



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

ASTRONOMICAL GRAND CYCLES

The Earth experiences climate fluctuations in a 2.4-million-year cycle, discovered through geological sedimentary evidence in the deep ocean current.

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WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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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. CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT RULES NOTIFIED

Context:

The government announced the **implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act rules, four years after the bill was passed** in Parliament.

Rules:

1. **Eligibility:** Applicants must belong to persecuted minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and have entered India before **December 31, 2014**.
2. **Application Process:** Apply through the online portal provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs, providing the necessary documents and information.
3. **Documentation:** Submit required documents such as proof of identity, residence, and eligibility for the specified minority communities.
4. **Oath of Allegiance:** All cleared applicants must take an oath affirming allegiance to the Indian Constitution.
5. **Empowered Committee Review:** Applications will be reviewed by an empowered committee to determine eligibility.
6. **Digital Certificate:** Successful applicants will receive a digital certificate of citizenship or naturalization.
7. **Physical Certificate:** Applicants can request a physical certificate, which must be collected from the office of the Empowered Committee.

What is CAA?

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) offers citizenship based on religion to **six non-Muslim communities (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians) from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh** who entered India on or **before December 31, 2014**. It exempts these communities from criminal cases under the **Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Passport Act, 1920**, which penalize illegal entry and overstaying on expired visas and permits.

Background of the Act:

Citizenship in India **is governed by the Citizenship Act, 1955**, offering acquisition through **birth, descent, registration, naturalization, or incorporation of territory**. Illegal migrants, entering without valid documents or overstaying, cannot become citizens and may face jail or deportation under the Foreigners Act, 1946, and Passport Act, 1920.

In 2015-2016, **specific groups of illegal migrants (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan)** arriving **before December 31, 2014**, were exempted from deportation. **The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2016** aimed to grant citizenship to these migrants, lapsed with the dissolution of the **16th Lok Sabha**.

Key Features of the Act:

Key Features	Details
Citizenship on the basis of religion	The Act grants citizenship based on religion for the first time , specifically to non-Muslim communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who entered India on or before December 31, 2014 . Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian communities from the mentioned countries are eligible for citizenship. Other communities are not covered under this provision.

Exceptions	The citizenship provisions for illegal migrants do not apply to regions protected by the 'Inner Line' permit system and areas under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
Citizenship by Naturalization	The Citizenship Act, 1955, requires residency in India during the last 12 months and for 11 of the previous 14 years for naturalization. The amendment reduces the residency requirement from 11 years to 5 years for applicants belonging to the specified six religions from the three mentioned countries.
Cancelling Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) Registration	The act grants the government authority to cancel Overseas Citizen of India registration for violations of the Citizenship Act or other laws. The Supreme Court has noted the necessity of guiding the nature of laws subject to OCI registration cancellation , to ensure the limitation of authority's powers and prevent arbitrariness.

Qualifications:

1. **Applicants must submit documents** such as birth certificates, rental agreements, and educational certificates issued by authorities in Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Bangladesh.
2. Documents **proving entry into India before December 31, 2014**
3. The applicant must provide an **"eligibility certificate" from a local community** institution, confirming their membership in the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian community.
4. **The person has to** present affidavits **verifying the application's accuracy** and the character of the applicant by an Indian citizen.
5. Applicants must have **adequate knowledge of a language listed in the 8th Schedule** of the Indian Constitution.
6. If the person is a citizen of another country, **re-nouncing the citizenship of another country is mandatory**, with an irrevocable declaration upon approval of Indian citizenship.

Applications are **submitted electronically to the Empowered Committee through the District Level Committee** notified by the Central Government, which scrutinizes and grants citizenship based on the fulfilment of criteria.

The citizenship application process will be **conducted online**, overseen by an empowered committee, which will scrutinize all applications through district-level committees.

Each state's empowered committee, chaired by the **Director of Census Operations**, will include officers from various government departments and invitees (Intelligence Bureau, Post Master General, State or National Informatics Centre, along with a representative each from the Department of Home and Divisional Railway Manager as invitees).

District-level committees, led by the Senior Superintendent or Superintendent of Post, will also play a crucial role.

Need of the Act:

Citizenship Amendment Act 2019

Why India Needs Citizenship Amendment Act?

India aims to grant quicker citizenship to those refugees who have faced religious persecution in neighbouring countries.

International migrants in India (in thousands)

2000	6,411.30
2019	5,154.70

Refugees as a share of international migrants 2019 (percentage) in India: **4.0**

Migrants stock by origin (2013)

Bangladesh	Pakistan	Nepal	Sri Lanka	Afghanistan
32,30,025	11,26,796	55,30,50	15,80,83	51,529

Know More about CAA History

1955: Citizenship Act was first enacted in 1955. After its enactment the Act has gone through 9 amendments.

2016: The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 19th July 2016.

JPC (Joint Parliamentary Committee) constituted on 23rd August 2016 consisting of members from: Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Law & Justice, Ministry of External Affairs. JPC was authorized to examine and submit a report on the bill.

2019: Lok Sabha passed the Bill on 6th Dec 2019. Rajya Sabha passed the bill on 11th Dec 2019.

2019: President approved the Act, Notified in Gazette on 12th Dec 2019.

Some Fact & Myths on CAA

Amendments to the existing Act

- Migrants will be provided with Indian citizenship if:**
 - They are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan
 - They belong to the following religions: Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian
 - They are currently staying in India
 - They have migrated to India before December 31st, 2014
- OCI registration: provision to cancel OCI registration in case the citizen violates any law in force specified by the Central government.**
- Who are excluded?** Tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and "The Inner Line" notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1913.

Myth Busters!

- Existing Indian citizens will not be affected by the amendment.
- CAA is not against Muslims. Its only purpose is to ensure the wellbeing of the migrants who faced religious persecution.
- CAA provisions are applicable for refugees who have migrated before Dec. 31, 2014 and who have experienced religious persecution.

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Arguments in favour of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA):

1. **Discrimination faced by Minorities:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh are Islamic republics, and minorities such as Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians face discrimination and persecution.
 - a. **The CAA aims to provide refuge to those who fled to India seeking**

safety due to religious persecution.

2. **Historical precedents:** India's historical commitment to protecting minorities facing persecution in neighbouring countries is **underscored by significant events such as the Partition of British India in 1947** and the signing of the **Indira-Mujib Pact in 1972** (the pact facilitated the return and absorption of **over 1.2 million refugees**, primarily Hindus, who sought shelter in India during the Bangladesh Liberation War)
3. **Easing of procedure:** The act **reduces the residency requirement for citizenship** by naturalization from **12 to 7 years**

Concerns with the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA):

1. **Targeting a particular community:** Critics fear that the CAA, coupled with the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)**, may favour **non-Muslims** while requiring excluded Muslims to prove their citizenship, potentially discriminating against Muslims.
2. **Issues in the Northeast:** The Act contradicts the Assam Accord of 1985 (the accord opposed illegal immigrants from all the regions), raising concerns about the impact on the demographic balance and resources of Assam, where illegal Bangladeshi migrants have settled.
3. **Violation of fundamental rights:** Opponents argue that the Act **violates Article 14** of the Constitution, which guarantees equality, by discriminating on the basis of religion.
4. **Discriminatory nature:** Critics highlight that the Act excludes refugees like **Tamil Sri Lankans and Hindu Rohingyas**, leading to accusations of discrimination based on religion.
5. **Exclusion of certain minorities:** Critics suggest that if the law aims to protect minorities, it should include persecuted Muslim groups like **Ahmadis in Pakistan and Rohingyas in Myanmar**.
6. **Administration challenges:** Differentiating between illegal migrants and persecuted individuals poses administrative difficulties.
7. **Impact on bilateral ties:** The Act may strain relations with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, as it highlights religious oppression in these countries.
8. **Linkage with NRC:** The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) is closely linked to the **Citi-**

zens' register (NRC) because it aims to protect non-Muslims excluded from the register, allowing them to gain citizenship.

- a. This means **Bengali Hindu migrants left out of the NRC** in Assam can still obtain citizenship. If the nationwide NRC is implemented, those excluded would be divided into **Muslims deemed illegal migrants and others protected by the CAB** if they are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, or Pakistan. Together, the **NRC and CAB could reshape citizenship rights in India**.

Way Forward:

India's initiative to **protect persecuted minorities** in its neighborhood is commendable, but it must align with **constitutional principles**. Transparency in notifying CAA rules is crucial to address concerns. The Supreme Court must **ensure fair procedures and examine whether the religious test for citizenship is arbitrary or discriminatory**. It should assess if excluding long-term refugees violates their constitutional rights and impacts India's secular identity.

Insta links:

- [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act Rules](#)

[Topics: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.](#)

2. HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE REPORT ON ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Context:

The High-Level Committee on One Nation, One Election, led by **former President Ram Nath Kovind**, has proposed significant changes to **enable synchronized elections across India**.

What is One Nation One Election (ONOE)?

One Nation One Election is a proposal to **synchronize the timing of all elections in India, including those for the Lok Sabha, state legislative assemblies, and local bodies**. The aim is to streamline the electoral process, reduce campaign expenditures, minimize disruptions to governance, and enhance political stability by holding all elections simultaneously at regular intervals, **typically once every five years**. ONOE was the norm **until 1967** but after that cycle was broken. **Earlier Law Commission** also recommended the idea of ONOE in its report.

Key Recommendations of the High-Level Committee:

1. **Two-step approach for Simultaneous Elections (SE):** Synchronize Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies (SLA) elections first, followed by Municipalities and Panchayats elections (M&PE).
 - i. **Amendments in Article 324A** are required for this synchronization, but states' ratification is not necessary.
 - ii. The amendments needed for simultaneous elections are **outside the scope of Article 368(2)** and thus don't require ratification by the states.
 - iii. Municipal and Panchayat elections should be held **within 100 days** of Lok Sabha and State elections.
2. **Dealing with hung House, adoption of no-confidence motion, and defection:**
 - i. For Lok Sabha, fresh elections should be held with tenure limited to the unexpired term of the previous Lok Sabha.
 - ii. For States, fresh elections should be held, continuing until the end of the full term of Lok Sabha.
 - iii. Amendments in **Article 83 and Article 172** are needed, but state ratification is not required.
3. **Single electoral roll and electoral identity cards:** An amendment to **Article 325 is recommended**, which will require states' ratification.
4. **Presidential Notification:** A Presidential notification would set an "appointed date" for simultaneous elections.
5. **Constitutional Authority of Parliament for ONOE:** The Constitution mainly **entrusts Parliament, not states**, with the power to conduct Assembly elections.
 - i. **Under Article 328 of the Constitution** States have only residual powers on conducting Assembly elections; the power is mainly entrusted to Parliament through Article 327.

Constitutional Articles involved:

Article	Description	Amendment Required
Article 324A	Article 324 of the Constitution vests the Election Commission with the authority to supervise, direct, and control elections for Parliament, state legislatures, the President of India, and the Vice-President of India. The committee has suggested the inclusion of a new Article 324A in the Constitution.	This new article would empower Parliament to make laws to ensure that municipality and panchayat elections are held simultaneously with the General Elections (to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies) without requiring state ratification.
Article 83 and Article 172	Article 83(2) and Article 172(1) stipulate a five-year term for the Lok Sabha and state legislative Assemblies , respectively, commencing from their first sitting unless dissolved earlier.	The committee recommended an amendment for synchronizing Assembly elections with Lok Sabha polls, suggesting no need for state ratification.
Article 325	Article 325 prohibits the exclusion of any person from a special electoral roll based on religion, race, caste, or sex.	The committee suggested amendment for a single electoral roll and electoral identity cards, requiring state ratification .
Articles 328 and 327	Article 328: Power of Legislature of a State to make provision with respect to elections to such Legislature.	As per the committee, the Constitution empowers Parliament, not states , to conduct Assembly elections, implying that simultaneous poll amendments do not mandate state ratification .

Benefits of “one nation, one election”:

Benefits	Description
Reducing Election Expenditure	<p>Conducting all elections simultaneously minimizes expenses on logistics, security, and campaigning.</p> <p>The Election Commission of India had pegged the expenditure for simultaneous elections at Rs 4,500 crore. In comparison, the 2014 Lok Sabha polls cost Rs 3,870 crore to the exchequer while the 2015 Bihar elections alone cost the government Rs 300 crore.</p>
Better Governance	Simultaneous elections reduce distractions to governance and allow elected governments to focus on developmental and welfare activities.
Voter Convenience	Voters are spared from multiple rounds of voting throughout the year, ensuring better turnout and convenience.
Reduced Security Concerns	Simultaneous elections decrease security concerns by requiring a unified security setup across the country.
Level Playing Field	All parties and candidates have equal opportunities, promoting fairness and transparency in the electoral process.
Reduced Impact on Education	Simultaneous elections lessen the impact on the education sector by minimizing the involvement of teachers in the electoral process.

Limitations of “one nation, one election”

Challenges	Description
Ratification by States	<p>The committee proposal that Ratification by states is not needed for most of the amendments may increase tension between the centre and states and also be struck down by Judicial Review</p> <p>In Kihoto Hollohan v Zachillhu (1992), the Supreme Court invalidated a law related to lawmaker disqualification because it lacked ratification by the states.</p>

Constitutional Challenges	Implementing “one nation, one election” requires lengthy and complicated constitutional amendments , necessitating consensus among political parties and states.
Anti-federalism	Combining assembly elections with general elections risks submerging regional issues under the national narrative , potentially undermining local representation.
Complexity of Logistics	<p>Managing simultaneous elections entails significant logistical arrangements, including security deployment, electoral roll preparation, and polling booth management.</p> <p>It would require greater numbers of electronic voting machines (EVMs) and voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) machines</p>
Dominance by National Parties	Simultaneous elections may favour national parties with more resources, potentially disadvantaging regional parties and diminishing the representation of regional issues.
Impact on Democracy	Conducting simultaneous elections might limit voters’ engagement with all issues , possibly compromising informed decision-making and the overall democratic process.
Voter’s choice and interests	<p>Simultaneous elections may shift voter focus to national issues, potentially favouring larger national parties over regional ones. This could marginalize regional parties and diminish voter interests.</p> <p>Additionally, separate elections enhance accountability by subjecting politicians to more frequent electoral scrutiny.</p>

International Experience:

- i. **South Africa:** National and provincial legislature elections are simultaneous for five years, with municipal elections held two years later.
- ii. **Sweden:** Elections for the national legislature (Riksdag), provincial legislature/county council (Landsting), and municipal assem-

blies (Kommunfullmaktige) are held every fourth year on the second Sunday in September.

- iii. **Britain:** The Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011 ensures stability by holding elections on the first Thursday of May every fifth year, starting from May 7, 2015.

Way forward

- **Parliamentary standing committee on Law and Justice** recommended a **two-phase election schedule**, according to which elections to **some legislative assemblies whose term end within six months to one year before or after the election date could be held during the midterm of Lok Sabha. For the rest of the states, elections could be held along with the general elections to Lok Sabha.**
- Cost can be brought under control by ensuring that **the legal cap on the expenditure of candidates is followed by all parties.**
- **Concept of One year, One election** will be easier than ONOE, and will have the same benefits.

