NEWS T⌄DAY

INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANIZATION (ISRO) RELEASES INDIAN SPACE POLICY-2023

- **Policy clarifies role and responsibilities** of ISRO, NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe), as well as that of Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs) **in space sector.**
  - ➤ **Department of Space will be the nodal department** for implementation of policy.
- **Key Highlights of the policy**

Stakeholders	Proposed Role
Government	• **Encouraging advanced** R&D in space sector. • **Providing public goods and services using space technology** for national priorities. • **Regulatory framework to provide a level playing field** to NGE through IN-SPACe.
ISRO	• **Will focus primarily on R&D of new space technologies** and applications, and for expanding the human understanding of outer space. • **Enable open data access** from remote sensing satellites of ISRO. • **Share technologies, products, processes and best practices** with NGEs and/or Government companies. • Demonstrate **human spaceflight capability.**
NSIL	• **Commercialising space technologies and platforms** created through public expenditure. • **Service the space-based needs of users,** whether Government entities or NGEs.
IN-SPACe	• Shall f**unction as an autonomous Government organization,** mandated **to promote, hand-hold, guide and authorize space activities.** • **Promote industry clusters / zones/ manufacturing hubs/ incubation Centres/ accelerators / technical centres etc.,** for the space sector. • **Ensure a level playing field for the utilization of all facilities** created using public expenditure.
NGEs	• **Undertake end-to-end activities in space sector** through establishment and operation of space objects, ground-based assets and related services. • **Offer national and international space-based communication services,** through geostationary orbit (GSO) and non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) systems. • **Manufacture and operate space transportation systems,** including launch vehicles, shuttles etc. • **Engage in the commercial recovery of an asteroid resource** or a space resource.

MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (MEITY) PROPOSES RULES TO ENABLE AADHAAR AUTHENTICATION BY ENTITIES OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT

- At present, **Ministries and Departments are allowed to undertake Aadhaar Authentication** under Aadhaar Authentication for Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Rules, 2020.
  - ➤ It is **allowed for purposes like in interest of good governance, preventing leakage of public funds and enablement of innovation and spread of knowledge.**
- Also, **entities such as banks and telecom companies were allowed** to perform authentication **if UIDAI was satisfied with regard to standards of privacy and security.**
  - ➤ It was **made possible through an amendment to Aadhaar** (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) **Act, 2016.**
- Now, it is **proposed that any entity** other than a ministry or department that **desires to use Aadhaar authentication need to submit its proposal** to concerned ministry/department **at Centre or state level.**
  - ➤ It is also **proposed to include** promoting **ease of living of residents and enabling of better access to services** for them as **one of the prescribed purposes.**
- Aadhaar is a **12-digit unique identity number** that can be obtained by **residents of India,** based on their **biometric and demographic data.**
  - ➤ **It is issued by UIDAI,** a statutory authority under MeitY, **on behalf of Government of India.**

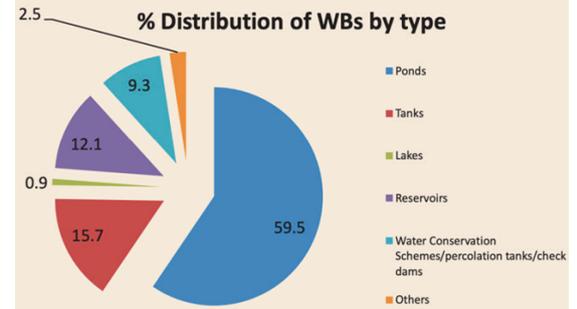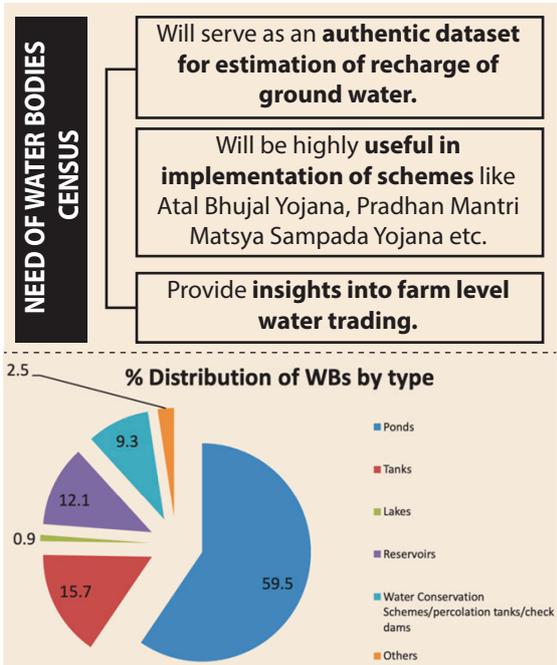# MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI RELEASED ALL INDIA REPORT OF THE FIRST CENSUS OF WATER BODIES

