

INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

IRIDESCENT CLOUDS

Rare iridescent clouds, known as nacreous clouds, were spotted over parts of Scotland, northern England, and the West Midlands recently.

26 DEC - 30 DEC 2023

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

1. THE PROPOSITION OF CREATING AN ALL-INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE (AIJS)

Context:

The [article](#) discusses the proposition of **creating an All-India Judicial Service (AIJS), a centralized recruitment system** for judges at the additional district and district levels across Indian states.

- President Droupadi Murmu recently suggested that AIJS could help diversify the judiciary.

About All India Judicial Service (AIJS):

All India Judicial Service (AIJS)	
Definition	AIJS is a proposed centralized recruitment system for judges at the level of additional district judges and district judges across all states.
Objective	AIJS aims to centralize the recruitment of judges , similar to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) model, assigning successful candidates to states.
Origin	<p>Originating from Law Commission reports in 1958 and 1978, AIJS seeks to address structural issues like varying pay, faster vacancy filling, and standardized nationwide training.</p> <p>The idea was revisited in 2006 by the Parliamentary Standing Committee, supporting a pan-Indian judicial service.</p> <p>The 'Strategy for New India @ 75' by NITI Aayog proposes judicial reforms, including the creation of an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) akin to IAS and IPS.</p>
Constitutional Basis	<p>Article 312 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of AIJS, similar to central civil services, upon a resolution by the Rajya Sabha supported by at least two-thirds of its members.</p> <p>However, Article 312 (2) states that the AIJS cannot include any post inferior to that of a district judge, as defined in Article 236.</p> <p>According to Article 236, a district judge can include various positions such as city civil court judge, additional district judge, etc.</p>

What is the current system of District Judges' Recruitment?	The current system involves Articles 233 and 234 granting states the authority over the appointment of district judges, managed through State Public Service Commissions and High Courts , since HCs exercise jurisdiction over the subordinate judiciary in the state.
	Panels of HC judges interview candidates after the exam and select them for appointment.
	All judges of the lower judiciary up to the level of district judges are selected through the Provincial Civil Services (Judicial) exam, commonly referred to as the judicial services exam.
	Article 233 deals with the appointment of district judges, while Article 234 deals with the recruitment of persons other than district judges to the judicial service.

Feasibility of implementing the All-India Judicial Service (AIJS):

1. **Uniform Standards:** One of the primary advantages of AIJS is the establishment of uniform standards for the recruitment of judicial officers across states. This could ensure a **consistent and merit-based selection process**, enhancing the overall quality of the judiciary.
2. **Addressing Judges to Population Ratio and Filling Vacancies:** In 1987, a **Law Commission report** recommended a target of **50 judges per million populations** for India, compared to the then **10.50 judges**.
 - a. While the current sanctioned strength has surpassed **20 judges**, it remains significantly lower than the **US (107) and the UK (51) per million people**.
 - b. AIJS would fill the vacancies of judges in the lower courts, addressing the present issue of **around 5,400 vacant positions and a pendency of 2.78 crore cases in lower judiciary** primarily due to delays in holding regular exams by states
3. **Enhanced Accountability:** With a centralized service, there could be greater accountability in terms of **performance evaluation, training, and disciplinary actions**. This can contribute to a **more transparent** and accountable judicial system.
4. **Attracting talent pool:** A centralised selection process under AIJS would facilitate attracting the best legal talent from across the country, through a **rigorous examination-based system**.
 - a. Currently, many states lag on legal acumen and merit in appointments.
5. **Increase Diversity:** AIJS would increase the representation and diversity of judges from **different regions, genders, castes, and communities**, reflecting the social composition of the country
6. **Prevents parochialism and political interference:** By giving All India character, it prevents parochialism

and political interference in appointments that currently take place under state-level control.

7. **Bottoms-Up Approach:** By adopting a bottom-up approach in recruitment, AIJS aims to tackle issues like **corruption and nepotism** in the lower judiciary. This approach is anticipated to enhance the **quality of justice dispensation** at the grassroots level.

Challenges of implementing the All-India Judicial Service (AIJS):

1. **Diversity of Laws:** India is a diverse country with different states having distinct languages, cultures, and legal traditions.
 - a. Implementing AIJS may **face resistance due to concerns about homogenizing the judiciary**, potentially neglecting the nuanced understanding of local laws and customs.
2. **Violates Basic Structure Doctrine:** this expansive mandate would require significant constitutional amendments, potentially violating the basic structure doctrine and upsetting the **current judicial federalism** under **Articles 233 and 234**.
3. **Language Barrier:** Since cases in lower courts are argued in local languages, there have been apprehensions as to how a person from north India can hold hearings in a southern state.
 - a. Thus, another fundamental concern regarding AIJS is the language barrier.
4. **Administrative Challenges:** Establishing a centralized recruitment system for the entire country involves significant administrative challenges.
 - a. **Coordination, infrastructure, and adapting to regional variations** in caseloads and legal issues present formidable hurdles.
5. **Political Opposition:** As per **Article 233**, recruitment to subordinate judiciary is the prerogative of the State. The proposal for AIJS may face political opposition, especially if it is perceived as a **centralizing move that encroaches upon the powers of state governments**.
6. **Reservations:** Additionally, ensuring reservation for locally domiciled citizens poses legal and utility challenges, casting doubt on the effectiveness of AIJS as judicial reform.

Way forward:

1. **Ensuring High Standards:** Conducted by the UPSC, the All India Judicial Services examination aims to uphold “high standards” in the judiciary, aligning with the recruitment processes of other prestigious civil services.
2. **Addressing Vacancy Causes:** While AIJS is proposed as a solution for judicial vacancies, a more prudent approach involves investigating and understanding the underlying reasons for the high number of vacancies, especially in underperforming states.
3. **Overcoming Administrative and Judicial Hurdles:** AIJS faces resistance from administrative blocks and High Courts, despite the Supreme Court’s endorsement. To be effective, AIJS must be **meticulously designed to address shortcomings** and garner support from all stakeholders.

4. **Urgency in Recruitment:** To address the judiciary’s vacancy crisis, prompt recruitment through AIJS is essential. A **substantial and timely influx of judges**, akin to the recruitment model in **IAS, IPS, and IFS**, is crucial for an efficient judicial system.
5. **Ensuring Meritocracy:** Following selection, comprehensive training for Judicial Service officers is vital. A meritocratic judiciary is **imperative, and achievable through a competitive recruitment process**. The urgency for implementation cannot be overstated.

Conclusion

As of 2023, **there is no consensus on AIJS** due to diverging opinions among major stakeholders. A balanced approach **considering pros and cons with a judicious structure** can potentially make AIJS viable. But key, Centre-State consensus is the prerequisite before it transforms from idea to reality after almost fifty years of debate.

Insta Links:

[SANSAD TV: PERSPECTIVE- ALL INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE](#)

Mains Links

Q. Critically examine the Supreme Court’s judgement on the ‘National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014’ with reference to the appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India. (150 words)

Q. With reference to the Indian judiciary, consider the following statements:(USPC 2021)

1. Any retired judge of the Supreme Court of India can be called back to sit and act as a Supreme Court judge by the Chief Justice of India with the prior permission of the President of India.
2. A High Court in India has the power to review its own judgement as the Supreme Court does.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: A

Topics: [Role of civil services in a democracy.](#)

2. EXTENTION OF MISSION KARMYOGI

Context:

On Good Governance Day, Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh launched the Extended Version of **Mission Karmayogi** in New Delhi.

Feature	Description
My iGOT	Delivers targeted training courses on the home page of individual officers, addressing their unique capacity-building needs as identified in the Capacity-Building Plan for their Ministries/Departments.
	This ensures a highly personalized, focused, and targeted capacity-building experience , aligning individual and organizational learning needs.
Blended Programs	Facilitates equitable access to training methodologies across all levels, meeting dynamic training needs.
	Integrates traditional offline (in-person) classroom courses with online learning components, allowing officers and faculty to benefit from the flexibility and convenience of online courses while retaining the invaluable benefits of face-to-face classroom interactions.
Curated Programs	Designed to cater to diverse learning needs of Ministries/Departments and Training Institutions .
	Course Providers can curate relevant content, resources, and assessments from the iGOT repository with a Programmatic approach, providing a tailored learning journey.
12 Domain-Specific Capacity Building E-learning Courses	Developed in two months as part of the Annual Capacity Building Plan (ACBP) of the DOPT by Karmayogi Digital Learning Lab (KDLL) of DoPT. These 12 courses directly address the domain competency requirements of Civil Servants working in DoPT and assist other Government organizations in handling functional matters effectively on a day-to-day basis.
VIKAS (Variable & Immersive Karmayogi Advanced Support)	A new blended learning program for capacity-building of middle management civil servants in the Central Secretariat. VIKAS is a blended program with iGOT, consisting of 33 hours complemented by 30 hours of offline training at ISTM . It focuses on the development of functional, behavioral, and technological competencies required in the Central Government.

What is “Mission Karmayogi”- National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)?

It is a mission moded programme aimed to **transition civil services from ‘Rules based’ to ‘Roles based’ Human Resource (HR) Management** by aligning work allocation of civil servants by matching their competencies to the requirements of the post, thereby leading to **“an effective citi-**

zen-centric civil service”

Purpose of the mission

- **Revival of bureaucracy:**
 - The bureaucracy is **instrumental in the growth** and progress of the country.
 - However, it is often said that the **recruitment and post-recruitment ecosystem** of civil servants in India is outdated.
 - So, the mission aims at a revival of the Indian bureaucratic nature through the civil servants.
 - In this line, the mission addresses the changing **needs and aspirations of the citizens** in their **interaction with the bureaucracy**.
- **Competent civil servants:**
 - Central to the programme is the recognition that a suitable government workforce requires a **competency driven capacity building approach**.
 - The workforce will focus on **imparting competencies** critical to discharge its roles.
 - This will be achieved through a **Competency Framework for Civil Services** that will be totally indigenous to India.

Key Features of Missions Karmayogi

- **Capacity building:**
 - The mission aims at **comprehensive reform** of the capacity building apparatus.
 - It will hence pay attention at **individual, institutional and process levels** for efficient public service delivery
 - E.g., Under the **Mission, nearly 95,000 Railway staff**, including all ticket conductors, reservation and freight clerks and station masters are being trained in better service delivery.
 - **Capacity Building Commission:** will assist the PM Public Human Resources Council in approving the Annual Capacity Building Plans
 - E.g. **Cross immersive learning** for the ministry staff in the **Civil Aviation Ministry’s Annual Capacity Building Plan**. Public officials were sent to private airlines/airports to observe their managerial practices.
- **Shift from Rules to Roles:**
 - The programme will support a transition from **“rules-based to roles-based” Human Resource Management (HRM) practices** among the officers.
 - It will focus more on **role-based management**, and so, will aim to allocate roles and

jobs bases on **competencies of the officers.**

Training:

- For training purposes, the mission has created an online platform called as **iGOT-Karmayogi**. iGOT stands for Integrated Government Online Training.
 - It will provide ‘**anytime-anywhere-any device**’ learning to train around **2.0 crores users** which was so far unachievable through traditional measures.
 - **Using the “70-20-10” formula:** Seventy per cent of adult learning comes from job experience, 20 per cent is a result of peer-to-peer sharing, and only 10 per cent comes from classroom teaching.
 - It will provide content to learn from **global best practices rooted in “Indian ethos.”**
 - Apart from domain knowledge training, the scheme will focus on **“functional and behavioural competencies”** as well.
- Civil servants will have to undertake courses on this platform on which the officers’ **performance will also be evaluated.**
- **Efficient, effective and empathetic civil services:** For instance, Inspector Inian, an SHO from Puducherry, after undergoing soft skills training under mission karmayogi, said that after receiving a mother’s complaint, he used his professional skills to find her lost child.
 - This, he remarked. gave him far more joy compared to promotions or salary hikes.
- **“Whole Government” approach:** Training resources are being shared across departments and silos are being broken.

