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SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION



Ai

RESOLUTION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The resolution emphasizes respect for human rights throughout the AI life cycle and acknowledges AI's potential to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

25 MAR - 30 MAR 2024

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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INSIDE

GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

1. Election Commissioner Selection: Ensuring Independence 4

Topics: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

2. Universal Health Coverage in India 6

Topics: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

3. Assessing India’s Social Security Programs: Progress and Challenges 7

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

4. UN Security Council Resolution on Gaza 10

GENERAL STUDIES – 3

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

1. ILO’s India Employment Report 2024: India’s Employment Crisis 12

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

2. Water crises threaten World Peace (report) 13

GENERAL STUDIES – 4

1. Humanitarian Aid in Conflict Zones 15

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

1. Usha Mehta 17

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS-1

1. Gulaal Gota 17
2. Archaeological Survey of India 18
3. Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount) 18
4. Kalyana Chalukya dynasty 18

GS-2

1. Postal ballots 20
2. Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code 20
3. Preventive detention 20
4. SLAPP suits and Injunctions 21
5. Group of Friends (GOF) 21

GS-3

1. Bima Sugam 21
2. Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management Programme – or FARM 22
3. ‘Shiva’ and ‘Shakti,’ earliest building blocks of the Milky Way 22
4. Resolution on artificial intelligence 22
5. COP Presidencies’ Troika 23
6. Application Programming Interface (API) 23
7. AI Tool Predicts Neem Fruit Metabolite Content 24

8. Statio Shiv Shakti	24	33. White Rabbit Collaboration	33
9. Power Lines ban rules eased in Great Indian Bustard Habitat	24	34. Kalam-250	33
10. Kerala: Man-animal conflict declared as a state-specific disaster	24	35. UNESCO Global Geoparks network	33
11. Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC)	25	MAPPING	
12. Usage of Embedded SIM for Machine-to-Machine Communications	25	<u>INTERNATIONAL</u>	
13. Magnetic fossils	26	36. India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) maritime trilateral exercise	33
14. MeerKAT radio telescope	26	37. Khorasan	34
15. Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024	26	38. Vietnam's Mekong Delta	34
16. National Disaster Response Fund	27	<u>INDIA</u>	
17. POEM-3	27	39. Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road	35
18. Reports in News	28	40. Luna Crater in Banni Plains	35
19. Black carbon	29	41. Moyar Valley (Tamil Nadu)	36
20. ICG Ship Samudra Paheredar	30		
21. Operation SANKALP	30		
22. T+0 settlement cycle	30		
23. Domestically systemically important insurance companies	30		
24. Meme coins	30		
25. Statins	30		
26. Twisted magnetic field	31		
27. START 2024	31		
28. Mushk budiji rice	31		
29. Eturnagaram & Amrabad wildlife sanctuaries	31		
30. Central Pollution Control Board	32		
31. Rice with low methane emission	32		
32. CoViNet	32		

GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: [Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.](#)

1. ELECTION COMMISSIONER SELECTION: ENSURING INDEPENDENCE

Context:

The recent swift appointment of **two new Election Commissioners** (after the resignation of **resignation of Arun Goel**) has sparked criticism due to concerns about the independence of the ECI and its selection process.

- The two officials are the first to be appointed under the new Chief Election Commissioner and other **Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023**

About ECI:

Aspect	Information
Election Commission of India	The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India. Established on January 25, 1950, in New Delhi.
Constitutional Provisions	Part XV of the Constitution (Articles 324-329) deals with elections and establishes the commission. Articles 324-329 outline its powers, including superintendence, direction, and control of elections.
Functions	Article 324 of the Constitution grants the Election Commission the authority over elections. It also says that the EC shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners, if any, as the President may fix from time to time. The Election Commission administers elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President in the country.
Structure of ECI	Originally single-membered , now multi-membered. Consists of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs). Present Chief Election Commissioner: Rajiv Kumar
Qualification	No specific qualifications are mandated by the Constitution for Election Commissioners. Typically, senior civil servants, like Cabinet Secretaries, are appointed . This tradition ensures leaders with extensive administrative expertise and electoral process understanding lead the ECI.
Appointment & Tenure	Appointed by the President under the CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023. Serve a fixed six-year term or until age 65.
Removal	Can resign or be removed before term expiry. CEC's removal requires Parliament's process akin to a Supreme Court judge . ECs can only be removed upon CEC's recommendation.

For the major feature of the [Election Commissioners \(Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office\) Act, 2023: Click Here](#)

For Issues with the New Act: [Click Here](#)

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has achieved significant milestones:

1. **Conducting Free and Fair Elections:** ECI ensures fair elections, overseeing over 17 national and over 370 state elections since 1947.
2. **Inclusive Participation Initiatives:** E.g., ECI implemented **reserved constituencies** for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
3. **Introduction of Voter ID Cards:** The ECI introduced the **Elector's Photo Identity Card (EPIC) in 1993**, enhancing electoral integrity and reducing impersonation.

4. **Adoption of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and VVPAT:** EVMs streamline voting, ensuring accuracy and reducing fraud.
5. **Implementation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** ECI enforces MCC, promoting fair campaigning and ethical practices.
6. **Innovative Use of Technology:** E.g., ECI developed the **cvIGIL mobile application**, allowing citizens to report election code violations directly.
7. **Voter Education Programs:** E.g., **SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation)**, to raise awareness about voting rights, the importance of participation, and making informed choices during elections

Issues Associated with the Election Commission of India:

1. **Constitutional Limitations:** No prescribed qualifications or terms for members.
2. **Post-retirement favours:** No prohibition on post-retirement appointments.
3. **Selection Committee Dominance:** The selection committee is dominated by government members in the new act. Potential compromise of ECI independence.
4. **Security of Tenure:** Election Commissioners lack guaranteed tenure.
5. **Lack of Financial Independence:** Reliance on Union Government for finances. Expenses not drawn from Consolidated Fund, limiting independence.
6. **Electoral Malpractices:** Irregularities in voter rolls and instances of fraud. A recent issue of electoral bond.
7. **Political Bias Allegations:** Allegations of bias and favoritism.
8. **Lack of Deregistration Authority:** ECI lacks the power to deregister parties for violations. **Unable to enforce inner-party democracy** or regulate finances.
9. **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Challenges in ensuring universal voter access.

Way forward:

To strengthen the Election Commission of India, several key steps are essential.

- **Establishing an independent selection committee** comprising diverse stakeholders, as highlighted in the Anoop Baranwal vs Union of India Case, 2023, is crucial for ensuring fair appointments.
- **Enacting legislation with statutory safeguards** is necessary to define conditions for the removal of Election Commissioners, incorporating stringent criteria and procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary dismissals.
- **Transparent funding mechanisms**, implement-

ed through parliamentary processes or independent oversight, would enhance accountability and impartiality in fund allocation.

- **Empowering the ECI** to impose proportional punishments on guilty parties, from fines to deregistration, would ensure accountability and deterrence against electoral violations.

Additionally, **promoting inclusive participation** by addressing voter suppression, and discrimination, and ensuring accessibility for all voters, including those with disabilities, is essential. Finally, **fostering international collaboration** with electoral management bodies can facilitate knowledge exchange and adoption of best practices, enhancing the ECI's credibility and effectiveness globally.

Conclusion:

India's electoral system is globally acclaimed, with independent-minded election commissioners. However, establishing robust institutional mechanisms is crucial for credibility. Democracy hinges on strong institutions, necessitating efforts to enhance independence, autonomy, and transparency.

Insta Links:

- [How are the CEC and ECs appointed?](#)

Prelims Links:

Q.1 Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2017)

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. 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

Ans: D

Mains Links:

Q.1 In light of the recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India? (UPSC 2018)

Q.2 To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful? (UPSC 2017)

Topics: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

2. UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE IN INDIA

Context:

Expanding Universal Health Coverage is a complex endeavour, but leveraging data and digital technology can streamline the process.

What is UHC?

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) refers to a healthcare system where **all individuals and communities** have **access to the quality health services**, they need without facing financial hardship. Access to quality healthcare is a **fundamental right** for all individuals, rather than a privilege reserved for a few.

Status:

1. **The Indian Constitutional provisions (Art. 39E, 42, 47) mandate** the State to secure workers' health, improve living standards, and enhance public health.
2. The United Nations designated **December 12th as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day)** in 2017
3. **Sustainable Development Goal 3.8** aims to achieve universal health coverage
4. **India aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** by expanding the Ayushman Bharat-**Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** (AB-PMJAY), its flagship publicly financed health insurance (PFHI) scheme

Challenges in Implementing UHC in India:

Challenges	Description
Inequitable Access to Health Insurance	Lowest health insurance coverage among households under the underprivileged sections. NFHS-5 results show only about 36% coverage among lowest lowest-wealth households.
Poor Finance	India's current health expenditure stands at approximately 3.2% of its GDP , significantly lower than the average of around 5.2% observed among Lower- and Middle-Income Countries (LMIC).
Lack of Financial Protection	Despite schemes like Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram, high out-of-pocket expenditure for deliveries , particularly in urban areas
Inclusion and Exclusion Errors	Government Schemes are prone to inclusion and exclusion errors , potentially including ineligible households and excluding eligible ones.
Inadequate Availability of Services	56% of PMJAY empanelled hospitals in the public sector, and 40% in the private for-profit sector, indicating unequal service availability
Inadequate Infrastructure	Lack of proper infrastructure, including health facilities, equipment, and medical supplies, hinders UHC The shortfall of over 79% specialists at Community Health Centers compared to the requirement. Lower bed density: (number of hospital beds per 1000 population) in India is 1.0 while in low-income countries it is 1.2, in middle-income countries it is 2.4 while in the world it is 2.7. 72 per cent of hospital beds in India are available in urban areas, while 28 per cent are in rural areas.
Poor Health Education	Lack of education and awareness about healthy lifestyles and preventive measures contributes to preventable illnesses and conditions.

In line with the objectives of UHC, the government has taken the following measures:

1. **Ayushman Bharat:** Launched in 2018. It consists of two components: Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY). PMJAY provides health insurance coverage.
 - a. A study in 2021 found the scheme is **associated with a 21% decline in out-of-pocket health expen-**

diture.

2. **National Health Mission (NHM)**: aims to provide accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare to rural and underprivileged populations.
 - a. Utilization of public health facilities for institutional deliveries **increased from 56% to 69%** in rural areas by 2019.
3. **National Ambulance Service-102**: Setup as part of the National Health Mission, operates 20,990 Emergency Response Service Vehicles. The '108' service aims at responding within the 'golden hour'.
4. **The National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** and the Essential Diagnostics Lists have been notified and are periodically updated to ensure the availability of more essential. The National Pharma Pricing Authority (NPPA) is set up to monitor the availability of drugs, identify shortages, if any, and to take remedial steps.
5. **The National Nutrition Mission** has set an objective of reducing the undernutrition, problems of stunting by 2%.
6. **Under India's G20 presidency, WHO launched the Global Initiative on Digital Health** to boost investments and facilitate international health exchange.
7. **Increasing doctor population ratio**: 1:854 is better than the World Health Organisation's standard of 1:1000. The number of UG (undergraduate) seats has increased from 51,348 before 2014 to 91,927 in 2022, which is an increase of 79 per cent.
 - a. Under the Central Sector Scheme for setting up new AIIMS, 22 AIIMS have been approved and undergraduate courses have started in 19 AIIMS.

Technology can be leveraged in the following ways to further augment it:

1. **Telemedicine**: allows remote consultation and diagnosis, enabling patients in rural and remote areas to access healthcare services.
 - a. **National telemedicine service of India, eSanjeevani** achieved 8 crore teleconsultations in 2022.
2. **Electronic Health Records (EHR)**: can enhance the efficiency and accuracy of healthcare delivery. The health ID provided for each patient will be a repository of his health-related information.
 - a. **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure.
3. **Mobile Health (mHealth)**: mHealth is an emerging concept involving the utilization of mobile devices and technology for health services, such as appointment scheduling, remote monitoring, and medication reminders.
4. **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**: analyses large amounts of health data, identifies patterns and trends, and provides insights for developing new treatments and therapies thus reducing the work-

load of healthcare professionals and enhancing diagnostic accuracy.

5. **IoT: The Internet of Things** connects vital monitoring equipment giving a composite picture of the health of patients

Conclusion:

Ensuring healthcare as a right for all citizens is not only a moral imperative but also a key driver for social development and economic progress. WHO recommends re-orienting health systems using the **primary healthcare (PHC) approach**, which can deliver 90% of essential UHC interventions. India should build on existing systems, implementing reforms and best practices incrementally for a healthier, more prosperous future.