Conclusion:

While the **objectives** for simultaneous polls offer **considerable opportunities**, the **challenges involved and practical limitations** highlight the need for **wider political support and legislative amendments**. Going forward toward this goal, **elaborate deliberations and a consensus-based mechanism** for implementation are essential.

Insta Links:

- [Sansad TV: One Nation One Election](#)

Mains Link:

Q. Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss. (UPSC 2017)

Prelims Links:

Q1. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)

1. According to the Constitution of India, a person who is eligible to vote can be made a minister in a State for six months even if he/she is not a member of the Legislature of that State.
2. According to the Representation of People Act, 1951, a person convicted of a criminal offense and sentenced to imprisonment for five years is permanently disqualified from contesting an election even after his release from prison.

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: D

Q. Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: D

[Topics: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.](#)

3. SUB-CLASSIFICATION WITHIN SCS AND STS

Context:

The forthcoming judgment in **the State of Punjab vs Davinder Singh case** by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India holds significant implications for affirmative action and reservations under the Constitution.

At the heart of the matter is the question of **whether State governments can sub-classify within Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)** for public employment recruitment.

What is Sub-categorization within castes?

It involves **creating sub-groups** within Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) for reservation and affirmative action purposes.

Aim: This process aims to **address intra-category inequalities** and ensure a fairer distribution of benefits and opportunities among marginalized communities.

Sub-classification will affect communities nationwide, such as **Balmikis and Mazhabi Sikhs in Punjab**, Madiga in Andhra Pradesh, Paswans in Bihar, Jatavs in UP, and Arundhatiyars in Tamil Nadu.

Background of the present case:

In the Past attempts at sub-categorization, States like Punjab, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu have faced legal challenges, reaching the Supreme Court. The Court, in the **2004 E.V. Chinnaiah vs State Of Andhra Pradesh case**, emphasized that **only Parliament has the authority to create and notify SC and ST lists**. It was also cited that, **B.R. Ambedkar**, in his speech, had **cautioned against allowing State governments to amend the list** due to potential political motivations was highlighted.

However, in the 2020 State of **Punjab and Others vs Davinder Singh and Others case**, a five-judge Bench ruled that states could determine the extent of benefits within the existing lists without altering them significantly. This ruling contradicts the 2004 decision and has led to the 2020 judgment being **referred to a larger Bench for further clarification**.

Competence of States for Creating Sub-Classification

States have the authority to provide reservation benefits to SCs and STs under **Articles 15(4) and 16(4), and Articles 341(1) and 342(1)**.

1. **Article 15(4)** empowers states to create special arrangements for socially and educationally backward classes like SCs and STs.
2. **Article 16(4)** allows States to make provisions for reservation in promotion if SCs and STs are underrepresented in state services.
3. **Articles 341(1) and 342(1)** permit the President, with consultation, to specify SCs and STs, including parts of these groups.

However, the **Chinnaiah judgement (2004) invalidated the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservations) Act, 2000**, for contravening Article 341. The Court emphasized that **only Parliament has the authority to modify the SC and ST lists** specified under Article 341.

Sub-categorize Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are needed:

1. **Addressing Intra-Group Inequalities:** E.g., In **Telangana, the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS)** is advocating for the internal reclassification of Scheduled Caste reservations. Despite constituting around 50% of the SC population in the state, Madigas feel their representation is being overshadowed by the dominance of another SC community, the Malas.
2. **Equitable Distribution of Benefits:** It prevents the concentration of benefits in the hands of a few dominant groups and pro-

motes broader social inclusion.

3. **Constitutional Mandate:** Articles 15(4), 16(4), 341(1), and 342(1) of the Constitution empower states to create special arrangements and provisions for the welfare of socially and educationally backward classes, including SCs and STs
4. **Empowerment of State Governments:** Sub-categorization grants autonomy to state governments to tailor reservation policies according to the specific socio-economic conditions and needs of different sub-groups within SCs and STs, promoting localized and targeted affirmative action measures.
5. **Enhancing Social Mobility:** Sub-categorization enables targeted measures to empower disadvantaged groups, fostering social mobility through education, employment, and political representation.

Challenges with Sub-Categorization of Caste:

1. **Inequality within Scheduled Castes:** Sub-categorization may not effectively address disparities, as the most backward communities may still remain marginalized despite a separate quota.
2. **Federalism Issue:** There's a constitutional dilemma regarding the authority of states to sub-categorize SCs and STs, with conflicting judgments from the Supreme Court on whether states have this power.
3. **Identification and Criteria:** Determining criteria for sub-categorization, such as socio-economic status or educational attainment, poses challenges due to the lack of consensus.
4. **Data Accuracy:** Obtaining accurate socio-economic data for different communities is difficult, hindering the decision-making process.
5. **Intra-group Disputes:** Sub-categorization may lead to internal conflicts and tensions among SC communities, potentially marginalizing certain groups from benefits.
6. **Possibility of Fragmentation:** There's a risk that sub-categorization could weaken the collective identity and strength of the community, leading to political and social fragmentation.

Suggestions for Sub-Classifying Caste Groups:

1. **Need for Wider Reading of Article 341:** Article 341 does not prohibit sub-classification,

allowing states to provide special measures within the SC list.

2. **Following Reasonable Classification:** Reasonable classifications, such as sub-categorization for inter-se backwardness, are permissible under the Constitution.
3. **Judging Sub-Classification on Its Own Merits:** Sub-classification should be judged based on its merits, ensuring fair treatment for different caste groups.
4. **Exploring Alternatives:** Legal options, such as constitutional amendments, can facilitate sub-categorization, as suggested by the Attorney General of India and expert committees.
5. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Comprehensive data collection on the socio-economic conditions of caste communities is crucial for formulating effective policies.
6. **Concept of Creamy-Layer:** The concept of creamy layer, applied to SC and ST promotions since 2018, ensures reservation benefits reach those most in need.
7. **Criteria Development:** Transparent criteria considering socio-economic status, education, and regional disparities are essential for sub-categorization.
8. **Following the Middle Path:** Balancing recognition of diversity within SCs and STs with maintaining community unity is crucial for effective policies without causing fragmentation.

Committee Recommendations:

1. **Justice P. Ramachandra Raju Commission (1996):** Recommended sub-categorization of Scheduled Castes in Andhra Pradesh
2. **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC):** Advocated for measures to address intra-group disparities and
3. **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST):** Highlighted the need to prioritize existing schemes and government benefits to reach the most backward sections of Scheduled Tribes before considering sub-categorization.
4. **Usha Mehra Committee (2008):** Proposed the inclusion of **Clause (3) in Article 341** through a constitutional amendment, empowering state legislatures to enact reclassification of the Scheduled Caste category, subject to Presidential confirmation.
5. **Justice G. Rohini headed the Commission**

for the Sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBC): Report submitted in August 2023

Conclusion:

Sub-categorizing Scheduled Castes is **crucial for addressing internal disparities and ensuring targeted social justice**. However, it requires careful consideration of constitutional provisions, data accuracy, and potential challenges to uplift marginalized communities effectively

Insta Links

- [Sub-categorization of Other Backward Classes](#)

Mains Links

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? (UPSC 2017)

Prelims Links:

Q. Consider the following organizations/bodies in India: (UPSC 2023)

1. The National Commission for Backward Classes
2. The National Human Rights Commission
3. The National Law Commission
4. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

How many of the above constitutional bodies?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Ans: A

Q. With reference to the 'Changpa' community of India, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2014)

1. They live mainly in the State of Uttarakhand.
2. They rear the Pashmina goats that yield a fine wool.
3. They are kept in the category of Scheduled Tribes.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: B

[Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.](#)

4. UN REFORMS: INDIA PRESENTS A DETAILED MODEL

Context:

India, representing the **G4 nations** (Participating in **Inter-governmental Negotiations** on UNSC reform), presented a **detailed model for UN Security Council reform**, proposing new permanent members elected democratically by the General Assembly and showing **flexibility on the veto issue**.

Key Highlights of the Proposed Model:

Highlights	Details
Enlarged Membership	11 Permanent members, and 14/15 non-permanent members with a 2-year term to be elected based on current practice.
Equitable Regional Representation	Representation of 6 new permanent members shall come from Africa (2), Asia-Pacific (2), Latin America and Caribbean (2), Western Europe and Other Member States (1).
Working Methods of Council	An affirmative vote of 14/15 of 25/26 members will be required for a decision.
Veto	No veto rights to new permanent members until decided by a review, held fifteen years after reform came into force.
Relationship between UNSC and UNGA	The council should hold regular consultations with the President of UNGA , submit annual reports and special reports to UNGA, etc.

Benefits of the proposed Model:

- Enlarged Membership:** Increasing the Security Council’s membership from 15 to 25-26 allows for **greater representation of diverse perspectives** and regions, enhancing the Council’s legitimacy.
- Equitable Regional Representation:** The proposed model ensures representation from under-represented regions such as Africa, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean, addressing the current imbalance in the Council’s composition.
- Democratic Election of New Members:** New permanent members will be elected democratically by the General Assembly, promoting fairness and inclusivity in the selection process.
- Flexibility on Veto:** By delaying the exercise of veto rights for new permanent members until a review is conducted, the model **displays a willingness to compromise and facilitate constructive negotiations**.
- Enhanced Working Methods:** Requiring an affirmative vote of 14/15 members for decisions encourages **consensus-building and cooperation** among Council members.

- Improved Relationship with UNGA:** Regular consultations with the President of the UN General Assembly and submission of reports enhance transparency and accountability, fostering a stronger relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly.
- Greater Acceptability:** E.g., France has expressed support for India, Japan, Brazil, and Germany’s candidacy for permanent membership and endorsed the G4 model. The U.S. acknowledged the support for expanding both permanent and non-permanent seats on the Security Council.

Limitations:

- Uncertainty in the Selection Process:** The model does not specify **which member states will occupy the new permanent seats**, potentially leading to ambiguity and disputes during the democratic election process.
- Delayed Exercise of Veto:** While the model offers flexibility on the veto issue, delaying its exercise until a review introduces uncertainty and may hinder immediate decision-making on critical matters.
- Potential Resistance from Current Permanent Members:** The proposed reforms may face opposition from existing permanent members who wield veto powers, as it could dilute their influence and control within the Security Council.
- Complex Decision-Making Process:** Requiring an affirmative vote of 14/15 members for decisions could **lead to gridlock and inefficiency** in decision-making, particularly on contentious issues where consensus is challenging to achieve.

The article should be read in continuation of the previous article: [Future of United Nations: UN Reforms](#)

Conclusion:

Looking towards the future, the **21st century presents a myriad of complex challenges**, ranging from climate change to cybersecurity threats and economic inequality. Despite its imperfections, the **United Nations (UN) stands uniquely positioned to address these multifaceted issues**, given its convening power, diplomatic role, and extensive network of agencies. However, **realizing its full potential requires implementing reforms** to enhance its effectiveness. **Streamlining bureaucracy, reducing inefficiencies, and ensuring more equitable representation** within the organization are crucial steps towards achieving this goal. Despite these challenges, the **UN remains indispensable in global governance, humanitarian assistance, and crisis management**. While the need for reform is evident, the UN’s continued role in fostering cooperation, dialogue, and collective action underscores its enduring im-

portance in tackling the world's most pressing problems.

About G4:

It consists of **Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan**, and aims to secure permanent seats on the UNSC. They mutually endorse each other's bids for permanent membership and regularly convene during the UN General Assembly sessions.

Inter-governmental Negotiations:

Intergovernmental Negotiations (**IGN**) is a **UN-based initiative focused on reforming the UNSC**. It involves various international organizations such as the African Union, G4 nations, Uniting for Consensus Group (UfC), L.69 Group of Developing Countries, Arab League, and Caribbean Community (CARICOM)

Insta Links:

- [If not reformed, the UN will be overtaken by other organisations](#)

Mains Links:

Q. What are the main functions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)? Explain different functional commissions attached to it. (10 M) (UPSC 2017)

Prelims Links:

Q. With reference to the "United Nations Credentials Committee", consider the following statements: (UPSC 2022)

1. It is a committee set up by the UN Security Council and works under its supervision.
2. It traditionally meets in March, June and September every year
3. It assesses the credentials of all UN members before submitting a report to the General Assembly for approval.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)

GENERAL STUDIES – 3

Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. HCES DATA: A SHIFT IN INDIAN HOUSEHOLDS' FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Context:

The recently released **Household Consumer Expenditure Survey (HCES) data** for 2022-23 highlights a shift in **Indian households' food consumption patterns**.

What does the HCES data show about Food Trends?

Over the years, there has been a **gradual decline in the share of expenditure on food (to less than 50%) and an increase in spending on non-food items** for both urban and rural households. This decline in food spending **reflects an increase in incomes**, allowing for more expenditures on other necessities like medical expenses, clothing, education, conveyance, durables, fuel, and entertainment.

The recent survey highlights **a reduction in the share of cereals and pulses within overall food consumption expenditure in both rural and urban households**.

Among non-food items, **spending on conveyance** now holds the highest share. Previously, fuel and light were the categories with the highest consumption spending **among non-food items until the 2022-23 survey**

Significance of the shift in Indian households' food consumption patterns:

1. **Economic Development Indicator:** The shift in Indian households' food consumption patterns reflects economic development, as it suggests an increase in incomes and the ability to spend more on non-food items.
2. **Improved Standard of Living:** The decline in the share of expenditure on food indicates an improved standard of living for households, allowing them to allocate more resources to other essential and discretionary expenses.
3. **Dietary Diversity:** The reduction in the share of cereals and pulses suggests a diversification of diets, potentially leading to improved nutrition outcomes by incorporating a wider range of food groups.
4. **Changing Lifestyle Preferences:** The increased spending on non-food items, such as conveyance, reflects changing lifestyle preferences and priorities among Indian households, possibly influenced by urbanization and modernization.
5. **Economic Opportunities:** The shift in consumption patterns may signify increased economic opportunities, particularly in sectors beyond agriculture, leading to greater consumption of goods and services beyond basic food necessities.
6. **Infrastructure Development:** Higher spending on non-food items like conveyance may indicate improved infrastructure development, such as better transportation networks, contributing to enhanced accessibility and mobility for households.

Limitations of MPCE Data:

- Lack of Intra-Household Allocation Insight:** MPCE data only reveals the overall consumption pattern of households, failing to provide insights into how food and nutrients are allocated among different demographic groups within the household, such as women and adolescent girls.
- Incomplete Assessment of Salt and Sugar Intake:** MPCE data does not accurately reflect the actual intake of salt and sugar, as it cannot estimate the quantities consumed through processed foods and beverages. This limitation is critical given the rising prevalence of obesity, diabetes, and hypertension in India.