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi likened public service to being a trustee of public resources. Civil servants are uniquely positioned to play a role in lifting more than 170 million out of poverty into prosperity. What is needed is professional bureaucracy i.e. bureaucratic in form and structure and non-bureaucratic in attitude and spirit.

Insta links:

- [Mission Karmayogi](#)

Mains Link:

Q. Mission Karmayogi aims at making Indian Civil Servants innovative, proactive and technology-enabled while making them empowered with specific role competencies and high efficiency. Discuss.

Topics: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

3. FOREIGN MINISTER VISIT TO RUSSIA: INDIA-RUSSIA RELATIONS

Context:

The recent **External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar’s recent visit to Russia** holds significance amid efforts to renew ties between India and Russia.

Key Highlights of the visit:

Highlights	Details
Economic Collaboration	Emphasis on strategic collaboration in defence, space exploration, nuclear energy , and technology sharing. Agreement on the expansion of Russian hydrocarbon exports to India
Program of Cooperation in the Far East	Finalization of the program of cooperation in the Far East. The decision to hold an early meeting of EaEU-India FTA negotiations.
	India and Russia signed a Protocol on Consultations for 2024-2028 , aiming to advance military and economic cooperation, energy trade, connectivity, and people-to-people exchanges.
Agreement on Nuclear Power Plants	India and Russia signed agreements for future units of the Kudankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu. India operates two Russian-built nuclear plants , with four more under construction in Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu. The Kudankulam nuclear power plant, India’s largest , began construction in March 2002 with Russian technical assistance. The first unit has operated at its 1,000 MW design capacity since February 2016, with full capacity expected by 2027.
Diplomatic Initiatives	Discussion on multilateral forums and international organizations: BRICS, SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), and UN affairs.

Timeline of the Relationship:

1468	• Russian traveller Afanasy Nikitin began his journey to India
1947	• Diplomatic relations between India and Russia began even before India achieved independence
1965	• The Soviet Union served successfully as peace broker between India and Pakistan after an Indian-Pakistani border war
1971	• Watershed moment in relations between India and the Soviet Union with the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship
1993	• After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, India and Russia entered into a new Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation
1994	• India and Russia entered into a bilateral Military-Technical Cooperation agreement
2000	• Since the signing of " Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership " in 2000, India-Russia ties have acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation
2010	• The Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a " Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership "

Important Dimensions of India-Russia Relations:

Dimensions	Details
Political Relations	The Annual Summit meeting between the PM of India and the Russian President is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership.
	The Strategic Partnership between the two countries was elevated to the level of " Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership " in 2010.
International/Multilateral Organisations and Connectivity Projects	BRICS, SCO, G20, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)
Defence and Security Cooperation	Evolution of India-Russia military-technical cooperation from a buyer-seller framework to joint research, development, and production of advanced defence technologies
	Russia is India's top military supplier accounting for 45% of total defence imports .
	Examples include the BrahMos Missile System , licensed production of SU-30 aircraft, and T-90 tanks. Deal for five S-400 batteries in 2018, and supply of MiG-29-K aircraft and Kamov-31
	Cooperation is guided by the Agreement on the Programme for Military-Technical Cooperation for 2021-2031

Trade and Economic Relations	Revised targets of increasing bilateral investment to US \$50 billion and bilateral trade to US \$30 billion by 2025. Bilateral investments surpassed the previous target of \$30 billion in 2018, leading to a revised target of \$50 billion by 2025 .
Nuclear Energy	2014 Strategic Vision for strengthening cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy. Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP) is being built in India with Russian cooperation.
Space Cooperation	Cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. MoU between ISRO and ROS-COSMOS on Joint Activities in the field of Human Spaceflight Programme (Gaganyaan) .
Science & Technology	Working Group on S&T under IRIGC-TEC. Institutional mechanisms: Integrated Long Term Programme (ILTP) and Basic Science Cooperation Programme.
	Initiatives: Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), GIAN, and Russia-India Network (RIN) of Universities.
Cultural Cooperation	A strong tradition of Indian studies in Russia. Strong Russian interest in Indian dance, music, yoga, and Ayurveda .

Challenges faced by India India-Russia relationship.

- **Issues related to Defence** – There has been a gradual decline in the orders of India from Russia because of India's desire to diversify its defence imports from other countries like Saudi Arabia, the USA, and Israel.
- **Russia's apprehensions over India's foreign policy** – Russian officials have repeatedly criticized the idea of the Indo-Pacific and the Quad, arguing that it is meant to contain China. Russia believes that India is currently an object of the Western countries.
- **The USA factor** – The source of divergence between Indian and Russian interests lies in the continuing problems that Russia faces in its relations with the US. The consequence of this confrontation is that Moscow has increasingly leaned on China both for support as well as a way to undermine American power.
 - Further, India also signed all the Foundational agreements with the US. Such as **LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA**.
 - Due to these developments, Russia changed their decades-old policy and started supplying China with weapon systems like the Sukhoi 35 and the S-400 missile defence system.

- **The China Factor** – Russia’s increasing bond with China also to some extent brings strain to Indo-Russia relations.
- **Failure of RIC** -- Russia already proposed a Russia-India-China (RIC) forum of foreign ministers. However, there has been no major diplomatic success for RIC due to India’s unresolved issues with China.
- **China-Russian ties are growing** due to their shared interest in opposing the US. The intense geostrategic rivalry between China and the US in the region. Russia which opposes the US joined hands with China. This is evident as Russia joined the **Chinese One Belt One Road initiative**.

Way forward

- India has to rebuild on its strengths and **common concerns with the Russians**.
- Both India and Russia have to identify **their strengths and common concerns like** developing joint projects in third countries. Such as the involvement of India and Russia in the **Rooppur nuclear plant project in Bangladesh**.
- India needs to deepen its **scientific and technological relations** with Russia since a base for this already exists.
- India can use some creative means to build a **Russia-India-China (RIC) alliance**.
- India needs to **balance its relationship between Russia, China and the US**. This is essential after the US conducted a Freedom of Navigation operation(-FONOP) in India’s Exclusive Economic Zone.

Conclusion

On the whole, **Both India and Russia will have to learn to navigate** their relationship amidst challenges emerging not just from bilateral factors but also regional and global ones, as both countries seek to strengthen their position at a time of flux in the international order.

Insta Links:

- [30 years of Indo-Russian Friendship Treaty 1993](#)
- [India-Russia relations](#)

Mains Links:

Q. What is the significance of Indo-US defence deals over Indo-Russian defence deals? Discuss with reference to stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (UPSC 2020)

Prelims Links:

Q. Recently, India signed a deal known as ‘Action Plan for Prioritization and Implementation of Cooperation Areas in the Nuclear Field’ with which of the following countries? (UPSC 2019)
 (a) Japan
 (b) Russia
 (c) The United Kingdom

(d) The United States of America

Ans: B

GENERAL STUDIES – 3

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

1. INDIA’S JOBS CRISIS

Context:

India is facing a jobs crisis, marked by **low labour demand for regular wage work**.

Status of High unemployment rate in India:

- The **unemployment rate** in the country has consistently **increased over the last two decades** - from **2% in 2010 to 5% in 2015 and 6.1% in 2018**.
- According to the **Center for Monitoring Indian Economy**, it was **over 7% for most of 2021 and 2022**
- **Over 42% of India’s graduates under 25 were unemployed in 2021-22** as per the State of Working India 2023.
- Despite a rise in GDP growth during the 2000s, the **employment growth rate remained unresponsive**, indicating a phenomenon of **jobless growth**

Types of Employment in India:

Types		Description
Wage Employment		Regular Wage Jobs: Formal, structured positions with fixed salaries, found in government organizations, private companies, and multinational corporations.
		Casual or Daily Wage Labor: Involves daily wage labour, prevalent in sectors like construction, agriculture, and unorganized labour markets.
Self-Employment		Entrepreneurship: Individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activities, running small businesses or enterprises such as shops, local services, or manufacturing units.
		Farmers: Agriculture serves as a significant source of self-employment , with individuals owning and operating farms independently or as part of a family-run enterprise.
		Freelancing and Informal Work: Reflects the gig economy trend, with individuals working as freelancers, consultants, or in part-time roles.

Causes for high unemployment rate:

- **Structural shortfalls:**
 - In the past 40 years, economic growth in India has aided a **structural shift away from agricultural jobs**.
 - However, this has **mainly moved to construction and not to high-value sectors** such as manufacturing or services.
 - In the **non-farm sector**, the link between GDP growth and the **pace of job creation has weakened over time**, leading to rising unemployment.
- **Shortfalls with social infrastructure:**
 - While India has made **huge progress in improving its physical infrastructure**, it has **fallen behind on human infrastructure like education and skills**.
- **Urban-rural disparity:**
 - **Physical infrastructure** investments are focused **more on urban areas**, which benefited in the 1990s.
 - However, from 2000 onwards, with the pace of **de-urbanisation of manufacturing** gathering momentum, the **manufacturing sector is migrating away from urban to rural areas to remain cost-competitive**.
 - However, **poor physical and human infrastructure in rural areas** has **constrained the growth drivers** and limited the size of the manufacturing sector in India.
- **Education-skills mismatch:**
 - **Jobs catering to the qualifications of graduates** who have studied subjects like agriculture, history, English, philosophy and communication are **difficult, and increasingly impossible** to come by.
 - On the one hand, the young find themselves **overqualified for manual labour jobs**. On the other, they **lack the technical skills** required for high-paying jobs in IT and professional services.
 - In the **absence of suitable employment in the private sector** for this section, many turn to government jobs.
 - However, a **rapid increase in the supply of educated youth**, coupled with a **gradual reduction of public-sector vacancies** has resulted in stiff competition for even the most junior positions in government offices.

growth. So even though GDP increases, output will increase only if labour productivity increases.

Social Impact of Unemployment in India:

Social Impact	Details
Marginalisation of People	Prolonged unemployment leads to the ability even when jobs become available. ness as skills diminish over time.
Social Unrest	High unemployment can result in disorder forms of manifestation such as protests.
Migration	High unemployment often drives rural to urban opportunities. This migration can slow the development of slums and inadequate infrastructure.
Impact on Education	Financial struggles due to high unemployment lead to less investment in education . Immediate earnings over education, perpetuating a cycle of ill-education across generations .
Disproportionate Impact on Social Groups	Disadvantaged groups like youth, women, and scheduled castes are disproportionately affected, exacerbating existing inequalities in society.
Increased Crime	Lack of lawful income sources due to unemployment leads to a turn toward illegal activities . Unemployment is a major factor in crime in affected areas .

Various Approaches to growth and employment:

Aspect	Details
Keynesian Theory	Emphasizes aggregate demand as the key factor in growth. Expansionary fiscal policy is seen as a tool to boost labour demand.
Mahalanobis Strategy	Identifies availability of capital goods as the key to growth and employment. Advocates for policies promoting capital goods production .
Structuralist Theories	Based on experiences of developing countries, it focuses on removal of payment constraints on output. This led to high growth during the 1970s and early 1990s .
Common Pre-sumption	Across these frameworks, increasing the output of the formal sector was believed to be sufficient for growth.
Contemporary Challenge	Recognition that addressing the employment challenge requires a broader focus on employment , not just relying on growth.