Insta Links:

[Moving forward with a newer concept of Universal Healthcare](#)

Prelims Link:

Q. With reference to the National Rural Health Mission, which of the following are the jobs of 'ASHA', a trained community health worker? (UPSC 2012)

1. Accompanying women to the health facility for antenatal care check-up
2. Using pregnancy test kits for early detection of pregnancy
3. Providing information on nutrition and immunisation.
4. Conducting the delivery of the baby

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

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

Ans: (a)

[Topics: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.](#)

3. ASSESSING INDIA'S SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMS: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

Context:

The [article](#) evaluates welfare and social protection programs in India, noting progress but also highlighting shortcomings

What is Social Security?

Social security is a system implemented by societies/governments to provide individuals and households with

financial assistance and support during times of need or vulnerability. It ensures **access to healthcare and guarantees income security**, especially in situations such as old age, unemployment, sickness, disability, maternity, or loss of a breadwinner.

Status of Social Security:

- Global:** Almost **53% of the population in the world** has no social protection (56% in the Asia-Pacific) (as per [ILO: World Social Protection Report 2020-22](#))
- India:** In India over 76% have no social protection (Bangladesh has a higher % of people under social protection than India)
- Spending on social protection:** The world average is about **13%**, while that in India is **just 8.6% (eight points six)** (Economic Survey 2021-22)
- India's social security spending:** Lower than 5% of GDP per capita
- Around 53% of all of the salaried workforce** does not have any social security benefits in India, according to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2021-22**
- Only about **2% of the poorest 20% of India's workforce** have access to social security benefits

Issues with the Social Security in India:

Issues	Description
Lack of adequate budgetary allocation	The National Social Security Fund and other schemes suffer from insufficient initial allocations, leading to a lack of resources to meet the needs of vulnerable populations.
Policy Issues	E.g., The Social Security Code 2020 remains unimplemented even today
Lack of Competition	Monopolies like EPFO and ESI in work-related social security payments breed issues like high costs for employers, mistreatment of employees, and incentivize informality over formality.
Poor Fund Utilization and Management	E.g., The CAG audit found that ₹1,927 crore in the National Social Security Fund remained unused, while about 94% of the cess collected for construction workers' social security in Delhi went unspent.
Corruption and Leakage	E.g., In Haryana, the CAG found about ₹99 crore transferred to accounts of deceased beneficiaries , indicating loopholes in beneficiary identification and delivery mechanisms for social security benefits.
Inadequate Coverage and Benefits	E.g., The Centre's contribution to old-age pension schemes has remained stagnant at ₹200 per month since 2006, falling below the daily minimum wage. Restrictive eligibility criteria exclude many deserving beneficiaries, leaving out elderly individuals facing economic hardship
Budgetary Cuts	E.g., Reductions in budget allocations for programs like MGNREGA
Digital Divide	As of recent data, around 50% of India's population still does not have access to the internet
Informal Labour Sector	Over 90% of India's workforce works in the informal sector

Steps taken by India

Schemes/ Policies	Details
Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-SYM)	Voluntary and contributory pension schemes ; 50% monthly contribution by beneficiary, equal matching contribution by Central Government
Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)	Coverage of Rs. 5 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization
Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G)	Aim to construct about 3 crore pucca houses with basic amenities by March 2024; Assistance of 1.2 Lakhs in plain areas, 1.3 Lakhs in Hilly Areas
Public Distribution System (PDS)	Provides 35 kg of rice or wheat monthly for households below the poverty line; Entitlements adjusted under ONORC for migrant workers
Atal Pension Yojana	Pension scheme offering Rs. 1000-5000 or accumulated sum after death

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)	Rs. 2 lakh coverage for accidental death and full disability; Premium at Rs. 20 per year
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana (PMJJBY)	Rs. 2 lakh coverage on death due to any cause; Premium at Rs. 436 per year
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	Allocation of Rs. 60,000 crores in Budget Estimate 2023-24; Recently notified new wage rates for unskilled manual workers for FY 2024-2025
Code on Social Security, 2020	Consolidates and simplifies nine previous laws related to social security; Covers employees in both organized and unorganized sectors
Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)	Administers Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, Employees' Pension Scheme , Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme; Provides retirement pension, provident fund, and life and disability insurance
Employees' State Insurance (ESI)	Self-financing social security scheme providing medical care and cash benefits; Covers employees in organized sector earning below a certain threshold
National Pension System (NPS)	Voluntary, defined contribution pension scheme for retirement savings; Open to all citizens of India , including those in the unorganized sector
National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)	Provides support to aged persons, widows, disabled persons , and bereaved families; Belonging to below-poverty-line households

Steps for Social Security in India:

1. **Universal Coverage:** Implement **universal social security to cover** the entire labour force, consolidating existing schemes and ad hoc measures.
2. **Linking EPFO contributions to Aadhaar numbers** enhances effectiveness by enabling traceability, portability, and accessibility.
3. **Expand EPFO Contributions:** Increase contributions to the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for formal workers, involving both employers and employees.
4. **Offering EPFO products to self-employed and gig workers**, addressing challenges of contractual employment.
5. **Government Support:** Provide **subsidies or social assistance** to vulnerable workers unable to contribute due to unemployment, underemployment, or low earnings.
6. **Digitization and e-Shram Platform:** Invest in digital platforms for streamlined registration, verification, and delivery of social security services, extending coverage and efficiency.
7. **Mandatory Social Security for Employers:** Enforce mandatory social security entitlements for employees by their employers to foster formalization esp. for Gig Workers.
8. **Pan-India Labour Force Card:** Introduce a nationwide labour force card for simplified registration and expanded coverage beyond specific sectors.
9. **Administrative Simplification:** Simplify the administrative framework of social security programs to reduce complexity and ensure better implementation.

10. **Raising Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to inform more workers about available social security benefits, leveraging organizations like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) for outreach.

States Experience: The Madhya Pradesh Unorganised Workers Welfare Act offers a model for raising resources while strengthening existing schemes like EPF, ESI, and NSAP is vital.

International Experience:

- **Brazil:** Brazil's extensive social security system, covering over 90% of the population, offers valuable lessons for India. **Brazil's General Social Security Scheme** is contribution-based, providing income replacement for workers and their families in partial or full loss situations. It includes **unemployment insurance funded by worker support funds and health care** through the Unified Health System.
- **Germany:** Germany's robust social security system, founded on social insurance principles with contributions from both workers and employers, offers pensions, healthcare, unemployment benefits, long-term care, and family allowances. India can benefit from emulating Germany's social insurance model.
- **Singapore:** Singapore's unique social security system promotes personal savings through a central provident fund for retirement, housing, healthcare, and education. India could adopt this approach to foster personal responsibility and flexibility for workers.

Conclusion:

To accelerate the **formalization of social security in India**, reforms are essential. Advocacy for competition, **championed by former finance minister Arun Jaitley**, suggests allowing employee choice in contributing to either EPFO or NPS. **Migrant data collection** and the proposed **Social Security Fund** under the Social Security Code, 2020, would further bolster efforts towards universal social security.

Insta Links:

- [ILO-UNICEF joint report on social protection for children](#)
- [Programmes for Social Security Cover](#)

Prelims Links:

Q. What is/are the facility/facilities the beneficiaries can get from the services of Business Correspondent (Bank Saathi) in branchless areas? (UPSC 2014)

1. It enables the beneficiaries to draw their subsidies and social security benefits in their villages.
2. It enables the beneficiaries in rural areas to make deposits and withdrawals.

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

Answer: C

Both statements are correct

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

4. UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION ON GAZA

Context:

After **five and a half months of conflict in Gaza**, with significant casualties and displacement, the **UN Security Council called for an immediate ceasefire**.

What are UNSC resolutions?

A UNSC resolution is a **decision adopted by the UN Security Council**, responsible for international peace and security. **Article 27 of the UN Charter** requires an affirmative vote of **nine out of fifteen members for resolutions**. Any of the five permanent members can veto resolutions, except procedural ones. The permanent members are China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US. **Article 25 obligates UN members to accept and implement UNSC decisions**. As of today, the Security Council has passed **2728 resolutions**. The ICJ has **affirmed the legal bind-**

ingness of all Security Council resolutions.

If the Security Council fails to pass a resolution, it may issue a **non-binding presidential statement** adopted by consensus. These statements apply political pressure and signal the Council’s attention, often indicating that further action may follow.

What does the current Resolution call for?

The resolution calls for

1. **Aid to reach Palestinian civilians**
2. **Release of hostages** held by Hamas
3. **Immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan** to be respected by all parties
4. **Adherence to international law**
5. Need for **sustained humanitarian aid**

The **US abstained from voting**, marking a shift in policy.




What does the resolution mean?

While all UNSC resolutions are **typically binding under Article 25 of the UN Charter**, the US has deemed the **latest resolution non-binding**. If a resolution is not adhered to, the Council can **vote on a follow-up resolution** and impose punitive measures such as sanctions or authorizing an international force. So, in this case, there is **high pressure on Israel** to comply with the resolution.

Has Israel adhered to the previous resolutions?

No, Israel has not adhered to previous resolutions. E.g.,

1. **2016:** Israel ignored UNSC resolution deeming Israel’s settlements in Palestine illegal and a violation of international law
2. **December 2023:** Israel ignored the UN General Assembly’s call for a “humanitarian ceasefire”

Israel **faces accusations of genocide in Gaza at the International Court of Justice**, with South Africa leading the charge.

Significance of US policy shift towards Israel:

The US policy **shift towards Israel indicates a change in how the US government** approaches its relationship with Israel. This change can have **significant implications for various aspects, including diplomatic relations**, regional stability in the Middle East, and efforts to address the Israel-Palestine conflict. Historically, the US has been a **staunch ally of Israel**, providing significant political, military, and economic support.

Israel has various options available to address the ongoing conflict:

1. **Long-term perspective:** Israel should heed the UNSC’s call for a ceasefire, allow humanitarian aid into Gaza, and engage in talks with Hamas for the release of hostages and withdrawal of troops.
2. **Abiding by the Abraham Accords:** Israel should consider its previous position of normalizing relations with Arab states and the broader international community.
3. **Cooperation with Hamas:** Israel could explore dialogue with Hamas for a potential prisoner exchange, as Hamas has expressed willingness for immediate engagement.
4. **Synchronizing with US stance:** With the US increasingly critical of Israel’s actions and urging for aid delivery to Gaza, Israel may need to align its approach accordingly.

India’s Policy on the Israel-Palestine Conflict:

India’s Policy	Description
Historical Stance	India historically favoured Palestine due to factors like Gandhi’s opposition to a Jewish state, a significant Muslim population, and alignment with Arab countries, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the UN.
Shift in Policy	In 1992, India established diplomatic relations with Israel while continuing to support Palestine. This marked a significant change influenced by post-Cold War dynamics.
Balancing National Interest	India aims to balance maintaining strong ties with Israel, supporting Palestine, and cultivating relations with the Arab world , guided by national interest and diplomatic pragmatism.
Current Policy	India’s relations with Israel have strengthened across various sectors. It supports Israel’s anti-terrorism efforts, although the contexts differ.
Support for Palestine’s Cause	India remains vocal about its commitment to the Palestinian cause and provides aid to Palestinian refugees and relief materials in the midst of ongoing tensions.
Balanced Stance	India’s leadership has visited both Israel and Palestine , signalling a balanced approach. It voted against unilateral recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in 2017.
Official Position	India officially supports a two-state solution with Israel and Palestine living as good neighbours, a stance consistent with international mediation efforts.

For: [Implications of the Gaza Crisis for India: Click Here](#)

Conclusion:

India, with its balanced approach and rapport with both Middle Eastern countries and Israel, can utilize multilateral forums like the Human Rights Council to mediate and help resolve the Israel-Palestine issue.