Way Forward:

- Awareness:** Implement front-of-pack food labeling with a **traffic light system** to indicate high salt, fat, or sugar content in processed foods and **Promote nutrition literacy** to educate consumers about healthy eating practices and lifestyle modifications.
- Imposition of Health Tax:** Implement a **20% to 30% health tax**, in addition to GST, on high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) foods to deter consumption.
- Expansion of Low-Cost Eateries:** Increase the **number of low-cost eateries** operated by the government, offering affordable nutritious meals and healthy alternatives like buttermilk.
- Nutritious Provision in Anganwadi:** Enhance the **allocation of vegetables** in government Anganwadi and school noon meal schemes to encourage healthy eating habits and improve nutrition.
- Diversification of PDS Basket:** Expand the **Public Distribution System (PDS) basket** to include a wider variety of foods, ensuring nutritional security for all.

About Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES):

It is conducted **every 5 years** by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** and gathers data on household consumption of **goods and services**. This data is essential for deriving macroeconomic indicators like **Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poverty rates, and Consumer Price Inflation (CPI)**. The survey generates insights into

- Household spending on both goods and services
- Aids in calculating Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE)
- Analyzes the distribution of households and individuals across MPCE categories.

Note: NITI Aayog noted that the latest survey showed a **reduction in poverty to 5%**.

Prelims Links:

Q. As per the NSSO 70th Round “Situation Assessment Survey of Agricultural Households”, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2018)

- Rajasthan has the highest percentage share of agricultural households among its rural households.
- Out of the total agricultural households in the country, a little over 60 per cent belong to OBCs.
- In Kerala, a little over 60 per cent of agricultural households reported to have received maximum income from sources other than agricultural activities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 2 and 3 only
- 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Ans: C

Q. In a given year in India, official poverty lines are higher in some States than in others because (UPSC 2019)

- poverty rates vary from State to State
- price levels vary from State to State
- Gross State Product varies from State to State
- quality of public distribution varies from State to State

Ans: B

2. INDIA-EFTA TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (TEPA)

Context:

India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) signed a **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)** on March 10, 2024.

What is EFTA?

EFTA, the European Free Trade Association, is an **inter-governmental organization** founded in 1960 to promote free trade among its member states, which include **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland**. It operates independently of the European Union (EU).



Importance of EFTA States:

The EFTA states, **despite their small population of just over 14 million**, wield significant economic influence. Their advanced economies **rank among the world's highest in innovation, competitiveness, and wealth creation**. In 2021, they collectively traded close to over USD 1 trillion in goods and services, making them formidable players in global trade. **EFTA companies** are renowned world leaders in various sectors, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, machinery manufacturing, technology products, and financial services.

India-EFTA Trade:

EFTA countries	Exports	Imports	Trade balance
Iceland	13	5	8
Liechtenstein	0	8	-8
Norway	484	782	-298
Switzerland	1,382	19,657	-18,275
TOTAL	1,879	20,452	-18,574

*CY2023

What is TEPA?

The India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is a **trade agreement between India and the EFTA countries**. It focuses on market access, investment promotion, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), and other trade-related aspects to enhance economic cooperation between India and the EFTA states.

Major Benefits for India from TEPA:

- Increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** TEPA aims to increase the stock of foreign direct investments **by USD 100 billion in India** over the next 15 years, providing a significant boost to the country's economy.
- Job Creation:** The agreement is expected to facilitate the **generation of 1 million direct employment opportunities in India** through investments from EFTA countries.
 - Legal commitment made about **promoting target-oriented investment** and creation of jobs.
- Market Access:** TEPA provides enhanced market access for Indian goods, with tariff concessions and **favourable rules of origin**, enabling Indian exporters to access EFTA markets more competitively.
- Services Sector Growth:** The agreement stimulates **growth in India's services exports**, particularly in key sectors like IT services, business services, personal, cultural, sporting and recreational services, and other education services.
- Intellectual Property Protection:** TEPA ensures robust protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for Indian products and innovations, ad-

ressing concerns related to generic medicines and patents.

- Sustainable Development:** The agreement signals India's commitment to sustainable development, environmental protection, and inclusive growth, fostering transparency and efficiency in trade procedures.
- Domestic Manufacturing:** TEPA encourages domestic manufacturing in sectors such as Infrastructure, Machinery, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals, Food Processing, Transport and Logistics, Banking and Financial Services, and Insurance, supporting the "Make in India" initiative.
- Human Rights and Sustainable Development:** For the first time, the FTA also included a chapter on commitments to human rights and sustainable development.
- Template for other FTA negotiations:** E.g., TEPA can act as a model for negotiation with the European Union FTA

Major Benefits for EFTA from TEPA:

- Market Access:** EFTA members gain improved access to the Indian market
- Investment Opportunities:** TEPA provides avenues for them to invest in various sectors and industries.
- Services Trade:** EFTA countries benefit from better access to Indian services through provisions for digital delivery of services, commercial presence, and improved commitments for entry and temporary stay of key personnel.
- Intellectual Property Rights:** The agreement ensures strong protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) for EFTA countries in India
- Mutual Recognition Agreements:** TEPA includes provisions for Mutual Recognition Agreements in Professional Services, allowing professionals from EFTA countries to practice in India and vice versa
- Enhanced Economic Integration:** TEPA strengthens economic ties between EFTA countries and India

Challenges include:

- Economic Structure Differences:** EFTA states' focus on high-tech industries contrasts with India's diverse economy, requiring alignment.
- Regulatory Hurdles:** Varied regulations and standards necessitate harmonization efforts for seamless trade.
- Competition:** EFTA's competitiveness in key sectors demands measures for fair competition.
- Environmental and Social Considerations:** Prioritizing sustainability and social equity is vital.

Way Forward:

Moving forward, it is crucial for **strong political involvement and guidance to be provided** by both India and EFTA, ensuring that TEPA is streamlined to facilitate the swift establishment of a balanced agreement that serves the interests of all parties involved.

Insta Links

[India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement \(ECTA\) approved](#)

Prelims Links

Q. 'Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)' is sometimes seen in the news in the context of negotiations held between India and (UPSC 2017)

- European Union
- Gulf Cooperation Council
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Ans: A

Q. The SEZ Act, 2005 which came into effect in February 2006 has certain objectives. In this context, consider the following: (UPSC 2010)

- Development of infrastructure facilities.
- Promotion of investment from foreign sources.
- Promotion of exports of services only.

Which of the above are the objectives of this Act?

- 1 and 2 only
- 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Ans: A

Q. A "closed economy" is an economy in which (UPSC 2011)

- the money supply is fully controlled
- deficit financing takes place
- only exports take place
- neither exports nor imports take place

Ans: D

[Topics: Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.](#)

3. INDIA'S R&D LANDSCAPE: FUNDING, CHALLENGES, AND INITIATIVES

Context: India's R&D funding landscape is undergoing significant transformation with the **announcement of a ₹1 lakh crore corpus in the interim Budget for 2024-25**, aimed at bolstering research and innovation.

What is Research and Development?

It refers to the **systematic investigation and experimentation** undertaken to discover new knowledge or create **new products, processes, or services**. R&D activities are essential for driving innovation, improving existing products, and staying competitive in various industries.

Status of India in the R&D landscape:

- Low R&D funding:** China allocates **2.4%** of its GDP to R&D, the US allocates **3.5%**, while India's allocation stands at only **0.64%**.
- Growth in GERD: India's Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD)** has shown significant growth, reaching over USD 17 billion in 2020-21, but it still lags behind major economies in terms of the percentage of GDP spent on R&D.
- Academic Talent Production:** Despite lower R&D expenditure compared to other countries, **India ranks third globally in producing PhDs and publications**, reflecting a commitment to fostering intellectual capital and contributing to global research endeavours.
- Patent Grants:** India **ranks sixth globally in patent grants**, showcasing an evolving innovation landscape and potential for further growth in intellectual property creation.
- Investment in Autonomous R&D:** A significant portion of R&D funding is allocated to **autonomous laboratories** operated by the government, driving research and technology development with strategic implications.
- Government Sector Dominance:** With **54% of total R&D investment** allocated to the government sector, key scientific agencies like DRDO, Department of Space, ICAR, and Department of Atomic Energy benefit, enhancing strategic research and development initiatives.
- Provisions in Interim Budget 2024-25:** The interim budget allocated a corpus of Rs. 1 lakh crore for long-term financing or refinancing in R&D, along with launching a new scheme to **strengthen deep-tech technologies** for defence purposes, promoting self-reliance (atmanirbharta).

Issues with India's R&D landscape:

- Low R&D Investment as a Percentage of GDP:** India's GERD has grown significantly, but its R&D investment as a percentage of GDP remains low at **0.64%**.

2. **Less Contribution by Private Sector:** In India, the private sector contributed only about 36% in 2020-21 Vs economies like China, Japan, South Korea, and the U.S., where private industries typically **contribute over 65% of R&D funding**.
3. **Under-Utilisation of Allocated Funds: DBT used only 72% and DST used only 61% in 2022-23.**
4. **Bureaucratic red tape and delays** in procuring laboratory equipment impede research.
5. **State Governments Not Allocating Adequate Funds:** The annual spending on research in most states is **only 0.09% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) on average**, indicating a lack of emphasis on research at the state level.
6. **A weak patent system leads** to concerns about inadequate protection of intellectual property.
7. **Insufficient capacity in the Indian Patent Office** to handle patent examination demands.
8. **Lack of talent due to underdeveloped** higher education institutions hampers private sector engagement.
9. **Limited collaboration between academia and industry** inhibits innovation and commercialization.

Government Initiatives:

1. **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Launched in 2016, this scheme aims to foster innovation by creating new programs and policies to support start-up development.
2. **Innovation of Science Pursuit for Inspire Research (INSPIRE):** This scheme aims to attract talent to science and research at an early stage.
3. **One Week - One Lab Campaign:** This aims to create awareness about CSIR-NPL's technologies, provide solutions to societal problems, and develop scientific temperament among students.
4. **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI):** End-to-end plan for start-ups to double the number of incubators and start-ups within five years.
5. **National Start-up Awards:** Recognizes outstanding start-ups and ecosystem enablers contributing to economic dynamism by stimulating innovation and competition.

6. National Research Foundation:



National Research Foundation (NRF)



National Research Foundation (NRF)	
About	NRF will be established as an apex body at a total estimated cost of ₹50,000 crores from 2023-28 (the government will contribute ₹14,000 crores and ~₹36,000 crores are expected to come from the private sector as investments).
Recommendation	National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
Implementation	DST, Ministry of S&T
Governed by	A Governing Board : The PM will be the ex-officio President of the Board and the Union Minister of S&T and Union Minister of Education will be the ex-officio Vice-Presidents . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will also consist of eminent researchers and professionals across disciplines. An Executive Council : Chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India.
Purpose	NRF will seed, grow and promote R&D and foster a culture of research and innovation throughout India's universities, colleges, research institutions and R&D laboratories.
How?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By prioritising research funding and ensuring that scientific research was conducted and funded equitably with greater participation from the private sector. Currently, the IITs and IISc receive the majority of research funds, whereas State universities receive a very little portion (~10%). By forging collaborations among the industry, academia, and government departments and research institutions and creating an interface mechanism for their participation and contribution. By creating a policy framework and putting in place regulatory processes that can encourage collaboration and increased spending by the industry on R&D.
Significance/need of NRF/Bill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India barely spends 0.7% of its GDP on R&D, which is extremely low compared to the US (2.83%), China (2.14%), Israel (4.9%), Brazil, Malaysia and Egypt. NRF will promote the democratisation of science funding, finding solutions to the big problems facing Indian society, etc. The Bill was necessary because current laws made it hard for private research organisations to contribute to a funding body such as the NRF.

Steps to Enhance R&D Funding:

Steps	Description
Encouraging Private Sector Collaboration	Provide incentives for private investment, including relaxation of foreign direct investments (FDIs), tax rebates , and clear regulatory roadmaps.
Increasing R&D Expenditure	Aim to spend at least 1-3% of GDP annually on R&D to have a meaningful impact on development
Ensuring Increased Role for HEIs in India	Recognize the importance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in R&D and Strengthen academia's research infrastructure
Investing in Deep Tech	Implement initiatives like the National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) and the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act to incentivize private sector engagement and safeguard intellectual property.
Mandating Proper Utilization of Allocated Funds	- Prioritize political commitment to R&D spending and build bureaucratic capacity for effective project evaluation and utilization.
Prioritizing Expenditure Through State Governments	Allocate expenditure to facilitate the transition of research from the lab bench to the factory floor , promoting innovation and high-quality advancements.

Creating an Enabling Regulatory Environment	Ensure a level playing field for all players in the R&D sector through clear regulatory frameworks.
Skill Development and Education	Invest in skill development and education initiatives to cultivate a skilled workforce that can support private sector growth.

Conclusion:

This commitment to R&D underscores the nation's emphasis on research and development, as reflected in the rebranded slogan '**Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan**'.

Insta Links:

- [National Research Foundation \(NRF\)](#)
- [R&D ecosystem in India](#)

Mains Links:

Q. Scientific research in Indian universities is declining, because a career in science is not as attractive as our business operations, engineering or administration, and the universities are becoming consumer-oriented. Critically comment. (UPSC 2014)

Prelims Links:

Q. Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the National Innovation Foundation-India (NIF)? (UPSC 2015)

1. NIF is an autonomous body of the Department of Science and Technology under the Central Government.
2. NIF is an initiative to strengthen the highly advanced scientific research in India's premier scientific institutions in collaboration with highly advanced foreign scientific institutions.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: A

Q. For outstanding contribution to which one of the following fields is the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize given? (UPSC 2009)

- (a) Literature
- (b) Performing Arts
- (c) Science
- (d) Social Service

Ans: C

Q. Atal Innovation Mission is set up under the (UPSC 2019)

- (a) Department of Science and Technology
- (b) Ministry of Labour and Employment
- (c) NITI Aayog
- (d) Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

Ans: C

GENERAL STUDIES - 4

1. ACHIEVING HAPPINESS

Context:

The upcoming **International Day of Happiness on March 20** prompts reflection on the elusive nature of true contentment amid global strife.

What is Happiness?

Happiness is a **mental and emotional state characterized by contentment, satisfaction, and enjoyment**. It is subjective and elicits positive thoughts and feelings, encompassing various emotions like joy, amusement, and triumph.

Examples:

1. Individual Life Examples:

- Personal Achievement:** Completing a **long-term goal, like graduating from university**, can bring a profound sense of happiness and accomplishment to an individual.
- Quality Time with Loved Ones:** Spending a relaxing day with family or friends, and engaging in activities you enjoy together, can foster happiness through social connections.
- Practising Gratitude:** Taking time each day to reflect on things you're thankful for, whether big or small, can cultivate a sense of happiness and appreciation.

2. Societal Life Examples:

- Social Support Systems:** Societies that prioritize community support networks, such as accessible healthcare, education, and social welfare programs, contribute to the overall happiness and well-being of their

citizens.

- ii. **Cultural Celebrations:** Festivals and cultural events that bring communities together in celebration and unity often lead to collective happiness and a sense of belonging.

Thinkers: **Aristotle** sees it as the pursuit of well-being and fulfilment, **Buddhism** emphasizes overcoming craving, while **Hinduism** focuses on realizing one's true self by transcending duality. **UN** describes 'happiness' as a fundamental human goal.