Jobless Growth in India:

- **Two types of jobless growth in India:**
 - **Weak Responsiveness:** Automation and tech introduction lead to jobless growth, but increasing GDP can still boost employment.
 - **High Responsiveness:** In India, **labour productivity growth is strongly** linked to output

Measures to address unemployment:

- India needs **good infrastructure, both physical and human**, to create more jobs.
- There has to be a **convergence in the paths of urbanisation and industrialisation** to streamline job creation.
- **Tier II cities should be focused** as these new cities have the potential to **generate 70% of the country's new jobs and GDP over the next 20 years**.
- **National Employment Policy (NEP):** Implement a **comprehensive strategy** to address unemployment.

cused policy considering both the demand and supply sides. Enhance **workforce quality, bridge skills gaps**, and create public jobs.

- **Urban MGNREGA:** Introduce an urban version to provide income security for informal jobs and create public assets in urban areas.
- **Industrialization and Agricultural Investment:** Rapid industrialization and increased investment in agriculture create more jobs and boost productivity.
- **Diversify Agriculture and Promote Agro-Processing:** Shift to labour-intensive crops, promote agro-processing for export, reduce wastage, and increase value addition.
- **Expand Education and Healthcare:** Enhance human capital through education and healthcare expansion, providing employment in the social sector.
- **Reform Education, Provide Vocational Training:** Improve skills and employability through education system reforms and vocational/technical training.

Conclusion

More than 50% of India’s population is below the age of 25 and more than 65% is below the age of 35. India’s young demographic is an asset in an ageing world. This clearly presents the case for India to **address the jobless growth scenario**.

Mains Links:

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 Links:

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

2. INDIAN LABOUR DEMAND IN FOREIGN COUNTRY

Context:

The article is in continuation to the previous article published two days ago on [India’s jobs crisis](#).

Recent Developments Regarding Rising Demand for Indian Labour:

Rising Demand for Indian Labour	Developed countries face labour shortages due to rising costs and inflation.
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Countries Seeking Indian Workers	Greece (for seasonal agricultural workers), Italy (for municipal bodies), Israel (42,000 workers, potential expansion), France (agreement in 2018), and a recent partnership with Italy.
Reasons for Demand	Greece facing a shortage of 70,000 workers for agricultural production . Italy needs workers for municipal roles in depopulated towns . Israel seeking foreign workers to fill 90,000 jobs previously held by Palestinians.

Status:

As per recent government data, **there are around 13 million Indian** nationals abroad including labourers, professionals, and experts. The highest being in UAE (around 35 lakhs)

Government Steps:

Steps	
P r a v a s i Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)	Skill development initiative by the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. Focuses on training and certifying the Indian workforce for overseas employment .
Skill India International Centres (SIICS)	The government announced 30 SIICS in the 2023-24 Budget . Provides destination-based skilling, re-skilling, immigration assistance , and post-placement support. Offers domain skills training on international standards and pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) .
L a b o u r Agreements	India has signed 17 agreements with various countries between 2015 and 2023 to facilitate the movement of labour

Benefits of Sending Indian Labor Overseas:

Benefits for India	
Experience	Overseas labour migration provides international experience to labourers .
Incomes	Workers in developed countries earn higher wages , returning with savings that can be utilized to build assets in India (Remittances). The vast labour surplus minimizes the impact of shortages .
Goodwill	Skilled Migrant labourers act as informal ambassadors of India

However, **sending Indian labour overseas is not a comprehensive solution** to India’s unemployment problem. The current composition of the workforce, with **over 57% being**

self-employed, highlights the **necessity for creating more gainful employment** opportunities. What is needed is for India to take action by concurrently concentrating on **job creation domestically** and bolstering diplomatic efforts to promptly address challenges encountered by Indian workers abroad.

Topics: [Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.](#)

3. A NEW ECONOMICS FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Context:

The article is based on the book **“Breaking the Mould: Re-imagining India’s Economic Future”** and recommends **departing from manufacturing** and prioritizing the export of high-end services, challenging conventional economic approaches.

What is Inclusive growth?

Inclusive growth, as defined by **OECD and UNDP**, refers to fair economic growth that **involves and benefits all segments of society**, ensuring equal opportunities and outcomes irrespective of socio-economic factors.



India’s **post-reform era**, characterized by **economic liberalization and globalization**, has seen significant economic growth. However, this growth has not always translated into robust employment generation.

Factors that hindered India’s employment growth during the post-reform era:

- **Structural issues:** India’s economy continues to be characterized by a large informal sector with **limited job security and social benefits**. This has hindered inclusive employment growth as a significant por-

tion of the workforce remains vulnerable.

- E.g. **80 % workforce is employed** in the **informal sector**.
- **Skill mismatch:** The skill gap between the education system and industry requirements has led to unemployment among the youth. India’s education system often fails to equip students with the practical skills demanded by the job market.
 - E.g. **Only 2.5% of engineers in India** possess **artificial intelligence skills** while **only 5.5%** are qualified with **basic programming abilities**.
- **Labour market regulations:** Labour market regulations and inflexibilities have impeded employment growth. Stringent labour laws, although intended to protect workers, can discourage formal job creation, making employers hesitant to hire.
 - Example: The **Industrial Disputes Act and other labour laws**.
- **Technological disruption:** The job market in India is outgrowing traditional job roles with the advent of new-age tech and in the next five years, **40% of Indian employees** will need **reskilling** and **60% will need to upskill** to be market-ready.
- **Gender Disparities:** Gender disparities in employment persisted, with women often facing limited access to job opportunities, wage gaps, and social barriers to workforce participation.
 - E.g. **decline in female labour force participation rate from 34.8% in 1990 to 20.3% in 2020**.
- **Public Sector Employment:** The expansion of public sector employment, a traditional source of stable jobs, slowed down due to fiscal constraints, reducing opportunities for government jobs. E.g. **Increased disinvestment and Privatisations of PSUs**.
- **Slow Industrialization:** The pace of industrialization and the growth of **labour-intensive** manufacturing industries, crucial for absorbing a **sizable workforce**, **lagged behind** the demand.
 - Although the **service sector expanded**, it mainly generated employment in specialized fields like **IT and business process outsourcing (BPO)**, excluding a significant portion of the workforce.

Measures to be taken:

Measures	Description
Rethinking of Developmental Models	Consider reevaluating the traditional industry-led growth model and exploring an agri-centric model to create more employment in agriculture.
Shift Focus	Move away from policies solely focused on building the manufacturing sector and instead prioritize exporting high-end services .

Localized Economic Activity	Promote economic activity in rural areas and around farms through small, labour-intensive enterprises for processing agricultural produce.
Decentralization of Industries	Promote the decentralization of industries to ensure rural areas benefit from development and reduce migration pressure on urban jobs.
Equipping Education Required by Industry	Provide education that aligns with market demand, emphasizing vocational and technical education to improve employability.
Investment in Infrastructure	Invest in infrastructure development, which can serve as an engine for job creation.
Support Small-Scale Manufacturing	Avoid neglecting the small-scale and informal manufacturing sector, recognizing its importance in providing employment opportunities.
Cluster Development of MSMEs	Encourage cluster development to support job creation in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) concentrated in specific geographic areas.

The World Economic Forum suggests boosting social inclusion and economic growth through three practical ways:

1. **Increase investment in citizens' capabilities** to lift productivity growth.
2. **Upgrade national rules and institutions** related to work, in collaboration with governments, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations.
3. **Increase investment in labour-intensive economic** sectors with broader societal benefits, including sustainable infrastructure, care sectors, rural economy, and education.

Conclusion

The government has taken various steps to tackle the issue of unemployment. Schemes like **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Apprentice Protsahan Yojana, The National Career Service** etc. are welcome steps in this regard

Insta links:

- [Inclusive growth and issues arising from it](#)

Topics: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

4. RECENT DRONE ATTACK AND MARITIME SECURITY IN INDIA

Context:

India has issued a stern warning against recent drone attacks on India-bound merchant ships (near Porabander Port)

What was the issue?

Two merchant vessels, **MV Chem Pluto and a Gabon-flagged crude oil tanker**, were targeted in drone attacks in the Arabian Sea, raising concerns amid reports of **Houthi militants** targeting commercial vessels. The US attributed the drone attack on MV Chem Pluto to Iran. The incidents highlight heightened tensions in the region and the need for enhanced maritime security measures.

What is maritime security?

Maritime security refers to **measures and strategies implemented to safeguard the seas, oceans, and maritime activities** from various threats, including piracy, terrorism, environmental damage, and other illicit activities.

Importance of Maritime Security in India

Importance	Description
Geographical importance	India's long coastline of 7,516 km and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of approximately 2 million square km make maritime security a critical concern.
Economic significance	90% of India's international trade by volume and 70% by value occurs through sea routes; any disruption due to maritime security threats can severely impact the economy.
National security	India's vulnerability to security threats like piracy, terrorism, smuggling, and illegal fishing, was exemplified by the 26/11 terrorist attack in Mumbai using the sea route.
Strategic location	India's strategic position in the Indo-Pacific, intersecting major global shipping lanes , plays a crucial role in regional and global maritime security.
Protection of vital infrastructure	Major ports, nuclear power facilities (Tarapur, Kalpakkam) , and the satellite launch facility (Satish Dhawan Space Centre) require maritime security for protection.

Disaster response	Maritime security is vital in responding to natural disasters like tsunamis and cyclones, as seen in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
Environmental protection	Ensuring maritime security is essential to prevent activities like illegal fishing, smuggling, and hazardous waste dumping that can cause severe environmental damage.
Tourism	India's long coastline attracts tourism; maritime security is crucial for the safety and functioning of the tourism industry.
Scientific research	Seas and oceans are critical for scientific research; maritime security facilitates oceanography, marine biology, and climate studies .
International cooperation	India's efforts to enhance maritime security, as seen in the SAGAR vision , contribute to global initiatives for the safety and security of seas and oceans.

Challenges to the maritime security of India

- **Systemic weakness:** Inadequate surveillance and monitoring, lack of coordination among various agencies, insufficient training for personnel and manpower shortage restrict our ability to protect our coasts.
- **Piracy and maritime terrorism:** Piracy and maritime terrorism pose a significant risk to **India's economic and strategic interests**.
 - **E.g.,** Recent incidents of **Houthi rebels attacking ships bound for Israeli or from Israel** with ballistic missiles raise concern
- **Illegal fishing:** Illegal fishing remains a major issue in India's maritime security, with foreign vessels operating in Indian waters.
- **Maritime boundary disputes:** India has several maritime boundary disputes with its neighbouring countries, which have the potential to escalate into conflicts.
 - **Ex- Sir creek dispute with Pakistan.**
- **Environmental threats:** India's maritime security is also threatened by environmental issues such as **oil spills and pollution**, which can have a significant impact on **marine life and the livelihoods of coastal communities**.

Government measures undertaken

- **SAGAR Doctrine:** India's SAGAR Doctrine (**Security and Growth for All in the Region**) underscores India's commitment to fostering a secure and prosperous maritime neighbourhood.
- **Strengthening infrastructure:** The **Sagarmala program** aims to develop ports, harbours, and coastal security installations.
- **Improving coastal security:** The Indian Coast Guard

has launched a coastal security scheme called "**Sagar Kavach**" which involves the **deployment of patrol vessels, UAVs, and maritime surveillance systems to monitor the coastline**.