Mains Links:

Q. “India’s relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back.” Discuss. (UPSC 2018)

Prelims Links: (UPSC 2015)

The area known as ‘Golan Heights’ sometimes appears in the news in the context of the events related to

- a) Central Asia
- b) Middle East
- c) South-East Asia
- d) Central Africa

Ans: B

GENERAL STUDIES – 3

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

1. ILO'S INDIA EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2024: INDIA'S EMPLOYMENT CRISIS

Context:

ILO's India Employment Report 2024 examines youth employment challenges and trends over two decades, drawing from various data sources

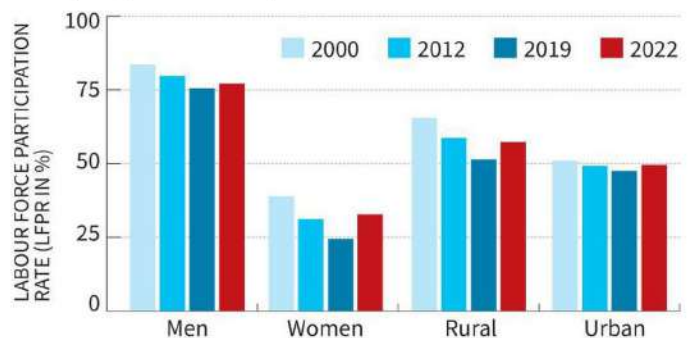
Key findings of the Report are:

Positive Findings:

1. Women saw a **rise in self-employment** and unpaid family work.
2. **Labour productivity increased** consistently alongside technological progress.
3. **Female labour market participation rates increased**, especially in rural areas.
4. **There's a gradual shift from agriculture to non-farm sectors** in the workforce, however, the transition slowed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment blues

Labour participation for various sections increased slightly in 2022 (compared to 2019) but was still low vis-a-vis 2000



Negative Findings:

1. **Youth unemployment increased** nearly three-fold, from **5.7% in 2000 to 17.5% in 2019**
2. Employment growth **remained stagnant until 2019**, then started to rise
3. Employment is dominated by the **informal sector (about 82%)**. **Self-employment and casual employment** are predominant
4. Wages have **remained low and stagnant or decreased**. Modest wage rises for casual labourers were observed, while real wages for regular workers stagnated or declined.
5. India is expected to have a **migration rate of around 40% by 2030**, with an urban population of about 607 million.
6. **Contractualization has risen**, with only a small fraction of workers under long-term contracts. The proportion of regular employment increased post-2000 but declined after 2018.
7. **Livelihood insecurities are widespread**, especially in the non-agricultural organized sector, with limited social protection coverage.
8. Despite India's youthful workforce being a demographic asset, **many lack essential skills, with 75% unable to send emails with attachments, 60% unable to copy and paste files, and 90% unable to use spreadsheets for mathematical formulas.**
9. **Education:** While overall **educational levels have risen**, gaps remain across **social groups, economic backgrounds, and regions**. Only a **small percentage of youths** have formal vocational training, **with less than 4% accessing it**

Recommendations:

	Policy Measures
1: Make production and growth more employment-intensive	Integrate the employment creation agenda with macroeconomic policies.
	Prioritize labour-intensive manufacturing
	Focus on micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises
	Increase agricultural productivity and promote entrepreneurship
	Invest in the green and blue economies

2: Improve the quality of jobs	Invest in sectors like care and the digital economy
	Develop inclusive urbanization and migration policies
	Ensure strong labour policies and regulations.
3: Overcome labour market inequalities	Boost women's participation with quality work policies.
	Bridge the digital divide
	Enhance skills training for social and economic inclusion
	Create a non-discriminatory labour market
	Implement regional-level policies to reduce inequalities.
4: Enhance the effectiveness of skills training	Strengthen the role of skills development
	Facilitate youths' connection with job opportunities.
	Address unfilled vacancies in the public sector transparently
5: Bridge knowledge deficits on labour market patterns	Develop reliable labour market statistics on emerging job forms
	Utilize implementation and monitoring data effectively for policy.

For [Types of Employment in India: Click Here](#)
 For [Causes of the high unemployment rate: Click Here](#)
 For the [Social Impact of Unemployment in India: Click Here](#)
 For [Measures to address unemployment: Click Here](#)

Government's Initiatives Related to Employment:

- [Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise \(SMILE\)](#)
- [PM-DAKSH](#) (Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi)
- [Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act](#) (MGNREGA)
- [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana](#) (PMKVY)
- [Start-Up India Scheme](#)
- [Indira Gandhi Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme](#)- Rajasthan.

About India Employment Report 2024
 The India Employment Report 2024 is the **third in the series of regular publications** by the **Institute for Human Development (together with the International Labour Organization) on labour and employment issues**. The report is primarily based on analysis of data from the [National Sample Surveys and the Periodic Labour Force Surveys between 2000 and 2022](#), with a postscript for 2023. Other sources of data include the Annual Survey of Industries, the National Account Statistics and the Reserve Bank of India-KLEMS database.

Mains Link:

Q. Most of the unemployment in India is structural in nature. Examine the methodology adopted to compute unemployment in the country and suggest improvements. (UPSC 2023)

Prelims Link:

Q. Disguised unemployment generally means (UPSC 2013)

- (a) a large number of people remain unemployed
- (b) alternative employment is not available
- (c) the marginal productivity of labour is zero
- (d) productivity of workers is low

Ans: C

[Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.](#)

2. WATER CRISES THREATEN WORLD PEACE (REPORT)

Context:

The **United Nations World Water Development Report 2024**, published by **UNESCO on behalf of UN-Water** on **World Water Day**

- **World Water Day**, observed annually on March 22, is a global initiative supported by the United Nations, dating back to 1993. This year's theme is **"Leveraging water for peace"**

Key Highlights of the Report:

- Current Status of Water Resources:** Agriculture consumes 70% of freshwater withdrawals in the world, **Lake Chad** has shrunk by 90% in the past 60 years.
- Groundwater depleting:** Cooperation over shared surface water is increasing, but groundwater resources are often neglected.
- Water's Linkage to Peace and Prosperity:**
 - i. **Water and Peace:** Water scarcity can escalate local disputes, as observed in the **Sahel region**.

Migration due to water scarcity can heighten tensions in settlement areas and exacerbate food insecurity.

- ii. **Water and Prosperity:** Water sustains environmental integrity. In low and lower-middle-income countries, **70-80% of jobs depend on water.** Water is crucial for inclusivity, as it **affects girls and women's education**, economic participation, and safety.
 - iii. **Water and Food Production:** Regions like Northwest India and North China are among the top three areas worldwide with high water-related risks to food production.
4. **Challenges in Achieving SDG 6:** Half of the global population faces severe water scarcity at some point each year.
 5. **Water-Prosperity Paradox:** Developed water infrastructure can drive growth and prosperity, but only the wealthiest countries can afford such investments.

Key recommendations of the report:

1. **Emphasize sustainable management** of water resources
2. **Advocate for increased private investment** to achieve **universal access to water by 2030**
3. **Encourage industries to decouple water usage** from production e.g., Tata Chemicals cut the use of groundwater by **over 99% within a year through recycling and water management**
4. **Boost international cooperation and trans-boundary agreements** to address water-related tensions and maintain peace.
5. **Safeguard water resources and enhance global cooperation** to mitigate water stress and conflicts.
6. Prioritize achieving **access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation** for all by 2030.
7. **Address inequalities in water access**, particularly among vulnerable populations like girls and women.
8. **Highlight successful cooperation models:** E.g., **Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin:** It aims to establish a multilateral agreement for sustainable water management among Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia.
9. **Encourage states to enact policies ensuring fair and equitable access** to water resources with support from the United Nations system.

Terms related to water:

Terms used	Definition
Water scarcity	Lack of sufficient available water resources to meet water usage demands within a region
Water stress	The difficulty of obtaining fresh water sources during a period of time may lead to further depletion and deterioration of available water
Water shortage/deficits	Shortages of water caused by climate change, pollution, increased human demand, and overuse of water
Water crisis	A situation where the available potable, unpolluted water within a region is less than that region's demand

Steps taken for Water Conservation:

Global:

1. **UN 2023 Water Conference: First global 'Action Plan'** recognizing that "all peoples have the right to have access to drinking water in quantities and of a quality equal to their basic needs."
2. **Private: IBM Sustainability Accelerator** focused on water management
3. **Data and models:** World Meteorological Organisation's **Hydrological Status and Outlook System**, offered data analysis tools.
4. **Knowledge sharing: W12+ Blueprint**, a UNESCO platform that hosts city profiles and case studies of programs (for cross cities learning)
5. **Capacity building: Making Rights Real** initiative offered to help marginalised communities and women understand how to exercise their rights. **'Water for Women Fund'** offered support mechanisms for more effective and sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene outcomes for women.
6. **NGOs:** World Vision is committed to raising and investing \$2 billion by 2030 to extend the impact of transformative **water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services** across 50 countries in six regions.
7. **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 6** includes a specific goal on water and sanitation (Goal 6)
8. **Dublin Principles** water was established as an "economic good"

India:

1. \$50-billion commitment to improving rural drinking water services under its **Jal Jeevan Mission**.
2. **Jal Kranti Abhiyan**

3. [National Water Mission](#)
4. National Rural Drinking Water Programme
5. [NITI Aayog Composite Water Management Index](#)
6. [Jal Shakti Abhiyan](#)
7. [Atal Bhujal Yojana](#)

About UN-Water

It is an interagency mechanism, that was **formed in 2003 and serves as the coordinating body for United Nations** entities and international organizations working on water and sanitation issues. With over 30 UN organizations and 47 international partners, it ensures a unified response to water challenges. **Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland**, UN-Water facilitates coordinated action at global, regional, and country levels to address freshwater-related matters, including sanitation

Insta Links:

- [UN World Water Development Report 2023](#)
- [U.N. water conference](#)

Prelims Link:

Q. With reference to 'Water Credit', consider the following statements: (UPSC 2021)

It puts microfinance tools to work in the water and sanitation sector.

It is a global initiative launched under the aegis of the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.

It aims to enable poor people to meet their water needs without depending on subsidies.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Ans: C

Mains Link:

Q. What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security? (UPSC 2020)

sponse to humanitarian crises such as natural disasters, conflicts, or other emergencies. It includes essential supplies like food, water, shelter, and medical care, aimed at alleviating suffering and saving lives. Humanitarian aid promotes ethical values like **compassion, empathy, solidarity, and the inherent worth and dignity of every individual.**

How does Politics often interfere with humanitarian aid in conflict zones?

Issue	Description
Funding cuts	E.g., U.S. Congress stops funding to UNRWA
Political conditions	Aid delivery is halted unless certain political demands are met
Blockades and restrictions	E.g., Israel blocking aid convoys to Gaza during the current crisis
Manipulation for leverage	Aid used as a bargaining tool in negotiations
Militarization of aid	Airdrops leading to casualties during food distribution
Lack of access	Humanitarian access denied due to political tensions
The UN Security Council's approach to humanitarian aid is viewed as inconsistent	Selective Enforcement: While the Council calls for aid in places like Gaza, its actions, such as the U.S.'s abstention and labelling of resolutions as non-binding, suggest selective enforcement of aid policies.
	Inadequate Action: Despite recognizing the need for aid in conflict zones like Syria, Yemen, and Ethiopia, the Council's actions are often limited by political interests, resulting in insufficient aid delivery.
	Diplomatic Tool: Aid is sometimes used as a diplomatic tool, as seen in Afghanistan, where aid was provided without significant progress on women's rights

GENERAL STUDIES – 4

1. HUMANITARIAN AID IN CONFLICT ZONES

Context:

Politics often interferes with humanitarian aid in conflict zones (such as the Gaza war in the current situation), creating various ethical issues.

What is humanitarian aid?

Humanitarian aid refers to **assistance provided in re-**

Denial of aid raises ethical concerns such as:

1. **Violation of human rights:** E.g., Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently stated that **"100 per cent of the population in Gaza is at severe levels of acute food insecurity."**
2. **Exacerbation of suffering:** Without aid, vulnerable populations face increased hardship, including hunger, illness, and displacement.
3. **Political manipulation:** Denying aid for political gain exploits the vulnerable and undermines humanitarian principles.
4. **International obligations:** Denying aid violates international laws and conventions that mandate

assistance to those in need.

5. **Loss of trust in humanitarian efforts:** Denial of aid erodes trust in humanitarian organizations and the international community's commitment to help those in crisis.

Ethical Thinker's perspective on humanitarian aid:

Ethical thinkers, such as **Immanuel Kant and Peter Singer**, advocate for the provision of humanitarian aid during conflicts. They argue that it is a **moral imperative to alleviate suffering and uphold human dignity**, regardless of the circumstances. **Kant emphasizes the importance of treating others as ends in themselves**, suggesting that providing aid aligns with the principle of universal respect for human life. Similarly, **Singer's utilitarian approach emphasizes maximizing overall well-being**, which includes helping those in need during conflicts. Both thinkers highlight the ethical obligation to prioritize humanitarian concerns and alleviate suffering, even during conflicts.

India plays a significant role in providing humanitarian aid:

1. **Aid to Sri Lanka:** In 2008, India sent aid to displaced Sri Lankan Tamil civilians, serving as both a humanitarian gesture
2. **Continued Support:** In 2022, Tamil Nadu's government sent substantial aid to Sri Lanka during its economic crisis, demonstrating India's ongoing commitment to humanitarian assistance.
3. **Global Contribution During COVID-19:** India extended its humanitarian efforts globally by **sending vaccines to over 100 countries** during the pandemic, showcasing its capability and willingness to support international humanitarian causes.