Is economic growth sufficient to ensure a happy life? Economic growth isn't always enough for happiness.

While wealth can contribute, studies reveal it's not a guarantee. For instance, despite its affluence, the USA ranks low in the UN's Happiness Report. Conversely, Nordic countries like Finland, Denmark, and Sweden, while not as rich, often rank higher.

What is a 'Happy Society'?

A "happy society" is generally considered to be a society in which the majority of people report **feeling satisfied** and **content** with their lives.

- This can be influenced by **factors** such as a **high standard of living, access to education and healthcare, a sense of community and social support**, and low levels of crime and violence.

Why has Indian society continuously underperformed in the gross happiness Index?

India has ranked 126 out of 150 countries in the annual World Happiness Report 2023, finding itself **toward the bottom** of the index for the eighth consecutive year.

Factors Responsible	Impact
Poverty and income inequality	Despite economic growth, a significant portion lives in poverty, lacking basics like food and healthcare.
Corruption	Undermines public trust, and reduces the effectiveness of public services.
Lack of access to education	Many, especially rural dwellers, lack a quality education, impacting well-being.
Lack of access to healthcare	Limited healthcare access negatively affects overall well-being.
Social and cultural issues	Challenges include discrimination, violence against women, child labour, and caste-based discrimination.

Political instability	Instability and ineffective governance contribute to lower well-being.
Rapid urbanization	Congested cities and urbanization impact well-being negatively.
Low earnings	Economic challenges like dropping earnings and unemployment affect well-being.
Environmental pollution	Pollution and its impact on mental health reduce well-being.



International Example:

Nordic countries consistently perform well in the World Happiness Report due to their strong government traits, including effective financial management, service delivery, rule of law, peacekeeping, and absence of repression. Additionally, these countries prioritize citizen welfare, contributing to their higher levels of happiness.

To achieve a happy citizen and society:

1. Prioritize social welfare alongside economic growth.
2. Foster environmental sustainability and conservation efforts.
3. Ensure access to quality education and healthcare for all.
4. Combat corruption and promote transparency in governance.
5. Address social inequalities and discrimination.
6. Promote community engagement and social cohesion.
7. Invest in mental health services and promote well-being initiatives.
8. Encourage active participation in civic and cultural activities.

Conclusion:

The pursuit of happiness is intertwined with sustainable development, combining social inclusion and environmental preservation. India must adopt a **holistic approach encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions** to achieve genuine progress and enhance overall happiness, prioritizing not just economic growth but also social welfare and good governance.

About World Happiness Report:

The World Happiness Report, **released annually by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, ranks countries** based on happiness. **Started in 2012**, it coincides with the **International Day of Happiness**. Surveying people in over 150 countries, the report evaluates happiness using six factors: **social support, income, health, freedom, generosity, and absence of corruption**.

Mains Link:

Q. Happiness depends upon ourselves.” – Aristotle. What does this quote mean to you? (150 words)

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

1. MISSING VOTERS

“**Missing voters**” are primarily young, **single male migrants in urban areas** whose addresses on electoral rolls don’t match their current living places.

The Election Commission’s plan to **use remote voting machines** could help these voters participate, potentially **increasing voter turnout by up to 30%** and impacting political focus and party strategies. This inclusion could lead to a **shift in political manifestos**, focusing on issues like **urban employment and migration-related challenges**. Additionally, it may lead to **demands for specific policies** addressing job security and skill development.

The Election Commission’s initiative is seen as **crucial for ensuring a more inclusive and representative democratic process**.

Other countries are tackling the issue of missing voters with the following strategies:

- Remote Voting Systems:** Estonia has implemented remote voting systems, enabling **citizens to vote online or via mobile devices**, enhancing accessibility for those unable to visit polling stations.
- Postal Voting:** Australia and Switzerland offer postal voting options, allowing **eligible voters to cast their ballots by mail**, accommodating those unable to attend polling stations on election day.
- Voter Registration Reforms:** Canada and New Zealand have simplified voter registration processes **through automatic registration systems** and initiatives to update voter rolls using government databases, reducing the likelihood of exclusion due to address discrepancies.
- Outreach Programs:** The **United Kingdom and the United States** conduct outreach programs to educate citizens about voter registration procedures, particularly targeting marginalized com-

munities to ensure their participation in elections.

Usage: The example can be used in Polity/Governance/ Essay as a way to electoral reforms.

2. HYODOL

Context:

South Korean company **Hyodol has introduced an AI social robot priced at \$1,800 to combat loneliness among seniors**, particularly those with dementia.

Deployed by the South Korean government, these robots offer **customized care, including conversation, music, reminders, and health monitoring features**. They utilize advanced language processing and emotional AI systems to provide **realistic engagement**. However, concerns about **data privacy and security remain** regarding the extensive data collection by the robot.

Other such robots for elders are:

- ElliQ:** AI-powered social robot designed to provide companionship, cognitive stimulation, and assistance with daily activities.
- CarePredict:** Wearable AI device that monitors seniors’ activities, detects anomalies, and provides insights into their well-being.
- Cuttii:** French AI companion robot equipped with video conferencing, entertainment features, and reminders for medication and appointments.
- Zora:** AI-powered humanoid robot used in elder care facilities to provide entertainment, assistance, and companionship to residents.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS-1

1. ANTHROPOCENE EPOCH

Context:

The **International Commission on Stratigraphy** rejected the proposal of the Anthropocene epoch after a **committee of 18 scientists** recently voted against it.

What is an Epoch?

An epoch is a **subdivision of geological time** that represents a distinct interval of time characterized by significant events or developments in Earth’s history.

Quaternary Period with the Anthropocene Epoch

Eonothem/ Eon	Era/ Era	System/ Period	Series/ Epoch	Stage/ Age	millions of years ago
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Anthropocene ¹		1950 CE
			Holocene		0.0117
			Pleistocene	Upper	0.126
				Middle	0.781
				Calabrian	1.806
Gelasian	2.588				

¹In August 2016 the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG), a special body created within the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS), recommended that the Anthropocene Epoch be made a formal interval within the International Chronostratigraphic Chart. The AWG recommended that the year 1950 be used as the starting point of the Anthropocene Epoch.

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What is the Anthropocene epoch?

The Anthropocene epoch is a **proposed unit of geologic time** that marks a period during which human activities have had a **significant impact on Earth’s climate and ecosystems**. It suggests a new epoch following the **Holocene**, with the concept coined in 2000 by **Dutch meteorologist Paul Crutzen and American botanist Eugene Stoermer**. The starting point of the Anthropocene is debated, with some proposing the **period after World War II** due to the “Great Acceleration” of human activities.

Why was the proposal Rejected?

The proposal to recognize the Anthropocene epoch was rejected due to several reasons:

- Contention over the starting date:** The proposal suggested 1952 as the beginning of the Anthropocene, citing global **plutonium fallout from nuclear weapons tests**. However, opponents argue that human impact began earlier, including activities such as farming, and cannot be confined to a single date.
- Epoch definition standards:** The International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) committee found that adding an Anthropocene epoch and ending the Holocene didn’t align with the usual standards for defining epochs. There were concerns about the scientific rigour and criteria required to establish a new geological epoch.

2. FIFTH MASS CORAL BLEACHING EVENT

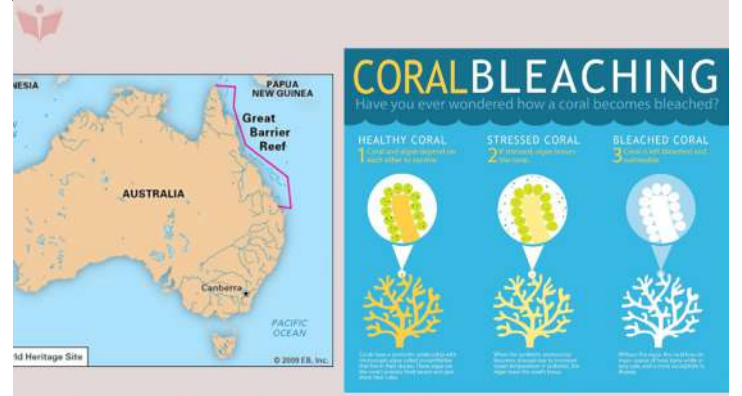
Context:

The Great Barrier Reef is experiencing its **fifth mass coral bleaching event in eight years**, driven by **global heating and an El Niño climate pattern**.

- Aerial surveys have revealed **widespread bleaching across two-thirds of the reef**, with particular concern for the southern section where **centuries-old corals are severely affected**.
- The reef’s size, **covering an area larger than Italy**, has seen significant bleaching episodes **in**

1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022, and now in 2024

Coral bleaching is a **response to stressful conditions that cause corals to expel the algae that live in their tissues**. The algae are the **coral’s primary food source and give them their colour**. Coral bleaching can be **caused by changes in conditions such as temperature, light, or nutrients**. Coral bleaching is associated with the **devastation of coral reefs, which are home to approximately 25 per cent of all marine species**



3. ORAN LAND

Context:

Villagers in Rajasthan **oppose the state government’s proposal** to classify sacred groves known as orans as **deemed forests**, fearing loss of **access and livelihood**. The notification, **released on February 1, 2024**, aims to give **orans the status of deemed forests** as per Supreme Court directives.

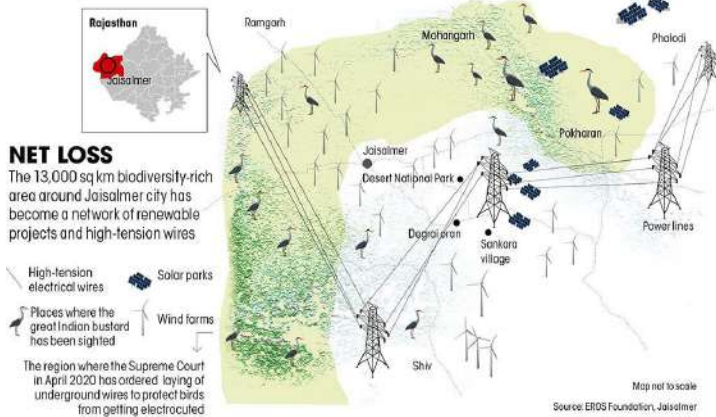
Communities rely on orans for **cultural, religious, and economic reasons**, using them for cattle herding, pastures, and gathering forest produce. They fear that this classification will **deprive them of access to the forests and threaten** their way of life. Legal experts clarify that while deemed forests are protected from certain activities like mining, they do not restrict community access to grazing or worship.

What are Orans?

Orans are **traditional sacred groves found in Rajasthan, India**. These community forests are **preserved and managed by rural communities**, often associated with local deities. They are rich in biodiversity, typically containing water bodies, and have been conserved for centuries. Orans serve as grazing areas for livestock and are venues for communal gatherings and festivals. They are also vital habitats for **endangered species like the Great Indian Bustard**.

What are Sacred groves?

Sacred groves are **relic forest patches traditionally protected by communities** in reverence of a deity. They are important repositories of forest biodiversity, providing refuge to many plant and animal species of conservation significance. India has **over 13,000** documented sacred groves. These groves are known by different names in different regions, such as **Kavu/Sarpa Kavu** in Kerala, **Devarakadu/Devkad** in Karnataka, and **Deorai/Devrai** in Maharashtra.



4. GORSAM KORA FESTIVAL

Context:

The **Gorsam Kora Festival**, held **annually in Arunachal Pradesh's Zemithang valley**, concluded, celebrating the **shared Himalayan Buddhist cultural heritage and the enduring friendship between India and Bhutan**.

- Located along the Nyanmjang Chu River, **Zemithang is historically significant as the refuge where the 14th Dalai Lama sought sanctuary in 1959.**
- The festival, **centred around the 93-foot tall stupa – 'Gorsam Chorten' built in the 13th century**, attracts thousands of devotees, including **Bhutanese nationals, for prayers and traditional rituals.**

5. 2024 PRITZKER ARCHITECTURE PRIZE

Context:

Riken Yamamoto, a Japanese architect, was awarded the 2024 **Pritzker Architecture Prize**, often dubbed the **"Architecture Nobel"**.

Established in 1979 by the Pritzker family of Chicago, it recognizes living architects for their significant contributions to humanity and the built environment.

The laureate receives **\$100,000 and a bronze medalion**. Riken Yamamoto, the ninth laureate from Japan, is known for projects like the **Hiroshima Nishi Fire Station (2000) and the Koyasu Elementary School (2018)**, which emphasize transparency and interaction in architectural design.

The Pritzker Architecture Prize



6. SELA TUNNEL (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

Context:

PM Modi inaugurates the **Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh**, built at an altitude of 13,700 feet by the **Border Roads Organisation**.

The all-weather Sela Tunnel is built on the **road linking Tezpur (Assam) to Tawang in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh**. Constructed using **the New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM)**, it stabilizes the tunnel perimeter with sprayed concrete and other support while ensuring stability through regular monitoring. This bi-lane tunnel, stretching approximately **1.5 kilometres**, stands as the **world's longest (at an altitude above 13,000 feet)**, offering crucial all-weather connectivity.



7. SPONGE IRON INDUSTRY

Context:

India's sponge iron industry faces an **ore shortage due to rampant exports of iron ore**, its crucial raw material.

About the Sponge Iron:

- Definition:** Sponge iron, also known as direct-reduced iron (DRI), is produced from the **direct reduction of iron ore** (in the form of lumps, pellets, or fines) into metallic iron through a reduction reaction (chemical process) at high temperatures.
- Production Process:** Sponge iron is produced by **removing oxygen from iron ore** through a reduction process in a rotary kiln or fluidized bed reactor. This process occurs at **high temperatures (typically above 1000°C)** and involves the use of reducing agents such as coal or natural gas.
- End Use:** Sponge iron serves as a crucial raw material in the steelmaking industry.
- Advantages:** Sponge iron production offers several advantages, including lower production costs compared to traditional steelmaking methods, higher purity of the final product, and reduced environmental impact due to lower emissions of greenhouse gases.
- Leading Producer:** India has been the world's largest sponge iron-producing nation since 2003, with 30% of India's steel production coming from this route.
- Impact of Export:** The shortage of Sponge Iron in India is attributed to the high rate of iron ore exports, leaving minimal quantities for domestic use by secondary steel sector players.
- Export Dynamics:** Iron ore exports, including pellets, **almost tripled in 2023**, reaching 44 MT. This surge followed the withdrawal of **export duty on ores with less than 58% Fe in November 2022**.
- Policy Objectives:** The National Steel Policy 2017 aims to increase sponge iron production to 80 MTPA by 2030-31 to achieve a targeted steel production capacity of 300 MT
- Calls for Action:** Several state-based sponge iron manufacturing associations have appealed to the **Union Steel Ministry** to ban all forms of iron ore exports due to the severe shortage of raw material.

8. ASTRONOMICAL GRAND CYCLES

Context:

The Earth experiences climate fluctuations **in a 2.4-million-year cycle**, discovered through geological sedimentary evidence in the deep **ocean current**. This cycle, known as "astronomical grand cycles," is linked to the **orbits of Earth and Mars around the Sun**.