- In the present case of drone attack, the Indian Navy has deployed **INS Mormugao, INS Kochi, and INS Kolkata** to maintain a deterrent presence.
- **Countering piracy and maritime terrorism:** The Indian Navy has deployed warships to the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to counter piracy and maritime terrorism. The Navy has also conducted **joint exercises** with the navies of other countries, including the **United States, Japan, and Australia**, to enhance coordination and cooperation.
- **Combating illegal fishing:** The Indian Coast Guard has launched **Operation Olivia** to combat illegal fishing in Indian waters. The operation involves the **deployment of specialized patrol vessels to monitor and intercept foreign vessels engaged in illegal fishing**.
- **Enhancing cybersecurity:** The Indian government has launched a **national cybersecurity strategy**, which aims to enhance the **cybersecurity of critical infrastructure, including ports and maritime transportation systems**.
- **Technology:** A vessel traffic management system (VTMS) and national command control communication and intelligence network (NC3I) have been established to improve maritime security.
- **Regional cooperation:** India has prioritized regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean through initiatives like the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** and the **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)**.
- **HADR capabilities:** Prompt Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) responses like **Operation Sahayata in Mozambique** to natural disasters, such as cyclones and tsunamis, have earned India the reputation of a reliable partner in times of crisis. '**Vaccine Maitri**' has further elevated the status of India.
- **Capacity building:** It provides **training (ITEC)**, conducts **joint and passage exercises**, and shares expertise to enhance the prosperity and maritime security capacities of its neighbours.

Global Response:

- **Operation Prosperity Guardian:** Initiated by the US with allies like the UK, Bahrain, and Canada to protect maritime traffic from drone threats.

Way forward

- **Enhancing surveillance and monitoring:** This can be achieved by deploying advanced technology such as **drones, radars, and other maritime surveillance systems to monitor the coastline and detect suspicious activity**.
- **Improving coordination and cooperation:** The government should establish a mechanism to facilitate

information sharing and coordination among various agencies involved in maritime security, such as the **Indian Navy, Coast Guard, and law enforcement agencies**.

- **Strengthening coastal security infrastructure:** By deploying more **patrol vessels, installing CCTV cameras** and other security systems, and improving the **physical security** of ports and other maritime installations.
- **Enhancing the capabilities of law enforcement agencies:** By providing them with the **necessary training, equipment, and resources**.
- **Promoting international cooperation:** This can be achieved by establishing **partnerships with neighbouring countries, UNCLOS, sharing intelligence and information and conducting joint exercises with foreign navies and coast guards**.

Conclusion:

Improving maritime security in India will require a **sustained effort from all stakeholders**, including the **government, navy, coast guard, and law enforcement agencies**. By implementing these steps, India can enhance **its maritime security, protect its economic, political, and strategic interests, and become an important player in the Indian Ocean region**.

Mains Links:

Q. Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of the Indian government to improve its relationship with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss. (UPSC 2015)

Q. With respect to the South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China. (UPSC 2014)

Q. Consider the following in respect of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). (USPC 2017)

1. Inaugural IONS was held in India in 2015 under the chairmanship of the Indian Navy.
2. IONS is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: B

CONTENT FOR MAINS ENRICHMENT

1. HARMANPREET KAUR

She is a **prominent figure in Indian women's cricket**, known for her impactful batting and leadership. She **gained fame with her 171 not-out in the 2017 ODI World Cup** semi-final. In 2023, she achieved **several milestones**, becoming the first cricketer to play 150 T20s and leading India to their **first Asian Games gold medal**.

Widely recognized, she was named one of **Wisden's cricketers of the year** and featured in **BBC's influential women list** and TIME magazine's 100 Next list.

Hailing from Moga, Punjab, **Kaur overcame economic challenges** to become a cricket star. Her contributions have **elevated women's cricket in India**, and she continues to break new ground.

2. CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

Context:

Israeli youth 18-year-old Tal Mitnik have been imprisoned in Israel for conscientious objection to military service, particularly the assault on Gaza.

- Mitnik's refusal is based on a **commitment to working directly for a solution** rather than participating in oppression and bloodshed.

What is conscience?

Conscience refers to an individual's internal moral and ethical awareness, guiding their sense of right and wrong.

What is a conscientious objector?

It is **an individual who refuses to perform military service** based on their conscience, often for ideological or religious reasons.

The concept gained international recognition through declarations such as the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, which emphasizes the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Other examples of conscientious objection: Maximilianus in 295 CE, figures like Desmond Doss and Muhammad Ali

Usage: The example can be used in Essay/Ethics to show values of commitment to nonviolence, pacifism, and a strong moral or ethical stance against participation in armed conflicts.

3. JAYANTI BURUDA

Context:

Jayanti Buruda, a **tribal woman from Malkangiri district** in Odisha, became the **first tribal woman reporter at Kalinga TV in 2015**.

However, unhappy with mainstream news coverage, she founded **Bada Didi Union in 2018** to address issues like girls' education and reproductive health in tribal communities.

In 2022, she launched **Jungle Rani**, a social media news platform managed by **50 tribal women**, empowering them to share stories through mobile journalism. The platform focuses on topics such as **tribal life, culture, and awareness of the Forest Rights Act**, showcasing the perspectives of the tribal community. Buruda aims to expand Jungle Rani to other tribal-dominated districts in Odisha.

Usage: The example can be used in **Indian Society/ Ethics** to show the values of empowerment, social responsibility, inclusivity, and giving a voice to marginalized communities

4. WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

Context:

In October 2023, Pope Francis **granted women the right to vote at the Synod of Bishops**, marking a significant change in the **male-dominated Roman Catholic Church**.

Vatican City, becoming the last country to **allow women's suffrage**, concluded a century-long democratic quest for justice.

The **women's suffrage movement** originated in the **19th and early 20th centuries**, led by voices in the **Anglosphere** (a group of English-speaking countries). **Between 1893 and 1960, 129 countries** granted women the right to vote, overcoming attempts to impose disqualifiers based on **race, age, education, or marital status**. **Social activism** played a crucial role, as seen in **New Zealand's fight** against alcohol in **1893 and the US suffrage** activism linked to protests against slavery in 1920. Additionally, **World Wars I and II** accelerated women's enfranchisement, particularly in the West.

Usage: The example can be used in women-related Questions/Indian Society/Women-themed essays etc.

5. RELIANCE RETAIL'S JIOMART PARTNERSHIP WITH SHGS

Context: The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Reliance Retail's JioMart to enhance the **outreach of products from Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** under the **Deendayal Antyo-**

daya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

The collaboration **allows SHGs to be sellers on JioMart**, widening their market and visibility. This initiative aligns with **MoRD's SARAS collection**, providing benefits and guidance to SHG sellers for **online business growth**.

JioMart will assist SHGs in setting up and operating their accounts, offer training, and support post-launch to ensure business growth.

What is the SARAS Collection brand?

It is dedicated to **promoting and showcasing products made by Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** across India. These products typically include **handlooms, handicrafts, textiles, pantry items, home décor, beauty products**, and various other items crafted by rural artisans and entrepreneurs.

Usage: The example can be used in the **Economy, Indian society, and Social Justice Qn**, to show how private-public partnership can help raise income opportunities for SHGs in India.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

GS-1

1. KONSACHEM

Context: The article discusses the association of **Apostle Bartholomew** with agriculture in Goa, particularly during the harvest festival called **Konsachem**.

What is Konsachem?

It is an important **harvest festival celebrated in Goa**, primarily in **August**. Both **Hindus and Catholics** participate in their unique ways. The festival involves blessing the **first sheaves of rice** when harvested.

For Goan Catholics, the peak of the celebration occurs on **August 24, the Feast Day of Saint Bartholomew** (his name meaning 'son of the furrows'), one of the **12 Apostles of Jesus Christ, who visited India in 55 AD**.

Before him, **Saint Thomas** arrived in India in **52 AD**

2. NORTH AFRICAN METAL ART

Context:

Metal engraving, a traditional craft practised **across North Africa and West Asia** for centuries, has gained **international recognition by being added to UNESCO's intangible heritage list**.

North African metal art refers to the **traditional craft of manually cutting words or symbols into metal, particularly jewellery and household objects.**

This longstanding artistic tradition has been **practised across North Africa and West Asia** for centuries. The art form involves intricate **engraving techniques applied to various metals, such as copper, silver, and gold.**



3. VEER BAL DIWAS

Context: **Veer Bal Diwas**, which is observed on **December 26** commemorate the martyrdom of **Guru Gobind Singh's younger sons, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh**, along with their grandmother **Mata Gujari.**

- This day was officially designated as **Veer Bal Diwas by the Indian government in January 2022.**

Background:

- In December **1704, during the battle of Chamkaur**, the Mughals and hill kings attacked **Anandpur Sahib.**
- Guru Gobind Singh's family was separated during the chaos, **with the elder sons sacrificing their lives in Chamkaur.**
- The younger sons and their grandmother were imprisoned, **and despite offers to convert to Islam, they refused and were bricked alive.**

About **Guru Gobind Singh (1666 - 1708)**
It was the **tenth and final human Sikh Guru.** He was a warrior, poet, and philosopher who contributed to Sikh scripture and philosophy. He is best known for creating the **Khalsa, the military brotherhood of the Sikhs**

4. IONOSPHERE

Context:

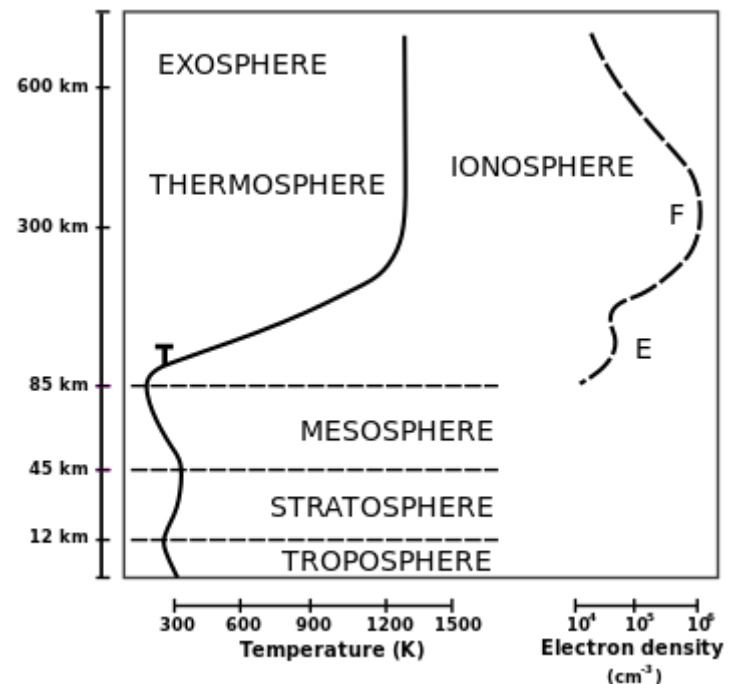
Scientists from **the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG)** have conducted **decade-long ionospheric observations at Bharati station in Antarctica**, revealing significant seasonal variations in **ionospheric density.**

- Despite the region experiencing 24 hours of sun-

light in summer and complete darkness in winter, **day-night ionospheric density variations were observed.**

- The researchers found the **peak ionospheric density near local noon** during the winter months, attributing it to **particle precipitation and the transportation of convectonal plasma** from high latitudes.
- These long-term studies aim to enhance **understanding of ionospheric effects on satellite-based navigation and communication systems.**

The ionosphere is a **layer of the Earth's atmosphere** that is made up of **charged atoms, molecules, and electrons.** It stretches from **50 kilometers (30 miles) to over 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) above the Earth.**



5. IRIDESCENT CLOUDS

Context:

Rare iridescent clouds, known as nacreous clouds, were spotted over parts of Scotland, northern England, and the West Midlands recently.