Steps to provide unhindered humanitarian aid:

1. **Political Diplomacy:** Conduct diplomatic negotiations between humanitarian organizations, governments, and armed groups to establish safe passage for aid convoys in conflict zones.
2. **International Cooperation:** Coordinate and Collaborate between the United Nations, Red Cross, and neighbouring countries to provide logistical support and ensure safe transit of aid supplies.
3. **Security Measures:** Deployment of peacekeeping forces or armed escorts to accompany aid convoys in volatile areas.
4. **Public Awareness:** E.g., Media campaigns and advocacy efforts to highlight humanitarian crises and mobilize support for aid initiatives.
5. **Accountability and Transparency:** E.g., establishing monitoring mechanisms and conducting regular audits to track the delivery and distribution of aid supplies.
6. **Local Engagement:** E.g., **Partnering with local NGOs** and community leaders to identify vulnerable populations and tailor aid interventions to meet their specific needs.
7. **Adherence to International Law:** Providing **aid impartially and without discrimination**, in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.

Mains Link:

Q. 'The will to power exists, but it can be tamed and be guided by rationality and principles of moral duty.' Examine this statement in the context of international relations. (UPSC 2020)

Q. Strength, peace and security are considered to be the pillars of international relations. Elucidate. (UPSC 2017)

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

Context	How to use?
<p>1. USHA MEHTA</p>	<p>Who was Usha Mehta? She was a prominent figure in India’s freedom struggle, known for her role in establishing Congress Radio during the Quit India Movement in 1942. A law student in Bombay at the time, Mehta was deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s call for civil disobedience. She played a pivotal role in setting up Congress Radio as an underground radio station to counter British censorship and provide uncensored news and information to the Indian public.</p> <p>Despite challenges, they succeeded in providing a vital voice for India’s freedom struggle, amplifying the call for independence and inspiring generations. When Mehta was released from Pune’s Yerawada Jail in March 1946, she was hailed in the nationalist media as “Radio-ben”. Conferred the Padma Vibhushan in 1998, Mehta died after a brief illness in 2000.</p> <p>Usha Mehta’s story exemplifies ethical values such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to Justice 2. Courage: Mehta demonstrated courage in the face of adversity, refusing to bow down to British authorities and continuing to broadcast nationalist messages even when faced with the threat of arrest. 3. Integrity: Despite the risks involved, she remained true to her principles and refused to compromise on the ideals of freedom and democracy. 4. Sacrifice: Mehta made personal sacrifices, including risking her safety and freedom, for the greater good of the nation and its people. 5. Leadership: She showed leadership by taking the initiative and organizing the establishment of Congress Radio, rallying others to join the resistance against British colonial rule.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS-1

1. GULAAL GOTA

Context:

The **Jaipur tradition of “Gulaal Gota”** involves small **lac balls filled with dry Gulaal (coloured powder)** thrown during **Holi celebrations**.

About Gulaal Gota:

- These balls are made by **Muslim artisans known as Manihaars in Jaipur**, with lac sourced from **Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand**.
- The tradition dates **back around 400 years and is unique to Jaipur**.
- Originally, the **Manihaars settled in Bagru, near Jaipur, and learned lac-making from Hindu lac makers**.
- The city’s founder, **Sawai Jai Singh II, dedicated a lane to the Manihaar community**, where they continue to sell lac bangles, jewellery, and Gulaal Gotas.

The artisans face challenges from cheaper, **chemical-based bangles flooding the market**.

Holi is a **popular Hindu festival**. It is also known as the **“Festival of Colors” or the “Festival of Love.”** Holi usually takes **place in March, marking the arrival of spring and the end of winter**.

The festival is **celebrated over two days**. The first day, known as **Holika Dahan or Chhoti Holi**, involves **lighting bonfires to signify the victory of good over evil**.

The second day is called **Rangwali Holi**, during which **people gather in public spaces and streets to play with colours**.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

Context:

The [Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has decided to **delist 18 centrally protected monuments** due to their **assessed lack of national importance**.

- This is **the first large-scale delisting exercise in decades**, reducing ASI's purview from **3,693 to 3,675 monuments**.
- These monuments, including landmarks like the **medieval highway milestone Kos Minar No.13 in Haryana, Barakhamba Cemetery in Delhi, and Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi**, are considered '**untraceable**' as their **precise locations or current conditions are unknown**.
- The decision follows the **criteria outlined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**

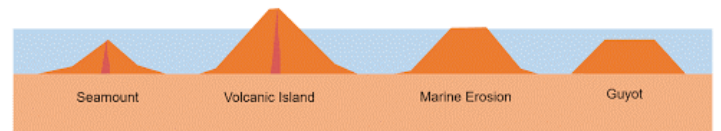
Delisting means **these monuments will no longer receive conservation, protection, or maintenance from ASI**, allowing **construction and urbanization in the area**.



The AN Seamount is a structural feature (400 km long and 150 km wide) in the Central Indian Basin, located about 3,000 km away from India's coast. From an oceanic depth of about 4,800 km, it rises to about 1,200 metre



Note: [Seamounts](#) are **underwater mountains** formed through volcanic activity and are recognized as hotspots for marine life.



ISA: It is a **Jamaica-based intergovernmental body** established under the [UNCLOS](#). It holds authority over the ocean floors outside of its 167 member states' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)

4. KALYANA CHALUKYA DYNASTY

Context: A 900-year-old **Kannada inscription from the Kalyana Chalukya dynasty** was discovered in a neglected state at Gangapuram, Mahabubnagar district.

3. AFANASY NIKITIN SEAMOUNT (AN SEAMOUNT)

Context:

India has applied to the International Seabed Authority (ISBA) for rights to explore the **Afanasy Nikitin Seamount (AN Seamount)**, a **cobalt-rich region** in the Indian Ocean.

This move, motivated partly by **Chinese activity in the area**, aims to secure strategic resources. The AN Seamount, **located about 3,000 km** from India's coast, is **rich in cobalt, nickel, manganese, and copper deposits**.

Issues:

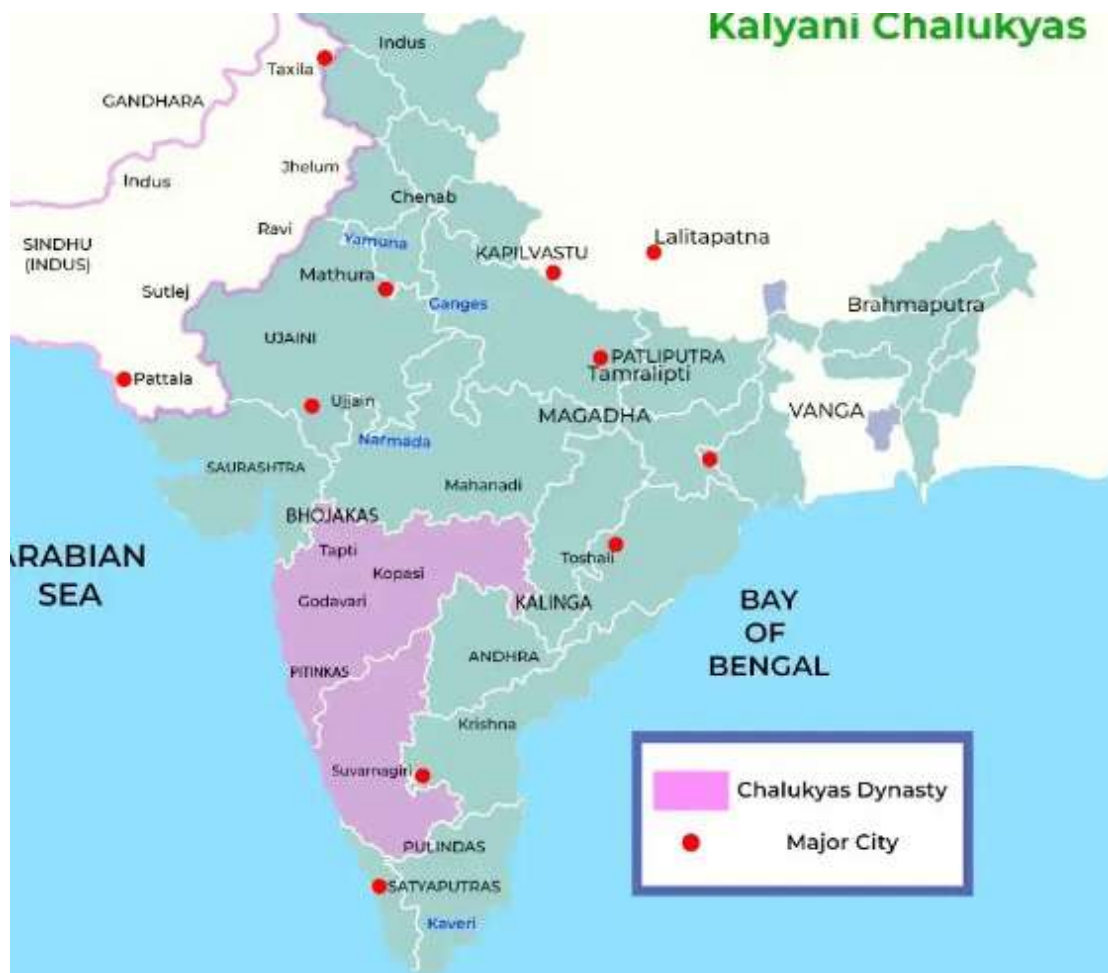
The application faces challenges due to overlapping claims by Sri Lanka and international regulations governing seabed exploration. Also, the cost of exploration and extraction is very high.

India is also seeking permission to explore the **Carlsberg Ridge for polymetallic sulphides**.

Archaeologists found it near **Chowdamma temple** during a heritage preservation campaign. The inscription, dated June 8, 1134 CE, **records toll tax remission for a temple lamp.**

About the dynasty:

Topic	Details
About Chalukya Dynasty	Ruled the central Indian plateau of Deccan between 6th and 12th centuries. Consisted of three closely related but distinct dynasties: 1. Chalukyas of Badami (6th–8th centuries); 2. Chalukyas of Kalyani (Western Chalukyas); 3. Chalukyas of Vengi (Eastern Chalukyas)
About Chalukyas of Kalyani	The Western Chalukya Empire, also known as the Kalyani Chalukyas, ruled the western Deccan and South India from the 10th to 12th centuries Primarily the Kannadiga dynasty , named after the capital city of Kalyani (modern-day Bidar, Karnataka). The empire was founded by Tailapa II during Rashtrakuta rule , governing Tardavadi in the Bijapur district. They defeated Rashtrakuta in 973. Reached peak under Vikramaditya VI (1076-1126 CE) , considered the ‘Chalukya Vikrama era’ Expanded into Deccan and southern India , defeating Cholas and gaining vast territories from the Kaveri River to the Narmada River. Administration: Hereditary, power passed to a male heir or brother. Feudatories managed territories The Western Chalukya minted punch-marked gold coins called pagodas with Kannada legends. Art and Architecture: Contributed to Kannada and Telugu literature. Their architecture is a link between the Badami Chalukya architecture of the 8th century and the Hoysala architecture of the 13th century. Known for ‘ Gadag style ’ temples in Tungabhadra-Krishna doab region. Temples depict religious and secular themes. Notable temples include the Mallikarjuna temple of Bellary, Siddeshvara temple in Haveri, and Kallesvara temple in Davangere district.



GS-2**1. POSTAL BALLOTS****Context:**

The [Election Commission of India](#) has announced the **provision of postal ballots for absentee voters from essential services in Tamil Nadu.**

Workers from various sectors including **Mercantile Marine, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited, Chennai Metro Rail Limited, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Food Corporation of India, Zonal Office (South), and the media industry** are eligible.

Currently, the following voters are also allowed to cast their votes through postal ballot:

1. Service voters (armed forces, the armed police force of a state and government servants posted abroad)
2. Voters on election duty
3. Voters above 80 years of age or Persons with Disabilities (PwD)
4. Voters under preventive detention

Procedure for Postal Ballots:

According to EC instructions, the **facilitation centre in charge of handling postal ballots is required to open the drop box daily** in the presence of party and candidate representatives. Each constituency's ballots are placed in a large envelope and then sent to the **Returning Officer (RO)** at the end of each voting day. The RO assumes custody of these bags, storing them securely in a designated **"special strong room"**

Procedure for Absentee Voters:

For absentee voters, Booth Level Officers (BLOs) deliver ballot forms to homes and collect filled forms within five days. Essential services personnel can vote at special centres for three days before polling. Postal ballots are sent to the **Returning Officer (RO) daily**. To ensure secure handling, postal ballots are transferred to a strong room at the counting centre before counting.

About Postal ballots:

It refers to a **method of voting where eligible voters receive their ballots by mail**, rather than **casting their votes in person at a polling station**. This allows voters who are unable to physically attend a polling station, such as those living abroad, military personnel, or individuals with disabilities, to participate in elections.