Explanation:

The concept of the **Astronomical Grand Cycle (AGC)** suggests that the **gravitational interaction between Earth and Mars cyclically influences deep ocean currents**,

leading to recurring patterns every 2.4 million years. This cycle is attributed to the **interference of gravity fields between the two planets**, causing a resonance that affects Earth's orbit around the Sun.

The mechanism proposed for AGC highlights the **gravitational interplay between Earth and Mars as the primary driver**. Unlike the **Milankovitch cycles**, which are associated with Earth's interactions with **Jupiter and Saturn** and coincide with the glacial and interglacial periods on Earth, the AGC specifically pertains to the interaction between Earth and Mars and its impact **on deep ocean currents**.

9. WORLD MONUMENTS FUND WATCH 2025

Context:

Conservationists plan to propose the **Kazhuveli watershed region in Villupuram district**, Tamil Nadu, for **nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 programme**.

- This region, **spanning 740 sq. km. from Gingee to Marakkanam and up to the Auroville plateau**, features **an ancient Eri (tank) network crucial for sustaining agricultural practices over millennia**.
- The proposal aims to **address the decline of this historic water management system and its cultural heritage**.

The **World Monuments Watch**, launched in 1996, is a **biennial program** that highlights heritage sites globally nominated by individuals and community-based organizations. It is a program by the **World Monuments Fund (WMF)** that **raises awareness about cultural heritage** around the world that is threatened **by conflict, vandalism, disaster, or neglect**.

10. PANDAVULA GUTTA DESIGNATED AS A GEO-HERITAGE SITE

Context:

Pandavula Gutta, an **ancient geological marvel in Telangana (Jayashankar Bhupalpally District)**, has been designated as the **exclusive Geo-heritage site** in the state.

About Pandavula Gutta:

It is **older than the Himalayas** and showcases ancient rock paintings in various colours like green, red, yellow, and white. The paintings depict symbols such as swastikas, circles, squares, and animals like bison, antelope, tiger, and leopard.

About Geo-heritage Sites:

Geo-heritage refers to the **geological features which are inherently or culturally significant offering insight into earth's evolution** or history to earth science or that can be utilized for education. Sites are designated as Geo-heritage Sites (GHS) by the **Geological Survey of India (GSI)**. India, as a member of the **UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, safeguards such sites through appropriate legislation, as done by other countries worldwide.

About the Geological Survey of India:

Headquartered in **Kolkata, it was set up in 1851** primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways. Presently, GSI is an attached office to the Ministry of Mines. The main functions of the GSI relate to the **creation and updation of national geoscientific information** and **mineral resource assessment**.

GS-2

1. SUDHA MURTY NOMINATED TO RAJYA SABHA

Context:

Author and philanthropist Sudha Murty has been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on March 8. This nomination coincides with **International Women's Day**, highlighting the significant role of **'Nari Shakti' or Women's Power**.

Who is Sudha Murty?

Sudha Murty is a **renowned author, philanthropist, and former chairperson of Infosys Foundation**. Known for her immense contributions to **social work, education, and literature**, she has authored numerous books and has been recognized with prestigious awards, including the **Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan**. Sudha Murty is celebrated for her **advocacy for social causes and the promotion of education** and healthcare initiatives.

Nomination to RS:

The **nomination of members to the Rajya Sabha** falls under the purview of the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, as per the Allocation of Business Rules, 1961. **Article 80(3)** of the Constitution allows the **President to nominate 12 members to the Rajya Sabha** who possess special knowledge or practical experience in fields such as **literature, science, art, and social service**. This provision was upheld by the Delhi High Court in the case of **Ram Gopal Singh Sisodia Vs. Union of India** through its Secretary & Ors. (2012), where the nomination of Sachin Tendulkar under Article 80(3) was validated.

Powers:

Nominated members of the Rajya Sabha **possess the same powers and privileges as elected MPs**, allowing them to participate fully in House proceedings. However, they are **unable to vote in the election of the President**, though they retain the **right to vote in the election of the Vice-President**

2. MYSORE PAINTS AND VARNISH LTD (MPVL)

Context:

Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd (MPVL), India's sole **manufacturer of indelible ink**, is ramping up production to meet the soaring demand ahead of the upcoming general elections.

Besides domestic demand, **MPVL is also catering to export orders**, reinforcing its pivotal role in safeguarding electoral integrity worldwide. **Under rule 49K of Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** every elector shall allow his **left forefinger** to be inspected by the Presiding officer or Polling Officer and an Indelible ink mark to be put on it.

What is Indelible Ink and how does it work?

Indelible ink is a **special purple colour** ink used to mark voters during elections to **prevent duplicate voting**. It is typically applied to a voter's finger after they cast their vote and is designed to be long-lasting and resistant to removal. It often **contains silver nitrate**, which reacts with the skin and on exposure to light, forms a **permanent dark mark**. The ink works by **penetrating the skin and staining it**, making it difficult to wash off or remove with solvents.

3. 'NITI FOR STATES' PLATFORM

Context:

The **'NITI for States' platform**, a **digital initiative aimed at empowering states and union territories (UTs)** in achieving **national development goals** was launched recently.

- The platform, **inaugurated at NITI Aayog's 'Viksit Bharat Strategy Room'**, provides a centralized **repository of resources including best practices, policy documents, datasets, and NITI Aayog publications**.
- It features **multilingual accessibility, capacity building initiatives, an expert help desk, and data integration** from the National Data & Analytics Platform (NDAP).

It reflects NITI Aayog's commitment to collaborative governance and promoting development across the nation.

4. NATIONAL COOPERATIVE DATABASE

Context:

Cooperation Minister launched the **National Cooperative Database**, aiming to **facilitate the expansion and development of cooperatives in India**.

- The database is a **web-based digital dashboard** capturing information about **over 8 lakh registered cooperative societies, involving more than 30 crore people**.
- Additionally, the '**National Cooperative Database 2023: A Report**' was released which highlighted the **progress made in computerizing all primary agricultural credit societies (PACS) in the country**.

The government of India established the **Agricultural Refinance Corporation in 1962 to provide long-term loans to cooperatives**. In 1963, Parliament established the **National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC)**

To form a cooperative society in India, at **least 10 adults must consent**. The association can then be registered with the Registrar of Co-operative Societies

5. ZERO FOOD CHILDREN

Context:

A recent study highlights India's alarming issue of 'zero-food children,' estimating **over 6 million affected**, particularly prevalent in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.).

Who are 'Zero-food children'?

It refers to **infants aged six to 23 months** who have **not consumed any food of substantial calorific content** (such as semi-solid, solid, soft, or mushy foods, infant formula, or fresh milk) for the **last 24 hours**. India has the **third-highest percentage of children** who have not eaten any food for 24 hours.

These children suffer from **extreme food deprivation**, which can have severe consequences on their growth and development.

The period after six month is critical because, at approximately six months of age, **breastfeeding alone is insufficient** to meet the nutritional needs of a child.

6. SC JUDGEMENT ON RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS

Context:

The recent Supreme Court ruling clarified that **Rajya Sabha elections fall under the purview of Article 194(2) of the Constitution**, recognizing its role as part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

It emphasized that **parliamentary privileges extend**

beyond legislative activities, covering other powers and responsibilities of elected members, **even when the house is not in session**. The decision also **rejected** the argument that Rajya Sabha voting isn't a legislative vote, affirming that such elections are integral to elected members' powers and responsibilities.

Basic Structure doctrine safeguards **essential constitutional features** from amendment. The Rajya Sabha (constituted under **Article 79 and 80**), as the upper house of Parliament, **represents state interests** and is vital for ensuring equal representation among states.

7. S.R. BOMMAI CASE COMPLETES 30 YEARS

What is the case about?

The S.R. Bommai case (involving 9 judge bench) refers to the **legal battle initiated by S.R. Bommai, the former Chief Minister of Karnataka after his government was dismissed in 1989 under Article 356 of the Constitution**. The case, which concluded in 1994, resulted in a **landmark Supreme Court verdict that restricted the arbitrary dismissal of state governments** by outlining specific guidelines.

Important takeaways from the judgement:

1. **Clarified the scope of Article 356** of the Constitution and imposed restrictions on its use
2. President's Rule can only be imposed on a **state's failure of constitutional machinery** and requires **approval by both houses of Parliament** within two months, renewable every six months.
3. President's power to dismiss a state government is subject to judicial review
4. Emphasized the importance of **the Assembly floor in testing the majority of a government**
5. **It checked the power of Governors and upheld federalism in center-state relationships**

Recent instances where the S.R. Bommai case principles were applied by the Supreme Court include:

1. **Goa Political Crisis (2022)**: The SC directed a floor test in Goa following the demise of the Chief Minister, emphasizing the Assembly's role in proving the majority.
2. **Maharashtra Political Crisis (2019)**: During the turmoil, the SC stressed the need for a transparent floor test to ascertain the majority.
3. **Karnataka Political Crisis (2019)**: In response to MLA resignations, the SC directed a floor test to determine government legitimacy.
4. **Arunachal Pradesh Political Crisis (2016)**: The SC invoked Bommai principles to limit the Governor's discretion and emphasize the Assembly's role in proving the majority.

8. 'DEMOCRACY REPORT 2024'

Context:

India, downgraded to an “**electoral autocracy**” in 2018, has further declined to become “**one of the worst autocracies**,” according to the ‘**Democracy Report 2024**’ by the **V-Dem Institute**.

About the Report:

Aspect	Details
Released by	V-Dem Institute at Sweden’s University of Gothenburg
Data Collection	A collaborative effort involving 4,200 scholars from 180 countries
Scope	Spans 1789 to 2023, covering 202 countries
Regime Types	Classified into four categories using the Liberal Democratic Index (LDI) Four types are: Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy
Key Findings	India ranks 104 in LDI , slipped to 110 in the Electoral Democracy Index, 92 in the Liberal Component Index The report highlighted deteriorating components of democracy, such as freedom of expression, clean elections, media independence, and civil society participation
Global Trend	42 countries and about 3 billion people affected by increasing autocratization
Regional Impact	South and Central Asia second most autocratic region globally, Bhutan sole liberal democracy
Component Indices	V-Dem LDI combines indicators from the Liberal Component Index (LCI) and Electoral Democracy Index (EDI) EDI Measures fairness of elections, freedom of expression, information, association, and suffrage LCI Emphasizes the protection of individual and minority rights against state oppression and majority rule

9. NF ECS AND NECCE LAUNCHED

Context:

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has launched a **National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** for children aged **three to six years**, along with a **National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation (NF ECS)** for children from **birth to three years**.

About NF ECS and NECCE:

Aspect	NF ECS (National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation)	NECCE (National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education)
Target Group	Children from birth to three years	Children from three to six years
Objective	Empower caregivers and Anganwadi Workers for holistic early stimulation	Enhance the quality of early childhood care and education at Anganwadi Centres It is aligned with the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022 (NCF-FS)
Developmental Domains Covered	Physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, cultural/aesthetic, positive habits	Physical/motor, cognitive, language and literacy, socio-emotional, cultural/aesthetic, positive habits
Approach	Responsive caregiving, opportunities for early learning	Competency-based lesson plans, joyful learning, preparation for primary school

Activities	36 month-wise-age-based activities	Weekly calendar with 36 weeks of active learning, 8 weeks of reinforcement, and 4 weeks of initiation
Special Focus	Serve and return: It refers to the interaction between caregivers and children , where the caregiver responds to the child's actions or cues , creating a supportive and nurturing environment.	Screening, inclusion, and referrals for Divyang children, community engagement
	Caregiver's three acts: Love, Talk and Play	
	Positive guidance: It involves providing gentle and supportive direction to encourage positive behaviour and development in children.	
Prepared by	Both documents have been prepared by the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) and will be integrated into the Poshan Tracker . NIPCCD will lead the training of Anganwadi functionaries on the new Curriculum and Framework	

These initiatives are aligned with the [National Education Policy 2020](#)

10. HYDERABAD LIBERATION DAY

Context:

The Central government has **declared September 17 as 'Hyderabad Liberation Day' annually**, commemorating the integration of **Hyderabad into the Indian Union in 1948**.

The announcement, made by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** through a gazette notification, honours the **martyrs who liberated Hyderabad from Nizam's rule during Operation Polo**. This decision aims to instil patriotism.

Background:

In 1947, Hyderabad, the largest Princely State, encompassed present-day Telangana and parts of Karnataka and Maharashtra, ruled by the **seventh Nizam, Mir Usman Ali**. As India transitioned to independence, provinces were given the choice to join India, Pakistan, or remain independent. Despite efforts by Home Minister Sardar Patel to integrate Hyderabad into India, the **Nizam declared it an independent nation**. A Standstill Agreement was signed in November 1947, **granting India control over foreign affairs, defence, and communications** while leaving domestic affairs to the Nizam. However, internal dissent grew, with the **Hyderabad State Congress and Communist-led peasant movements** opposing the Nizam's rule. The Nizam's response was ruthless, **employing the Razakars**, a para-military force, to suppress dissent. In the face of escalating violence, the Union government **initiated Operation Polo**, deploying the army to integrate Hyderabad into India on September 13, 1948.

11. UCC IN UTTARAKHAND BECOMES LAW

Context:

The **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in Uttarakhand**, passed by the state Assembly has **received the President's assent, making it law**.

- It makes **Uttarakhand the first state in India to adopt the UCC after Independence**.
- The UCC aims to **provide equal rights to all citizens, curb the oppression of women, and promote social equality**.

For more about UCC in Uttarakhand: [Click Here](#)

12. INTER-GOVERNMENTAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT (IGFA)

Context:


The Union Cabinet has given **ex-post facto approval to the Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement (IGFA)** signed on 13th February 2024 between India and the United Arab Emirates.

This agreement aims to **enhance bilateral relations and strengthen cooperation in the Ports, Maritime, and Logistics sectors, focusing on the India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)**. It outlines areas of collaboration and sets principles, guidelines, and agreements for joint investment and development in the IMEC, in line with respective countries' regulations.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEE-EC)

What is IMEE-EC?

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEE-EC) is an infrastructure development project that aims to create connectivity through rail and shipping networks, energy cables, and data links.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEE-EC)	
Participating Countries	India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, USA, EU
Objectives	IMEE seeks to boost trade, clean energy, and economic growth while providing an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
Part of	It is part of the Partnership for Rail and Shipping Corridors Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII) and focuses on enhancing global trade and cooperation through critical infrastructure development.
Corridor Components	<p>Railway lines (make trade between India and Europe 40% faster)</p> <p>Electricity cable and a clean hydrogen pipeline to foster clean energy trade.</p> <p>High-speed data cable to link innovative digital ecosystems in the world and create business opportunities</p>
Corridor Segments	<p>Eastern Corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf, Northern Corridor connecting Arabian Gulf to Europe</p> 
Benefits for India	<p>Enhancing food security, regional supply chains, trade accessibility, environmental considerations, economic cohesion, job creation, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Reliable cross-border ship-to-rail transit network connecting India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe.</p> <p>It offers India a crucial role in global commerce, digital communication, and energy networks vis-à-vis China's BRI</p> <p>Geographical Advantage: It firmly positions India along the trade route spanning South East Asia to the Gulf, West Asia, and Europe.</p>

To know more Visit Insights IAS Daily Current Affairs

13. PRADHAN MANTRI SAMAJIK UTTAN EVAM ROZGAR ADHARIT JANKALYAN (PM-SURAJ) PORTAL

Context:

The Prime Minister virtually launched the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan (PM-SURAJ) portal, aimed at providing credit support to entrepreneurs from disadvantaged sections of society.