- The clouds, **resembling mother of pearl, are known for their pastel light reflections** during sunset and sunrise.
- This phenomenon occurs as **sunlight diffracts around tiny ice crystals within the clouds, creating an effect similar to a thin layer of oil on water.**

Nacreous clouds are rare in the UK and are usually seen **when cold air from the polar vortex temporarily hovers over the region.**

The mechanism behind **iridescent clouds is diffraction**, which occurs when **small water droplets or small ice crystals scatter the sun's light.** Larger ice crystals do not produce iridescence but can cause halos.



GS-2

1. COLOMBO SECURITY CONCLAVE

Colombo Security Conclave

Context: The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), involving democracies like India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Bangladesh, and Seychelles, aims to address Indian Ocean challenges

About	Details
What is Colombo Security Conclave?	The CSC is a trilateral maritime security grouping formed in 2011 , consisting of India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Mauritius is the fourth member, and Bangladesh and Seychelles are observers in the group.
Envisaged Goal	The CSC's revival in 2020 is linked to China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean. The CSC focuses on enhancing and strengthening regional security in five pillars :
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maritime Safety and Security 2. Countering Terrorism and Radicalization 3. Combating Trafficking and Transnational Organized Crime 4. Cyber Security and Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Technology 5. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
Significance	It serves as India's outreach to the Indian Ocean (in alignment with India's vision of "SAGAR" vision), emphasizing regional cooperation and shared security objectives. It also aims to counter China's influence in the region and reduce the Chinese footprint in member countries.
Challenges	CSC faces vulnerability due to domestic politics in member-states , as seen with the Maldives' absence in the recent meeting of CSC members (NSA Meet)
Conclusion	India sees the CSC as crucial for consolidating its regional leadership amid evolving geopolitical dynamics. The success of the CSC hinges on a unified strategic vision and resilience against increasing Chinese influence. To foster collaboration and avoid conflicts, India must acknowledge the IOR's evolution into a global common

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2. ANGOLA LEAVES OPEC

Context:

Angola has decided to leave OPEC, a **setback for the Saudi-led oil producer group**.

Reason:

Angola argues that **OPEC no longer serves its interests**, following a dispute over its output quota. Angola's exit, joining **Ecuador and Qatar** as former members, further challenges OPEC's market share, which has been decreasing **due to production cuts and rising output from non-OPEC countries**.

About OPEC:

It was established in **1960 at the Baghdad Conference by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela**, is an inter-governmental organization with key members including Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, and the United Arab Emirates.

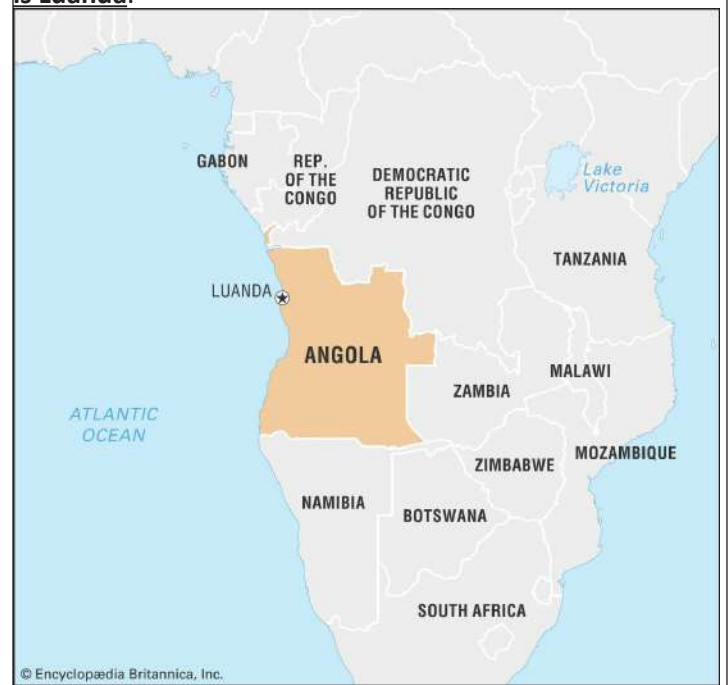
The organization's primary objective is to **coordinate and unify petroleum policies** among member countries, en-

surging fair and stable prices for petroleum producers and maintaining an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations. With its **headquarters in Vienna, Austria**, OPEC holds significant global influence, possessing over **80% of the world's total crude oil** reserves.

OPEC+ represents approximately 40% of world oil production, comprising OPEC and 10 other major oil-exporting nations, including Russia. The organization regulates crude oil prices through mechanisms like **spot or future sales**, using **Brent Crude as a benchmark** for quality, with **WTI (West Texas Intermediate)** being another major Benchmark.

About Angola

It is a **country on the west-central coast of Southern Africa**. Bordered by **Namibia** to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the north, Zambia to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The capital and largest city of **Angola is Luanda**.



3. DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Context:

External Affairs Minister acknowledged the **challenges of providing dual citizenship to Indians residing abroad**, citing **economic and security concerns**.

- While countries like **the United States, Finland, and Israel allow dual citizenship**, India prohibits it for its nationals.

Dual or multiple citizenship allows individuals to **hold legal status as citizens of two or more countries simultaneously**, with benefits such as **passport issuance, political participation, visa exemptions, and employment opportunities**.

Alternative of Dual Citizenship: **Overseas Citizen of India OCI program**

- The OCI program offers benefits like a **lifelong visa**,

exemption from reporting to police authorities, and parity with Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in various fields, excluding property acquisition.

- Eligibility for OCI includes being a former Indian citizen or a descendant, and the application process is available online through the official website.

4. MIGRATION AND MOBILITY AGREEMENT

Context:

The Union Cabinet, has granted ex-post facto approval to the Migration and Mobility Agreement between India and Italy.

- The agreement aims to enhance people-to-people contacts, promote the mobility of students, skilled workers, business people, and young professionals, and strengthen cooperation on issues related to irregular migration.

Key provisions :

- Granting temporary residence in Italy for up to 12 months to Indian students seeking initial professional experience after completing academic or vocational training.
- Reserves quotas for non-seasonal and seasonal Indian workers under the existing labour mobility pathways.
- Cooperation in combating irregular migration.

India – Italy Relations:

The two countries established political relations in 1947 and have celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations.

In 2022, bilateral trade between India and Italy reached a record 15 billion euros, double the amount in 2020.

5. QATAR COMMUTES DEATH SENTENCE FOR INDIAN NAVY OFFICERS

Context: An appellate court in Qatar has commuted the death sentence of eight former Indian Navy officers accused of espionage.

The individuals worked at Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services in Qatar. The charges included spying for Israel, and the death sentence was handed out in October. The court’s decision to reduce the sentences is seen as a significant development for India. The men had been working on overseeing the induction of the Italian small stealth submarine U212.

What is the Commutation of Death Sentence?

Commutation of a death sentence refers to the reduction or alteration of the original capital punishment imposed on a convicted individual. Instead of execution, the punishment is changed to a less severe form, often a lengthy prison term or life imprisonment.

Provisions in India	
Constitutional Provision in India	The President (Article 72) has the power to grant pardon for Offences against Union Law; Punishment or sentence by a court-martial (military court) and Death sentence
Meaning of Terms	Pardon: Removes sentence and conviction, absolves from all sentences, punishments, and disqualifications.
	Commutation: Substitution of a harsher punishment with a lighter one (e.g., death sentence to rigorous imprisonment).
	Remission: Reducing the sentence period without changing its character.
	Respite: Awarding a lesser sentence due to special circumstances
Judicial Stand on Pardoning Powers	Maru Ram v Union of India (1980): Power under Article 72 exercised on the advice of the Central Government , advice binding on the President.
	Epuru Sudhakar v Ors. (2006): Granting clemency can be challenged in court on grounds of arbitrariness, mala fide, lack of application of mind, or omission of relevant material.
Difference with Governor’s Power	The president’s power extends to cases of punishment or sentence by a Court Martial , but the Governor lacks such power under Article 161. Also, the President can grant pardon in all death sentence cases , while the Governor’s pardoning power does not cover death sentences.

6. PALNA SCHEME

Palna scheme	
Context: Union Women and Child Development Ministry plans to set up 17,000 creches in Anganwadi centres across India under the 'Palna' scheme (means 'to nourish')	
Specifications	Details
About the Scheme	The Palna Scheme is a centrally sponsored initiative by the Ministry of Women and Child Development , formerly known as the National Creche Scheme . The Scheme is part of Samarthya which is a sub-component under Mission Shakti .
Aim	1) To address the urgent need for quality day-care facilities/creches for the children of working women. 2) To improve nutrition and health status of children.
What is a Creche?	A creche is a facility that allows parents to leave their children in a supervised environment while they are at work.
Maternity Benefit Act	Maternity Benefit Act, 2017 requires every establishment having fifty or more employees to have the facility of creche within a prescribed distance
Focus of the Scheme	The scheme focuses on two types of creches: 1) Anganwadi-cum-Creches: These centres combine existing Anganwadi services with dedicated creche facilities. This approach aims to holistically address the needs of both mothers and children in one convenient location. 2) Stand-alone creches: The creches which were running under the erstwhile National Creche Scheme have been included as Stand Alone Creches.
Services Included	The program encompasses early stimulation services for children under 3 years, including sleeping facilities. For children aged 3 to 6 years, it provides pre-school education . Additionally, health check-ups and immunizations aligned with POSHAN 2.0 are part of the initiative. Under the scheme, two extra creche workers will be appointed in Anganwadis.
Target Group	The scheme focuses on children of 6 months to 6 years , of working women in rural and urban areas who are employed for a minimum period of 15 days in a month , or six months in a year.
Benefits	Institutionalization of day-care centres , formalization of India's Care Economy, and ensuring safety, health, and nutrition benefits for children.
About Mission Shakti	It is focused on women's safety and empowerment , comprising two sub-schemes: Sambal (addressing safety and security with initiatives like One Stop Centre and Women Helpline) and Samarthya (focusing on women's empowerment through programs like Ujjwala and SwadharGreh) Visit insights IAS Daily CA

GS-3

7. RODTEP

Context:

The Indian government is **exploring options to reinstate tax remission benefits for sugar exports**, which were **excluded from the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme in June 2022.**

- Sugar was moved to the **'restricted' category as a precautionary measure** to enhance domestic availability and prevent a surge in prices.
- The **sugar industry has appealed to reclassify sugar into the 'free' category with certain conditions**, such as obtaining permissions from the Directorate of Sugar for exports.

About RoDTEP:

The **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) scheme** has been introduced with the aim of **neutralizing the taxes and duties incurred on exported goods** that are not credited, remitted, or refunded in any manner, and thus, remain embedded in the export goods.