2. SECTION 153A OF THE INDIAN PENAL CODE**Context:**

The Supreme Court, in a recent judgement, clarified that to constitute an offence under [Section 153A](#) of the Indian Penal Code, the **essential requirement is to incite enmity and disharmony among different groups or communities.**

What is Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code?

Section 153A of the IPC penalizes actions that promote hostility between groups based on **religion, caste, race, etc.** Offenders spreading hate or disharmony through words, images, or actions **face imprisonment for up to three years, fines, or both**. If the offence occurs in a place of **worship**, the punishment can **increase to five years in prison.**

The application of the law:

1. **Hate speech laws have been invoked** under different regimes to crack down on criticism of public functionaries and to arrest individuals.
 - a. For example, a **Marathi actor was arrested** (booked under Section 153A of the IPC) last year, for a Facebook post allegedly defaming an NCP leader.
2. **According to the NCRB data**, the rate of conviction for Section 153A is very low. In 2020, **1,804 cases were registered** (six times higher than in 2014), however, the conviction rate was 2%.
3. Also, the **registration of multiple FIRs** across different states drains the resources of the accused to secure legal representation.

Safeguards against misuse:

1. **Section 153A requires prior sanction** (before the trial begins, not at the stage of preliminary investigation) from the government for initiating prosecution.
2. **In the Arnesh Kumar v State of Bihar case (2014)**, the SC laid down a set of guidelines. For instance, the police cannot automatically arrest a suspect before investigation for crimes that carry a punishment of less than seven years.
3. **In 2021, the SC ruled that the state will have to prove intent** (to cause disorder or incite people to violence) to secure a conviction under Section 153A.

3. PREVENTIVE DETENTION

Context: The Supreme Court emphasized the **need to prevent the arbitrary use of preventive detention powers, overturning a Telangana High Court decision.**

- It clarified that preventive **detention is meant to avert future harm, not as a form of punishment**, and should be based on careful consideration of facts.
- The court highlighted that **preventive detention is a severe measure and should not be invoked routinely or arbitrarily by authorities**.

The Supreme Court also underscored that **the grounds for detention must be clearly stated**, and the decision should be based on a thorough examination of relevant facts.

About Preventive Detention:

- Preventive detention entails the **detention of an individual without a trial or conviction by a court**, aiming to **prevent future offences rather than punish past ones**.
- Governments enact preventive detention laws to **ensure public safety and maintain social order**.
- In India, **Article 22 of the Constitution** provides **safeguards for individuals detained under such laws**.
- It **limits the duration of preventive detention to three months** unless **an Advisory Board approves an extension**.
- The detainee has the **right to know the grounds of detention** and **make representations against it**.
- Parliament **has exclusive power to enact preventive detention laws for defence, foreign affairs, or national security reasons**, while both Parliament and State Legislatures can enact laws for maintaining public order or essential services.
- Various laws in India, such as the **National Security Act (NSA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)**, allow for preventive detention for up to 12 months without formal charges, with periodic review by an advisory board.

4. SLAPP SUITS AND INJUNCTIONS

Context:

The Supreme Court has cautioned courts against the **use of SLAPP suits** by powerful entities to **curb free speech**, particularly in cases involving **media platforms and civil society**.

What are SLAPP suits?

SLAPP suits, or Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation, are legal actions filed by entities, such as corporations or individuals, with the intent to **intimidate or silence critics**, typically activists, journalists, or members of the public, by **burdening them with costly legal proceedings**.

E.g., In 2000, the **Tata Group filed a SLAPP suit** against environmental activist Dr. Claude Alvares and others for publishing a book critical of the company's activities.

What is the case here?

In a recent order, the **Court set aside injunctions against Bloomberg Television Services India Pvt Ltd**, emphasizing the need to balance free speech rights with reputational concerns in defamation suits. The Court highlighted the potential misuse of **pre-trial injunctions** to stifle public debate and underscored the importance of exceptional caution in granting such injunctions.

What are Injunctions?

An injunction in India is **a legal remedy used to prevent a party from carrying out a specific action**, such as **intellectual property infringement** or breach of contract. It is a court order requiring a **party to do or cease certain actions and plays a crucial role** in legal battles. Violating an injunction can result in contempt of court charges.

An ex-parte injunction, issued without hearing from the other party, is granted in emergency situations to prevent irreparable harm.

5. GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)

Context:

India, leading the Group of Friends (GOF) comprising **40 member states**, convened a **meeting to discuss strategies for strengthening legal frameworks against crimes targeting peacekeepers**.

- **India launched a new database hosted on the Unite Aware platform** to record **crimes against peacekeepers** and **monitor accountability efforts**.
- The meeting **underscores member states' commitment**, led by India, **to uphold the safety and dignity of peacekeepers worldwide**.

The **GOF was launched by India in 2022** to **promote accountability for crimes against the Blue Helmets** during its presidency of the UN Security Council.

India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco and Nepal are co-chairs of the GOE, which comprises 40 member states.

GS-3

1. BIMA SUGAM

Context:

The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has approved the establishment of **Bima Sugam**, an **online insurance marketplace**, aimed at simplifying the process of **buying, selling, and servicing insurance policies**, as well as **settling claims**.

Features of Bima Sugam:

- Bima Sugam functions as an **e-commerce platform** where insurance companies can offer their **products, providing customers with an end-to-end digital journey.**
- It **eliminates paperwork by offering policies in electronic format** and **allows customers to access all their policies** - life, health, and non-life insurance - in one application or window.
- Bima Sugam is expected to **make insurance policies more affordable** by reducing commissions paid to intermediaries, potentially leading to lower premiums for policyholders.
- Additionally, it **offers a unified platform for policy issuance, claim settlement, and service requests,** contributing to **transparency and collaboration in the insurance sector.**

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 the 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 launched **"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

FARM, led by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with support from the **Global Environment Facility (GEF),** intends to shift **financial incentives towards farmers to adopt low- and non-chemical alternatives,** promoting **sustainable practices.**

By phasing out hazardous pesticides and Agri-plastics and encouraging better management standards, the program **aims to prevent the release of over 51,000 tons of hazardous pesticides and 20,000 tons of plastic waste,** while also **reducing carbon dioxide emissions and protecting over 3 million hectares of land.**

3. 'SHIVA' AND 'SHAKTI,' EARLIEST BUILDING BLOCKS OF THE MILKY WAY

Context:

Astronomers have discovered **two ancient streams of stars, named Shakti and Shiva,** which are among the **earliest building blocks of the Milky Way galaxy.**

- These streams, identified using data from the **European Space Agency's Gaia telescope,** are believed to have **merged with the Milky Way around 12 billion years ago.**
- Each structure contains stars with similar chemical compositions, **formed approximately 12-13 billion years ago and with a mass about 10 million times greater than our sun.**

Gaia, launched in 2013, has been instrumental in **mapping the Milky Way's three-dimensional structure,** aiding astronomers in detecting structures like Shakti and Shiva. Further studies, including future Gaia surveys, are expected to provide additional insights into the formation and evolution of the Milky Way galaxy.

In Hinduism, the **union between Shiva and Shakti gave rise to the cosmos.** Identifying the Shakti and Shiva structures has helped to bring the **Milky Way's turbulent earliest stages into focus.**

2. FINANCING AGROCHEMICAL REDUCTION AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME – OR FARM

Context:

Seven countries - **Ecuador, India, Kenya, Laos, Philippines, Uruguay, and Vietnam** - have initiated a program called the **Financing Agrochemical Reduction and Management Programme (FARM)** to address pollution from **pesticides and plastics in agriculture.**

- This initiative aims to **combat the release of toxic persistent organic pollutants (POPs)** into the environment caused by the **use of harmful chemicals in farming.**

4. RESOLUTION ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Context:

The UN General Assembly adopted a significant resolution focused on **promoting safe, secure, and trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) systems** that align with **sustainable development goals.**

- The resolution emphasizes **respect for human rights throughout the AI life cycle** and acknowledges AI's potential to **advance the Sustainable Development Goals.**
- It is the **first time the Assembly has addressed regulation in this emerging field.**
- The resolution calls for **refraining from AI sys-**

tems that violate human rights and advocates for regulatory frameworks to ensure safe AI use. The resolution is a U.S.-led resolution promoting safe, secure, and trustworthy AI systems, backed by over 120 Member States.

5. COP PRESIDENCIES' TROIKA

Context:

The hosts of upcoming United Nations climate conferences, **including the United Arab Emirates, Azerbaijan, and Brazil also known as COP Presidencies' Troika**, have called for nations to align their **nationally-determined contributions (NDCs)** with the goal of **limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius**.

- They aim for these **aligned NDCs to be submitted by early 2025**.
- The plan advocates for comprehensive NDCs covering all greenhouse gases, **with emission reduction targets of 60% compared to 2019 levels by 2035**.

The "**COP Presidencies' Troika**" refers to a **collaborative effort among three countries** that have **hosted, or will host, consecutive sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Troika system is designed to **ensure continuity and cooperation in the leadership of these international climate conferences**.

Typically, the Troika consists of the current COP host country, the country that hosted the previous COP, and the country scheduled to host the subsequent COP session.

6. APPLICATION PROGRAMMING INTERFACE (API)

Context:

CERT-In and CSIRT-Fin's whitepaper on API security is a step in the right direction.

What is API?

Aspect	Description
Definition	APIs facilitate communication between software components by providing a set of definitions and protocols. For instance, a weather app on your phone communicates with the weather bureau's software system through APIs to display daily weather updates.
Importance	Integral for innovation in the digital sphere, empowering seamless integration and interoperability .
Usage	Widely used in various industries, including finance, healthcare, e-commerce, social media, and more.
Functionality	Allows applications to access and interact with the features or data of other applications or platforms.
Types	Includes Web APIs, RESTful APIs, SOAP APIs, GraphQL APIs , and more, catering to different use cases.
Benefits	Enhances efficiency, accelerates development, fosters collaboration, and enables cross-platform integration.
Security Challenges	Vulnerabilities include data breaches, unauthorized access, injection attacks, and denial-of-service attacks .
Security Measures	Implementing strong authentication, encryption, rate-limiting, input validation , and regular cyber security audits.
Emerging Technologies	Integration with artificial intelligence (AI) for anomaly detection, predictive analytics, and threat mitigation.

Future Trends	Increasing adoption of APIs in the Internet of Things (IoT), AI, machine learning, and blockchain technologies for enhanced functionality.
Government initiatives	Open Government Data platform (it has over 1 lakh APIs); API Setu
	Policy on Open Application Programming (government’s approach to the use of Open APIs to promote software interoperability)
	National Data Governance Policy (aims to standardize APIs for secure data management)
	National Data and Analytics Platform (or NDAP) (NITI Aayog’s initiative that hosts datasets from across India)

7. AI TOOL PREDICTS NEEM FRUIT METABOLITE CONTENT

Context:

Researchers at Jawaharlal Nehru University’s School of Biotechnology have developed an Artificial Intelligence-based tool to predict the metabolite content in neem fruits, specifically azadirachtin, which is used as a biopesticide.

- The AI model analyses images of neem leaves and fruits to classify them as having either low or high azadirachtin content, eliminating the need for expensive and cumbersome analytical equipment like high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC).
- The model, trained using deep learning frameworks and synthetic image augmentation, achieved high accuracy in classifying fruit metabolite content.

An Android app called Fruit-in-Sight has been developed based on the best predictive model, enabling fruit pickers to quickly assess azadirachtin content in neem fruits in the field, empowering them to select fruits with high azadirachtin content efficiently.

This innovation is expected to streamline the neem industry without additional cost, time, or effort.

8. STATIO SHIV SHAKTI

Context:

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) has approved the name ‘Statio Shiv Shakti’ for the landing site of Chandrayaan-3’s Vikram lander.

- The name ‘Statio Shiv Shakti’ reflects the duality of nature in Indian mythology, representing both masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) aspects.
- This name aligns with IAU’s guidelines, which prohibit names with political, military, or religious significance.

The IAU, responsible for assigning names to planetary surface features, follows specific rules and conventions for naming.

9. POWER LINES BAN RULES EASED IN GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD HABITAT

Context: The Supreme Court has eased the ban on high-power transmission lines within the habitat of the endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB) in Rajasthan and Gujarat.

- This decision comes after the formation of an expert committee tasked with balancing conservation efforts and development goals.
- The GIB, listed as Critically Endangered, faces threats including collision with overhead transmission lines, prompting conservation efforts amid a dwindling population.

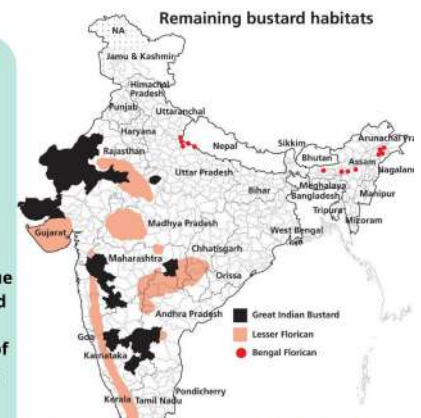


Great Indian Bustard



About Great Indian Bustard

- It is India's most critically endangered bird
- It is considered the flagship grassland species and is a symbol of the health of the grassland ecology.
- Threats: Power transmission lines, hunting, habitat loss due to agricultural expansion, and other factors.
- Legal protection: Schedule-I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, (legal protection from hunting)
- IUCN: Critically Endangered



The population is mostly confined to Rajasthan and Gujarat (with a small population in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh)

To know more Visit insights IAS Daily Current Affairs

10. KERALA: MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT DECLARED AS A STATE-SPECIFIC DISASTER

Context:

Recently, Kerala has declared the man-animal conflict a state-specific disaster, shifting responsibility from the forest department to the state disaster management authority.

- Previously, Uttar Pradesh became the first state in India to declare death through a man-animal

conflict a state disaster and the deceased’s family were mandated to give a compensation of Rs 5 lakh by state disaster management authority.

Current management vs. proposed change:

Aspect	Current Management	Proposed Change
Responsibility	Forest Department under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	State disaster management authority under the Disaster Management Act
Decision Making Authority	Chief Wildlife Warden	State Disaster Management Authority (Chief Minister at State Level)
District Level Authority	District Collector as the executive magistrate	District Collector as a Chairperson of District Disaster Management Authority
Intervention Capability	Limited by the Wildlife Protection Act	Enhanced powers to take decisive actions under Disaster Management Act 2005
Judicial Oversight	Decisions may be questioned in court under wildlife laws	Limited judicial interference due to provisions of the Disaster Management Act
Jurisdiction of Courts	Courts can entertain suits under relevant wildlife laws	Only the Supreme Court or High Court can entertain suits related to actions under Disaster Management Act, 2025 (Section 71)

Other State-Specific Disasters:

- Odisha and Kerala declared **snakebite** a **state-specific disaster in 2015**.
- Kerala declared **COVID-19 as** a state-specific disaster in 2020.
- **Heat waves, sunburn, Sunstroke, Soil piping, Lightning and coastal erosion** were declared in state disasters

11. KRISHI INTEGRATED COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTRE (ICCC)

Context:

The [Krishi Integrated Command and Control Centre \(ICCC\)](#) was recently inaugurated by Agriculture ministry as a **technological solution aimed at revolutionizing agricultural practices**.

- It leverages **state-of-the-art technologies such as artificial intelligence, remote sensing, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)** to collect and process extensive data on various agricultural parameters like **temperature, rainfall, crop yields, and production estimates**.

Features of ICCC:

- One of the primary objectives of the ICCC is to enable **efficient decision-making in the agricultural sector by providing comprehensive monitoring and visualization of geospatial information**.
- Aims to **generate individual farmer-specific advisories** through apps like **Kisan e-mitra, leveraging AI and machine learning algorithms** to customize recommendations based on **farmer data, historical crop sowing information, and weather forecasts**.
- The practical applications of the ICCC include **providing soil health advisories, facilitating drought management actions, identifying regions for crop diversification, and serving as a repository for agricultural data**.
- It aims to validate **yield estimates and assist in evidence-based decision-making for efficient agricultural practices**.

12. USAGE OF EMBEDDED SIM FOR MACHINE-TO-MACHINE COMMUNICATIONS

Context:

The [Telecom Regulatory Authority of India \(TRAI\)](#) has released recommendations on the **‘Usage of Embedded SIM for Machine-to-Machine (M2M) Communications’** following a request from the [Department of Telecommunications \(DoT\)](#).

- The recommendations **aim to streamline the regulatory framework for M2M embedded SIM (eSIM) in India**, especially for applications in various sectors like agriculture, transportation, healthcare, and in-

dustrial automation.

The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)** is a government agency that regulates the **telecommunications sector in India**.

TRAI was established by an **Act of Parliament on February 20, 1997**, and its headquarters are in New Delhi.

TRAI's mission is to create **conditions for the growth of telecommunications in India**, and its objectives include: **Providing a fair and transparent environment, facilitating fair competition in the market, and increasing broadband penetration in India.**

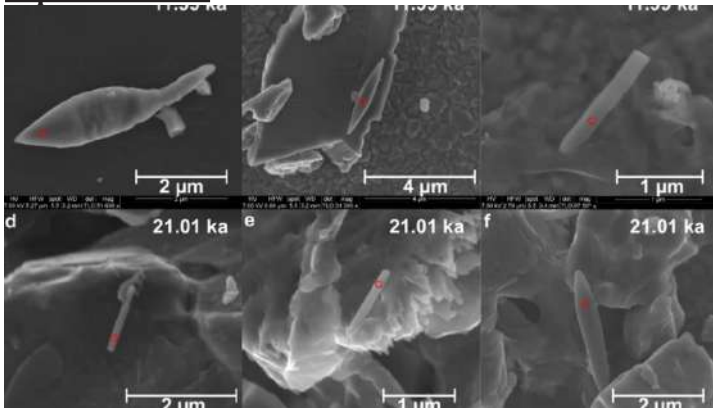
13. MAGNETIC FOSSILS

Context:

Scientists from the **CSIR-National Institute of Oceanography, Goa**, have discovered a **50,000-year-old giant magneto fossil in the Bay of Bengal**, making it one of the **youngest magneto fossils found to date.**

- Magneto fossils are fossilized **remains of magnetic particles created by magnetotactic bacteria**, which align themselves along Earth's magnetic field.
- These bacteria, first described in the 1960s, **create tiny iron-rich crystals of magnetite or greigite, aiding navigation in changing oxygen levels.**
- Using magnetic analyses and electron microscopy, scientists examined a sediment core from the Bay of Bengal, **revealing needle, spindle, bullet, and spearhead-shaped magnetofossils, alongside conventional ones.**
- The **sediment's origin was traced to river discharge, which supplied reactive iron, combining with organic carbon in low-oxygen conditions** to foster magnetotactic bacteria growth.

The presence of these fossils indicates **prolonged suboxic conditions in the Bay of Bengal, supporting bacterial proliferation.**



14. MEERKAT RADIO TELESCOPE

Context:

Astronomers using the **MeerKAT radio telescope**, initially aiming to **detect hydrogen gas in a specific galaxy, made a surprising discovery by identifying 49 previously unknown galaxies.**

- The MeerKAT telescope, **a precursor to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA)**, showcased its potential in this discovery.

The MeerKAT radio telescope is **a 64-antenna telescope in the Northern Cape region of South Africa that was launched in 2018**

It's operated by the **South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO)** and is part of the **Square Kilometre Array (SKA) initiative**

Scientists use the **MeerKAT to study hydrogen activity and pulsars**, and the telescope could help **deepen our understanding of how the universe formed.**

15. CAPTIVE ELEPHANT (TRANSFER OR TRANSPORT) RULES, 2024

Context:

New rules for elephant transfers, called the **Captive Elephant (Transfer or Transport) Rules, 2024**, have been introduced by the Centre, **liberalizing conditions for elephant transfers.**

What are Captive Elephants?

Captive elephants are **elephants that are owned and kept by humans**, often for various purposes such as historical roles in forest management, timber transport, religious ceremonies, or entertainment. They are distinct from wild elephants and are subject to regulations regarding their care and management.

Background:

Captive elephants, regulated by the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), are classified as **Schedule 1 species**, prohibiting their capture or trade. However, they can be translocated for specific reasons such as education, research, population management, or zoo specimens.

Previously, strict rules governed the transfer of captive elephants under the **Wildlife Protection Act**, with permission required from the **Chief Wildlife Warden**. Amendments in 2021 allowed transfers for religious or other purposes.

What are the updated Rules?

The **updated rules now allow transfers when the owner can't maintain the elephant or for better upkeep as**

deemed fit by the Chief Wildlife Warden. Health and habitat suitability assessments are required before transfers within or between states, with simplified permissions for interstate transfers.

Concerns:

These changes have raised questions about wildlife trafficking and the treatment of elephants, particularly with the establishment of large private zoos like the one in Jamnagar, Gujarat.

Elephant

African Elephants

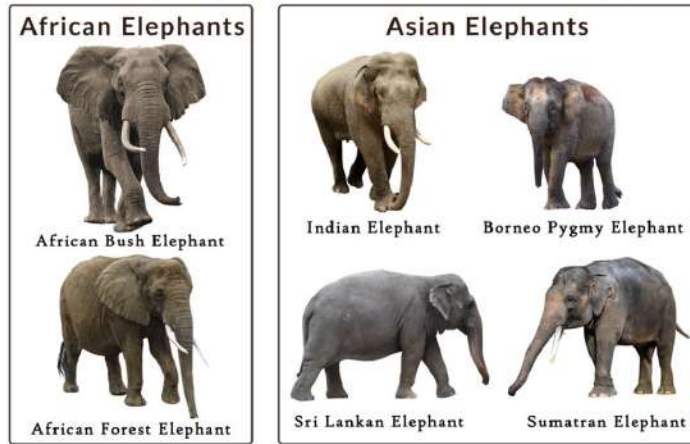
There are two subspecies of African elephants, the Savanna (or bush) elephant and the Forest elephant.

IUCN:
African Savanna: **Endangered**.
African Forest: **Critically Endangered**

Asian Elephants

There are three subspecies of Asian elephant which are the Indian, Sumatran and Sri Lankan

IUCN Red List: **Endangered**.
World Elephant Day: **August 12**



Comparison table between African and Asian elephant



Feature	African Elephant	Asian Elephant
Size	Larger, weighing between 4000-8000 kg	Smaller, weighing between 3000-6000 kg
Ears	Large fan-shaped ears (resembling shape of African continent)	Smaller rounded ears
Skin Texture	Skin is more wrinkled	Comparatively smoother skin
Head Shape	Single dome shape	Twin domed head
Tusk Growth	Both male and female African elephants grow tusks and are larger than Asian elephants	Only some male Asian elephants have tusks
Habitat	Savannahs and forests of Africa	Forests, grasslands, and scrublands of Southeast Asia and South Asia
Trunk Tips	Have two finger-like tips on the trunk	Have only one finger-like tip on the trunk
Social Behaviour	Tend to live in larger herds	Tend to live in smaller family groups
Lifespan	70 years	48 years

16. NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FUND

Context:

The **Karnataka government**, facing severe drought conditions, has taken an **unprecedented step by approaching the Supreme Court** against the Union government **for the delayed release of drought relief funds from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)**.

- The state, grappling with **extensive crop loss and water scarcity**, had submitted a memorandum to the **Centre requesting monetary aid**.
- The petition filed in the Supreme Court cites **violations of fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, particularly Articles 14 and 21**, pertaining to equality under the law and protection of life and personal liberty respectively.

The **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)** is a governmental fund set up in India to specifically **tackle situations arising out of natural calamities or disasters**.

It was established based on the **recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission in 2010**, replacing the erstwhile Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) and the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF). The NDRF is managed by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

17. POEM-3

Context:

ISRO achieved a significant milestone with its **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) successfully re-entering Earth's atmosphere without leaving any debris in orbit**.

- This achievement, following the **PSLV-C58/XPo-Sat mission, is termed another milestone by ISRO**.
- The operation involved **converting the final stage of the PSLV into POEM-3 and deorbiting it from 650 km to 350 km altitude**.
- This expedited re-entry process **aimed to minimize risks associated with accidental break-ups**.
- POEM-3 carried **nine experimental payloads, facilitating technology demonstrations and scientific experiments**.

This initiative aims to safeguard orbital environments, ensuring their viability for current and future space missions.

18. REPORTS IN NEWS

Report Title	Key Points
‘Enabling a Circular Economy in India’s Solar Industry: Assessing the Solar Waste Quantum’	Developed by MNRE and CEEW under NITI Aayog’s Action Plan for CE - Solar Panels
	India’s 66.7 GW capacity (FY23) has generated about 100 kt of waste , increasing to 600 kt by 2030
	Solar wastes contain critical minerals like silicon, copper, etc., toxic metals like lead and cadmium, and metals with high economic value
	Recommendations include database maintenance, recycling promotion, and technology innovation
Unicorn 2.0: Adding the Next Trillion Report	Released by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) , assesses Unicorn 1.0 impact and outlines Unicorn 2.0 vision.
	Unicorn 1.0 (2010-2023) contributed 10-15% to GDP, had 100+ unicorns, and improved inclusivity and sustainability
	Unicorn 2.0 (2024-35) aims to add \$1 trillion to GDP with shifts like leading startups, innovation focus, and governance improvements
Global Trade Update	Released by UNCTAD , reports a 14% rise in services exports and a 6% decline in goods export from India in 2023
	Forecasts rebound in international trade in 2024
	Warns of logistical challenges like shipping disruptions in the Red Sea, Black Sea, etc., affecting costs and supply chains

Reports	Description
India Gaming Report 2024	Released by Interactive Entertainment and Innovation Council (IEIC) and WinZO
	Key findings: India is the largest gaming market with 568 million users , accounting for 1 in 5 online gamers globally . The Indian gaming market is expected to reach \$6 Billion by 2028 . The number of Indian gaming companies surged from 25 in 2015 to over 1400 in 2023
Food Waste Index (FWI) Report 2024	Regulations: MeitY acts as the nodal agency for online gaming regulations and development; Draft National AVGC Policy, and National AVGC Centre of Excellence; 100% FDI allowed in the gaming sector utilizing automatic route within Electronic System and IT & BPM sectors
	Released by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) . The report co-authored with WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme) was published ahead of International Day of Zero Waste (observed annually on 30 March)
	Key Findings: Households across all continents wasted over 1 billion meals a day in 2022, while 783 million people were affected by hunger and a third of humanity faced food insecurity. Food Waste generates an estimated 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions .
	Issues: Due to the lack of robust cold chains, hotter countries generate more food waste per capita in households; Fragmented food system.
	Suggestions: Systemic action through the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model. Example, Courtauld Commitment 2030 (UK) , Australian Food Pact etc; Establish a roadmap or delivery plan, targeting priority areas or “hotspots” of waste
	The report aligns with SDG 12.3 , aiming to reduce food loss and waste by 2030. This includes reducing post-harvest losses (measured by the Food Loss Index (FLI) and managed by FAO) and halving per capita global food waste (measured by the Food Waste Index (FWI) and managed by UNEP)
About WRAP: It is a climate action NGO (established in the UK in 2000) working to tackle the causes of the climate crisis and give the planet a sustainable future	

<p>World Energy Transitions Outlook Brief 2024: Tracking CoP 28 outcomes</p>	<p>Released by IRENA ((founded 2009; HQ: UAE): The International Renewable Energy Agency is an intergovernmental organization mandated to facilitate cooperation, advance knowledge, and promote the adoption and sustainable use of renewable energy.</p> <p>Key Findings: 2023 added 473 GW (73% contributed by Solar energy) additional Renewable to the global energy mix; However, annual additions are still insufficient and must reach almost 1100 GW to meet the tripling target; Asia was the leader in renewable deployment with a growth of over 20%, driven by China.</p> <p>New EV models, financial incentives and improving charging infrastructure are key drivers for this</p> <p>Challenges: Rising financing costs; Supply chain issues</p> <p>Recommendations to achieve tripling targets include reforming multilateral finance mechanisms, supporting infrastructure, and robust policy frameworks.</p>
<p>International Finance Corporation (IFC) Green and Social Bond Impact Report 2023</p>	<p>About IFC: IFC (founded 1956; HQ: Washington DC, USA) is an international financial institution (part of the World Bank) that offers investment, advisory, and asset-management services to encourage private-sector development in less developed countries.</p> <p>Key Findings: \$2 billion raised through green bonds is expected to reduce over 3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per year; Over \$1 billion raised through social bonds will cater for sectors like Agribusiness, Gender finance, Education, etc.</p> <p>About Green Bonds: Debt securities designated to finance environment-friendly projects like Sustainable Water and Waste Management, Green Buildings, Pollution control etc. In 2022, the Ministry of Finance approved India's First Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs) Framework.</p> <p>India's First Green Bond was issued by Yes Bank Ltd in 2015. In 2023, India issued the first tranche of its first SGBs worth Rs. 80 billion</p> <p>About Social Bonds: Financial instruments issued by governments; and corporations to raise funds for projects to address social issues like affordable housing, healthcare etc.</p> <p>In 2023, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) raised more than Rs. 1000 crore via social bonds.</p>
<p>Western Ghat Regions (WGR) Soil Erosion Study by IIT-Bombay</p>	<p>Key findings: Portions of WGR in Tamil Nadu and Gujarat registered 121% and 119% increase in soil erosion respectively. Across the whole of WGR, the increase in erosion rate was 94%. In absolute terms, Maharashtra had the highest 79 tons per hectare per year soil loss in 2020, while Kerala had the lowest loss.</p> <p>Protection Measures: Gadgil committee and Dr. K. Kasturirangan committee to assess WG's ecology; Western Ghats Natural Heritage Management Committee under Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change</p>

19. BLACK CARBON

Context:

Black carbon, emitted from incomplete combustion of biomass and fossil fuels, is a significant contributor to global warming and poses health risks.

- In India, the **residential sector is the largest source of black carbon emissions.**

Prioritizing black carbon reduction aligns with **India's global commitments to decarbonization and sustainable development goals**, potentially preventing thousands of premature deaths annually.

Black carbon is a component of fine **particulate matter (PM) air pollution**. It's also known as **soot**. Black carbon is a **light-absorbing particle** that contributes to **climate change by releasing heat energy into the atmosphere**. It's the second most important **contributor to global warming and is considered a short-lived climate pollutant**.

Black carbon is formed by the **incomplete combustion of wood and fossil fuels**. The process also **creates carbon dioxide (CO), carbon monoxide, and volatile organic compounds**.

Black carbon particles can also settle **on the surface of snow and ice, accelerating its melting.**

20. ICG SHIP SAMUDRA PAHEREDAR

Context:

ICG Ship Samudra Paheredar recently arrived at **Manila Bay, Philippines**, as part of an overseas deployment to **ASEAN countries**. This deployment aims to showcase the Indian Coast Guard's marine pollution response capabilities and strengthen bilateral cooperation with the Philippine Coast Guard.

Built by ABG Shipyard, Surat, it is stationed on the **East Coast of India in Vishakhapatnam**, Andhra Pradesh. Equipped with advanced pollution response and control equipment, including containment and recovery devices for oil spills, it plays a vital role in safeguarding marine environments. Additionally, it boasts special features like **integrated platform management and power systems**, along with the capability to operate one twin-engine ALH/Chetak helicopter.

21. OPERATION SANKALP

Context:

Launched by the **Indian Navy in December 2023**, the operation completed 100 days, operating in key areas including the **Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, and off the East Coast** of Somalia. Its objective is to safeguard India's maritime interests, counter maritime threats, combat piracy resurgence, and curb narcotics trade in the Indian Ocean Region.

22. T+0 SETTLEMENT CYCLE

Context:

India's stock exchanges have launched a **beta version of same-day transaction settlement, known as T+0, for select cash segment stocks.**

- Currently, in a **limited rollout phase**, T+0 enables trades to **settle on the same day they occur**, offering benefits such as **faster access to funds and increased flexibility for investors.**
- This new system is **being tested with around 25 stocks and a select group of brokers**, with the aim of **assessing its effectiveness and resolving any issues before wider implementation.**
- **T+0 settlement allows investors to promptly reinvest funds**, react quickly to market changes, and potentially reduce counterparty risk.

After following a T+5 settlement cycle, India moved to T+3 in 2002 and further reduced it to T+2 in 2003. In

2021, Sebi introduced the T+1 system before making it the norm in 2023.

The **settlement cycle is the time required for a trade to be settled.** On Indian exchanges, the **settlement cycle for all traded instruments is T+1 day**, with T representing the trading day.

23. DOMESTICALLY SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT INSURANCE COMPANIES

Context:

In the financial year 2023-24, **three domestic insurance companies** have been identified as systemically important for the stability of the economy:

- **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC), and New India Assurance Co. Ltd.**
- These companies are considered **"too important to fail,"** and there is an expectation of **government support in case of financial distress.**
- Designated as Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs), **they play a critical role in ensuring the availability of insurance services to the national economy.**
- **D-SIIs are subject to additional regulatory measures to manage systemic risks and moral hazard issues**, including enhancing corporate governance and implementing robust risk management frameworks.

24. MEME COINS

Context:

Meme coins, a subset of cryptocurrencies, have gained popularity within the **digital currency realm.**

- Originating from **internet meme culture**, these coins are **often created as humorous tributes and lack substantial underlying value.**
- Their key characteristics include **extreme volatility, large or uncapped supplies, and easy creation facilitated by blockchain technology.**
- **Dogecoin and Shiba Inu are notable examples of meme coins**, with quirky branding and significant community engagement.

However, investing in meme coins carries **risks due to their speculative nature and lack of fundamental value.**

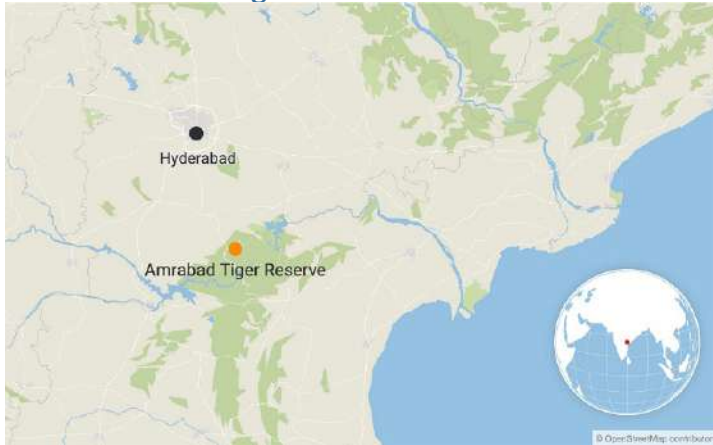
25. STATINS

Context: A study conducted by researchers in China has identified a mechanism through which **statins, commonly prescribed for cardiovascular disease**, can increase the **risk of glucose intolerance and diabetes.**

- The study found that a **gut microbiome deficient**

- **The Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary is located near Warangal, Telangana, and lies on the border of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.**
- It is traversed by the rivers **Dayyam Vagu and Godavari.**
- The sanctuary is home to various flora including **bamboo, maddi, dry deciduous teak, thuruman, and madhuca.**
- As for fauna, it harbors species such as **the sloth bear, chinkara, nilgai, black buck, among others.**

About Amrabad Tiger Reserve:



- **Amrabad Tiger Reserve is located in the Indian state of Telangana.**
- It is one of the **largest tiger reserves in the country**, covering an area of approximately 2,800 square kilometers.
- The reserve is situated on the **border of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**, encompassing **parts of the Nallamala Hills.**
- It was established with the aim **of conserving the endangered Bengal tiger and its habitat.**
- Apart from tigers, the reserve is home to various other species of wildlife including **leopards, sloth bears, Indian gaurs, and several species of birds and reptiles.**

30. CENTRAL POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

Context:

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has collected over Rs 777 crore in environment protection charge (EPC) and environmental compensation (EC) funds, but only about Rs 156 crore, or 20%, has been utilized.

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) receives compensation under two categories:

1. **Environment Protection Charge (EPC):** EPC, mandated by the Supreme Court, involves a **one per cent charge on specified new diesel** vehi-

cles registered in Delhi and NCR.

2. **Environmental Compensation**, based on the Polluter Pay Principle and ordered by the National Green Tribunal (NGT), is utilized for various environmental protection measures, including strengthening laboratories and monitoring networks, implementing NGT orders, and capacity building for pollution control boards.

About CPCB:

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is a **statutory organization** established in **September 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.** It was later given powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981,** and serves as a field formation providing technical services to the **Ministry of Environment and Forests under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.** Its key functions include promoting the cleanliness of streams and wells to prevent water pollution and improving air quality to prevent air pollution nationwide.

31. RICE WITH LOW METHANE EMISSION

Context:

The IRRI-South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) aims to **develop rice varieties with low methane emissions and improve the productivity of nutritious rice.**

- ISARC is promoting **agronomic practices like Dry Seeded Rice (DSR) and Alternate Wet and Drying (AWD)** to achieve these goals.
- The focus was **discussed during the 7th ISARC Coordination Committee meeting**, attended by officials from **India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.**

32. COVINET

Context:

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has launched a **global network of laboratories named CoViNet**, aimed at identifying and monitoring **potential novel coronaviruses.**

- **CoViNet** will **not only focus on SARS-CoV-2 but also assess other coronaviruses like MERS-CoV, enhancing laboratory capabilities.**
- The network will **include animal health and environmental surveillance** to enable timely risk assessment, **informing WHO policies and protective measures.**
- **CoViNet aims to support the establishment of more laboratories in low- and middle-income countries** to monitor MERS-CoV and other significant coronaviruses.
- **CoViNet comprises 36 laboratories from 21**

countries across all six WHO regions, including three from India.

Coronaviruses, being RNA viruses, are a significant concern in this context, with some causing mild illnesses like the common cold while others, such as SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, and SARS-CoV-2, have led to severe outbreaks and pandemics.

33. WHITE RABBIT COLLABORATION

Context:

CERN has introduced the White Rabbit Collaboration to promote the adoption of its White Rabbit (WR) technology, initially developed to synchronize devices in particle accelerators with sub-nanosecond precision.

- This technology has applications beyond particle physics and has been incorporated into the Precision Time Protocol (PTP) standard.
- Unlike other technologies, WR is open-source and based on standards, allowing companies and institutes to adapt it to their needs.

White Rabbit (WR) is a technology developed at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, to provide time synchronization and data transfer for the LHC accelerator chain.

WR is a deterministic Ethernet-based network that provides sub-nanosecond accuracy and picosecond precision of synchronization.

It uses the Precision Time Protocol to achieve sub-nanosecond accuracy, which allows for precise adjustment of clock phase and offset.

WR also provides the flexibility and modularity of real-time Ethernet networks.

34. KALAM-250

Context:

Skyroot Aerospace successfully conducted a test firing of the Stage-2 propulsion system, named Kalam-250, of the Vikram-1 space launch vehicle.

- Stage 2 is crucial for propelling the launch vehicle from the atmospheric phase to outer space.
- The Kalam-250 utilizes high-strength carbon composite materials and a solid fuel system with an Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers (EPDM) Thermal Protection System (TPS).
- It also features a carbon ablative flex nozzle and high-precision electro-mechanical actuators for thrust vector control.

35. UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK

Context:

UNESCO has added 18 new sites to its Global Geoparks network, bringing the total to 213 across 48 countries.

- These new geoparks are located in Belgium, the Netherlands, Brazil, China, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, and Spain.
- Each geopark showcases unique geological features and cultural heritage, contributing to sustainable development and promoting local communities

UNESCO's Global Geoparks (UGGPs) emerged in 2015, building upon the geopark concept that originated in the mid-1990s

UGGPs are unified geographical areas recognized for their international geological significance and managed with a holistic approach encompassing protection, education, and sustainable development.

They are governed by a body with legal recognition under national legislation. Designation as a UGGP is not permanent; it is reassessed every four years.

Additionally, membership in the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) is mandatory for UGGPs, promoting collaboration and networking among geoparks worldwide.

MAPPING

INTERNATIONAL

36. INDIA MOZAMBIQUE TANZANIA (IMT) MARITIME TRILATERAL EXERCISE

Context:

INS Sujata and INS Tir have entered the harbour phase of the India-Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) maritime trilateral exercise.

Phases:

1. Harbour Phase (March 21st to March 24th, 2024): Activities include a Planning Conference, joint harbour training sessions on various aspects like Damage Control, Fire Fighting, Visit Board Search and Seizure procedures, Medical Lectures, Casualty Evacuation, and Diving operations.
2. Sea Phase: Focuses on practical exercises such

as countering asymmetric threats, Visit Board Search and Seizure procedures, boat handling, manoeuvres, firing exercises, and joint **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance**.

These exercises demonstrate India's and the Indian Navy's dedication to bolstering maritime security and cooperation with neighbouring countries in the Indian Ocean Region while advancing **SAGAR (Safety and Growth for All in the Region)**.

Mozambique and Tanzania

Mozambique is a country in **southeast Africa bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east, Tanzania to the north, Malawi and Zambia to the northwest, Zimbabwe to the west, and Eswatini and South Africa to the southwest**. The capital and largest city is **Maputo**.

Tanzania is a country in East Africa within the African Great Lakes region. It borders Uganda to the north; Kenya to the northeast; the Indian Ocean to the east; Mozambique and Malawi to the south; Zambia to the southwest; and Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the west



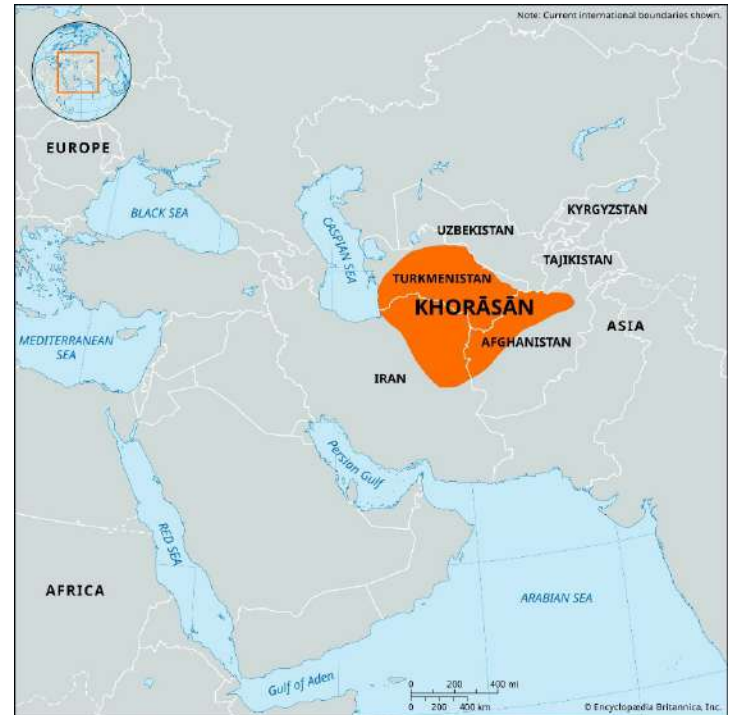
37. KHORASAN

Context:

The gunmen, **associated with ISIS-K (Islamic State Khorasan)**, carried out a shooting spree at **Moscow's Crocus City Hall**, resulting in the deaths of at least 143 people and injuries to hundreds more.

ISIS-K, or Islamic State Khorasan, is a terrorist organization that emerged in eastern **Afghanistan in late 2014**. It is one of the most active ISIS affiliates, known for its extreme brutality.

The group's name "**Khorasan**" refers to the historical region that includes parts of **Iran, Afghanistan, and other Central Asian countries**. The name comes from Persian and means "**where the sun arrives from**".



38. VIETNAM'S MEKONG DELTA

Context:

Rising saltwater levels threaten **Vietnam's Mekong Delta**, causing nearly \$3 billion in annual crop losses. The region, known as "**Vietnam's rice bowl**," faces intensified saltwater intrusion due to rising sea levels, droughts, and other factors. This could result in significant **damage to agriculture, particularly in the southern Ca Mau province**.

About the Mekong Delta in Vietnam:

It is a wet coastal area of over 40,500 km² where the Mekong River meets the sea. It's a vital agricultural and aquacultural region, with a history dating back to the 4th century BC. The area is renowned for its **biodiversity but is also vulnerable to climate change** and related issues like sea level rise and saltwater intrusion.

About the Mekong River

It is one of the world's longest, flows through East and Southeast Asia, spanning 4,909 km. Originating from the **Tibetan Plateau**, it traverses **six countries before reaching southern Vietnam**. Its **seasonal fluctuations**

and natural obstacles hinder navigation, yet it remains a crucial trade route.



Read about the [Mekong Ganga Cooperation \(MGC\) Mechanism: Here](#)

INDIA

39. NIMMU-PADAM-DARCHA ROAD

Context:

The [Border Roads Organisation \(BRO\)](#) recently completed the strategic Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road in Ladakh.

About the Road:

The Nimmu–Padam–Darcha road (NPDR) (298km), also known as the **Zaskar Highway**, is under construction, linking **Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh via Zaskar** valley. It connects Nimmu in the Indus Valley to Padum in Zaskar and Darcha village in Lahul and Spiti. Constructed by the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)**, it serves as an alternative to the Leh–Manali Highway, enhancing connectivity between Ladakh and the rest of India.

The road, along with the [Atal Tunnel and proposed Shingo La Tunnel](#), aims to provide all-weather connectivity and shorten the Manali to Kargil distance by 522 km.

Significance:

The road’s strategic significance lies in its shorter distance and the crossing of only one pass. This all-weather connectivity enhances defence preparedness and boosts economic development **in the Zaskar Valley**.



40. LUNA CRATER IN BANNI PLAINS

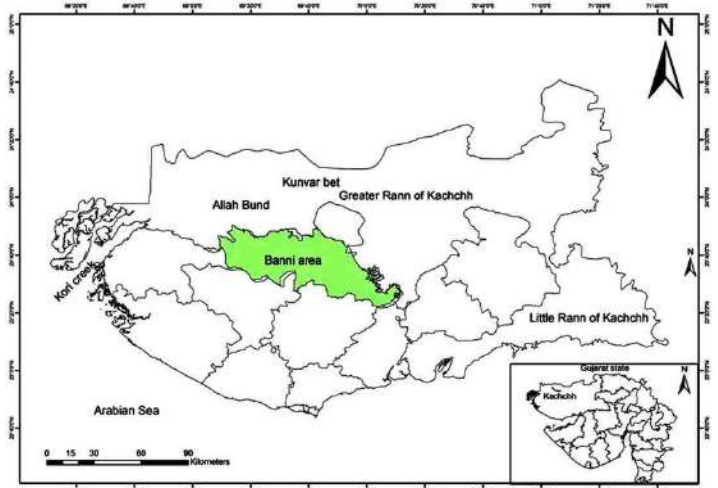
Context:

A **1.8 km wide crater (known as Luna Crater)** in **Gujarat’s Kutch region** (in the Banni Plains) has been confirmed as the result of a **massive asteroid impact**, reshaping the landscape and dating back approximately **6,905 years**

Luna region was **one of the several settlements linked to the ancient Harappan Civilization**. Other impact craters in India include **Dhala** in Madhya Pradesh, **Lonar** in Maharashtra, and **Ramgarh** in Rajasthan

The Banni Grassland near the **Great Rann of Kutch in Gujarat is considered the largest grassland in Asia**, covering 2,618 square kilometres, which is about **45% of Gujarat’s pastureland**

Read more about [Banni Plains here](#)



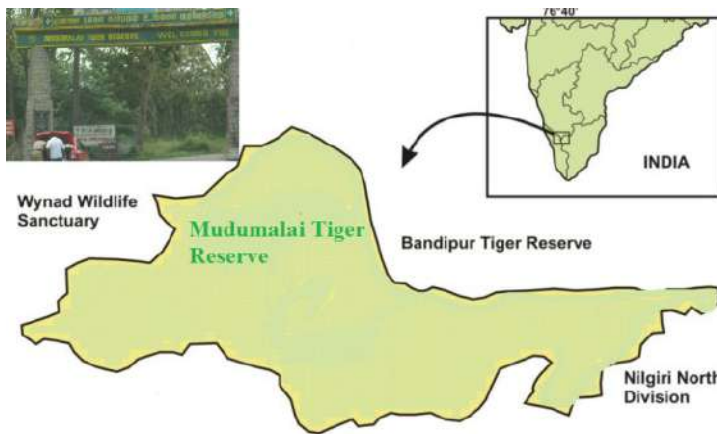
41. MOYAR VALLEY (TAMIL NADU)

Context:

Recent surveys show an increase in vulture numbers, highlighting the Moyar Valley's importance as a nesting site for **critically endangered Gyps vultures**

About Moyar Valley:

It is located in **Mudumalai Tiger Reserve** and is the only region with the largest nesting colony of Gyps vultures in the wild. This entire stretch is an **important biome in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**



About Gyps indicus (also known as the Indian vulture or White-backed vulture)

They are characterized by **whitish feathers on a dark head and neck, with a pale collar**. They are colonial nesters and often **found in flocks**. However, their population is declining rapidly. They primarily inhabit open **grasslands in states like Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan**. Classified as critically endangered by the IUCN and listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act-1972, conservation efforts include banning non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like diclofenac and Ketoprofen for veterinary use, along with the implementation of the Vulture Action Plan 2020-25.



About Vultures:

It is **one of the 22 species of large carrion-eating birds** that live predominantly in the tropics and subtropics. They act an important function as **nature's garbage collectors** and help to keep the environment clean of waste. India is home to **9 species of Vulture** namely the Oriental white-backed (Indian Vulture), Long-billed, Slender-billed, Himalayan, Red-headed, Egyptian, Bearded, Cinereous and the Eurasian Griffon.

Bearded, Long-billed, Slender-billed, and Oriental white-backed are protected in **Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972**. Rest are protected under '**Schedule IV**'.

Vulture Species	Conservation Status
White-rumped vulture (Indian Vulture)	Critically Endangered
Slender-billed vulture	Critically Endangered
Long-billed vulture	Critically Endangered
Red-headed vulture	Critically Endangered
Egyptian vulture	Endangered
Himalayan Griffon	Near Threatened
Cinereous vulture	Near Threatened
Bearded vulture	Near Threatened
Griffon vulture	Least Concern