- The portal serves as a one-stop point for applying and monitoring progress for loan and credit schemes implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

14. UNITED NATIONS INTER-AGENCY GROUP FOR CHILD MORTALITY ESTIMATION (UN IGME)

Context:

The United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) released a report indicating that in 2022, global child deaths before the age of five dropped below 5 million for the first time.

Key Findings:

- Despite this progress, an estimated 4.9 million children died, highlighting the need for further action to end preventable child deaths.
- Disparities in survival exist based on factors such as geographical location, socioeco-

...omic status, and living in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

- Low-income countries and those in fragile situations face higher under-five mortality rates.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME) is a technical group that produces annual estimates of child and adolescent mortality. The UN IGME was formed in 2004 to share data on child mortality, improve methods for child mortality estimation, and report on progress towards child survival goals. The UN IGME includes representatives from UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, and the United Nations Population Division.

GS-3

1. NATIONAL CREATORS AWARD

Context:

The Prime Minister presented the inaugural National Creators Award, celebrating the talent and impact of content creators in various fields.

- The award ceremony, honoured winners across storytelling, social change advocacy, education, gaming, and other domains.

The creator economy is a modern economic landscape where content creators can use digital platforms to produce and distribute content. It's also known as the influencer economy.

In the creator economy, creators can monetize their content through:

Advertising, Sponsorships, Subscriptions, Merchandise sales, Crowdfunding, Brand deals, Ad share revenue, Affiliate links, Monetary tips, and Courses.

The creator economy involves creators, audiences, digital platforms, marketers, and agencies. It's centred around social media channels where users and creators interact to form online communities.

2. 'MEASLES AND RUBELLA CHAMPION' AWARD

Context:

India has been honoured with the prestigious Measles and Rubella Champion Award by The Measles and Rubella Partnership at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C., USA.

- The partnership, comprising various organizations dedicated to reducing global measles deaths and preventing rubella illness, applauds India's commitment to public health and

leadership in controlling these infectious diseases, particularly among children.

Measles is a **highly contagious disease** that can **cause death in young children**. It can cause **brain damage, deafness, and blindness**. The **measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine** is safe and highly effective in **preventing rubella**. The WHO recommends **two doses of the measles vaccine to ensure immunity and prevent outbreaks**.

Rubella is a **contagious viral infection that can cause birth defects**. It's also known as **German measles or three-day measles**. Rubella is **not as infectious or as severe as measles**. It's caused by the **rubella virus and spreads when people breathe in virus-infected fluid or direct contact** with nasal or throat secretions of infected individuals.

3. CHIPIN CENTRE

Context:

The ChipIN Centre, a hub for chip designers in India, received a boost from leading semiconductor industry players, **aiming to empower the semiconductor design community in the country**.

- The centre offers **state-of-the-art Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools** to students at various academic levels.

These initiatives aim to realize **India's vision of becoming a semiconductor hub by fostering chip design innovation and entrepreneurship**.

A **semiconductor chip**, also known as an **integrated circuit (IC) or microchip**, is a small electronic device that contains **multiple interconnected electronic components**.

Semiconductor chips are made up of **electronic components such as transistors, resistors, and capacitors**. These components are etched onto a **small piece of semiconductor material, usually silicon**. Semiconductors are tiny electrical switches that **act like electrical currents on or off**.

4. PARASITOID WASP

Context:

Entomologists from the **Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)** have discovered a **new species of parasitoid wasp** in the **Western Ghats region of Karnataka**.

- Named **Taeniogonalos deepaki**, it was discovered in the Belgaum region and named after the **medical doctor and nature enthusiast Deepak Deshpande**, who collected the specimen.



Parasitoid wasps are a group of insects **that lay their eggs inside other insects to complete their life cycle**.

Parasitoid wasps are important **biological control methods for gardeners**. They are useful in **controlling both native pests and invasive species**. They feed on the **eggs, larvae, and sometimes pupae of many insects**, including aphids, caterpillars, and other honeydew-producing sucking insects.

5. PARTHENOGENESIS

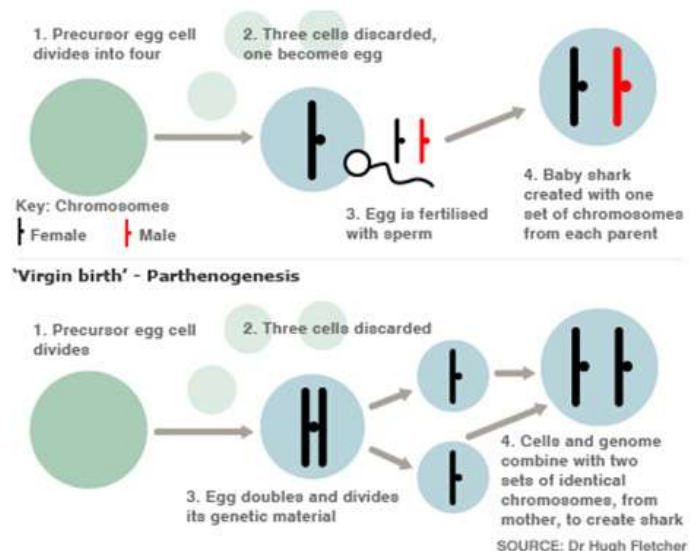
Context:

Researchers genetically modified the **Drosophila melanogaster fruit fly**, typically a sexually reproducing species, to reproduce asexually.

- They identified **44 genes in another fruit fly species**, *Drosophila mercatorum*, **responsible for parthenogenesis** and **modified the D. melanogaster genome to express these genes**, resulting in **1.4% of eggs being parthenogenetic**.

This breakthrough **could influence pest control strategies** by releasing **males sterilized by irradiation or edited genomes to reduce progeny numbers**, although it may **inadvertently select for facultatively parthenogenetic individuals, limiting long-term effectiveness**.

Parthenogenesis is a form of **asexual reproduction where an embryo develops from an unfertilized egg cell**.



6. PARROT FEVER

Context:

Parrot fever, also known as **psittacosis**, is a respiratory bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia psittaci*.

- The infection primarily **affects birds, such as parrots, pigeons, and poultry**, but can be **transmitted to humans through inhaling particles from bird feathers or droppings**.
- Symptoms include **fever, headache, chills, muscle pains, coughing, difficulty breathing, and gastrointestinal symptoms**.
- Treatment involves **antibiotics, such as doxycycline or tetracycline, along with supportive care and symptomatic relief**.
- Prevention includes **proper hygiene practices, such as handwashing and avoiding close contact with sick birds**.

7. IP/MPLS ROUTER

Context:

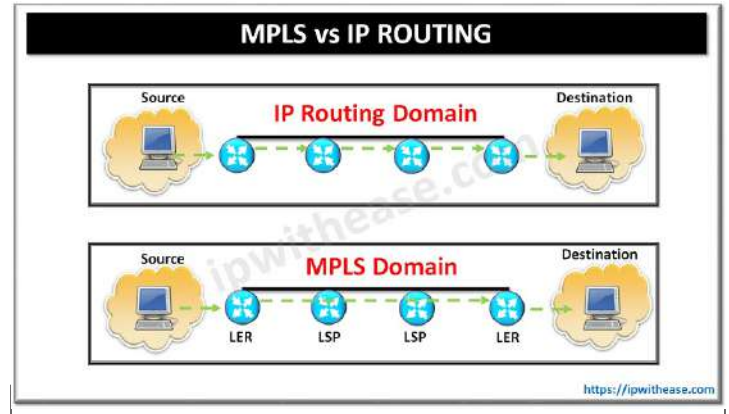
India has launched **its fastest and indigenously designed IP/MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) router**.

- MPLS is a **routing technique in telecommunications networks** that directs data based on labels rather than network addresses.

With a **capacity of 2.4 Terabits per second (TBPS)**, this secure core router represents a **significant achievement for India**, showcasing the **country's technological innovation and self-reliance**.

About IP/MPLS Router System:

- **IP MPLS, or Internet Protocol Multi-Protocol Label Switching**, is a routing system that **enables rapid data switching between nodes based on labels rather than destination addresses**, reducing processing time.
- It **improves traffic speed by assigning labels to data packets**, allowing for **end-to-end circuits across different transport mediums and protocols**.
- MPLS is not a protocol itself but a **protocol-independent solution that enhances network connectivity and scalability**.
- Unlike traditional IP routing, MPLS **switches traffic based on predetermined paths known as label switch paths**, optimizing network performance and reducing downtime for users.



8. GOLDEN LANGUR

Context:

The latest survey estimates that there are **approximately 7,396 golden langurs in India**.

- The survey was carried out in two phases, covering the **Manas Biosphere Reserve and fragmented forests in western Assam**.



The **golden langur (Trachypithecus geei)** is a small, arboreal primate that lives in the trees of **northeastern India and southern Bhutan**. It is also known as the **golden leaf monkey**.

Golden langurs are **endangered (IUCN)** and listed in **Appendix I of CITES**.

Their habitat is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks: the foothills of **Bhutan (North)**, **Manas River (East)**, **Sankosh River (West)**, and **Brahmaputra River (South)**.

9. MISSION DIVYASTRA - AGNI-5 BALLISTIC MISSILE

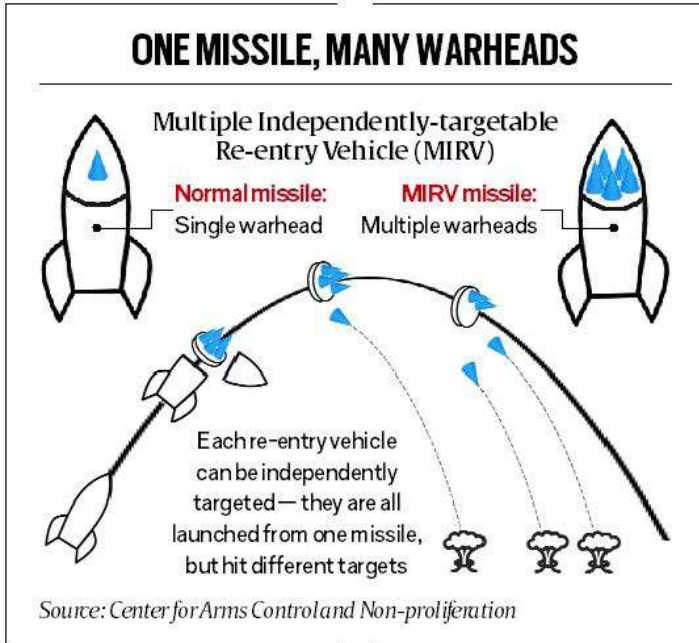
Context:

India successfully tested a **new version of the Agni-5 ballistic missile** capable of **carrying multiple warheads**, each capable of **striking separate targets, enhancing the country's nuclear strike capability**.

- The Agni-5, **developed indigenously by**

DRDO, has a range of over **5,000 km** and uses **MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle) technology**.

- MIRV-equipped missiles can target multiple locations, significantly boosting India's strategic deterrence against adversaries like China.
- The **United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom and France** already possess MIRV Technology



10. YAOUNDE DECLARATION

Context:

The Yaounde Declaration **marks a significant commitment by 11 African countries to end malaria deaths**, acknowledging the urgent need for action given the alarming rise in cases.

These countries, including **Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda**, collectively bear the highest burden of malaria infections and deaths globally. The declaration emphasizes the importance of **addressing root causes such as changing vector behaviour, improving access to health services, and combating insecticide and drug resistance**.

The Yaounde Declaration includes a **commitment by African countries to allocate 15 per cent of annual budgets** for the health sector. It aligns with the **WHO's "High burden to high impact" approach**, which is built on four pillars:

1. political will to reduce malaria deaths
2. strategic information to drive impact
3. better guidance, policies, and strategies
4. coordinated national malaria response

11. IRDAI NEW REGULATION

Context:

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) exercising powers under the **Insurance Act, 1938 and IRDA Act, 1999**, has framed regulations (IRDAI (Protection of Policyholders' Interests and Allied Matters of Insurers) Regulations, 2024) consolidating **8 separate regulations into a unified framework**.

The main objective: It is to **protect the interests of policyholders** and ensure insurers and distribution channels fulfil their obligations.

Key measures include A **30-day free-look period** for policy returns, compulsory nominee information collection for life insurance, electronic policy offerings with data privacy safeguards, prevention of mis-selling and unfair practices, and **establishment of grievance redressal systems** in insurer offices.

About IRDAI:

IRDAI (HQ: Hyderabad; est 1999), safeguards insurance customers' interests as **a statutory body under the IRDA Act 1999**. It operates under the **Ministry of Finance**, overseeing and developing the insurance industry. Its powers and functions are defined by the IRDAI Act, 1999 and Insurance Act, 1938.

IRDAI's **"Vision Insurance for All" initiative** aims for comprehensive coverage by 2047, allocating states and union territories to insurers for increased penetration. In 2023, IRDAI plans to launch **"Bima Trinity" - Bima Sugam, Bima Vistar, Bima Vaahaks** - with insurers to streamline insurance activities.

About the Insurance Sector in India:

India has a **low insurance penetration at 4.2% and an insurance density of \$91 in 2021 (from USD 11 in 2001)**. India's insurance market is forecasted to become **one of the fastest-growing globally** in the next decade, as per the Economic Survey. In 2023, India ranked as the **10th largest insurance market** globally and is projected to climb to the **6th position** by 2032.

12. SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (SEBI) INDEX PROVIDERS REGULATIONS, 2024

Context: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) mandates the **registration of index providers managing "significant indices"** based on Indian securities to enhance transparency in financial benchmark governance.

What are Indices?

Indices are **statistical measures used to track the performance of a group of assets or securities** in a particular market. They serve as benchmarks or indicators for investors to **assess the overall performance** and trends of a specific segment of the market. Indices are often composed of **stocks, bonds, commodities**, or other financial instruments, and they provide a way to monitor the ups and downs of various sectors or the entire market.

Common examples of indices include the Sensex, Nifty 200(India); **S&P 500, Dow Jones Industrial Average, and NASDAQ Composite** in the United States, which track the performance of large-cap stocks traded on major exchanges.

What does the regulation Say?

1. The regulations **require index providers like NSE Indices and Asia Index (AIPL)** to register with Sebi, along with making their methodology documents public and adhering to a code of conduct.
2. **Global index providers such as MSCI, Nasdaq, and FTSE Russell** may not need to register unless their indices are widely used by domestic asset managers.

13. KARNATAKA BANS HARMFUL DYES

Context:

Karnataka bans harmful dyes in **Gobi Manchurian, cotton candy**, imposing imprisonment of up **to seven years and fines of up to Rs 10 lakh** for violators.