The scheme **provides a rebate for all hidden central, state, and local duties, taxes, and levies on exported goods** that **have not been refunded under any other existing scheme.**

The scheme is designed to be **compliant with World Trade Organization (WTO) principles.**

8. RARE EARTH PROCESSING TECHNOLOGIES

Context:

China, the leading **global processor of rare earths**, has **imposed a ban on the export of technology** essential for **extracting and separating these strategic metals.**

- This action is part of a **revision to the list of technologies considered vital for national security.**
- The ban covers **not only technology related to extraction and separation** but also extends to the **export of production technology for rare earth metals, alloy materials, and specific rare earth magnets.**
- This move by China coincides with **efforts by Europe and the United States to reduce dependence on Chinese rare earths**, which currently **account for 90% of the world's refined output.**

Rare earths, a group of 17 metals crucial for **manufacturing magnets used in electric vehicles**, wind turbines, and various electronic devices, have become a focal point for geopolitical considerations.

9. SELF-POLLINATION

Context:

In a groundbreaking discovery, scientists have observed rapid evolution in a flowering plant, **Viola arvensis (field pansy)**, in Paris, France. The plant is producing **less nectar and smaller flowers to attract fewer pollinators**, displaying signs of **self-pollination.**

What are the reason for the evolution?

Changes in the environment especially due to anthropogenic activities have limited the population of **pollinators** (such as Bees). In such a situation, plants evolve to self-pollinate itself.

What is Self-pollination?

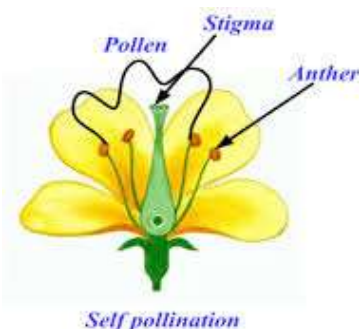
It is a **reproductive process in plants** where pollen from a flower's male reproductive organs (**anther**) fertilizes the female reproductive organs (**stigma**) of the same flower or another flower on the same plant.

- The mechanism ensures the plant's **ability to reproduce** without relying on **external pollinators** like insects or wind.

Mechanism of the Self-Pollination:

1. **Anther and Stigma Proximity:** In self-pollinating plants, the anther (producing pollen) is close to the stigma (receiving pollen) within the same flower.
2. **Pollen Transfer:** Pollen grains are transferred from the anther to the stigma, either by physical contact or through the plant's internal mechanisms.
3. **Fertilization:** The pollen tube **grows down the style to the ovary**, where fertilization takes place, resulting in the formation of seeds.
4. **Genetic Similarity:** Since both the pollen and the ovule come from the same plant, the offspring are **genetically identical to the parent**, leading to limited genetic diversity.

Self-pollination ensures reproductive success, especially in **environments with limited pollinators**, but it can also **reduce genetic variability** in plant populations and risk to the plant-pollinator interaction system.



10. INS IMPHAL

Context:

INS Imphal, the **third warship of Project 15B** forming the **Visakhapatnam class stealth-guided missile destroyers**, is set to be commissioned into the **Indian Navy**.

- The commissioning of INS Imphal holds special significance, being the **largest and most advanced destroyer named after a city from the northeast**.

Features:

- The **Visakhapatnam class** is recognized as **one of the most advanced ship classes in the Indian Navy**, capable of independent offensive operations.
- The **arsenal of the Visakhapatnam class includes BrahMos surface-to-surface cruise missiles**, vertically launched Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles, a 127 mm main gun, AK-630 30mm guns for close-point engagement, indigenously developed 533 mm torpedo launchers, and RBU-6000 anti-submarine rocket launchers.
- Strategically, **destroyers play a vital role in naval operations**, protecting fleets and carrier battle groups from short-range attackers.
- It can **operate independently and is well-equipped for network-centric warfare**, utilizing information technology and computer networking tools.

This pays **tribute to Manipur’s historical contributions to India’s freedom struggle**, emphasizing the region’s importance in national security, sovereignty, and prosperity.



Type of Warship	Description	Examples
Aircraft Carriers	Large ships capable of carrying and launching aircraft.	INS Vikramaditya, INS Vikrant (under construction)
Destroyers	Versatile warships with anti-air, anti-ship, and anti-submarine capabilities.	INS Kolkata, INS Visakhapatnam, INS Imphal
Frigates	Smaller than destroyers, with multi-role capabilities.	INS Shivalik, INS Nilgiri
Corvettes	Compact warships designed for coastal defense and patrol duties.	INS Kamorta, INS Kiltan
Submarines	Submersible vessels used for stealthy underwater operations.	INS Kalvari, INS Arihant
Patrol Vessels	Smaller craft used for patrolling, search and rescue, and other coastal missions.	INS Saryu, INS Sunayna
Mine Countermeasures Vessels	Designed for mine-clearing operations.	INS Nireekshak, INS Karwar
Landing Platform Docks	Amphibious assault ships for launching troops and equipment ashore.	INS Jalashwa, INS Shardul
Offshore Patrol Vessels	Used for patrolling and surveillance in offshore waters.	INS Vikram, INS Vajra
Research Vessels	Ships dedicated to scientific research and oceanographic studies.	INS Sagardhwani, INS Sindhughosh (research variant)
Training Ships	Used for training purposes and instruction of naval cadets.	INS Tarangini, INS Sudarshini

11. TOKENISATION

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has expanded the scope of **card-on-file tokenisation (CoFT)** to include card issuing banks and institutions directly, **moving beyond ser-**

VICES provided through merchants.

- CoFT is a security measure** for users opting for **digital payments, replacing the practice of merchants storing card details with specially created tokens.**
- RBI’s recent notification outlines the requirements for **enabling CoFT through card issuers, allowing customers to generate tokens through mobile and internet banking channels** with explicit consent and additional validation.

Tokenization is the **process of replacing sensitive data with a non-sensitive equivalent, called a token.** Tokens are random strings of characters that have no meaningful value if breached. They serve as a **reference to the original data, but cannot be used to guess those values.**



12. MEDTECH MITRA

Context:

The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare in India, has launched the **“MedTech Mitra”** initiative to empower innovators and advance healthcare solutions in the country.

- The initiative aims to **support and collaborate with technology innovators and startups in the medical technology sector.**
- The **goal is to harness innovation to enhance healthcare delivery and address healthcare challenges.**
- MedTech Mitra is a platform that will **help young talents of country in shaping their research and getting regulatory approval.**
- It will facilitate **indigenous development of affordable, quality MedTech devices and diagnostics leading to reduction in import dependence (presently around 80%) in MedTech.**

MedTech Mitra is part of the government’s efforts to **promote innovation in the health sector and improve healthcare services in the country.**

13. PONG DAM ECO-SENSITIVE ZONE

Context:

The state government is **re-evaluate the extent of the eco-sensitive zone around the Pong Dam** to alleviate the difficulties **faced by local residents and enable farming during periods of reduced water levels**

About the Pong Dam Wildlife Sanctuary
It is located in the **Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh**, India, is a significant protected area known for its **diverse flora and fauna**.
Pong Dam Lake (Maharana Pratap Sagar) is a manmade reservoir created in **1975 with construction of Pong Dam on Beas River**. It is also known as **Pong reservoir or Pong Dam**. In 1983, reservoir was declared as **Wildlife Sanctuary**. Pong Dam Lake was **designated a Ramsar site in 2002**. There is a **Vulture café in Pong** wherein cattle carcass is dumped for Vultures.

14. 'UPI TAP AND PAY'

Context:

The **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** has initiated the deployment of **'UPI Tap and Pay'** across digital payment providers.

- The **UPI Tap and Pay** feature is currently live on the **BHIM app** and **Paytm** for limited users.

Features of UPI tap and pay:

- It **utilizes near-field communication (NFC) technology** to capture a **payee's UPI ID or Virtual Payment Address (VPA)**, eliminating the **need for a camera**.
- The feature can only be **accessed on phones or devices with NFC capability**.
- Users need to **locate the 'Tap & Pay' button on their UPI app**, and the transaction is completed by tapping the **device on the UPI Smart Tag/Smart QR**.
- Transactions up to ₹500 are processed through UPI LITE, while those exceeding ₹500 require a UPI PIN.

About **Near-field communication (NFC)** is a **short-range wireless technology** that allows two devices to communicate when they are **within 4 centimetres of each other**. NFC uses **magnetic field induction to enable communication**.

15. T+0, INSTANT SETTLEMENT CYCLE

Context:

The **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** has proposed a **new settlement cycle called T+0**, allowing for the **clearing and settlement of funds and securities on the same day of the trade**, in addition to the existing T+1 settlement cycle.

- The proposal is part of SEBI's efforts to keep pace with **market changes, enhance investor protection, and make the securities markets more efficient**.
- Surveillance measures applicable in the **T+1 settlement cycle will apply to the T+0 settlement cycle**.

It will be implemented in two phases:

Phase	Description
1	An optional T+0 settlement cycle is proposed , allowing settlement of funds and securities on the same day by 4:30 PM for trades until 1:30 PM .

2	An optional immediate trade-by-trade settlement may be implemented in Phase 2, with trading continuing until 3:30 PM .
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Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)



Context: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) recently unveiled a new logo on the occasion of its **35th anniversary**.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (est. 1988; HQ: Mumbai) is the statutory regulatory body for securities and commodity market in India under the ownership of Ministry of Finance .	
Regulatory Authority	Primary market, Secondary Market, Mutual fund, Foreign Institutional Investment
Background	Initially a non-statutory body without any statutory power. It became autonomous and given statutory powers by SEBI Act 1992
Aim	To protect the interests of investors in securities and to promote the development of, and regulate the securities market
Powers & Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial body that can draft regulations, conduct inquiries, pass rulings, and impose penalties. • Its primary objective is to protect the interests of Indian investors in the securities market and promote its development. • SEBI also regulates the tasks entrusted to depositors, credit rating agencies, custodians of securities, foreign portfolio investors, and other participants. • It educates investors about securities markets and their intermediaries • It prohibits fraudulent and unfair trade practices within the securities market and related to it.
Expansion of its powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can regulate any money pooling scheme worth Rs. 100 crore or more and attach assets in cases of non-compliance. • SEBI Chairman has the authority to order "search and seizure operations"
SEBI's structure	SEBI Board consists of a Chairman (for 3 years terms) and several other whole time and part time members .
Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)	It has been constituted to protect the interest of entities that feel aggrieved by SEBI's decision. SAT consists of a Presiding Officer and two other Members. It has the same powers as vested in a civil court .

16. FORMALDEHYDE

Context:

Researchers developed a **low-cost, non-invasive sensor for detecting formaldehyde adulteration in fish at room temperature**.

- The sensor, **made of tin oxide-reduced graphene oxide composite**, overcomes the limitations of **existing formalin sensors, which are either expensive or invasive**.
- The **graphene oxide's low electrical conductivity** was addressed by **creating the tin oxide-reduced graphene oxide composite**.
- The sensor **demonstrated effective detection of formaldehyde vapor in adulterated fish samples**, showing promise for addressing food adulteration issues.

About Formaldehyde

It is a **colourless, flammable gas with a strong odour**. It is classified as a **human carcinogen** and is linked to long-term adverse health effects and cancer.

Formaldehyde is used in many industries, including:

Glues and resins, Dyes, Textiles, Disinfectants, Building materials, Automobile parts, Embalming, Laboratories.

17. ELECTRONIC SOIL' (ESOIL)

Context:

Researchers introduced a ground-breaking study on **"electronic soil" (eSoil) in hydroponics**, offering the potential for **sustainable urban agriculture and food security**.

- eSoil is an **electrically conductive growth substrate** derived from **cellulose and a conductive polymer**

(PEDOT).