- Objective is **to develop a national database for all water bodies** by collecting information on subject including their size, condition, status of encroachments, use, storage capacity, status of filling up of storage etc.
  - ➢ Census was launched **in convergence with 6th Minor Irrigation Census under Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Irrigation Census".**
- Water bodies **include all natural or man-made units** bounded on all sides **with some or no masonry work used** for storing water for irrigation or other purposes (refer image for types).
- **Key highlights of the Census**
  - ➢ **24.24 lakh water bodies** have been enumerated, out of which **97.1% are in rural areas** and only 2.9% are in urban areas.
  - ➢ **Top 3 states with most water bodies:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh.
    - ■ West Bengal's **South 24 Parganas district has highest number of waterbodies.**
  - ➢ **States/UTs with least water bodies:** Sikkim, Chandigarh, Delhi.
  - ➢ **78% are man-made water bodies** whereas **22% are natural** water bodies.
  - ➢ **55.2% are owned by private entities** whereas rest are under public ownership.
  - ➢ **Water User Associations** (WUA) has helped in **preventing encroachments.**

NEED OF WATER BODIES CENSUS

- Will serve as an **authentic dataset for estimation of recharge of ground water.**
- Will be highly **useful in implementation of schemes** like Atal Bhujal Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana etc.
- Provide **insights into farm level water trading.**

% Distribution of WBs by type

- Ponds — 59.5
- Tanks — 15.7
- Lakes — 0.9
- Reservoirs — 12.1
- Water Conservation Schemes/percolation tanks/check dams — 9.3
- Others — 2.5

ATAL INNOVATION MISSION (AIM), NITI AAYOG, AND UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (UNCDF) RELEASED A WHITEPAPER FOR AGRI-TECH INNOVATION IN INDIA

- Earlier, **UNCDF,** in partnership with AIM, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other organisations, **has launched an innovation platform** to enable **cross-border exchange of innovations, insights and investments.**
  - ➢ **First initiative of this platform is Agri-tech Challenge,** under which this whitepaper has been released.
- Agri-tech is **use of technology and technological innovation** to improve the **efficiency and output of agricultural processes.**
  - ➢ **Indian agri-tech market** potential is estimated at **US$24 billion by 2025,** of which **less than 1% has been captured** so far.
- **Challenges for Agri-tech start-ups**
  - ➢ **High cost of infrastructure and devices** is a significant barrier to scaling of agri-tech solutions.
  - ➢ **Lack of digital literacy.**
  - ➢ High cost of **customer acquisition.**
  - ➢ **Inadequate** farm and farmer level **data set.**
- **Recommendations**
  - ➢ **Ensuring access to public data** on farmers, land records, financial health, weather reports, meteorological data etc.
  - ➢ Creating **transparency around the licensing process** for agri-tech start-ups by digitising the entire process.
  - ➢ Promote **creation of local agriculture-related infrastructures** by incentivising and providing financing from formal financial institutions.
  - ➢ **State-specific Agri-Tech policy** to promote agriculture-based start-ups.

ABOUT UNCDF
- It is **UN' flagship catalytic financing entity** for world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- It is **an autonomous, voluntarily funded** UN organization, **affiliated with UN Development Programme.**
- It was **created in 1966 by UN General Assembly.**

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN (SOWC) 2023: FOR EVERY CHILD, VACCINATION REPORT RELEASED BY UNICEF

- **Building on global strategies** outlined in Immunization Agenda 2030 and Gavi Strategy 5.0 **to promote equity** and sustainably scale up immunization coverage, **report presents an agenda to put childhood vaccination first.**
- **Key priorities identified**
  - ➢ **Vaccinate every child, everywhere by**
    - ■ **Catching up on vaccination of children missed** during the pandemic.
      - □ **98% of the population in India** currently perceive **vaccines as important for children.**
    - ■ **Identifying zero-dose (unreached or missed out) and under-vaccinated** children.
      - □ **India was among top 20 countries** with the largest numbers **of zero-dose children.**
  - ➢ **Strengthen demand for vaccination by talking** to communities; **tackling gender barriers; rethinking accountability** in health systems.
  - ➢ **Spend more on immunization** and health **by investing in primary health care** at national level and **better aligning** donor support.
  - ➢ **Build resilient systems by improving data collection** and disease surveillance; Securing vaccine and **other supplies etc.**
    - ■ In India, **digital health platform TeCHO+** (Technology Enabled Community Health Operations) and **electronic vaccine intelligence network (eVIN) increased vaccination coverage** while enhancing data entry efficiency.

USA TO CATALYSE GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH MAJOR ECONOMIES FORUM (MEF) ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE

- MEF, **launched in 2009** by US President Barack Obama, is aimed at facilitating **candid dialogue among major emitting countries** to garner the political leadership needed to advance efforts against climate change.
  - ➢ MEF economies account for **roughly 80% of global GDP and global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.**
  - ➢ MEF represents **20 major economies including India,** Australia, Brazil, China, UK, UAE etc.
- MEF leaders **deliberated on International Energy Agency's (IEA's) "Credible Pathways to 1.5°C",** which identified **need for efforts in four key areas for keeping a 1.5°C limit** on warming within reach.

Areas	Key Actions identified
Decarbonizing Energy	• **Scaling up deployment of clean electricity** - including renewables, nuclear power, fossil fuel power plants with carbon capture, storage and use (CCUS).
Reducing deforestation to net zero by 2030	• **Ending deforestation of Amazon** and other critical forests. • Improved **management of existing forests.**
Tackling potent, non-CO2 climate pollutants	• **Launching a Methane Finance Sprint** to cut methane emissions. • **Accelerating hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) phasedown** under Kigali Amendment.
Advancing Carbon Management	• **Accelerate CCUS technologies** through a COP 28 Carbon Management Challenge.

- **Other initiatives announced by USA**
  - ➢ **Providing $1 Billion to Green Climate Fund,** set up by UNFCCC in 2010 **to help developing countries reduce their GHG emissions** and adapt to impact of climate change.
  - ➢ **Mobilising multilateral development banks** (MDBs) to address global challenges, including climate change.

ALSO IN NEWS

Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border dispute	• Assam and Arunachal Pradesh **signed a MoU to end inter-state border dispute.**
	• **About Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border dispute:**
	  ➢ Both states **share an 804 km long boundary. Dispute** in question was **over 123 villages,** which span 12 districts of Arunachal Pradesh and 8 districts of Assam.
	  ➢ **Allegations of residents** of one state **encroaching on the other's land** stoked disputes and violence.
	  ➢ Under the agreement, **both states have agreed** that this agreement will be final and **neither of the states will make any new claim.**

India-Denmark Green Strategic Partnership (GSP)	• **India- Denmark reviewed progress** of GSP. • **In 2020,** PMs of India and Denmark **agreed to elevate relations to a GSP.** • GSP is **to advance political cooperation, expand economic relations and green growth, create jobs and strengthen cooperation on addressing global challenges** and opportunities. • Focus of GSP is on an implementation of **Paris Agreement and UN Sustainable Development Goals.**

Zombie Bank	• In backdrop of **challenges posed by zombie firms** to financial system, experts have suggested to **identify zombie banks** as well.
	  ➢ Zombie firms/companies **survive on borrowing as they do not have enough profits** to cover debt-servicing costs.
	• **About Zombie Banks:**
	  ➢ It is a bank that is **practically insolvent but continues to exist through hiding bad loans** on their balance sheet.
	  ➢ These are **kept afloat to prevent panic** from spreading to healthier banks.
	  ➢ Zombie banks **resort to forbearance lending** i.e. allows a borrower to **temporarily stop or suspend payments of the loan.**

Arm's length price	• **Supreme Court ruled that "arm's length price" determined** by income tax appellate tribunal **cannot be treated as final in disputes** related to alleged income suppression by multinational companies. • Arm's length price is a **transaction in which buyers and sellers** of a product **act independently and have no relationship to each other.** • It seeks **to ensure that both parties** in the deal are **acting in their own self-interest** and are **not subject to any pressure** or duress from the other party.

PRAYAG Platform	• **PRAYAG stands for P**latform for **R**eal-time **A**nalysis of **Y**amuna, **G**anga and their Tributaries • Prayag is a **real tme monitoring centre for planning and monitoring of projects, river water quality, etc.** through various online dashboards such as Ganga Tarang Portal, Ganga Districts Performance Monitoring System, etc. • L**aunched by: Ministry of Jal Shakti,** Under the ambit of Namami Gange Programme.
Satkosia wildlife sanctuary	• Recently, Satkosia wildlife sanctuary **witnessed breeding of Indian Skimmer** (IUCN status: **Endangered) for the first time.** • **About Satkosia wildlife sanctuary** ➤ It is **located around Satkosia gorge of Mahanadi river** and is spread over Angul, Cuttack, Boudh and Nayagarh districts in **Odisha.** ➤ **Flora:** Tropical moist deciduous Forests and Moist peninsular low level sal. ➤ **Fauna:** Tiger, Elephant, Gaur, fresh water crocodile, gharial, barking deer, bison, wild dog, sloth bear etc.
Mount Annapurna	• **Indian mountaineer who went missing** on Nepal's Mount Annapurna **has been found alive.** • Annapurna range is a **series of peaks with Mt. Annapurna I,** at 8,091 metres, is the **tenth-highest mountain in the world.** ➤ It is **counted among the most difficult peaks to summit** along with K2 and Nanga Parbat. • It **lies east of a great gorge cut through the Himalaya by the Kali Gandaki River, which separates it from** the other large massif, **the Dhaulagiri.**
SpaceX's Starship	• SpaceX's new rocket system - **Starship - exploded mid-air** during its first test flight. • **SpaceX's Starship spacecraft and Super Heavy rocket** – collectively referred to as Starship – represent a **fully reusable transportation system.** ➤ Once fully developed, it could be the **most powerful launch vehicle** with the capability to carry a **payload of up to 150 metric tonnes** in fully-reusable mode and **250 metric tonnes in expendable mode.** ➤ It is **designed to carry both crew and cargo** to **Earth orbit, the Moon, Mars and beyond.** ➤ It is also **capable of point-to-point transport on Earth.**
Exobiology Extant Life Surveyor (EELS)	• **NASA is developing a snake-like robot - EELS** - which can **boost space exploration** through its diverse adaptability to various terrains. • EELS is **capable of exploring internal and enclosed dynamic terrain structures** to assess evidence for life. ➤ EELS **uses rotating propulsion unit** which **acts as tracks** while gripping mechanism and **propeller unit helps it to access a plume vent exit.** • It's **special focus is on Encaladus,** the **sixth largest moon of Saturn.** ➤ Besides Enceladus, **EELS system can explore Martial polar caps** and descending crevasses in Earth's ice sheets.
100 Food Streets across the country	• **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** in collaboration with Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has requested **states/UTs to develop 100 food streets in 100 districts across the country.** • Aim is **to encourage safe and healthy food practices** among food businesses and community members. • It will be **implemented through National Health Mission** (NHM) with technical support from FSSAI. • **Financial assistance to States/UTs** (in the ratio of 60:40 or 90: 10) in the form **of Rs.1 crore per food street/districts will be given.**
INIOCHOS-23	• **Indian Air Force will participate** in Exercise INIOCHOS-23, a **multi-national air exercise** hosted **by the Greece Air Force.**
Abhilekh Patal	• PM **praised "Abhilekh patal"** a portal with **over 1 Crore Pages of Historical Records** of National Archives. • It is a **full-featured web-portal to access National Archives of India's (NAI)** reference media and its **digitized collections through internet.** ➤ It is an **initiative of NAI** to make its **Indian Archival Records available to all.** • NAI is an **Attached Office of the Ministry of Culture** and act as **repository of non-current records** of Government of India.