Chemicals banned:

Chemical	Description	Colour Produced
Tartrazine	Can induce allergic or pseudo-allergic reactions.	Yellow
Sunset Yellow	Can cause allergic or pseudo-allergic reactions.	Yellow
Carmoisine	May lead to skin rashes and respiratory allergies.	Red
Rhodamine B	Considered carcinogenic; commonly used in textile dyeing and the paper industry.	Pink

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry had previously banned cotton candy sales due to similar concerns.

14. BLUE LEADERS ALLIANCE

Context:

The Blue Leaders High-Level Event on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction took place in Belgium recently.

What is the Blue Leaders alliance?

It is **a coalition of 24 countries advocating for urgent action to address the threats** facing the global ocean, including the climate crisis, overfishing, pollution, and other challenges. Key members include Belgium, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Germany, Italy etc. India is not a member, but it endorsed the treaty's implementation at the **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration in 2023**

Aim: Blue Leaders aim to achieve two main objectives:

- a) Establishing a new international target to **safeguard at least 30% of the global ocean with highly and fully protected marine areas by 2030.**
- b) **Successfully concluding a new High Seas Treaty** to create fully and highly protected marine areas in the high seas and enhance management of human activities outside these areas.

Efforts are underway to bring the **BBNJ (Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction) Treaty** into force by 2025, with **only two countries having ratified it so far.**

To know about **BBNJ: UN adopts first ever High Seas Treaty: Click Here**

15. INFAAR 2019-22 REPORT

Context:

The FAO and ICAR **released the first national report on AMR surveillance (INFAAR 2019-22 Report)** in India's fisheries and livestock sectors.

What is INFAAR?

ICAR, supported by FAO, initiated **INFAAR (Indian Network for Fishery and Animal Antimicrobial Resistance) in 2017** to monitor AMR in the aquaculture and veterinary sectors.

What is AMR?

AMR stands for Antimicrobial Resistance. It occurs when microorganisms like bacteria, viruses, fungi, etc., evolve and become resistant to antimicrobial medicines, rendering them ineffective in treating infections. For instance, **oxytocin misuse** in the dairy industry contributes to this issue.

Key findings of the INFAAR Report:

1. **Staphylococcus** displayed notably **high resistance (60% or higher)** to penicillin in the fisheries sector.
2. **Higher resistance was noted in the live-stock sector**, particularly among E coli and Staphylococci.
3. **Antibiotic usage** might be elevated among organized and **contractual farming practices**.

The (INFAAR) collected data from 2019-2022, covering 3 aquaculture systems and major food-producing animals.

Anti-Microbial Resistance

CAUSES OF ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

- Over-prescribing of antibiotics
- Patients not taking antibiotics as prescribed
- Unnecessary antibiotics used in agriculture
- Poor infection control in hospitals and clinics
- Poor hygiene and sanitation practices
- Lack of rapid laboratory tests

Consequences of AMR

- Greater number of AMR deaths (currently 5mn per year)
- Routine treatment becomes riskier to perform
- Economic loss

Steps taken

India	Global
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chennai declaration (2012): It promotes antibiotic stewardship Red-line campaign National action plan on AMR (2017-21) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EU: ban on preventive mass medication in animals using antibiotics or other drugs. UN: One Health Approach WHO: AWaRe Classification of antibiotics

Other initiatives:

1. AMR Surveillance Network
2. National One Health Program for Prevention and Control of Zoonoses
3. Integrated One Health Surveillance Network for Antimicrobial Resistance
4. **GLASS IT Platform** is a web-based platform for global data sharing on AMR
5. **Operation Amrith** (AMRITH – Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention For Total Health)

16. NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF SNAKEBITE ENVENOMING (NAP-SE)

Context:

The Union Health Ministry launched the **National Action**

Plan for Prevention and Control of Snakebite Envenoming (NAP-SE), aiming to **halve snakebite deaths by 2030** through a 'One Health' Approach.

The plan includes:

1. **Launching of IEC materials:** Booklet, Posters, and Video for Snakebite Awareness.
2. **Introduction of Snakebite Helpline** in five pilot States.
3. Launch of **National Rabies Control Programme Website**.
4. **Onboarding National One Health Programme** for Zoonoses on Integrated Health Initiative Platform.

Snakebite envenoming is a significant health issue in India, **causing around 50,000 deaths** annually. The NAP-SE aims to **reduce mortality and complications** due to snakebites through a comprehensive approach involving healthcare, wildlife, tribal, and animal health components.

Key strategic actions include:

1. Strengthening anti-venom availability at all health facilities
2. Surveillance, emergency care, and inter-sectoral coordination
3. States to develop their action plans tailored to their needs, with designated nodal officers for coordination and monitoring

Snakebites in India

A significant number of snake bites in India are attributed to the widely distributed **Big Four** species.

As of 2023, India only has polyvalent antivenom to neutralise venoms of the Big Four.

Indian cobra (<i>Naja naja</i>)	Saw-scaled viper (<i>Echis carinatus</i>)	Russell's viper (<i>Daboia russelii</i>)	Common krait (<i>Bungarus coeruleus</i>)
Found in forests, grasslands, and agricultural lands; Mainly diurnal.	Found in both desert areas and dense grassland; Mainly nocturnal.	Found in large variety of habitats, often in urbanized areas; Mainly nocturnal.	Usually seen in scrub jungle and sandy areas; Mainly nocturnal.

17. RPTUAS

Context:

The Department of Pharmaceuticals under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers has announced the **Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme (RPTUAS)**.

What is RPTUAS?

Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance Scheme aims to enhance the **quality and safety**

of pharmaceutical products manufactured in India. The scheme offers support to pharmaceutical manufacturing units **for technology and quality upgradation**.

PTUAS is a component of the **Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry (SPI) Scheme**. SPI Scheme aimed to strengthen the existing infrastructure facilities to make **India a global leader in the Pharma Sector**. RPTUAS is the successor of PTUAS under SPI.

Key features:

1. **Broadened Eligibility:** Previously, the scheme only included MSME Pharma units, now the incentive is available to any pharmaceutical manufacturing units based on turnover criteria:
 - a. **Turnover less than Rs 50 crore:** Incentive of 20% of investment under eligible activities.
 - b. **Turnover from Rs 50 crore to less than Rs 250 crore:** Incentive of 15% of investment under eligible activities.
 - c. **Turnover from Rs 250 crore to less than Rs 500 crore:** Incentive of 10% of investment under eligible activities.
2. **Flexible Financing:** It offers flexible financing options, including **subsidies on a reimbursement basis**, to diversify financing options for participating units.
3. **Support for Compliance:** Supports technological upgrades aligned with revised Schedule-M and WHO-GMP standards, covering various improvements such as **HVAC systems, testing laboratories, and clean room facilities**.
 - a. Schedule-M of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rule, 1945 provides **good manufacturing practices (GMP) for pharmaceutical products**
4. **Dynamic Incentive Structure:** Provides incentives based on the average turnover for the last three years, with a **maximum incentive of Rs one crore per unit**.
5. **Integration with State Schemes:** Allows integration with state government schemes to provide additional assistance, fostering collaboration between central and state initiatives.
6. **Enhanced Verification:** Introduces a robust verification mechanism through a **Project Management Agency** to ensure transparency, accountability, and efficient resource allocation.

Incidents of issues with Indian pharma products:

1. **Quality Control Concerns:** E.g., Four types of medicine, made in India, caused the deaths of at least 70 children in Gambia in 2022
2. **Regulatory Violations:** E.g., Sun Pharmaceutical Industries received a warning letter from the FDA for failing to comply with GMP regulations at its Halol plant.
3. **Drug Recalls:** E.g., Dr Reddy’s Laboratories recalled over 3,342 bottles of hypertension drugs in the US due to the presence of impurities.
4. **Counterfeit Drugs:** As per a report, fake drugs constituted over \$4 billion of the total \$14–17 billion of the Indian domestic drug market
5. **Export Bans:** E.g., EU banned the import of over 700 generic drugs manufactured in India due to concerns about data integrity and manipulation.

18. UCPMP 2024

Context:

The Department of Pharmaceuticals issued the **Uniform Code for Pharmaceutical Marketing Practices (UCPMP) 2024**, setting guidelines for interactions between pharmaceutical companies and healthcare professionals.

Aim: It aims to regulate unethical practices in the pharmaceutical industry.

Key Provisions of UCPMP 2024:

Provisions	Description
------------	-------------

1. Prohibits gifts	Companies cannot offer gifts benefiting healthcare professionals or their family members personally.
2. Restriction on Traveling facilities	Travel and vacation benefits are limited unless related to Continuing Medical Education (CME) events
3. Financial limitations	Financial benefits or perks are restricted for individuals qualified to prescribe or supply drugs.
4. Ban on CME workshops abroad	Prohibits conducting CME workshops in foreign countries.
5. Drugs promotion directive	Drug promotion must adhere to marketing approval terms.
	Claims of effectiveness are backed by current evidence.
	Terms like 'safe' must not be used without qualification.
	Drugs can't be labelled as 'new' if available for over a year.
6. Rules violation & adherence directive	Violations handled by Ethics Committees for Pharma Marketing Practices (ECPMP).
	CEOs of drug companies are responsible for compliance.
	Annual self-declarations of adherence are required.

These guidelines, first issued by the Central Government in December 2014, provide **recommendations to the pharmaceutical industry for drug and medical device promotion**. They are **voluntary and not legally binding** on companies. In 2022, the Central Board for Direct Taxes (CBDT) accused **Dolo-650 tablet makers of spending Rs 1,000 crore** on distributing freebies to doctors.

Ethical issues: Pharmaceutical companies **providing freebies to doctors raise** ethical concerns as they can influence prescription behaviour, potentially compromising patient care. This practice may lead to **biased prescribing, prioritizing drugs** based on benefits to the prescriber rather than patient needs, and can **erode trust in the medical profession**.

19. CALLING NAME PRESENTATION (CNAP)

Context:

CNAP, or Calling Name Presentation, is a **proposed Caller ID service by TRAI** to reduce incessant spam and Unsolicited Commercial Communication (UCC).

Aim: It aims to **show the caller's name** when receiving a call, similar to services like Truecaller. Unlike **crowd-sourced services**, **CNAP** will rely on verified information from **Customer Application Forms (CAFs)** filled by subscribers.

TRAI recommends telecom providers **maintain a database linking phone numbers with customer names** from CAFs. This initiative has raised **privacy concerns** among industry players, with suggestions for **opt-in mechanisms** and limitations to protect user privacy. Unlike Truecaller, CNAP's database will be **based on veri-**

fied information, potentially providing more accurate caller identification.

20. STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI) REPORT

Context:

India emerged as the **world's top arms importer** for the period 2019-23, **with a 4.7% increase** compared to 2014-18, as per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Key findings:

For Exports:

- The USA is the largest arms exporter** > France, for the first time, was the second biggest arms exporter > Russia
- The U.S. increased its arms exports** by 17%, while Russia's exports fell by over half.

For Import:

- India was the world's top arms importer:** Russia remained India's main arms supplier (accounting for 36% of its arms imports), However, its share decreased to less than 50% for the first time in 6 decades.
- Ukraine** emerged as the largest European arms importer in 2019-23.
- Nine of the top 10 arms importers** were in Asia and the Middle East.

About SIPRI:

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (**founded in 1966; HQ: Solna (Sweden)**), is

an Independent international institute and global think tank, that provides data, analysis, and recommendations on armed conflict, military spending, arms trade, disarmament, and arms control. Its research, based on open sources, targets decision-makers, researchers, media, and the public, aiming to foster an understanding of conditions for peaceful conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

21. EMPS SCHEME FOR ELECTRIC MOBILITY

Context: The Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024 (EMPS 2024) is introduced by the Ministry of Heavy Industries to boost the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in India, specifically targeting the electric two-wheeler and three-wheeler segments.

- EMPS 2024 offers subsidies or demand incentives for electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, including registered electric rickshaws and carts, as well as L5 models.
- The L5 category includes electric three-wheelers with a maximum speed of over 25kmph and motor power exceeding 0.25kW.

22. DEVIN AI

Context: Cognition, a start-up, has developed an AI named Devin, which claims to possess remarkable capabilities in handling coding projects independently.

Feature of Devin AI:

- Devin is said to be capable of writing complex code, identifying and correcting errors, and managing entire development projects, all without human intervention.
- Unlike previous AI coding assistants, such as OpenAI's Copilot, Devin is designed to operate as a self-sufficient software engineer.
- Users can interact with Devin through a chat interface, providing instructions for tasks.
- The AI then plans, executes, tests, and updates the user in real time.
- Devin has demonstrated its prowess in various tasks, including deploying web apps, fine-tuning language models, and resolving real open-source software issues.

23. ATMOSPHERIC TESTBED FACILITY

Context:

India inaugurated an atmospheric testbed facility near Bhopal and a Coastal Research Laboratory (CRL) in Visakhapatnam.

What is Atmospheric Testbed Facility?

About Atmospheric Research Testbed	Description
Establishment	Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), MoES at Silkheda to study cloud systems and monsoon patterns, aiding in climate forecasts
Instrumentation	An extensive set of <u>remote-sensing and in-situ instruments</u> providing continuous observations of convection, clouds, precipitation, soil moisture, radiation, and microphysics. A <u>Ka-band cloud radar and a C-band Doppler weather radar</u> will aid in tracking the movement of rain-bearing systems in the area.
Phases	First phase: Set up in central India to study convection, land-atmosphere interactions, and precipitation processes. Second phase: Planned for the northeast/eastern part of the country to study <u>severe thunderstorm processes</u> .
Objectives	Better understanding of processes governing monsoon convection and land-atmosphere interactions. <u>Organizing intense observational campaigns</u> and model runs to improve physical parameterizations related to convection and land surface processes Outreach, Training, and Dissemination of <u>ART-CI data sets</u> .
Instruments	<u>Approximately 25 high-end instruments</u> were installed for aerosol studies, cloud measurements, rain radar, and weather radar to track rain-bearing systems.

24. PB-SHABD

Context:

The government has **unveiled PB-SHABD, a news-sharing initiative by Prasar Bharati, DD News, and Akashvani News**, along with an updated News on the Air mobile app.

About PB-SHABD

It is a **news-sharing initiative** to provide **news stories in major Indian languages across fifty categories**. The service offers clean feeds curated from across the country, free for the first year, and without the Doordarshan logo. The revamped websites and apps of Doordarshan News and All India Radio will provide **personalized news feeds, push notifications, multimedia integration**, live streaming, social media sharing, and more.

Aim: It aims to **revolutionize the news industry** by offering accurate and meaningful content to print and electronic media nationwide, benefiting smaller news organizations.

25. SMALL AND MEDIUM REITS

Context:

The SEBI recently amended the **REIT Regulations of 2014** to allow for the creation of small and medium real estate investment trusts, known as **SM REITs or micro REITs**.