- It **stimulates plant roots and the growth environment with low power, providing a safer and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional methods.**
- **eSoil works by electrically stimulating plant roots.**
- This promotes **effective and sustainable development**, expanding the **range of crops that can be grown hydroponically**—without soil, using only water, nutrients, and a substrate.

The benefits of eSoil include **low energy consumption, safety, and its compatibility with hydroponics, enabling urban agriculture to meet the challenges of a growing population and climate change.**

18. MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE FOR COPRA

Context:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, has approved the **Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for copra for the 2024 season.**

- The move aims to provide better **returns to coconut growers, encourage copra production, and meet the growing demand for coconut products.**
- Copra is the **dried, white flesh of the coconut.** It's a **major cash crop** and is valued for the **coconut oil that can be extracted from it.**

The MSP is a **form of government intervention to protect farmers from steep declines in the prices of their goods.** The MSP is based on a calculation of **at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers.**

19. HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE

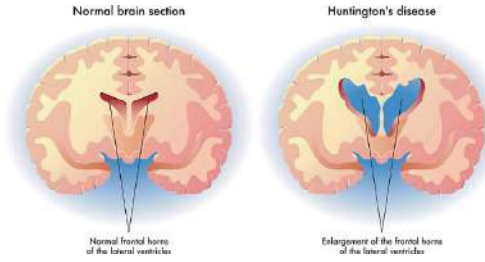
Context:

Scientists have made progress in **understanding Huntington's disease by studying fruit flies (Drosophila melanogaster).**

About the study:

- Huntington's disease **patients carry a mutated version of the HTT gene**, which codes for a protein called **huntingtin (Htt).**
- The **mutated gene encodes an abnormal Htt protein**, leading to the **destruction of neurons regulating movement, thinking, and memory.**
- The researchers **genetically engineered fruit flies** to express the **polyglutamine tract of a mutated human HTT gene in their nervous system.**
- The study identified the **Yod1 gene**, whose overexpression **removed disease-like effects in the flies**, suggesting a potential avenue for therapeutic intervention in humans.

Huntington's disease (HD) is an **inherited disorder that causes nerve cells (neurons) in parts of the brain to gradually break down and die.** The disease attacks areas **of the brain that help to control voluntary (intentional) movement, as well as other areas.**



20. AMMONIA

Context:

An **ammonia gas leak from an underwater supply pipeline** to an industrial unit in Chennai, caused hundreds of **residents to complain of difficulty in breathing and burning of eyes and faces.**

- The leak originated from the **Coromandel International Limited fertiliser** manufacturing facility, which receives **ammonia shipments from Iran or Saudi Arabia.**

About Ammonia:

Ammonia is a **colourless, pungent gas** with the **chemical formula NH3.** It's made up of **hydrogen and nitrogen.** In its aqueous form, it's called **ammonium hydroxide.**

Ammonia is a **natural byproduct and respiratory stimulant.** It's produced **naturally in the human body and in nature, including in water, soil, and air.** In human health, ammonia and the ammonium ion are important components of metabolic processes.

In its concentrated form, **ammonia is dangerous and caustic.**

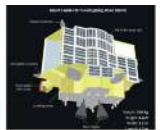
Signs and symptoms of **ammonia exposure include:**

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Burns of the mouth, throat, oesophagus, and stomach

21. SLIM SPACECRAFT



Japan's Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) spacecraft



Context: Japan is set to attempt a historic moon landing with its SLIM spacecraft, aiming to land on the lunar surface on January 19, 2024.

SLIM Overview	
About	SLIM (also called "Moon Sniper") is Japan's first lunar surface mission. Previously, Soviet Union (Interkosmos), the United States (NASA), China (CNSA) and India (ISRO) are the only four nations to have successfully achieved soft landings
Objective	To showcase precision soft landing capabilities on the Moon, targeting a landing within 100 meters of its chosen site near the Shioli crater.
Launch	Built by Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) , it was launched on September 7, 2023, along with the X-Ray Imaging and Spectroscopy Mission (XRISM) space telescope. XRISM is focused on studying X-ray emissions from celestial objects to better understand the universe's structure and evolution. It will observe phenomena like black holes, neutron stars, and galaxy clusters. Unlike Chandrayaan-3's Hohmann transfer orbit , SLIM followed a longer, fuel-efficient path, taking four months to reach the moon.
Weight	Weights 590 kg, approximately one-seventh of Chandrayaan-3's weight (3,900 kg).
Features	Upon soft landing, SLIM will deploy two small rovers (Lunar Excursion Vehicle 1 and 2) to study the lunar surface, collect temperature and radiation readings, and attempt to study the moon's mantle.
Significance for Chandrayaan 4	Success of SLIM, especially in terms of low weight and precision landing, could play a crucial role in the Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) Mission (also called Chandrayaan 4) a joint effort of ISRO and JAXA.
Challenges of Lunar	The moon's polar regions, characterized by rocky terrain, craters, and steep slopes , demand highly accurate landing capabilities.

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22. NEW DESIGN OF ADMIRALS' EPAULETTES

Context:

The Indian Navy has unveiled new epaulettes for Admirals, inspired by the naval ensign and Chhatrapati Shivaji's **rajmudra**, as part of an initiative to reflect India's rich maritime heritage and move away from British nomenclature.

- The design features an octagon, a golden navy button top, an Indian sword, a crossed telescope, and stars denoting ranks.

Decoding the new epaulette

The new epaulettes, to be worn by the navy chief, vice admirals and rear admirals, from January 1, 2024, have five modifications over the previous ones

- 1 GOLDEN BUTTON**
The golden navy button on the epaulettes no longer features the fowl anchor with the nautical rope, associated with the colonial era, and the design has introduced a clear anchor
- 2 SHIVAJI'S SEAL**
Navy has discarded the Crown-inspired red background on which the national emblem sits and replaced it with an octagon derived from Shivaji's seal
- 3 INDIAN SWORD**
The generic sword has been replaced by a straight double-edged sword of Indian origin, akin to the Khanda used by Rajput warriors
- 4 TELESCOPE**
The baton (a symbol of authority) has given way to a telescope symbolising "long-term vision and foresight"
- 5 STARS**
The new style of stars on the epaulettes has no particular significance other than increasing aesthetic appeal



Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's **Rajmudra** is a royal seal and symbol of his dream of a Maratha Swarajya.

The seal includes Sanskrit inscriptions that express Shivaji's gratitude to his father and his commitment to ruling his land

independently and the welfare of his subjects.

The **Rajmudra's text is in Sanskrit**, unlike other royal seals from the time, which were usually carved in Persian. The Rajmudra's meaning is "The glory of this Mudra of Shahaji's son Shivaji (Maharaj) will grow like the first-day moon. It will be worshipped by the world and it will shine only for well well-being of people".

23. ARGENTINA REJECTS BRICS MEMBERSHIP

Context:

Argentina has formally rejected the invitation to join the **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group of major emerging economies.

- The membership of **Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates** was due to take effect from January 1, 2024.

Why did Argentina Reject BRICS Membership?

New Argentinian President Milei, during his election campaign, Milei had expressed a geopolitical alignment with the United States and Israel, emphasizing a reluctance to ally with communists. The decision aligns with his campaign promises and reflects a shift in foreign policy from the previous administration.



Context: The alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa invited six more countries (Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Egypt, and Ethiopia) to join, starting in January 2024.

Significance of Adding New Members in BRICS:

Aspect	Significance
Strengthened Representation	The addition of new members boosts BRICS' influence as a representative of the Global South. It symbolizes BRICS as a " voice of the Global South ."
Population and GDP	BRICS already represents 40% of the world's population and over a quarter of global GDP. With new members, it represents almost half the world's population and more diverse economies .
Anti-US Sentiment	The expansion is driven partly by anti-US sentiment globally , allowing nations to rally against perceived Western dominance.
Multipolarity Platform	BRICS provides a platform for countries of the Global South to express solidarity and advocate for multipolarity in global affairs .
Economic and Geopolitical Role	It challenges Western geopolitical views and has the potential to emerge as a counterweight to Western-led forums like G7 and the World Bank .
China's Influence	China's influence in driving the expansion underscores its aspirations to establish BRICS as a core agenda and non-western grouping .
Diverse Geopolitical Ties	The new members have diverse geopolitical interests, ranging from oil production (Saudi Arabia) to diplomatic alliances (Iran and Russia) .
China-Russia Imprint	China's involvement in inviting Iran and Saudi Arabia underscores its role in expanding BRICS and shaping global alliances .
Signal to the West	Iran and Russia's inclusion is a signal to the West that they have global allies despite strained relations .
India's Positioning	India values its presence in BRICS as a " non-western " grouping, allowing it to maintain diverse partnerships.

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24. DOMESTIC SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT BANKS

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released its list of domestic systemically important banks (D-SIBs) for 2023, including the State Bank of India (SBI), HDFC Bank, and ICICI Bank.

- While ICICI Bank maintains its previous categorization, **SBI and HDFC Bank have moved to higher buckets.**
- The D-SIB framework aims to **enhance the resilience of the financial system** by assigning additional **common equity requirements based on the systemic importance of banks.**

25. INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION (ISS)

Context: Russian and U.S. space agencies, Roscosmos and NASA, have agreed to extend their collaboration on **delivering crews to the International Space Station (ISS) until at least 2025, as announced by Roscosmos.**

- This decision is aimed at **maintaining the reliability of the ISS** and ensuring the **continued presence of representatives from both agencies on the Russian and American** segments of the space station.
- The **ISS, launched in 1998 during a period of increased U.S.-Russia cooperation post-Cold War**, has been a rare **area of collaboration between the two countries.**

ISS marked its 25th anniversary	
<p>What is the ISS?</p> <p>The ISS is a complex international scientific and engineering project, the largest human-made structure in space, serving as a laboratory for new technologies and an observation platform for various research.</p>	<p>International Space Station</p>
<p>Orbit</p> <p>It orbits Earth at an average altitude of 400 kilometres and circles the globe every 90 minutes at a speed of 28,000 kph.</p>	
<p>Construction and Components</p> <p>The ISS was constructed piece by piece in orbit (first module, Zarya, launched in 1998). It was built by five space agencies representing 15 countries, including NASA (USA), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), Canadian Space Agency, and the European Space Agency.</p>	
<p>Size</p> <p>ISS weighs almost 400 tonnes and covers an area as big as a football pitch.</p>	
<p>Russia's Role in Maintaining ISS</p> <p>Russia is responsible for making course corrections to the station's orbit, ensuring it avoids space debris, and facilitates the transport of astronauts to and from the ISS. Last year Russia withdrew its support from ISS, as US sanctioned Russian invasion on Ukraine</p>	
<p>Importance</p> <p>ISS allow crew members to do research in critical fields such as fluids, combustion, Microgravity Research, life support systems and radiation environment, which is needed for future human space exploration</p>	
<p>Notable Success</p> <p>Medical Discoveries: Research on the ISS has led to the advancements in osteoporosis treatments and understanding muscle atrophy</p> <p>Technological Advancements: The construction of the ISS have led to technological advancements in space exploration, robotics, and life support systems.</p>	
<p>Mission Life</p> <p>ISS is expected to operate until 2030. NASA plans to decommission it in 2031</p>	
<p>China's mission</p> <p>Tiangong space station is China's permanently crewed space station (launched in 2021) and operated by China Manned Space Agency in low Earth orbit between 340 and 450 km above the surface.</p>	
<p>India's Mission</p> <p>India plans to have its own space station by 2035, weighing 20 tonnes and serving as a facility where astronauts can stay for 15-20 days, and would be placed in an orbit 400 km above earth</p>	

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26. NEORA VALLEY NATIONAL PARK

Context: A **recent image captured by trap cameras in the Neora Valley National Park** in the hills of West Bengal has confirmed the **presence of Royal Bengal Tigers at an altitude of 10,509 feet** above sea level.

- The survey indicates the presence of **more than 10 tigers in the area**, with recent camera trap images consistently featuring at least one Royal Bengal Tiger.

Neora Valley National Park in the Kalimpong district of West Bengal was **established in 1986**, it's a **rich biological zone**

with diverse flora and fauna.

The park is home to the red **panda and is known for its rugged, inaccessible terrain.**

27. LITCHI

Context:

The **National Research Centre on Litchi (NRCL)**, has successfully expanded **litchi cultivation to 19 states in India.**

- Litchi cultivation for commercial production has commenced in states such as **Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and others.**

About Litchi:

- Litchi (Litchi chinensis) is a small, oval roundish fruit that is **native to Southeast Asia.** It is a member of the **soapberry family (Sapindaceae)** and is also **known as lychee or lichee.**
- Litchi is a sensitive fruit, **influenced by temperature, rainfall, humidity, and soil conditions.**
- The fruit primarily grows in **the foothills of the Himalayas, with Bihar alone contributing nearly 40% of India's litchi production.**

Litchi fruit contains a **toxin, methylene cyclopropyl-glycine (MCPG)**, which is known to be fatal by **causing encephalitis-related deaths.** This is especially harmful when **consumed by malnourished children**

28. SOVEREIGN CREDIT RATING

Context:

India's Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) in its recent paper has raised concerns about the sovereign credit rating system.

Topic	Details
<p>What is Credit Rating?</p>	<p>Credit rating is an assessment of the creditworthiness of a borrower, including individuals, companies, or countries.</p>
<p>What is Sovereign Credit Rating?</p>	<p>A sovereign credit rating is an independent assessment of a country's creditworthiness. It evaluates the country's ability to repay debt without default, impacting the risk associated with investing in its debt instruments.</p> <p>Key agencies include Standard & Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch Ratings, considering economic indicators, fiscal policies, political stability, and trade position.</p>

Importance of Credit Rating	Obtaining a good credit rating is crucial for accessing funding in the international bond market and attracting foreign investments . It also influences borrowing costs in global financial markets , allowing countries with higher ratings to borrow at lower interest rates.
Key Concerns Raised by CEA	Concerns include the disadvantageous rating methods for developing countries , lack of transparency in expert selection, unclear weights assigned to parameters, and subjective assessments favouring advanced economies. Between 2006 and 2022 , India's GDP has risen, and foreign exchange reserves have increased, yet its credit rating remains lower than expected. CRAs heavily rely on the World Bank's governance indicators , explaining only 68% of India's rating.
How CRAs Rated India	S&P Global and Fitch raised India's rating to BBB (lowest investment grade), while Moody's initially upgraded but later reverted to Baa3 .
Way Ahead for India	India needs fiscal consolidation by reducing the government debt-to-GDP ratio and improving data quality . The absence of post-2011-12 survey results emphasizes the importance of accurate and transparent data.
Credit Rating in India	SEBI in India regulates credit rating agencies , including CRISIL, CARE, ICRA, Acuité Ratings, Brickwork Rating, India Rating and Research Pvt. Ltd, and Infomerics Valuation and Rating Pvt. Ltd.

29. "FLIP" MUTATIONS

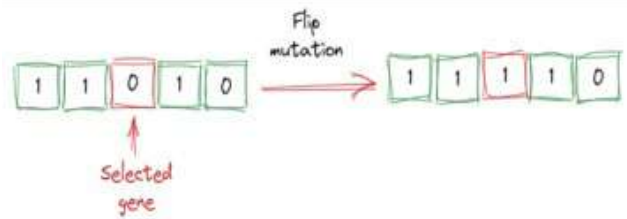
Context:

The **omicron subvariant JN.1**, characterized by the **"Flip" mutation L455S** in its **spike protein**, is expected to **become the dominant lineage of the SARS-CoV-2 virus worldwide**.

- This subvariant, **a descendant of the BA.2.86 lineage**, has shown rapid growth and was **designated a variant of interest (VOI)**.
- The **"Flip" mutations, including L455S and L455F**, are associated **with increased transmissibility**.
- The mutation affects the receptor binding capacity of **angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2)**, the **protein that the SARS-CoV-2 virus uses as an entry point**.
- This alteration results in stronger binding to ACE2, potentially reducing protection from natural antibodies.

Flip mutation

This type of **mutation is performed when we use binary crossover**. A randomly selected bit of a chromosome is flipped, as shown in the following diagram.



L455S and L455F are called "Flip" mutations because they **switch the positions of amino acids F and L on the spike protein, increasing their transmissibility**.

MAPPING

30. WORLD'S OLDEST FORT (AMNYA FORT) IN SIBERIA

Context:

Hunter-gatherers built the **world's oldest known fort 8,000 years ago in Siberia**, challenging the assumption that fortresses were **exclusive to agricultural societies**.

The **Amnya fort** along the **Amnya River in western Siberia** consists of pit-house depressions with earthen walls and **wooden palisades**, suggesting advanced agricultural and defensive capabilities.

Siberia is a **vast Russian province** encompassing most of Northern Asia, with terrain spanning **tundra, coniferous forest and mountain ranges** including the **Ural, Altai and Verkhoyansk**. **Lake Baikal**, in its south, is the **world's deepest lake**, circled by a network of hiking paths called the **Great Baikal Trail**. The **Trans-Siberian Railway** passes Baikal on its route between Moscow and the Sea of Japan



31. NANDANKANAN ZOOLOGICAL PARK (NZZP) (ODISHA)

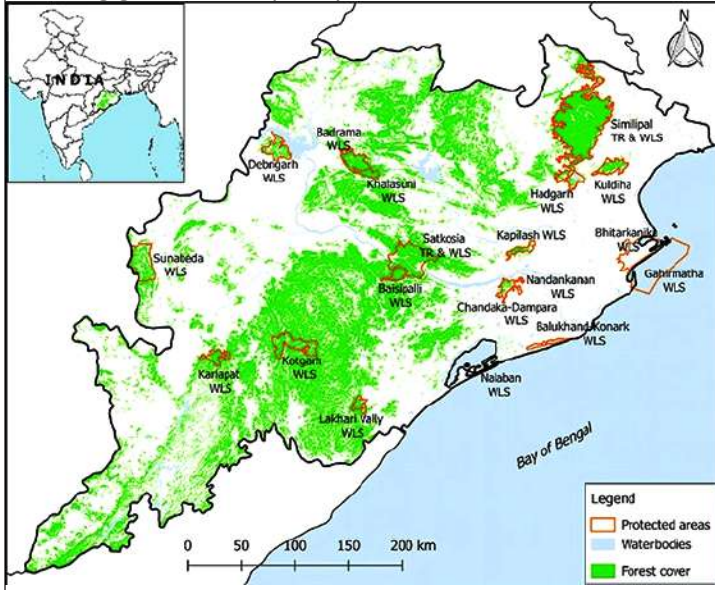
Context:

The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has **approved the transfer of a cheetah, African lion, and Chimpanzee** from Dubai Safari Park to **Nandankanan Zoological Park (NZZP)** in Odisha.

The NZZP, in exchange, will provide various animals including **Hippopotamus, blackbuck, hog deer, gaur, red junglefowl, and gharial**.

About Nandankanan Zoological Park

It is located **15 km from Bhubaneswar, Odisha**, and was inaugurated in 1960. It holds the distinction of being the **first zoo in India to join the World Association of Zoos & Aquariums (WAZA)**, a global alliance dedicated to animal care and conservation. Recognized for breeding **Indian pangolins and white tigers**, it is also a breeding ground for leopards, mouse deer, lions, ratel, and vultures. Nandankanan was the **world's first captive crocodile breeding centre**, successfully breeding gharials in captivity in 1980.



32. NICARAGUA

Context:

A recent incident involving a **Nicaragua-bound flight detained** in France fuelled suspicions of human trafficking.

There's a surge in **Indians showing interest in travelling to Nicaragua**, with concerns arising about potential misuse for illegal entry into the **US and Canada**. Obtaining a visa for Nicaragua is challenging due to unclear rules and the **absence of a Nicaraguan embassy in India**.

About Nicaragua

It is the **largest Central American country**, bordered by Honduras, the Caribbean, Costa Rica, and the Pacific Ocean. **Managua** is the capital. With a multi-ethnic population of six

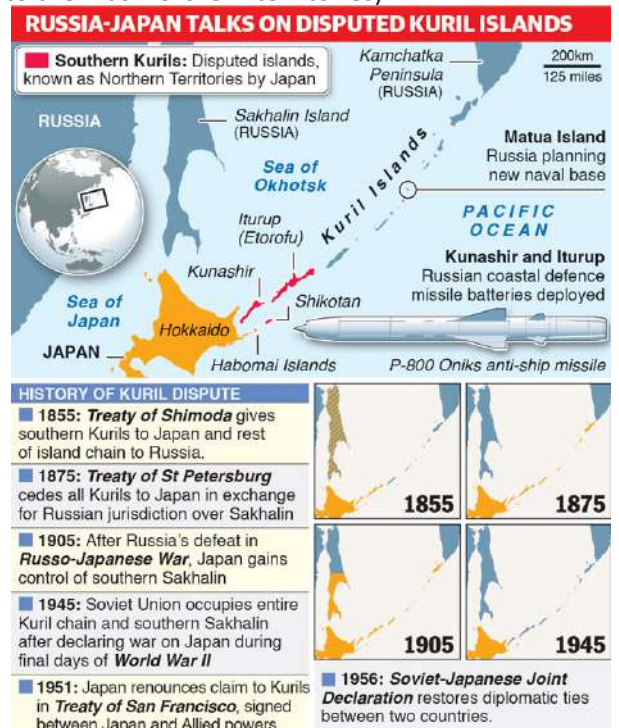
million, including mestizo, Indigenous, European, and African heritage, the main language is **Spanish**.



33. JAPAN'S KURIL ISLANDS

Context: An earthquake of **magnitude 6.3 on the Richter Scale** jolted Japan's **Kuril Islands**.

The Kuril Islands stretch from **Japan's Hokkaido to Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula**, separating the **Okhotsk Sea** from the North Pacific Ocean. They are part of the **Pacific's Ring of Fire**, with over 100 volcanoes, 35 active, and numerous hot springs. The Southern Kuril Islands are disputed between **Russia and Japan** (Russia calls them Kuril Islands; Japan refers to them as Northern territories)



34. INDIA AND BANGLADESH TRADE

India and Bangladesh officials emphasized the **need for coordinated border management** to address trans-border crimes. Also, the Shipping Secretary Level Talks between India and Bangladesh in Dhaka concluded with decisions such as **easing visa issuance, shore-leave facility, and repatriation for seafarers.**

Key outcomes involve:

- **The establishment of a land route at LCS Radhikapur and Hodibari** to enhance trade and connectivity
- Bangladesh plans to extend the **Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route**, designating **Safardighi as a new port of call**
- Common Automatic Identification System (AIS) on the IBP route for better vessel navigation and tracking
- **Inclusion of Payra seaport in the Agreement on the use of Chattogram and Mongla Ports** for Movement of Goods (ACMP)

With a bilateral trade volume **worth \$16bn**, India is Bangladesh's **second-largest trading partner** after China.