About SM REITs:

Key Points	Description
Definition	SM REITs are specialised real estate investment trusts focusing on smaller and medium-sized properties, distinct from conventional REITs.
Aim	To regulate fractional ownership and protect investors
Regulations	Sebi sets regulations for SM REITs, including minimum subscription size, asset value for listing, leverage limits, and minimum unit holder requirements.
	SM REITs are to have a minimum subscription size of ₹10 lakh per unit and a minimum of 200 unit holders .
	The investment manager must have a net worth of ₹20 crore , and a trustee will oversee operations
	SM REITs can list assets ranging from ₹50 crore to ₹500 crore and focus on smaller properties, unlike traditional REITs.

Benefits & Risks	SM REITs offer retail investors diversification, access to high-value assets, reduced management burden , regular income, and potential capital appreciation. However, they also carry risks such as market volatility and regulatory compliance.
Impact of Macroeconomic Factors	Economic factors like interest rates, inflation, and market conditions significantly influence SM REITs. Strong economic growth and favourable market conditions can lead to higher occupancy rates, rental income, and property values for SM REITs.
Global Experience	SM REITs exist worldwide, catering to niche markets and specialised real estate segments.

26. LYME DISEASE

Context:

Lyme Disease, a **tick-borne illness caused by the Borrelia burgdorferi bacterium**, was diagnosed in a 56-year-old man from Koovappady, Ernakulam.

About the Disease:

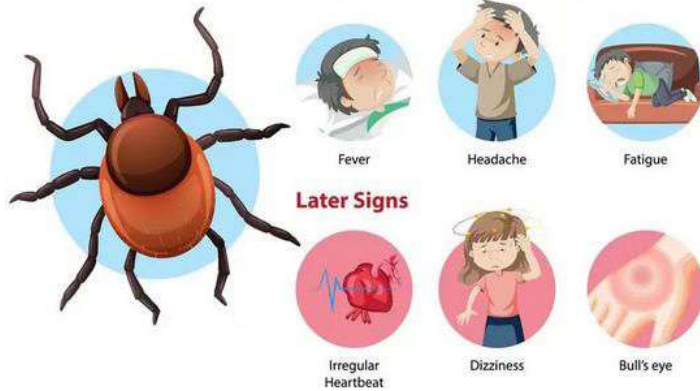
Aspect	Description
About Lyme Disease	It is a vector-borne infectious disease caused by the bacterium <i>Borrelia burgdorferi</i> .
Transmission	Primarily transmitted to humans through the bite of infected black-legged ticks .
	Cannot spread between humans , from pets to humans, or through air, food, or water. Lice, mosquitoes, fleas, and flies also do not transmit it .
Prevalence	Prevalent in wooded and grassy areas worldwide , especially during warmer months.
	Most commonly reported in North America, Europe, and some parts of Asia .
Symptoms	Early symptoms appear between 3 to 30 days after an infected tick bite .
	Manifests with fever, headache, fatigue, and a characteristic "bull's-eye" rash (erythema migrans).
	Erythema migrans serves as a hallmark sign for early diagnosis.

Complications	Left untreated, it can lead to severe complications affecting joints, heart, and nervous system.
Treatment	Standard treatment involves antibiotics like doxycycline or amoxicillin , especially in the early stages. Intravenous antibiotics may be required in later stages.

About Methane	Odorless, colourless, and flammable gas; second-largest contributor to global warming after Carbon Dioxide and primary contributor to the formation of ground-level ozone.
Global Initiatives to Control Methane	International Methane Emissions Observatory , Global Methane Pledge (India is not part of it), Global Methane Initiative, MethaneSAT
Indian Initiatives	GobarDhan scheme , National Biogas and Organic Manure Programme.
About IEA	IEA (HQ: Paris; Founded in 1974) is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation to ensure the security of oil supplies. Membership: 31 countries. World Energy Outlook is Published every year and provides critical analysis and insights on trends in energy demand and supply.

LYME DISEASE SYMPTOMS

Early Signs (3-30 Days After Bite)



27. GLOBAL METHANE TRACKER 2024 REPORT

Context:

The International Energy Agency (IEA) released its **annual Global Methane Tracker 2024 report**

Key Findings of the Report	In 2023, methane emissions from the energy sector remained close to a record high. Fossil fuel production and usage, alongside bioenergy, contributed to nearly 120 million tonnes (Mt) of emissions, with approximately 70% originating from the top 10 emitting countries. Among these, the United States leads in methane emissions from oil and gas operations, followed by Russia, while China ranks highest in the coal sector.
Recommendations of the Report	Achieving a 75% reduction in methane emissions by 2030 necessitates an estimated investment of around US \$170 billion Improved tools for emission tracking, like satellite imagery, have enhanced transparency, yet systematic and transparent data utilization is essential to reduce emission

28. NATO'S DIANA PROGRAM

Context:

Finland has joined **NATO's DIANA (Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic) program**, marking a significant opportunity for Finnish companies to expand globally.

What is this program?

The DIANA program, established by NATO, aims to **accelerate dual-use innovation** capacity across the Alliance. It offers resources, networks, and guidance to companies for developing deep technologies. DIANA addresses critical defence and security challenges, including operating in denied environments and enhancing collective resilience. **All NATO nations are members of DIANA.**

SPORTS CORNER

1. KIRTI PROGRAM

Context:

The Union Sports Minister inaugurated the Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) program in Chandigarh.

About KIRTI Programme:

About Programme	Description
Aimed at	It is a scouting and training programme for School children between nine and 18 years of age, under the Khelo India Scheme

Objectives	1. To hunt talent nationwide; 2. To use sports to combat drug addiction and distractions from technology
Assessments	Aims to conduct 20 lakh assessments throughout the year through Talent Assessment Centers
Reach	Aims to reach every block in the country and connect with children interested in sports but lacking opportunities
Launch Details	Launched across 50 centres in India , assessing 50,000 applicants in the first phase across 10 sports including athletics, boxing, wrestling, hockey, football, and wrestling
Selection Methodology	Transparent selection process based on Information Technology with data analytics using Artificial Intelligence
About the Khelo India Scheme	It is a central sector scheme introduced by the Indian government in 2017 and serves as a dynamic platform to nurture sports talent and revive the sporting culture of India. It encompasses the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Khelo India Youth Games (KIYG) (commenced 2018): Annual national competition for youngsters representing states Khelo India University Games (KIUG) (commenced 2020): Showcases university students' talent in sports Khelo India Winter Games (Commenced 2020): Promotes winter sports in India

The [Suez Canal](#) typically handles about **15% of global maritime trade volume**, while the Panama Canal accounts for approximately **5% of global maritime trade**.

Initiatives for restoring peace include:

1. **Operations Prosperity Guardian**: Led by the US, it's a multinational security effort under the Combined Maritime Forces, concentrating on security in the Red Sea. Members include the UK, Bahrain, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Seychelles, and Spain.
2. **Operation Aspides**: Introduced by the EU to enhance regional stability in the

Major Canals of the World:

Canal Name	Description
Suez Canal	Connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea , facilitating maritime trade between Europe and Asia.
Panama Canal	Connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean , providing a shortcut for ships travelling between the two oceans.
Kiel Canal	Links the North Sea with the Baltic Sea , providing a shortcut for ships travelling between the two seas.
Corinth Canal	Cuts through the Isthmus of Corinth in Greece , connecting the Gulf of Corinth with the Saronic Gulf.
Suez-Mediterranean Pipeline	Carries crude oil from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea , bypassing the Suez Canal for oil transportation.
Welland Canal	Connects Lake Ontario to Lake Erie , bypassing Niagara Falls and facilitating shipping in the Great Lakes region.
Erie Canal	Links the Great Lakes with the Hudson River , providing a navigable water route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes.
Amsterdam-Rhine Canal	Connects Amsterdam to the Rhine River , serving as an important waterway for transportation and trade in the Netherlands.
Strait of Hormuz	Located between Oman and Iran , it's a critical chokepoint for global oil transportation, connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman .

MAPPING

1. CANALS OF THE WORLD

Context:

In early 2024, **global trade faced disruptions** due to attacks in the Red Sea and a drought at the Panama Canal. This led to a **50% drop in Suez Canal trade and a 32% decline in Panama Canal trade**. These disruptions may **hamper supply chains**, lead to **inflation**, and affect official trade statistics.

Bosporus Strait	Separates European and Asian Turkey , serving as a key passage for maritime traffic between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.
Strait of Malacca	Connects the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea , serving as one of the busiest and most important shipping lanes in the world.
Strait of Gibraltar	Links the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea , serving as a strategic maritime route between Europe and Africa.
English Channel	Separates southern England from northern France , serving as a major maritime route connecting the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.

The Land Ports Authority of India (Under the Ministry of Home Affairs) **is a statutory body** established under the **Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010** to provide safe, secure and systematic facilities for the **movement of cargo** as well as passengers at its **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)** along the international borders of India.



3. EXERCISES IN NEWS

Exercise Name	Participating Forces	Location
Exercise Cutlass Express	Indian Navy, U.S. Naval Forces, multi-national	Seychelles
Sea Defenders-2024	Indian Coast Guard (ICG), United States Coast Guard (USCG)	Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar Islands)

2. LAND PORT IN SABROOM (TRIPURA)

Context:

PM virtually inaugurated Tripura’s second integrated check post (ICP) and Land Port in Sabroom, located at Tripura’s southernmost tip bordering Bangladesh.

The Sabroom Land Port (SLP) is **connected to the Chittagong port of Bangladesh via the Maitree Bridge on River Feni**, enhancing passenger and cargo movement between India and Bangladesh.

Aim: These initiatives are expected to boost connectivity, trade, and tourism between the North-East region of India and Bangladesh, contributing to the overall development of Tripura.

What are Land Ports?

Land Ports are designated areas on **international borders with facilities for customs clearance and transport of passengers and goods**. India currently has **11 operational Land Ports**, excluding SLP.

Some other exercises between India and the US:

- MALABAR Exercise:** A trilateral naval exercise involving the navies of India, the United States, and Japan, primarily focused on maritime security and interoperability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- YUDH ABHYAS:** A joint military training exercise conducted annually between the Indian and US armies, focusing on enhancing interoperability and cooperation in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations.
- Vajra Prahar:** A bilateral military exercise between the Special Forces of India and the United States, focusing on enhancing counterterrorism and urban warfare capabilities.
- Cope India:** A series of bilateral aerial exercises between the air forces of India and the United States, aimed at enhancing interoperability, combat readiness, and joint operational capabilities.
- Red Flag:** A multinational aerial combat training exercise hosted by the United States Air Force, which often includes participation from the Indian Air Force, focusing on air combat tactics, techniques, and procedures.

About Seychelles

It is an **island country and archipelagic state** in the Indian Ocean, consisting of 115 islands. Its capital and largest city, Victoria, lies 1,500 kilometres east of mainland Africa. Seychelles is the smallest country in Africa with a population of around 100,600



About Port Blair

It is the capital city of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a union territory of India in the Bay of Bengal. It serves as the entry point for visiting the islands and is connected to mainland India by air and sea. Port Blair is home to several museums, including the historic Cellular Jail. It also houses major naval and air bases of the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, along with the headquarters of the Andaman and Nicobar Command.

4. POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Context:

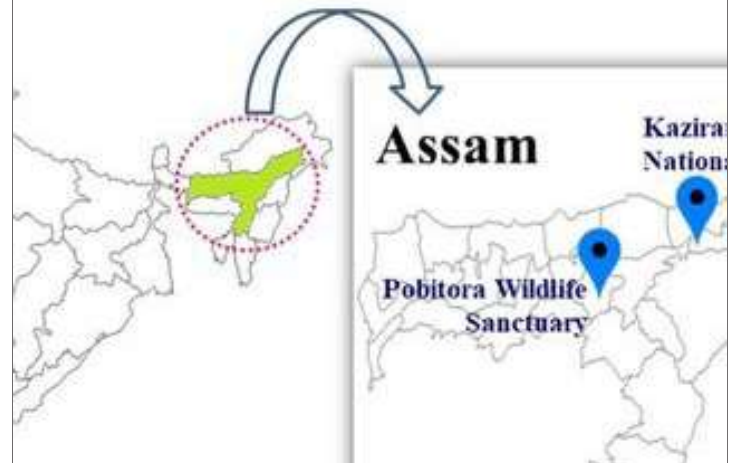
Assam Cabinet decides to **de-notify Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**, a prime rhino habitat, following a decision taken without prior Cabinet approval in 1998.

The move, unprecedented for any protected area in India, seeks to address **land rights issues and involve local communities in conservation efforts**. The decision faces scrutiny from conservationists and requires approval from the Supreme Court and the National Board for Wildlife for de-notification.

Previously, last year, the Supreme Court had issued notices to MoEF and the Assam govt. on plea against declaring **an eco-sensitive zone around Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**. Eco-sensitive zones are areas surrounding parks and sanctuaries crucial for wildlife conservation. **Mandated within 10 km**, but can extend further for ecological corridors. It prohibits commercial mining, and polluting industries, regulates tree felling, and permits sustainable practices like organic farming and renewable energy use.

About Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary:

It is located in the **flood plains of the Brahmaputra River in Assam** and is known for having the **highest density of one-horned rhinos (EN)** in the world. It is often referred to as **'Mini Kaziranga'** due to its similar landscape and vegetation. Approximately 72% of the sanctuary is **covered by wet savannah dominated by Arundo donax and Saccharum**, while the rest consists of water bodies.



5. DARIEN GAP

Context:

The Darien Gap, a **dense jungle spanning northern Colombia and southern Panama**, has become a perilous route for migrants seeking asylum in the US.

What is Darien Gap?

The Darién Gap is a rugged **region in the Isthmus of Darién, connecting Central and South America**. It comprises dense forests and mountains in Panama's Darién Province and Colombia's Chocó Department. Home to indigenous communities, the terrain varies from flat marshlands to mountainous rainforests. With no roads crossing it, travel is challenging and often conducted by boat or on foot. Despite the dangers, increasing violence and limited legal immigration options in their home countries have driven a surge in crossings, primarily by Venezuelans but also by **Haitians, Chinese, Afghans, and others**.



The Dibang River, known as **Sikang by the Adi and Talo in Idu**, is an upstream tributary of the Brahmaputra in Arunachal Pradesh. Originating near **Keya Pass on the Indo-Chinese border**, it flows through the **Mishmi Hills in the Upper and Lower Dibang Valley districts**.



Prelims Links:

Q. Which of the following is/are tributary/tributaries of Brahmaputra? (UPSC 2016)

1. Dibang
2. Kameng
3. Lohit

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Ans: D

6. DIBANG MULTIPURPOSE HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT (ARUNACHAL PRADESH)

Context:

PM laid the foundation stone for the **2,880 MW Dibang Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh**, which will be **India's highest dam**, on the **Dibang River**, a tributary of **Brahmaputra River**. The project will be commissioned by February 2032. The project, located near **Munli village in Lower Dibang Valley District**, will feature a **278-meter-high dam**, making it the highest Concrete-Gravity Dam in India.

Currently, **Tehri Dam (260 m)**, located on the Bhagirathi River in Uttarakhand, is the highest dam in India.

About Dibang River: