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Approach is to build fundamental concepts and analytical ability in students to enable them to answer questions of Preliminary as well as Mains Exam

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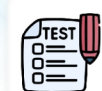
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NOTE:

Dear Students,

Memorisation and recollection of information in Current Affairs is as important as understanding the articles. In order to enhance the learning outcomes from the Monthly Current Affairs Magazine, we are introducing following additions:



A thematic based colors has been used in the document in the boxes, tables etc to enable easy identification and recollection of various concepts and topics.



Questions are an important tool to assess and retain information. To enable this we are adding a Smart Quiz at the end of each section in the document for practicing the questions.



A wide variety of infographics have been added to ensure smoother learning experience and enhanced retention of the information. This will also help in effective presentation of information in the answer writing as well.



Places and persons in news are being presented in an objective manner through Maps, Tables & Pictures. This will help in easier recollection of factual information.

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
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RANCHI

1. POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

1.1. FISCAL FEDERALISM

Why in the news?

Recently, some states have moved the Supreme Court against the Centre for disputes over sharing of financial resources by the Central Government.

More on News

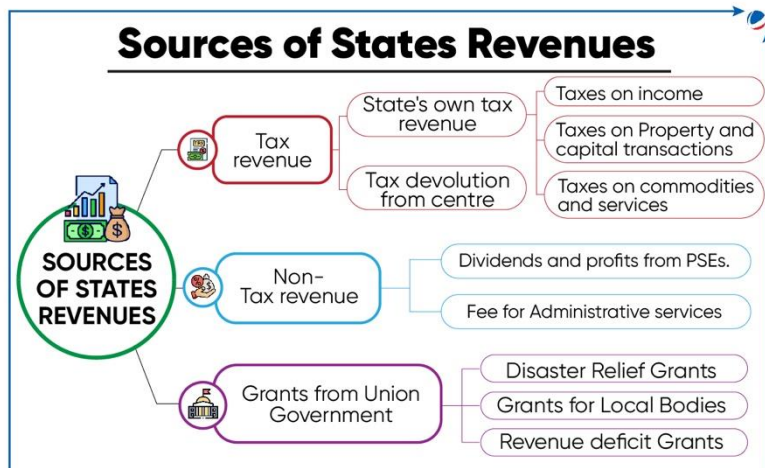
- **Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka government** moved the Supreme Court against the Centre for **delay in release of disaster relief fund, imposition of net borrowing ceiling limit, and drought relief respectively**.

Fiscal Federalism

- Fiscal federalism refers to how **federal, state, and local governments share funding and administrative responsibilities within India's federal system**.
- Fiscal federalism is **often associated with three broad principles**:
 - **Fiscal Equivalency**: It requires a **separate jurisdiction for each public service** which should include the set of individuals that consume it.
 - **Decentralization theorem**: Each public service should be provided by the jurisdiction having **control over the minimum geographic area** that would internalise the benefits and costs of such provision.
 - **Principle of Subsidiarity**: Functions should be performed at the **low level of government**, implying hierarchy.

Constitutional Provisions defining India's Fiscal Federalism Arrangement

- **Seventh Schedule**: Constitution delineates tax bases between the Union and States listing them in the Union List and the State List respectively (**Article 246**).
- **Distribution of Revenue**: A classification of tax revenues between the union and the states is as follows:
 - **Taxes levied and collected by the centre, but wholly assigned to the states** (Article 269).
 - Levy and Collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in course of **Inter-State Trade or Commerce (Article 269-A)**, which is distributed between Centre and States on **recommendations of GST council**.
 - Taxes levied and collected by the union and distributed between the union and the states (**Article 270**) on the **recommendation of Finance Commission**.
- **Grants-in-Aid**: Centre provides grants-in-aid to states as per **Article 275**.
- **Borrowings**: As per **Article 292**, the union government has powers to borrow money either **within or outside the country** while under **Article 293**, a **state government can borrow within India (and not abroad)**.
 - Also, if a **state is indebted to the Union**, it **may not resort to further borrowing without the prior consent of the Union Government**.
- **Finance Commission (FC)**: Article 280 provides for a Finance Commission (constituted by President after every five years) to **adjudicate sharing of resources** between Union and States.



Issues between Centre-State Financial Relations

- **Borrowing limits on states**: Centre is increasingly restricting borrowing by States to equivalent of **3% of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for the 2023-24 financial year** (As per recommendations of 15th Finance commission).
 - It has also made enhanced borrowings conditional on **implementation of reform measures** such as power sector reforms.

- **Vertical fiscal imbalance:** Power to raise taxes rests largely with Union government (such as income tax, CGST, taxing foreign transactions, rents on natural resources etc.) while post-GST, the state governments may only tax the consumption of goods and services (SGST).
- **Burden of developmental expenditure:** RBI has categorised the budgetary expenditures as ‘**developmental**’ (expenditures on socio-economic services) and ‘**non-developmental**’ (interest payments, pensions, subsidies etc.).
 - As a proportion of the GDP, the **combined developmental expenditures** by all State governments increased from 8.8% in 2004-05 to **12.5% in 2021-22**.
- **Intergovernmental fiscal transfers:** Over the years, the **share of Union Finance Commission tax transfers has declined** for a few States.
 - 15th Finance Commission has designed tax transfer formula based on population (15%), area (15%), income distance (45%), demographic transition (12.5%), forest and ecology (10%) and tax effort (2.5%).
 - The weightage given to the **distance of per capita income adversely affects growing States**.
- **Non-sharing of cess revenue with states:** There has been a 133% rise in collection of major cesses and surcharges levied by the Union government during 2017-18 and 2022-23.
 - These account for about 25% of total taxes but are **excluded from being distributed to the states**.
- **Decline in grants-in-aid:** Grants-in-aid to States have fallen from Rs.1,95,000 crore in 2015-16 to Rs.1,65,000 crore in 2023-24.
 - Besides these statutory transfers, discretionary spending, earlier mediated by the Planning Commission, now depends solely at the **discretion of the Centre**.
- **Increasing share in centrally sponsored schemes:** States are required to bankroll a higher proportion of expenditure under these partially central funded schemes while they have **no role in design of such schemes**.

Way Forward

- **Role of 16th FC:** There needs to be a negotiation with the 16th FC for specific-purpose transfers to **tackle State-specific issues** such as **demographic transition, inward and outward migration and climate change crisis**.
 - **Equity** can be made the overarching concern of the 16th FC and **Human Development Index** could be considered as a strong candidate in horizontal tax distribution.
- **Reviewing Off-budget borrowings:** There is a need to review the off-Budget borrowing practices of both the Union and the States.
 - Off-Budget borrowings mean all borrowings not provided for in the Budget but whose repayment liabilities fall on the Budget. They are generally unscrutinised and unreported.
- **Addressing horizontal imbalance:** Recognising that each state requires a certain minimum fiscal resource value regardless of the population, rich states should also be guaranteed a minimum share in tax devolution.
 - Vice-versa, a **ceiling should be defined for poor states also**.
- **Major principles that should guide fiscal federalism in India include:**
 - The Centre as well as the States should be **autonomous** and **neither should be unduly dependent on the other** for its finances.
 - Both should be able to **obtain enough funds** for their legitimate expenses.
 - The **receipts should grow** with the need for expenditure.

1.2. ROLE OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN GOVERNANCE

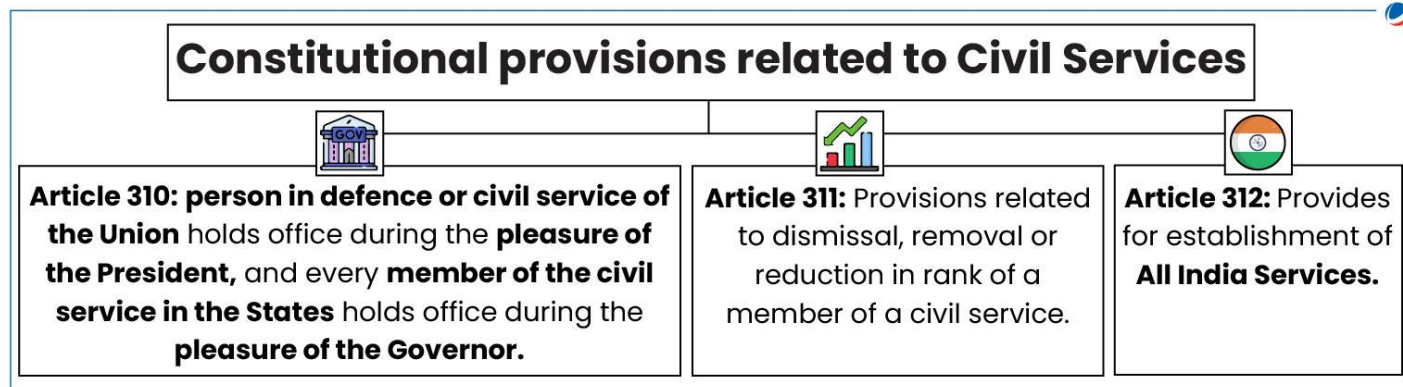
Why in the news?

Recently, on occasion of Civil Services Day, Prime Minister highlighted that civil servants play a pivotal role in furthering governance and public welfare.

About Civil Services

- Civil servants **are permanent officials in the executive wing of governance**.
- **Genesis:** The concept of a **merit based modern Civil Service** in India was **introduced in 1854 following Lord Macaulay’s Report**,
- **Post-independence:** Civil Services, after Independence, have been **categorised into three types:**

- **All India Services** (common to both Centre & States): recruited and trained by the Central Government, but, for work, they are assigned to different States.
- **Central Services** (for purely Central subjects) and
- **State Services** (for administration of subjects under State jurisdiction).



Role of Civil Servants in Governance

- **Continuity of governance:** Being part of permanent executive Civil servants ensure continuity in governance even when elected governments change.
- **Interface between government and people:** Civil servants act as the **main channel for communicating** people's needs to the government and **implementing government policies** on the ground.
- **Policy formulation:** They provide necessary **inputs, identify policy areas, analyse alternatives, solutions to societal issues** etc. and advice to the ministers.
- **Cementing Indian democracy:**
 - **Free and fair elections:** Election Commission has played a pivotal role in ensuring elections in India are free and fair. Reforms introduced by former CEC T.N.Seshan is considered to be critical in reducing the influence of money and muscle in election.
 - **Participative democracy:** Example, in 1976, A.M. Gokhale introduced the Village Development Board (VDB) in Nagaland **for decentralised grassroots planning and development**.
 - **Inclusive democracy:** Many civil servants have played critical role in giving **voice to voiceless**. For example, in 2020, the Balangir district administration launched 'Sweekruti' to integrate the transgender community into mainstream activities and social security schemes.
- **Growth and development:**
 - **Enforcing law and order:** Peace is crucial for socio-economic development of the country. Civil servants work towards addressing social tensions, conflicts and thus create social unity and harmony.
 - ✓ For instance, **Sanjukta Parashar** (IPS officer), also known as **Iron Lady of Assam** played a critical role on in tackling northeast insurgency.
 - **Overcoming resource constraints:** For example,
 - ✓ **IAS officer Armstrong Pame**, known as the Miracle Man of Manipur, **crowdfunded** through social media to construct a **100 km road in 2012 without state financial aid**. Now this road is also known as **"people's road"**.
 - ✓ **Operation Sulaimani**, pioneered by Prasanth Nair (former District Collector of Kozhikode in Kerala), **uses nameless donations from the public to provide food with dignity**. This facilitates in ensuring Right to Food.
- **Career Diplomats:** Civil servants represent their country in international forums and play an important role in negotiating agreements, promoting national interest, protecting friendly relations with other countries, etc.
- **Quasi- Judicial role:** Civil servants serves on tribunals, like Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal, Cyber Appellate Tribunal etc.,
- **Delegated Legislation:** The civil servants **frame departmental legislation**. The legislature gives a broad outline of legislation and delegates to the civil servants the power to make details of that legislation.

Challenges associated with the functioning of civil services

- **Autonomy:** Frequent transfer, political pressure and interference, and need for approval from higher authorities, etc. compromises the autonomy of civil servants.
- **Infrastructure:** Many Indian cities, particularly rural areas, **lack proper infrastructure and resources**, impacting effective implementation of government programs and service delivery.
- **Red-tapism:** Complex bureaucratic procedures, hierarchical system in civil services, make the decision process time-consuming, **slowing down the progress** and make it difficult to implement change in society.
- **Security:** Civil servants and their family members are often exposed to **risk of violence, and threats from criminals or extremists**.
 - For example, Death threats to IAS officer, Tukaram Mundhe for raiding illegal bars, demolishing encroachments and action against land and water mafia.

Initiatives taken to improve the functioning of Civil Servants

- **National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building- Mission Karmayogi:** Aims to transform the capacity building apparatus at individual, institutional and process levels at Government of India.
 - **Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) - Karmayogi platform** is a comprehensive online platform that guides individual civil service officials in their capacity-building journey.
- **National Standards for Civil Service Training Institutions (NSCSTI):** It was **developed by Capacity Building Commission** for **elevating quality and capacity of training delivery** of Central Training Institutes (CTIs).
- **Aarambh:** Launched by Government of India in 2019, it is first ever **common foundation course for civil servants training**.
- **National Training Policy:** To **develop professional, impartial and efficient civil servants** that are responsible to needs of citizens.
- **Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration.**

Conclusion

Each step taken by a civil servant towards transparency, efficiency, and integrity, brings our nation closer to its goals of inclusive development and good governance. In recent years, government undertook multiple steps to enhance civil servants work efficiency, capacity building etc. However, a careful restructuring of civil services is further required to address issues faced by citizens in 21st century, and enhance delivery of services.

1.3. EVM-VVPAT

Why in the News?

In **Association for Democratic Reforms vs Election Commission of India And Another** (2024) the Supreme Court dismissed requests for full cross-verification of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) data with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) records.

More on News

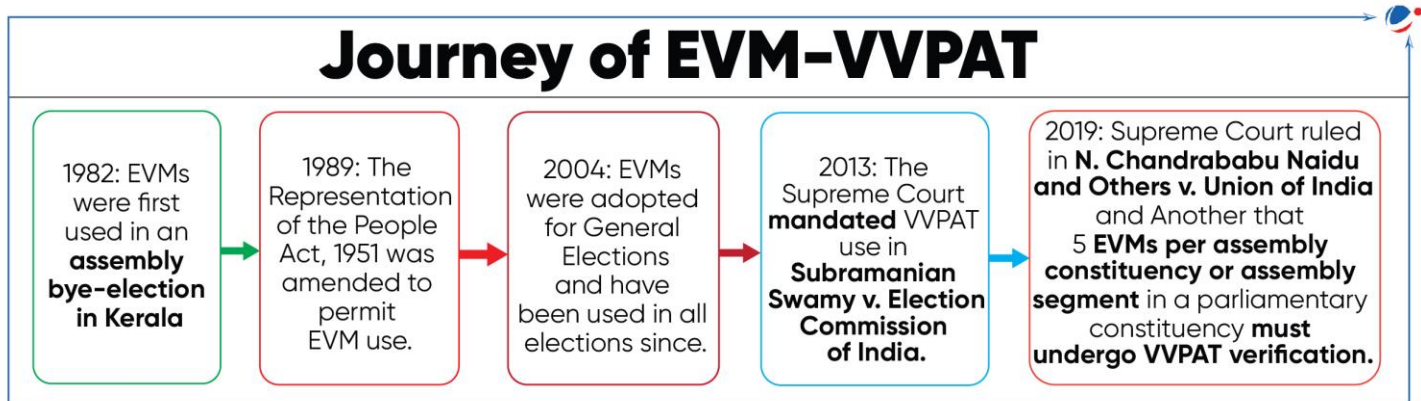
- In 2023, the ADR filed a petition in the Supreme Court about the possibility of manipulating the EVMs and made three requests to the court.
 - **return to the paper ballot** system; **or**
 - the **printed slip** from the VVPAT machine be **given to the voter to verify**, and put in the ballot box, for counting; **and/or**
 - There should be **100% counting of the VVPAT slips** in addition to electronic counting by the control unit.

Key highlights of the Judgment

- **Verification of VVPAT:** Court **acknowledged the fundamental right** of voters to ensure their vote is accurately recorded and counted. However, it clarified **that this does not equate to the right to count all VVPAT slips** or to physically access these slips.
- **Return to paper ballot:** Court also **refused to return to paper ballot** referring to the **checks and protocols** to ensure and ascertain the legitimacy and integrity of the EVMs and the election process.
- **Direction to enhance public confidence in the EVM-VVPAT:** The Court issued following two directions:

- **Strengthening of Symbol Loading Unit (SLU) protocol:** On completion of the symbol loading process in the VVPAT, the **SLU shall be sealed and secured in containers** which shall be signed by the candidates or their representatives.
 - ✓ The sealed containers shall be **kept in the strong rooms** along with the EVMs at **least for a period of 45 days post the declaration of results.**
- **Verification of burnt memory:** Verification of the burnt memory semi-controller of **5% of EVMs** per assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency.
 - ✓ **It applies to cases** where a written request for the same is made by either of two runners up candidates, within a period of **7 days post the announcement result.**

About EVM-VVPAT



- **Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)** is a **portable microcontroller-based instrument** designed to modernize the Election process.
 - It is manufactured and supplied to the ECI by **Bharat Electronics Limited** (under the Ministry of Defense) and **Electronic Corporation of India Limited** (under the Department of Atomic Energy).
- **It consists of 3-units the**
 - **Ballot unit:** Functions like a keyboard with 16 buttons/key.
 - **Control unit:** Also called as the master unit, remains with the polling/presiding officer
 - **VVPAT:** Allows the voters to **verify that their votes are cast as intended.**
 - ✓ When a vote is cast, a **slip is printed** containing the **serial number, name and symbol of the candidate**
 - ✓ This **slip is visible through a transparent window for 7 seconds** before it automatically **cuts and drops into a sealed box.**
 - ✓ It was introduced to have the **fullest transparency in the voting system** and to restore the confidence of the voters by ensuring the accuracy of the voting system using EVMs.

Advantages of the EVM-VVPAT

- It runs on battery and **does not require any external power supply.**
- **Negating a scenario of an invalid vote** akin to an invalid paper ballot.
- It does not permit more than 4 votes per minute, thereby **detering booth capturing.**
- After pressing the 'CLOSE' button on the control unit, there is **no possibility of voting.**
- By pressing the 'TOTAL' button on the control unit at any time, the **total number of votes polled up to the time of pressing the button** is displayed, without indicating the candidate-wise result of votes.
- It is **not possible to pre-program the EVM** in a spurious manner.

Do you know?

- **Goa was the first state to use VVPATs with all EVMs** during its 2017 Legislative Assembly election.
- **VVPATs were fully deployed in the 2019 Lok Sabha General Elections.**

Conclusion

There is a need to nurture a culture of trust and collaboration among the citizens, the elected representatives, and the electoral machinery to strengthen the foundations of our democracy and ensure that the voices and choices of all citizens are valued and respected.

1.4. RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (RPWD) ACT, 2016

Why in the News?

Recently, in the **Seema Girija Lal & Anr Vs Union of India & Ors** case the Supreme Court expressed disappointment at the inadequate implementation of the RPwD Act, 2016 across states.

More on News

- The Court noted that many states including **Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, UP, Punjab, Tripura, and UT of Chandigarh** were lagging in the implementation of various provisions of the Act including:
 - appointment of **State Commissioners**,
 - creation of **State Funds for PwDs**,
 - formation of **assessment boards for disability certificates**,
 - establishment of **Special Courts**, etc.
- The court **directed all such states to implement** various provisions of the Act **by June 30** while also directing the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to **update the court with a status of compliance**.



Data Bank

As per Census 2011

- **2.21%** of the total population constitutes PwD.
- **69%** of the PwDs live in rural areas.
- **56%** of the PwDs is **male**.
- **21%** of the the total PwDs are **Elderly** (60+ years)

About PWDs

- PwDs face **stigma, discrimination, and neglect**, due to prejudice and socio-psychological and cultural reasons, despite the Constitutional guarantee of equality of all citizens.
- Their abilities are often underestimated, leading to a **vicious cycle of underachievement and hindering their growth**.

About Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016

Background

- The Act aims to ensure that **all PwDs can lead their lives with dignity**, without discrimination and **with equal opportunities**.
- It was enacted to give effect to the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) of 2007**, to which **India is a signatory**.

Key Provisions of the Act

- Definition of PwD:** PwD refers to a person with **long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment** which, in interaction with barriers, **hinders his full and effective participation** in society equally with others.
- Disabilities recognized:** Recognises **21** types of disabilities including **acid attack victims, intellectual disability, mental illness**, etc.

Challenges faced by PwDs



Limited access to quality education due to lack of accessible infrastructure, trained teachers, teaching materials, and other supportive resources in schools.



PwDs may face difficulties in accessing **appropriate and affordable healthcare services**, including rehabilitation, assistive devices, and specialized care.

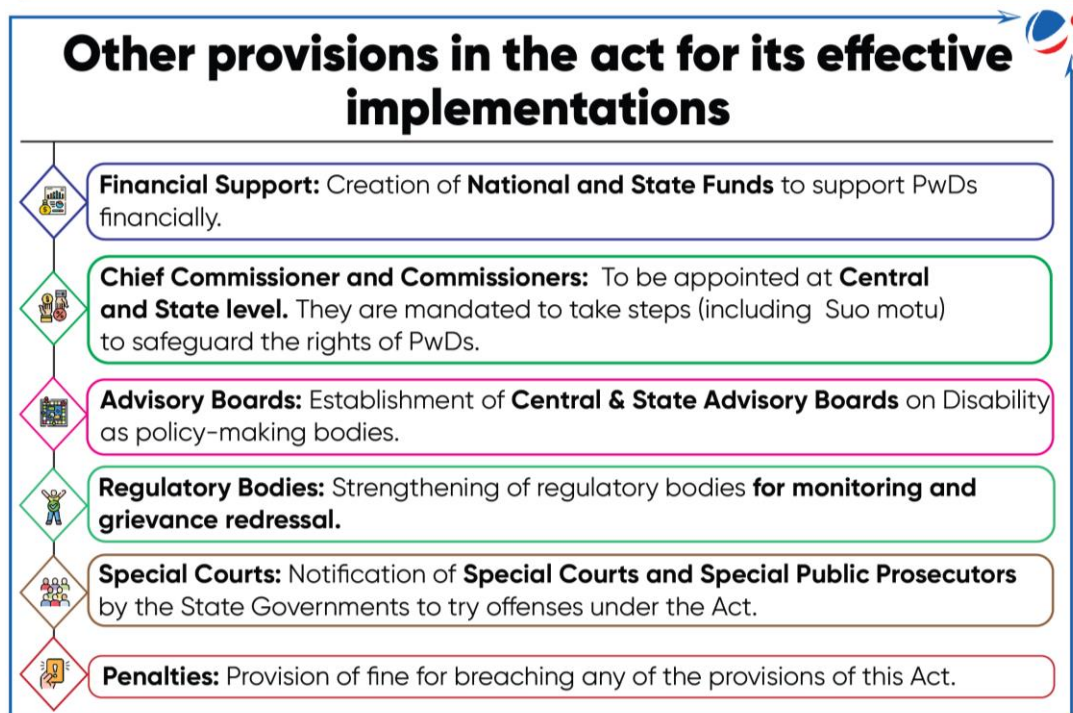
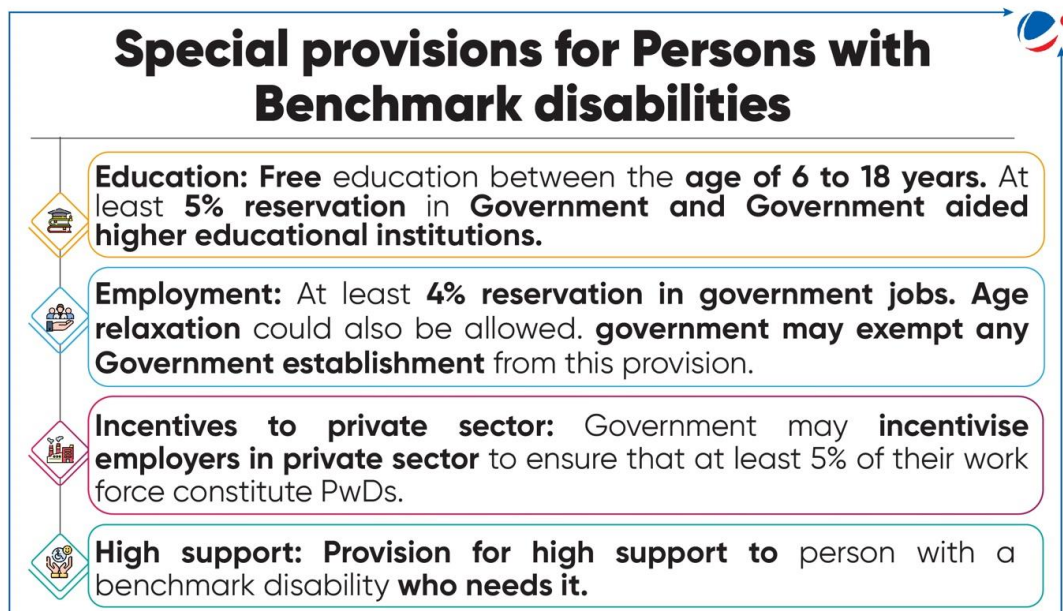


PwDs and their families are **more likely to experience poverty and economic marginalization** due to limited employment opportunities, additional expenses for assistive devices, etc.



Lack of **affordable assistive technologies**, such as screen readers, speech recognition software, specialized hardware, etc., may reinforce digital divide.

- **Enumerates right of PwDs**
 - Governments are responsible for ensuring PwDs enjoy the **right to equality, life with dignity and respect**.
 - **Protection from abuse**, cruelty, inhuman treatment, violence and exploitation, etc.
 - **Other rights** include the right to **home and family**, **reproductive right**, **accessibility in voting**, the right to **own or inherit property**.
- **Persons with Benchmark disabilities:** It refers to person with **at least 40% of a specified disability**, whether defined in measurable terms or not as certified by the relevant authority.
- **Guardianship:** If a PwD cannot make legally binding decisions even with support, a **limited guardian** may be appointed. The **District Court or designated authority** may also **grant total support** to the person if needed or if repeated limited guardianship is necessary.
 - Limited guardianship is a **joint decision-making system** based on mutual understanding and trust between the guardian and the PwD. It follows the **PwD's will** and is **limited to specific periods, decisions, and situations**.
- **Social security:** Mandates the government to formulate necessary programmes to safeguard the rights of PwDs for an **adequate standard of living** to enable them to live independently or in the community.



Reasons for sub-optimal implementation of the RPwD Act

- **Inadequate allocation of resources:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2022-23 highlighted suboptimal budget allocation for PwD program. **For example**,
 - between 2016-17 and 2020-21, number of components under the SIPDA increased from 6 to 13, whereas the budgetary allocation increased by less than 9%.

- Disability pension of **₹300 or 500 per month under Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme** is provided which given the current state of inflation is too low.
- **Coordination issues:** Effective implementation requires active participation of states as well as districts and effective coordination between various departments and agencies, ensuring this is difficult.
 - **For example**, the non-receipt of Utilisation Certificates from the State Governments has remained a recurring problem, which has resulted in non-release of funds for initiatives for PwDs by the Centre.
- **Rehabilitation services**
 - **69% of the PwDs reside in rural areas** where accessibility, availability, and utilization of rehabilitation services is inadequate.
 - Under Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme the present cost norms are **not sufficient to get qualified rehabilitation professionals** and there is a **particular scarcity of professionals in remote areas**.
- **Hinderance in educational empowerment:** Budgetary allocation for schemes meant for educational empowerment of PwDs has remained stagnant.
 - Additionally, **except the National Fellowship Scheme**, no other targets were achieved.
- **Lack of data and research:** There is a **lack of updated reliable and disaggregated data**, which hinders evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

Initiatives taken for PwDs

- **Draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities** proposed to revise the 2006 policy to align it with UNCRPD, RPwD Act 2016 and National Education Policy 2020 (promotes inclusive education).
- There are **four national legislations** dealing with persons with disabilities namely,
 - **Ministry of Social Justice:** Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992, National Trust for the Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, 1999; the RPwD Act, 2016.
 - **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare:** Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.
- **Scheme for Implementing of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (SIPDA)**
 - **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan):** Launched in 2015, to enhance the accessibility of the built environment, transport system and information and communication eco-system.
 - **Skill Development Programme for PwDs.**
 - To establish **early diagnostic and intervention centres** at District Headquarters/other places having Government Medical Colleges
- **India is also a signatory to the following international initiatives**
 - Adoption of **Incheon Strategy** "To make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific.
 - **Declaration on the Full Participation and Equality** of People with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region
 - **Biwako Millennium Framework** working towards an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society

Some major schemes for PwDs

- 
Social Empowerment
 - ▶ Accessible India Campaign (AIC)
 - ▶ Unique Disability Identification (UDID) Project
- 
Physical Empowerment
 - ▶ Assistance to disabled persons for purchase/fitting of aids/assistive devices (ADIP)
- 
Economic Empowerment
 - ▶ National Action Plan for Skill Training of Persons with Disabilities
 - ▶ Concessional loan to entrepreneurs
- 
Educational Empowerment
 - ▶ Scholarships for students with Disabilities
 - ▶ Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)

Way Forward

- **Handholding to states:** The Union ministry should guide state agencies with expert advice, targets, and resources to implement the Act's provisions effectively.
- **Enhancing Collaboration:** Foster collaboration across government bodies and with civil society, disability rights groups, and the private sector to promote the rights and inclusion of PwDs.
- **Improve accessibility:** Incorporate accessibility criteria in all **central and state level procurement laws and policies** in public procurement of physical, digital and transport infrastructure.
- **Advancing impact assessment:** Establish robust data systems to monitor the RPwD Act's implementation and assess its impact, while supporting relevant research to understand regional challenges faced by PwDs.
- **Social audit:** Section 48 of the Act requires the appropriate **government to undertake a social audit** of all general schemes and programmes involving PwDs. This provision needs to be implemented on a priority basis.

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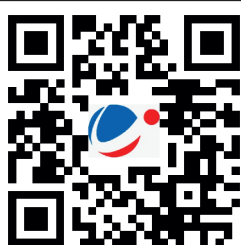
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SURAT | THANE | THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | TIRUCHIRAPPALLI | TIRUPATI | UDAIPUR | VADODARA | VARANASI | VIJAYAWADA
VISAKHAPATNAM | WARANGAL

1.5. STREET VENDORS (PROTECTION OF LIVELIHOOD AND REGULATION OF STREET VENDING) ACT, 2014

Why in the news?

Recently, the enactment of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act 2014 completed 10 years.

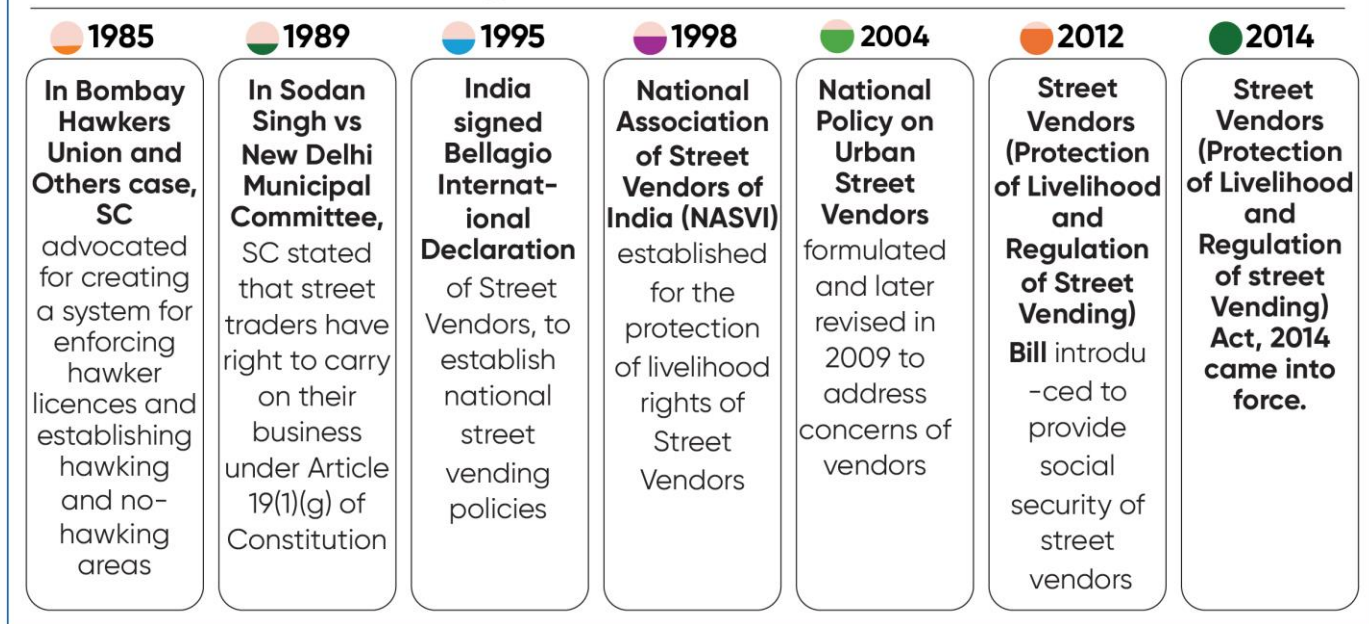
About street vendors

- **Current status:** The number of street vendors is expected to be around 10 million. Cities like **Delhi and Mumbai have the largest share**. Most of them are migrants.
- **Contribution to economy:** According to government estimates, street-vending accounts for **14% of the total (non-agricultural) urban informal employment** in the country.
- For poor, Street vending acts as the **best opportunity for self-employment with the lowest capital**
- **Challenges faced by street vendors:**
 - **Financial insecurity** due to low income, irregular employment and sale fluctuation, further impacts access to formal credit services.
 - **Poor working conditions** such as long working hours, harsh weather conditions like heatwave, lack of access to shelter, transportation, storage facilities etc.
 - **Women face issues of access to basic facilities** such as sanitation, also face **security issues** including eve-teasing, sexual harassment, etc.

Constitutional Provisions related to Street Vendors

- **Article 19(1)(g):** Right to practise any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.
- **Articles 39 (a):** Citizens, men and women equally, have the **right to an adequate means of livelihood**.
- **Article 39 (b):** Ownership and control of the material resources of community are so distributed as best to sub-serve the common good.

Evolution of rights of street vendor in India



About Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014

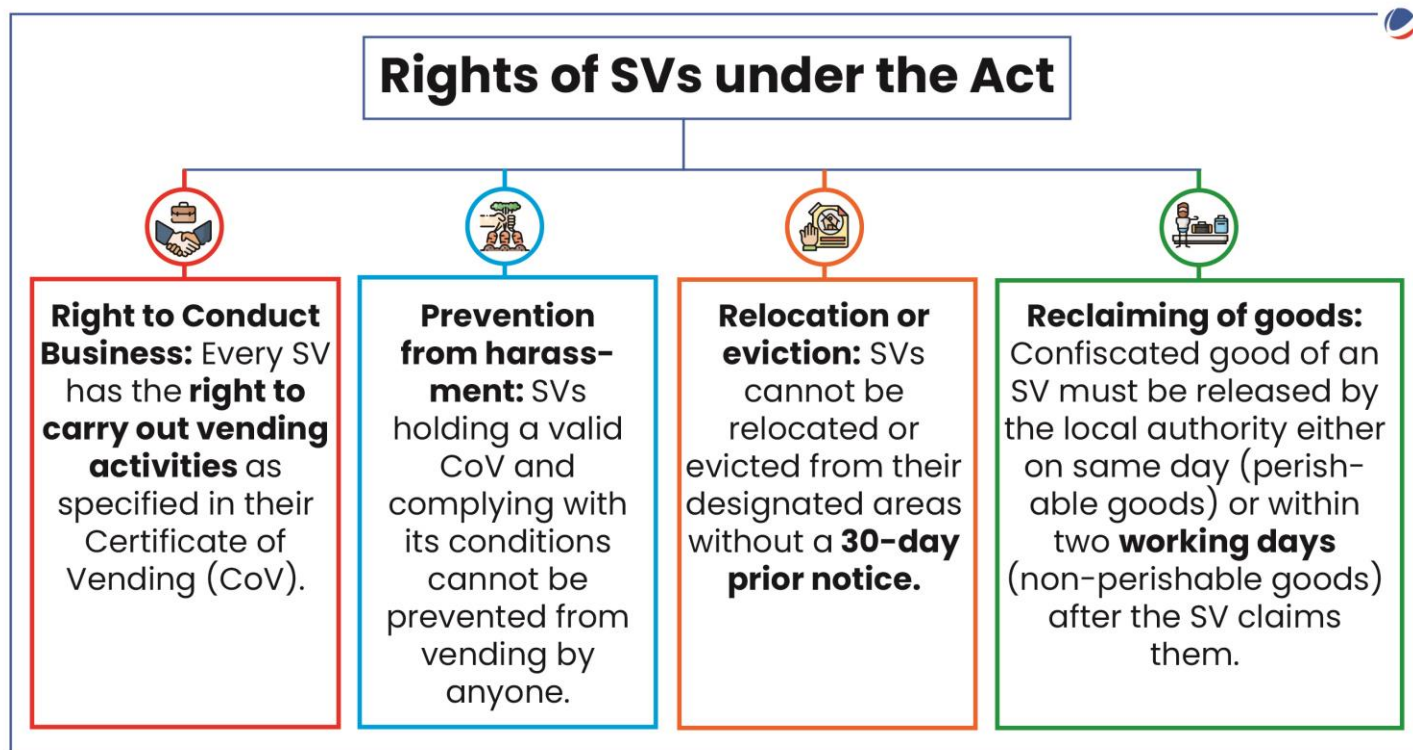
Background

- Since street vending is **part of the unregulated informal economy** and is therefore generally **criminalized by city officials, police officers, wholesalers, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)**, and many residents themselves.

- Despite India's **National Policy on Urban Street Vendors** recognizing street vending positively the main challenge to include street vendors in urban planning remained unresolved.
- In this background, over the years many organisations including NASVI and the Supreme Court have repeatedly called for “structured regulation and legislation to control and regulate the fundamental right of hawking.”

Key provisions

- **Defines Street Vendor (SV):** A person engaged in vending of articles, goods, food items or offering services to the general public in a street, lane, footpath, or by moving from place to place.
- **Defines vending zones:** It refers to an area or a place or a location **designated as such by the local authority** for the specific use by street vendors for street vending and includes footpath, sidewalk, pavement, etc.
 - **Vending zones** can only accommodate up to **2.5% of the population** of a ward/ zone/ town/ city.
- **Street vending plans (SVPs):** Local authorities **must frame SVPs which should cover:**
 - **identification of vending zones,**
 - **spatial plans for street vendors,** and
 - **establishing measures for efficient, and cost-effective distribution of goods and services.**
- **Enumerates duties**
 - **Duty of SV:** Adherence to local laws and regulations, payment of vending fees, and compliance with hygiene and safety standards.
 - **Duty of Government:** Appropriate Government may undertake promotional measures of making **available credit, insurance and other welfare schemes of social security for the street vendors.**



Key Bodies established under the Act

Town Vending Committees (TVCs)	Grievance Redressal Committees (GRC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chairperson: Municipal Commissioner or CEO. ○ Other Members: Representatives from local authority, planning authority, local police, etc. At least 40% of the members must be SVs, with a third being women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment: The Government may constitute one or more GRCs. • Functions: Addressing the grievances or disputes of SVs • Composition: A Chairperson who has been a civil judge or a judicial

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Surveys: TVCs must survey all street vendors (SVs) at least once every five years to identify them. ○ Issuance of CoV: Every SV over the age of 14 identified in the survey will receive a CoV. Priority shall be given to SCs, STs, OBCs, women, persons with disabilities, and minorities. ○ Cancellation of CoV: Can cancel or suspend a CoV for non-compliance. • Appeal against TVCs: Appeals against its decisions lie to the local authority. 	<p>magistrate and two other professionals for dispute resolution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeal: Appeal against the decision of GRC can be made to the local authority.
--	---

Challenges in implementation of the Street Vendors Act, 2014

Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development has highlighted the following challenges in the implementation of the Act:

- **Suboptimal registration of street vendors:** Identity cards and CoV that provide legal rights to SV to conduct their businesses have **not been issued to all vendors.**
- **Persistence of vulnerability to eviction:**
 - **TVCs have not been constituted** in several states, leaving street vendors vulnerable to eviction.
 - **60% of a TVC is composed of government-nominated officials.** This may overshadow concerns raised by SV representatives.
- **Lax implementation by States:**
 - **Many provisions** of the Act **are yet to be implemented** by several states/ union territories.
 - **Only 31% of towns in states** which have notified a scheme under the Act have framed **Street vending plans.**
 - Certain states like **Assam** have **notified vending zones without formulating the vending plans.**
 - **Only nine states** (including Assam, Kerala, and Punjab) have **constituted GRCs.**
- **Exclusionary urbanisation:** Many cities are being developed as smart cities or are formulating master plans without consideration of the street vendors.

Other Initiatives taken to safeguard Street Vendors in India

- **PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme:** To facilitate **collateral-free working capital loans** to street vendors
- **Support to Urban Street Vendors (SUSV):** it is a component of **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM).** SUSV provides for **skilling, micro-enterprise development,** credit enablement, etc.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 3.0:** Provides for **skilling of Street Food Vendors** (who apply for e-cart license) under **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) component.**

Way forward

Recommendations by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development for effective implementation of the Act:

- **Issuance of Smart card:** Provide SVs smart cards with relevant information (such as identification and details of vending certificate), which may also be more durable compared to paper-based documents.
- **Strengthen TVCs:**
 - **Expedite constitution of TVCs** in all states. Also, ensure that **no eviction or relocation** should be enforced **without consultation with TVCs.**
 - The **SV representation** in the TVCs should be **regularly monitored** and a **database of the representation** should be maintained by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- **Ensure inclusive urbanisation:** MoHUA shall issue guidelines for:
 - **integrate the Act** with developmental missions and urban planning processes,
 - **consultation with the TVCs** while planning projects under the smart city mission,
 - **ensure representation of the vendor community** in the Committee formulating the master plan of a city.
- **Enhancing Implementation:**
 - **Encourage the constitution of GRCs** and develop a **website or mobile application** to **ensure traceability, accountability, and transparency** in the complaint redressal process.

- Constitute a **monitoring committee to review the progress** of implementation, and share good practices for implementing the Act.
- **Conduct annual surveys** similar to the Swachh Survekshan to recognize and **incentivize effective implementation by urban local bodies.**

1.6. NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (NHRC)

Why in the news?

Recently, the United Nations-linked Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) **deferred the accreditation of the NHRCI (National Human Rights Commission of India) for the second year** in a row.

Background

- In a unique **peer-review-based accreditation process**, GANHRI ensures **compliance** of individual National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) **with** internationally recognised standards also known as **the Paris Principles**.
- This accreditation aims to **ensure the independence, pluralism and accountability of NHRIs**.
- **Process of NHRIs Accreditation:** NHRIs are reviewed by the **Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)** of GANHRI when it applies for **initial accreditation**, and **re-accreditation every five years**. NHRIs are accredited by GANHRI as
 - **'A status':** Accredited to **fully compliant NHRIs**: They have **independent participation rights at the UN Human Rights Council**, its subsidiary bodies and some General Assembly bodies and mechanisms. They are **eligible for full membership of GANHRI**, including the **right to vote and hold governance positions**.
 - **'B status':** Accredited to **partially compliant NHRI**. They **participate in GANHRI meetings** but are **unable to vote or hold governance positions**.

Do you know?

- > **Paris Principles**, adopted by UN General Assembly (UNGA) in **1993**, set out internationally agreed **minimum standards that NHRIs must meet** to be considered credible. These are:
- Mandate and competence
 - Autonomy from Government
 - Independence guaranteed by a Statute or Constitution
 - Pluralism, Adequate resources and
 - Adequate powers of investigation.

Accreditation of NHRC

- NHRCI got **'A' status of accreditation first time in 1999**. In 2016, NHRCI's accreditation was deferred by a year after which it received an **'A' rating in 2017** by SCA of GANHRI.
- In 2023, **accreditation of NHRCI was deferred**. The current accreditation by GANHRI is deferred due to a **lack of diversity in staff and leadership** and **insufficient action to protect marginalised groups**.

About the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Genesis:** It is a statutory body, established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993** as amended in 2006 and in 2019.
- **PHRA defines**

Human Rights as the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual. These rights are **guaranteed by the Constitution** or embodied in International Covenants and are **enforceable by courts in India**.



Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

Geneva, Switzerland



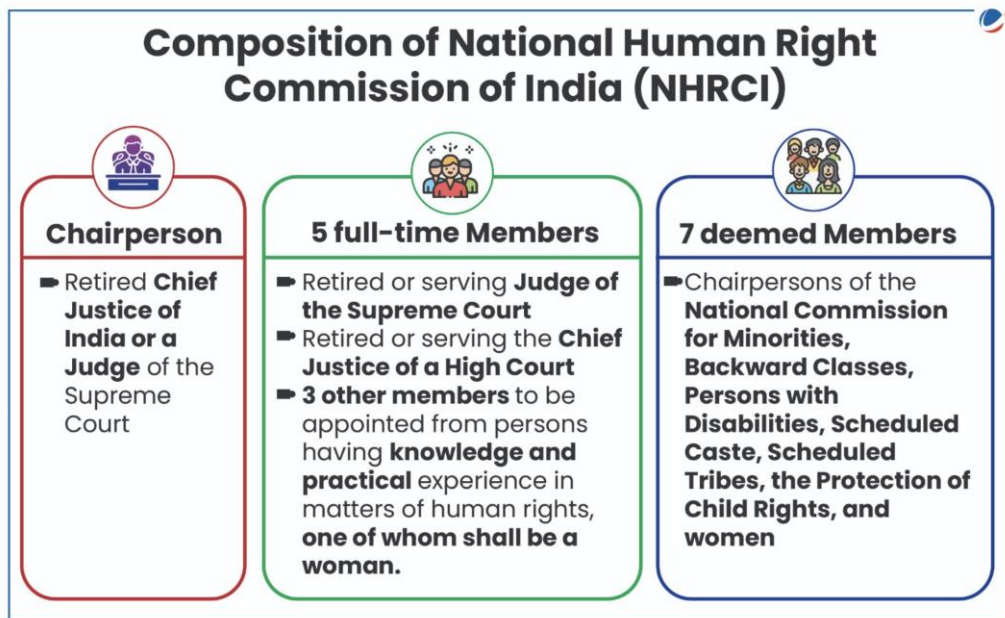
About: Established in 1993 as the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of National Institutions for **the promotion and protection of human rights**. Since 2016, it has been known as GANHRI.

Members: **120 members** (as of December 2023) (is India a member? ✓)

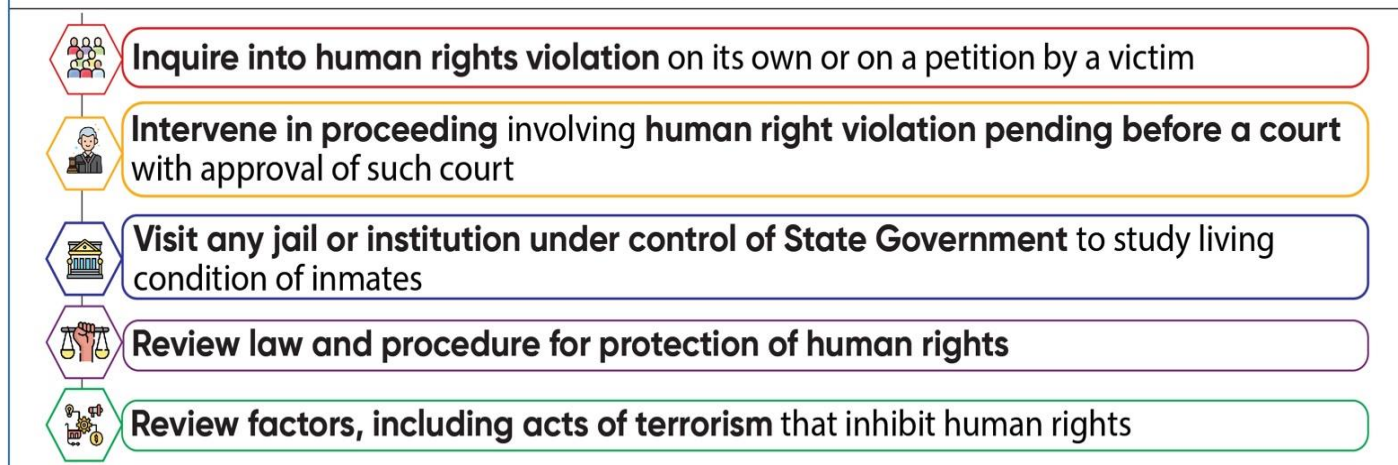
Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA): GANHRI through SCA is **responsible for reviewing and accrediting NHRIs** in compliance with Paris Principles.

- **SCA** comprises **one 'A' status institution from each of the four GANHRI regional groupings:** Africa, Americas, Asia and Pacific, and Europe.
- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** is a permanent observer on SCA and serves as the **secretariat to the GANHRI and its SCA**.

- **Appointment:** Chairperson and Members of the Commission are **appointed by the President of India**, on the recommendations of a **committee, headed by the Prime Minister**, consisting of:
 - Speaker of Lok Sabha
 - Minister-in-Charge of Ministry of Home Affairs
 - Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
 - Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha
- **Tenure:** Chairperson and members of NHRC will hold office for **three years or till the age of seventy years**, whichever is earlier. The Chairperson and members both are **eligible for reappointment**.
- **Removal:** Both Chairperson and members can be removed from office **by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity** after consultation with the **Supreme Court**.
- **Powers of NHRC:** It has all the **powers of a civil court trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908** and in particular in respect of the following matters, namely:
 - **Summoning and enforcing the attendance of witnesses** and examining them on oath;
 - **Discovery** and production of any document;
 - **Receiving evidence** on affidavits;
 - **Requisitioning any public record** or copy thereof from any court or office;
 - Issuing commissions for the examination of witnesses or documents.



Functions of NHRC



Issues associated with the NHRC

NHRC **cannot consider complaints** for human rights violations which **happened more than one year before filing of complaints** or issues which are **subjudice**. This puts limits on its power.

Moreover, the SCA of GANHRI has pointed out the following issues:

- **Lack of diversity:** Only 95 out of 393 staff positions are held by women in leadership positions in NHRCI.
- **Government dominated selection Committee:** The selection committee for appointing is **dominated by the ruling party, curbing the dissent of opposition.**
- **Government interference:** The PHR Act provides for **recruiting civil servants with the rank of Secretary as Secretary General** of NHRCI which may lead to government interference in violation of Paris Principles.
- **Investigation resources:** The NHRC rely on deputed officials for investigation. They may lack accountability due to insufficient oversight mechanisms.
- **Limited Engagement with Civil Society:** There is a **lack of effective engagement with civil society** and human rights defenders.

Way forward

- **Independence:** The PHR Act should be amended in a manner that allows the independent appointment of qualified persons for investigative positions in line with Paris principles.
- **Investigation:** There is need for an **independent police complaint commission to deal exclusively with human rights issues**, as in the UK and South Africa. Also, steps should be taken to **develop the investigation wing of NHRC.**
- **Effective utilisation of statutory power:** Section 17 of the PHR Act empowers NHRC to conduct its investigation if Centre/state government do not respond within the stipulated time.
- **Wider collaboration:** Regular and constructive engagement with all relevant stakeholders such as civil society is essential for NHRIs to effectively fulfil their mandates.
- **Other reforms:** The appointment process must ensure the **composition of NHRC reflects India's diversity, a time limit of one year should be relaxed, etc.**

1.7. NEWS IN SHORTS

1.7.1. ELECTION COMMISSION INTRODUCES HOME VOTING

- Election Commission of India for the first time provides facilities of home voting in coming 2024 election.
- The step is in line with **Election Commission (EC) motto 'No voter is left behind'.**
- **Home Voting Facility:**
 - Under this, **voting from home takes place** with involvement of a full contingent of polling staff and security personnel with **secrecy of voting** diligently maintained.
 - **Beneficiaries:**
 - ✓ **Persons with disabilities (PwDs)** meeting **40% benchmark disability.**
 - ✓ Senior citizens aged **above 85 years.**
- **Other Steps by EC to make voting inclusive:**
 - Ease of voting by **abolishing Form-M** for kashmiri migrants residing at Jammu and Udhampur.
 - **SVEEP** (Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation) to engage PwDs and also sensitise their friends, families, polling officials, etc.
 - Proposed **Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM):** It would enable migrant voters to exercise their vote from their current place of residence.

- **Postal ballot:** It allows **votes being sent by post.** following Persons are entitled to vote by post:
 - ✓ **special voters.**
 - ✓ **service voters.**
 - ✓ voters on **election duty** and.
 - ✓ electors subjected to **preventive detention**
- **Proxy voting:** It allows registered elector to **delegate his voting rights to a representative** he nominates. Available for **service voters.**

Service voters include:



Member of **armed forces.**



Member of **police force** of a State, who is serving outside that State.



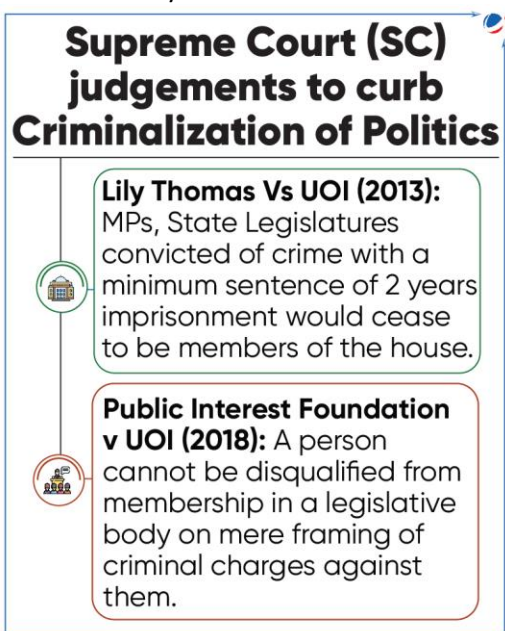
Person who is employed under Government of India, in a **post outside India.**



Member of a **force to which Army Act, 1950** is applicable.

1.7.2. CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS

- **44% of sitting Member of Parliament (MPs) face criminal charges**, 5% are billionaires according to the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) report.
- **ADR report also highlights that:**
 - **50% of MPs facing criminal charge** from **Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Himachal Pradesh.**
 - Among sitting MPs with criminal charges, **29% face serious criminal cases** including allegations of murder, attempt to murder, crime against women etc.
- **About Criminalisation of Politics**
 - Refers to **infiltration of criminals, lawbreakers, and corrupt individuals into political system**, who then use their influence to further their own interests at cost of country and its citizens.
 - **Reasons**
 - ✓ Growing nexus between political parties and criminals.
 - ✓ **Lack of laws and rules** for governing elections procedure
 - ✓ Money power i.e. **Buying votes** for another illegitimate purpose.
 - **Impact**
 - ✓ Against free and fair elections.
 - ✓ Affects good governance and integrity of public servants.
 - ✓ Corrupt activities like taking bribes, embezzling public funds etc. damages social fabric of society.



1.7.3. DISCLOSURE OF ASSETS BY ELECTION CANDIDATES

- Supreme Court, while hearing an appeal on election petition, held that **election candidates have right to privacy** as regards to matters which are of no concern to voters or are irrelevant to candidature of public life.
- **Statutory provisions regarding declarations by Election candidates**
 - **Section 33 of the Representation of People's Act (RPA), 1951:** Deals with nominations for election of candidates and presentation of valid information.
 - **Section 36 of RPA, 1951:** Provides for scrutiny of nomination and empowers returning officer to reject nominations on grounds of any **defect of 'substantial character'**.

1.7.4. SC ASK GOVERNMENT TO ACT ON MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENTS

- Supreme Court (SC) asked the Government to **act on FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) firms using misleading advertisements.**
- Court also requested Union Ministries to detail the **actions taken to combat deceptive advertising practices**, which negatively impact public lives.
- **Misleading Advertisements**
 - Misleading advertising is **any published claim** that gives a consumer an **incorrect understanding of the product or service.**
 - Under **Consumer Protection Act 2019**, an advertisement is misleading if it
 - ✓ Falsely describes a product/service,
 - ✓ Gives a false guarantee to nature, quantity or quality of product/service,
 - ✓ Represents unfair trade practice, or
 - ✓ Deliberately conceals important information.
- **Impact of misleading advertisements**
 - Violates consumers' **right to information and choice**
 - Potential to cause consumer **financial loss and mental agony**
 - Severe **repercussions on consumer health and safety**, especially with advertisements of drugs or medical devices of questionable efficiency.
- **Initiatives Taken to combat misleading advertisements.**
 - **'Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022'** issued by Central Consumer Protection authority (CCPA).

- **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954:** It prohibits advertisement for remedies alleged to possess magic qualities.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Establishes CCPA to regulate matters relating to misleading advertisements.
- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:** Penalty for misleading advertisements pertaining to food.

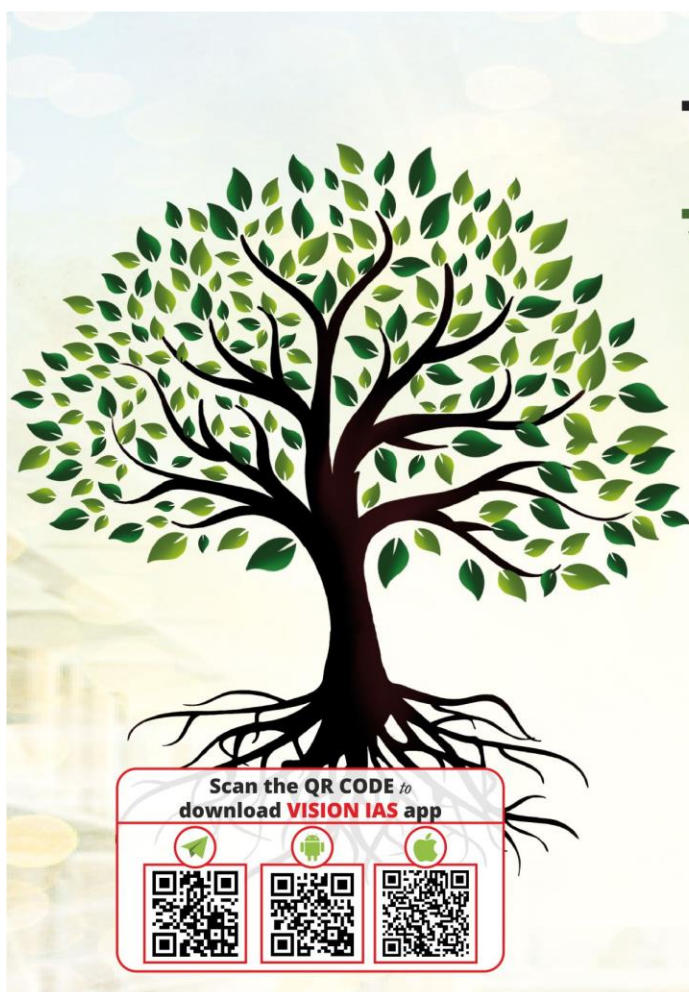
Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act of 1954

- Supreme Court is hearing a case of “misleading” claims in advertisements by an Ayurveda-related company.
- Misleading claims are prohibited under the **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act of 1954.**
 - **Section 4** of the Act prohibits advertisements that give **false impressions** regarding the true character of the drug.
 - **Section 5** prohibits the **Advertisement of Magic Remedies** for treatment.
 - ✓ magic remedies are defined as **any charm** (talisman, mantra, kavacha etc.), **alleged to possess miraculous powers** for diagnosis, cure, mitigation etc.



SMART QUIZ

You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of Polity at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.



फाउंडेशन कोर्स सामान्य अध्ययन प्रारंभिक एवं मुख्य परीक्षा 2025

इनोवेटिव क्लासरूम प्रोग्राम

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • प्रारंभिक परीक्षा, मुख्य परीक्षा और निबंध के लिए महत्वपूर्ण सभी टॉपिक का विस्तृत कवरेज • मौलिक अवधारणाओं की समझ के विकास एवं विश्लेषणात्मक क्षमता निर्माण पर विशेष ध्यान • एनीमेशन, पॉवर प्वाइंट, वीडियो जैसी तकनीकी सुविधाओं का प्रयोग • अंतर - विषयक समझ विकसित करने का प्रयास • योजनाबद्ध तैयारी हेतु करेंट ओरिएंटेड अप्रोच • नियमित क्लास टेस्ट एवं व्यक्तिगत मूल्यांकन | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • सीसेट कक्षाएं • PT 365 कक्षाएं • MAINS 365 कक्षाएं • PT टेस्ट सीरीज • मुख्य परीक्षा टेस्ट सीरीज • निबंध टेस्ट सीरीज • सीसेट टेस्ट सीरीज • निबंध लेखन - शैली की कक्षाएं • करेंट अफेयर्स मैगजीन |
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नोट: ऑनलाइन छात्र हमारे पाठ्यक्रम की लाइव वीडियो कक्षाएं अपने घर पर ऑनलाइन प्लेटफॉर्म पर देख सकते हैं। छात्र लाइव चैट विकल्प के माध्यम से कक्षा के दौरान अपने संदेह और विषय संबंधी प्रश्न पूछ सकते हैं। वे अपने संदेह और प्रश्न नोट भी कर सकते हैं और दिल्ली केंद्र में हमारे कक्षा सलाहकार को बता सकते हैं और हम फोन/मेल के माध्यम से प्रश्नों का उत्तर देंगे।

DELHI: 14 मई, 9 AM | 11 जून, 9 AM

BHOPAL: 11 जून

LUCKNOW: 5 जून

JAIPUR: 21 मई

JODHPUR: 20 मई



ABHYAAS 2024

ALL INDIA PRELIMS
(GS+CSAT)

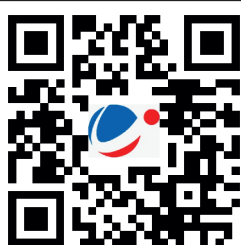
MOCK TEST SERIES

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SAMBHAJI NAGAR (AURANGABAD) | COIMBATORE | CUTTACK | DEHRADUN | DELHI | DHANBAD | DHARAMSHALA | DHARWAD
DURGAPUR | ARIDABAD | GANGTOK | GAYA | GHAZIABAD | GORAKHPUR | GURUGRAM(GURGAON) | GUWAHATI | GWALIOR
HALDWANI | HARIDWAR | HAZARIBAGH | HISAR | HYDERABAD | IMPHAL | INDORE | ITANAGAR | JABALPUR | JAIPUR | JALANDHAR
JAMMU | JAMSHEDPUR | JHANSI | JODHPUR | KANPUR | KOCHI | KOHIMA | KOLKATA | KOTA | KOZHIKODE (CALICUT) | KURUKSHETRA
LEH | LUCKNOW | LUDHIANA | MADURAI (TAMIL NADU) | MANDI (HIMACHAL) | MEERUT | MORADABAD | MUMBAI | MUZAFFARPUR
MYSURU | NAGPUR | NASHIK | NAVI MUMBAI | NOIDA | ORAI | PANAJI (GOA) | PANIPAT | PATIALA | PATNA | PRAYAGRAJ (ALLAHABAD)
PUDUCHERRY | PUNE | RAIPUR | RAJKOT | RANCHI | ROHTAK | ROORKEE | SAMBALPUR | SHILLONG | SHIMLA | SILIGURI | SRINAGAR
SURAT | THANE | THIRUVANANTHAPURAM | TIRUCHIRAPPALLI | TIRUPATI | UDAIPUR | VADODARA | VARANASI | VIJAYAWADA
VISAKHAPATNAM | WARANGAL

2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

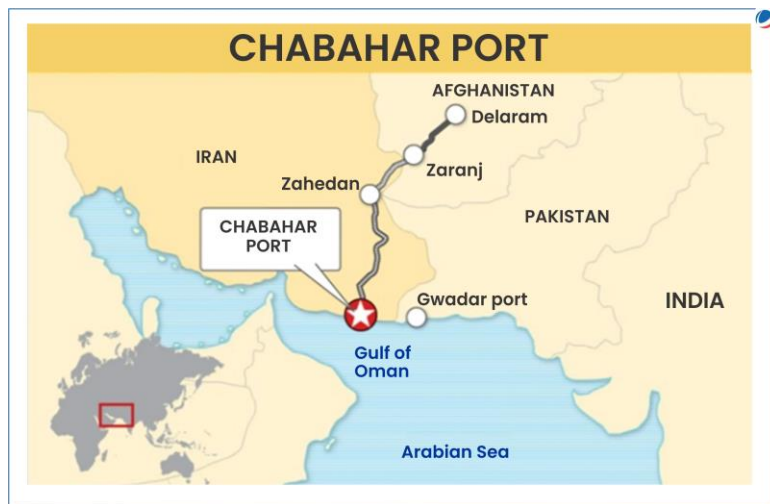
2.1. GEOPOLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PORTS

Why in the news?

Recently, India signed a 10-year agreement with Iran for the development of the **Shahid Beheshti Port Terminal at Chabahar Port**.

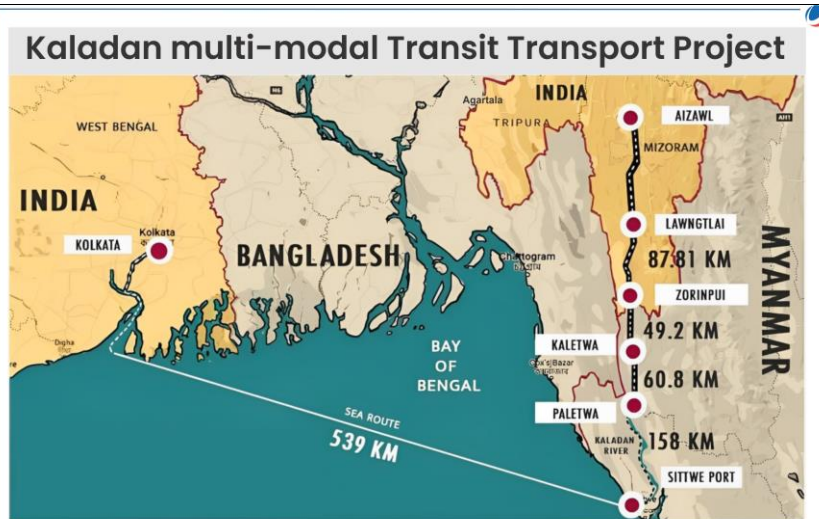
More on the News

- The contract was signed between India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and Ports and Maritime Organization (PMO) of Iran.
 - IPGL is a company which is 100% owned by **Sagarmala Development Company Limited**, a company under administrative control of **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**.
- India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed a **trilateral agreement in 2016** for the development of the Chabahar port.
- The port will **minimize the distance from India's west coast to landlocked Afghanistan, Central Asia and European nations bypassing Pakistan**.
- In a related development, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has also approved the proposal for **IPGL** to take over the operations of the **entire Sittwe port in Myanmar**.
 - The port is located on the **Kaladan River** and is a component of **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project**.
- These developments showcase the rising importance of ports not only as an economic aspect but also as a **strategic tool of geopolitics**.



Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project

- Govt. of India entered into a Framework Agreement with the Govt. of Myanmar in 2008 to create a **multi-modal mode of transport** to the North Eastern states through Myanmar.
- It facilitates movement from the **eastern ports of India (E.g Vizag and Kolkata)** to Myanmar as well as **to the North-Eastern part of India** through Myanmar **bypassing Bangladesh**.
- It aims to reduce dependency on the Siliguri Corridor, known as the chicken's neck, squeezed between Bhutan and Bangladesh.



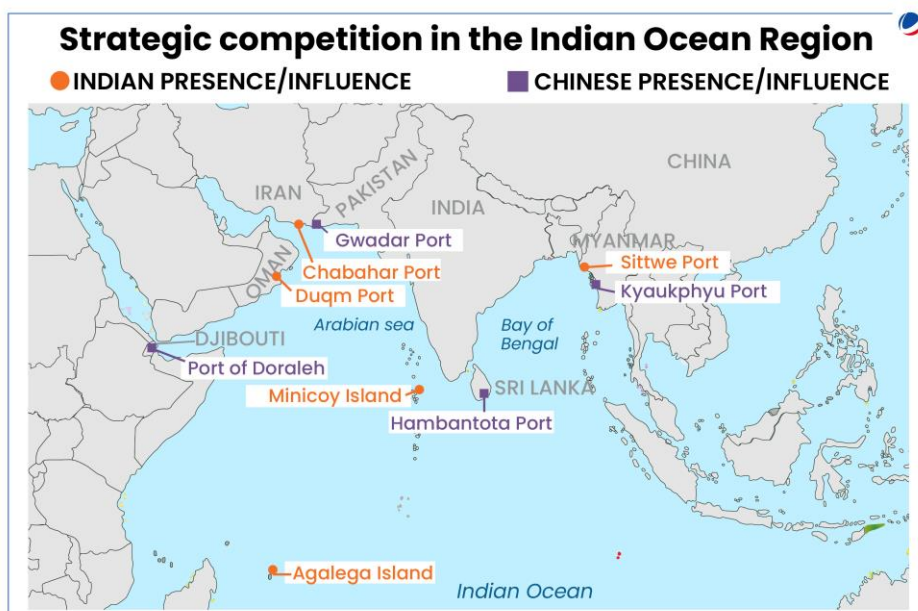
Strategic Significance of Ports

- Act as geopolitical assets:** Ports enhance the projection of strategic reach, which helps strengthen the country's control over important sea and energy supply routes.
 - E.g. Indian Navy's staging base at **Agalega Islands** will enable marine patrols over the Mozambique Channel and allow to keep an eye on commercial corridors throughout southern Africa.
- Strengthens Maritime Security:** E.g. **Access to Sittwe port by Myanmar** will improve India's capabilities for maritime domain awareness through presence in the **Indian Ocean Region**.

- **Strengthening Bilateral and multilateral relationship:** E.g. Allowing access to **Duqm Port by Oman** has made India's engagement with Gulf countries easier.
- **Port Diplomacy:** Ports have become important nodes in network of trade and projection of sea power.
 - E.g. Access to **Chabahar port by Iran** gives India its opportunity to enter major trade partnerships with Central Asia and also counter China's economic influence in the region.
- **Economic significance of ports:**
 - **Enhance connectivity, facilitate trade and enable country's participation in the global value chain** through integration of procurement, production and distribution systems.
 - **Opens avenues for transactions in local currency** (e.g. rupee) leading to its internationalisation.
 - **Port cities as global cities** position a country at the centre of global trade and financial networks.
 - **Alternative route to safeguard economic and energy security:**
 - ✓ E.g. Investment in **Gwadar port (Pakistan)** will help China in surpassing Strait of Malacca and give it a shorter route for Middle East, Africa and Europe.

Challenges in Strategic use of Ports

- **Rivalry among Nations:** E.g., Ports have become highly significant in the rivalry between China and India to expand their influence, leading to creation of **string of pearls (China)** and **necklace of diamonds (India)** strategies.
 - **String of pearls** is a theory according to which China wants to encircle India with a chain of Chinese-influenced ports throughout the Indian Ocean
- **Loss of Sovereignty:** Hold of rival nations on strategic port facilities may undermine long-term national interests.
 - E.g. **China's debt trap diplomacy (with respect to Hambantota)** was considered an important contributor to **Sri Lanka's economic crisis**.
- **Security and Safety concerns:** Such concerns may also arise due to piracy as well as foreign or rival ownership of seaports.
- **Heightened vulnerability:** Channels of transportation, especially chokepoints may be manipulated or disrupted during periods of heightened geopolitical tension.
- **Challenges related to India:**
 - Smaller neighbourhood nations (such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives etc.) consider themselves to be **caught in geopolitical rivalry of China and India**.
 - **Limited financial resources** to further expand its geopolitical influence through development of overseas ports.



Way Forward

- **At global level**
 - **Monitoring of risks** which include irresponsible lending and misuse of commercial arrangements at host country ports to support military functions.
 - **Building security partnerships at the global level** to safeguard seaports from opaque economic activity, which threatens host country sovereignty and global interests.

Know the term

- **Debt-trap diplomacy:** A term used to define a creditor nation extending loans to a borrowing nation in order to expand the lender's geopolitical leverage.

- **India Specific measures**

- **Explore multilateral partnerships** with like-minded countries (e.g. QUAD countries) to protect India's maritime security interests while restricting China's larger footprint in the region.
- **Establish a stronger presence in the Western Indian Ocean Region**, where China is at a geographical disadvantage due to its more distant location.

Conclusion

As ports not only connect the two geographical realms of land and sea but also play the dual roles of economic gateways and nodes of geostrategic projection, their management becomes important in the current geopolitical transition.

2.2. DISASTER DIPLOMACY

Why in the news?

Recently, 6th edition of the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (ICDRI) held in India, which emphasized the nation's expanding contribution to global crisis response efforts.

About Disaster diplomacy

With increased disaster response capacities at home, India's disaster diplomacy began to take shape.

- **Disaster diplomacy** is a fairly new academic field that deals with the impact of disasters on international relations.
- **Disaster Diplomacy** refers to 'a country's efforts to provide aid and support to other countries affected by natural/ man-made disasters or conflicts'.
 - This approach to diplomacy involves a **country's deployment of personnel, resources, and aid** to provide assistance to those in need.
- **The Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief - "Oslo Guidelines"** (adopted in 1994, updated in 2006) sets the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance for UN humanitarian agencies.

Significance of India's disaster diplomacy

- **Soft Power Projection:** By providing humanitarian assistance during crises, India aims to foster goodwill and strengthen ties with other nations.
- **Increased geopolitical reach:** By responding to crises stretching from Japan in the Far East to Turkey in the Middle East, New Delhi is underscoring the reality of its **rise to major power status**
- **Breakthroughs in bilateral ties:** India's **Operation Maitri during the Nepal earthquake of 2015** played a crucial role in India's outreach to Kathmandu in the years afterward. Also, India has been steadily pushing a rapprochement with Turkiye.
- **Strategic Importance of Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR):** India sees HADR as a key element of its foreign policy and statecraft, countering geopolitical influences, particularly from China.
 - India's approach is **typically non-intrusive** and aimed solely at assisting affected nations without violating their sovereignty.

Factors contributing to India's global crisis response

- **India's aspiration to become regional power and secure a UN Security Council membership** drives increased development assistance during disasters.



Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure

New Delhi



Genesis: A global partnership launched in 2019 by Indian Prime Minister at UN Climate Action Summit (New York).

Objectives: To promote the resilience of infrastructure systems to climate and disaster risks, thereby ensuring sustainable development.

Members: 31 Countries, 6 International Organisations and 2 private sector organizations as members.

Is India a member ✓

Other Key information: Works at intersection of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Reports: Biennial report on global infrastructure titled "Global Infrastructure Resilience: Capturing the Resilience Dividend".

Know the term

- A rapprochement is an **increase in friendliness** between two countries, groups, or people, especially **after a period of unfriendliness**.

- India's commitment to the **Global South and Neighbourhood First Policy** strengthens regional ties and capacity-building.
- **Leveraging domestic disaster management capacities** developed from past emergencies.
- **India's robust economic growth** enhances its global influence and resources for disaster diplomacy.

India's Approach towards disaster relief

Approach	India's initiatives
First responder to natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched Operation Dost in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes that struck in Turkiye, reflecting India's consensus approach to conflict management. • India launched Operation Karuna to assist cyclone-hit Myanmar
Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce loss of life and property due to extreme events India assists Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Mauritius in developing Early Warning Systems under the UN's 'Early Warnings for All (EW4All)' initiative.
Helping people in Conflict Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A part of Mission SAGAR, India's humanitarian assistance included supplies of essential food items, medicines, Ayurvedic medicines and deployment of Medical Assistance Teams to Mauritius and Comoros.
Post-conflict relief and rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focusing on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan's return to normalcy years of violent conflict.
UN Peacekeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India has contributed significantly in peacekeeping missions to facilitate stabilization and reconstruction.
Managing Health Disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the COVID-19 pandemic, India conducted COVID-19 Vaccine Maitri program, which has assisted over 100 nations.

Key challenges faced by India in its Disaster diplomacy

- **Lack of technological capacities:** India's response to the 2011 Fukushima disaster in Japan was tardy and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) was unable to effectively provide aid.
- **Limited Impact:** India's assistance to Nepal has also not delivered lasting benefits as the bilateral relationship has become increasingly strained over territorial disputes since 2021.
- **Geopolitical tensions:** India's diplomatic efforts in disaster response can be hindered by existing geopolitical tensions with neighbouring countries, impacting collaboration and coordination during crises.
- **Potential rejection due to historical hostilities:** Pakistan rejected India's aid during 2022 floods.

Way Forward

India's disaster diplomacy is set to be an increasingly important part of the country's foreign policy toolkit. The **increasing occurrence of climate change** related disasters will place a greater demand on India's particular capabilities.

- **Need for Capacity Building:** India needs to enhance its HADR capabilities **through investments in platforms like utility helicopters, landing platforms, and hospital ships**, to ensure faster and more effective response to disasters.
 - NDRF to increasingly incorporate technology in its relief duties and develop much better SOPs and much quicker response times.
- **Improve budgetary allocation:** Budgetary allocations to improve emergency preparedness and logistic capabilities.
- **Projection of Achievements:** India needs to improve its projection of humanitarian achievements amidst its ambition to become global power.
- **Utilizing Forums like the Quad:** Emerging forums like the Quad (Australia, Japan, India, and the USA) should be utilized for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts.
 - This cooperation can lead to capacity building across the Indo-Pacific and enhance India's image as a growing power capable of administering operations beyond its borders.

2.3. INSTABILITY IN WEST ASIA

Why in the news?

Recently, escalation in the West Asia has reached new heights as Israel's strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria led to a retaliatory attack from Iran.

More on the news

- The attack by Iran was intercepted by Israel, which had deployed a multi-layered air defence, including the **Iron Dome, the Arrow and David's Sling**.
- Allegedly, **Exoatmospheric missiles (EMs)** were used to intercept the attack.
- Recently, attacks **by Houthis in the Red Sea were also reported**.
- Institutions such as the United Nations, IMF, and World Bank have warned about the threats these conflicts pose to the economies and politics across the regions, including India.

Other Major conflicts in the West Asia

- **Terrorism factions:** Hezbollah in Lebanon, **ISIS** in Syria etc.
- **Civil Wars and Insurgency**
 - **Sudan:** Between two factions of military
 - **Yemen:** Houthis conflict.
 - **Egypt:** Insurgency in Sinai Peninsula.

About Exoatmospheric missiles (EMs)

- EMs, also known as anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs), are designed to **intercept and destroy incoming ballistic missiles** during mid-course or terminal phase of their trajectory.
- They use **advanced sensors**, such as infrared and radar systems, to detect and track incoming threats and use **guidance systems** to accurately manoeuvre and intercept targets travelling at high speeds in space.
- **Different types of exoatmospheric missiles:**
 - **Kinetic kill vehicles:** Destroy their targets through physical impact.
 - **Directed energy weapons:** Use lasers or other energy beams to disable or destroy incoming threats.



What are the impacts of instability in the West Asia?

On India	At Global Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's act of diplomatic and strategic balancing may be tested due to engagement with countries with conflicting interests, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ (E.g. emergence of Iran-Russia- China axis). • Maritime Security challenges include drone strikes, hijackings (Houthis attack in Red Sea) impacting freedom of navigation in India's maritime region. • Safety and Security of the Indian diaspora in the middle east region may become a concern. • Threat to Energy Security as India is highly dependent on imports of Crude oil (~85%). • Delay in completion of infrastructure projects such as India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). • Impact on Indian Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Disruption in global maritime trade and supply chain may lead to a rise in fuel prices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diplomatic milestones (E.g. Abraham Accords, Israel-Saudi) may get compromised. • Intensification of maritime security challenges across the Indo-Pacific region in case of attacks on ships of USA, United Kingdom. • Competition between nations for arms race or possession of Nuclear weapons may lead to global instability issues. • Impact on Global Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Higher oil prices may lead to higher food prices intensifying food insecurity in many countries. ○ Economies directly exposed may get downgraded and investment across the globe may suffer due to downgraded sentiment. • International Humanitarian Crisis due to loss of lives, forced displacements and instances of War Crimes (E.g. Rafah Offensive stance of Israel)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Negative impact on inflation rate, pharma's export, trade balance, forex reserves, stock market, value of rupee, and the overall economy. ○ Rise in shipping costs and insurance premiums. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions being raised on the role and relevance of International institutions such as United Nations Security Council.
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Way Forward

- **Enhance Diplomatic Engagements and negotiations** within all parties to refrain them from further violence and seek solutions through diplomacy.
- **Building Normative Framework and Process** through arms control and security negotiations declaration of regional "Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone" leading to demilitarization.
- **Resolution of the Israel-Palestine** issues based on the Two Nation Theory for long-term security, peace and stability.
- **Safeguarding Fiscal and External Sustainability** by countries by strengthening policy buffers.
- **Opportunity for India to emerge as a net security provider and mediator for South-South cooperation.**
 - **Maritime Security Operations** have been conducted by Indian Navy (**Operation Sankalp**) and USA (**Operation Prosperity Guardian**) in the regions of **Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, off the East Coast of Somalia** to protect from various non-traditional threats present in the region.

Conclusion

India should remain mindful of its wide-ranging interests in the region, such as energy security, maritime security, and the safety and security of the Indian diaspora. Moreover, India can use its civilizational credentials in the region to maintain balanced relationships with different countries and engage strategically with neutral parties to safeguard its geopolitical and geoeconomic interests.

2.4. INDIA AUSTRALIA SECURITY PARTNERSHIP

Why in the news?

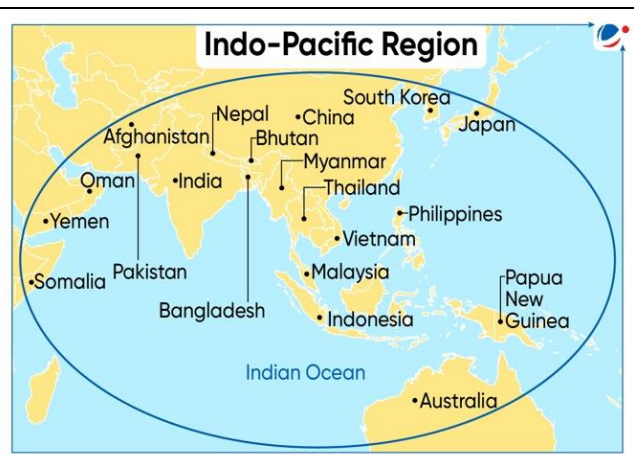
Australian Government in its National Defense Strategy (NDS) 2024 **identified India as 'top-tier security partner'** in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR).

More on news

- NDS highlighted that Australia will continue to seek opportunities with India to drive **practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation, defense industry cooperation and information sharing.**

Concept of Indo-Pacific:

- **The Indo-Pacific** is the world's economic and strategic centre of gravity, home to more than half of the world's population, and nearly 2/3rds of the global economy.
- India's definition of the "Indo-Pacific" **stretches from the Eastern coast of Africa to the islands of the South Pacific.**
- India's policy perspective on Indo-Pacific includes **"inclusiveness", "openness", "ASEAN centrality"** and that the concept was not directed against any country.



Significance of India-Australia Partnership

- **Shared Strategic Interests:** Both have a **vested interest in maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.**
- **Counterbalancing China:** While not explicitly stated, the India-Australia partnership is widely seen as a **counterbalance to China's growing influence** in the region. Both aim to **preserve a balance of power** and prevent any single country from dominating the region.

- **Addressing non-traditional issues:** By collaborating closely, both can address issues such as **terrorism, piracy, illegal fishing, marine pollution, and climate change more effectively**, thereby enhancing the overall security and sustainability of the region.
- **Cooperation in new Initiatives:** Australia expressed **support for India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** which will promote **better coordination and cooperation** among the countries in the region on maritime related issues.

Initiative taken to enhance Security partnership

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP): Upgraded bilateral ties in 2020** underscore strategic cooperation between the two nations. This includes a **2+2 Ministerial dialogues (2021)**, as well as a **Joint Declaration on Maritime Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific (2020)**.
- **QUAD Partnership:** India and Australia, alongside the US and Japan, are partnering to advance a practical and positive agenda supporting an **open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific**.
- **Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (MLSA) and Defense Science and Technology Implementing Arrangement** provide a framework to deepen defense cooperation.
 - MLSA facilitates **sophisticated logistic cooperation, enabling** increasingly complex **military engagement**, and combined responsiveness to regional humanitarian disasters.
 - ✓ The first deployment of Indian Navy and Air Force aircraft **to Australia's Cocos Keeling Islands** in June and July 2023 exemplified this cooperation.
- **Military Exercises:** **AUSINDEX** (maritime), **PITCH BLACK** (Air force), **AUSTRAHIND** (annual training event), Malabar Exercise (Quadrilateral)
- **Australia-India Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative Partnership (AIPOIP)** helps shape maritime **cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to support an open, inclusive, resilient, prosperous and rules-based maritime order**.

Divergence in India Australia Security Relations

- **Geopolitical Divergence:** Australia's alliance with the U.S. and India's strategic autonomy pose challenges to aligning their geopolitical interests completely.
- **The dynamics of the Indo-Pacific Construct:** India has traditionally seen itself as an Indian Ocean power, while Australia has historically focused more on the Pacific.
- **Asymmetric Priorities:** Australia views the challenge of China in terms of its politics, society, and economy, as well as regional security. In contrast, India sees China as a direct military threat along its contested border.
 - For instance, many experts observe that **India's refusal to join the US-Australia Talisman Sabre military exercise** reflects **its cautious approach**.

Measures to strengthen India Australia Security Relations

- **Mutual Expansion in Indo-Pacific:** While Australia can facilitate India's involvement in the South Pacific through its support and collaboration, India needs to work with Australia as a part of CDRI initiative in the Western Indian Ocean Region.
- **Deepen technological Cooperation:** Unexplored opportunities can be explored like the joint production of armoured vehicles, undersea sensors, radar systems, and various subsystems.
 - More active Australian involvement in Indian defense industry exhibitions like **DEFEXPO and Aero India** would enhance collaboration prospects in this sector.
- **Improve interoperability:** **Interoperability in maritime sphere** can deepen in terms of **maritime domain awareness (MDA)**, search and rescue operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- **Implementation of Agreements:** MLSA should be fully implemented to enable routine logistical support, facilitating tri-services exercises, cross-basing, and joint operations.

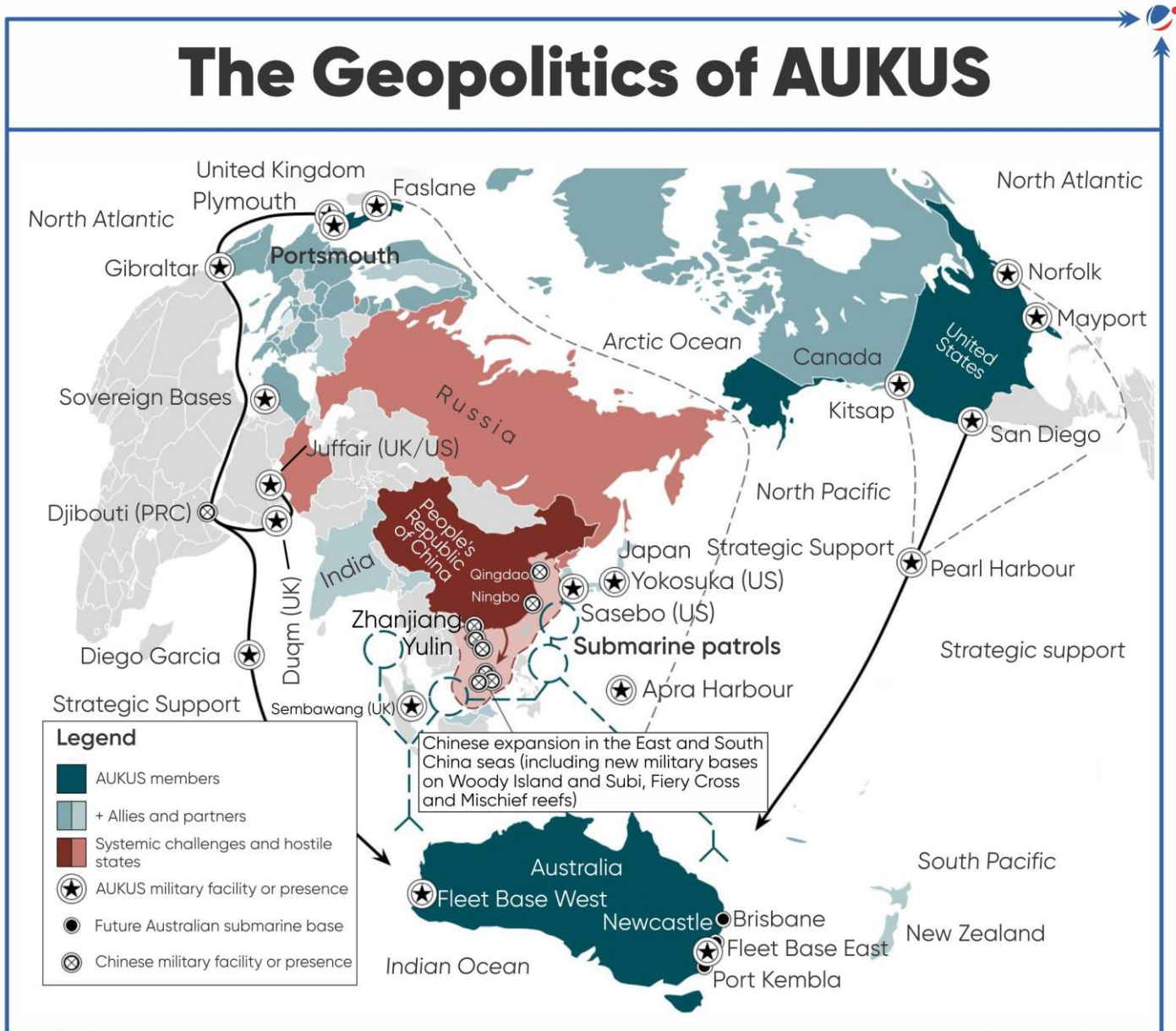
2.4.1. AUKUS

Why in the news?

AUKUS members are considering **cooperation with Japan on advanced capabilities projects**.

More on news

- Japan's inclusion in Pillar II (not a new full member yet) could enhance alliance partnerships, capability integration and standardisation, as well as potentially rationalise export control and information security regulations among the four countries.
 - Japan already has a close bilateral defense partnerships with all three countries (**Australia, the UK and US**)



About AUKUS

- **Genesis:** Announced in 2021
- **Nature:** It is a new three-way strategic defence alliance between **Australia, the UK and US**.
- **Aim:** To boost defense capabilities, accelerate technological integration, and expand the industrial capacity of all three countries.
- AUKUS partnership is composed of **two pillars**:
 - **Pillar I – Conventionally Armed, Nuclear-Powered Submarines:** Under it, UK and USA are helping Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines.
 - **Pillar II – Advanced Capability Development:** Focused on developing joint capabilities to enhance interoperability with focus on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and additional undersea capabilities etc.

- AUKUS primarily serves as a framework for advancing defense technologies, rather than an alliance committed to defense during contingencies.
- For facilitating sharing of critical technology, a **legally binding tripartite agreement** known as the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement (ENNPIA) was signed in 2021.
- **Implications of AUKUS**
 - **Strategic implication for Indo-Pacific:** By strengthening the defence capabilities of Australia, AUKUS aims to achieve the vision of free, open, resilient and inclusive Indo-Pacific.
 - ✓ Increased defense capability strengthens Australia's ability to be an effective security partner and contribute to regional stability.
 - **USA's Renewed push in Indo-Pacific:** AUKUS is seen as US's strong commitment to security of Indo-Pacific region.
 - **Re-establish UK's strategic footprint:** AUKUS will renew UK's claim for a long term role in Indo-Pacific security
- **Concerns related to AUKUS**
 - **AUKUS lacks clarity in its narratives and strategic purpose.**
 - **China opposes AUKUS**, which may trigger regional tensions in Indo-Pacific.
 - Australia's intent to acquire nuclear-powered submarines also resulted in a **deterioration of Australia's relations with France** following the cancellation of plans to acquire diesel-electric Attack Class submarines.
 - ✓ **AUKUS has widened the divide in the trans-Atlantic relationship between France and AUKUS states**, especially after USA's unilateral decision to pull its troops out of Afghanistan.
- **AUKUS is different from Quad:** AUKUS prioritizes defense partnership, unlike Quad, which has a broader focus on strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** is a group of **US, Australia, India, and Japan** which commits for a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region that is prosperous and resilient.

India and AUKUS

- **Importance of AUKUS for India:**
 - **Complements the Quad:** AUKUS would strengthen Quad to deal with China as a common threat and to keep the Indo-Pacific region free, open and inclusive.
 - **Strategic collaboration with France:** It also provides a window of opportunity for strategic collaboration with France and deepening trust with European nations.
 - ✓ Australia's switch from a diesel-powered submarine deal with France to AUKUS (US providing nuclear-powered submarines to Australia) prompted France to offer India a contract for six nuclear submarines, reshaping Indo-Pacific strategic dynamics.
- **Concerns for India**
 - **Erosion of India's regional influence** in the Eastern Indian Ocean with the crowding of nuclear attack submarines in the future.
 - AUKUS may **shift balance of power in Indo-Pacific**, and may also diminish the value and usefulness of the Quad.

2.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

2.5.1. BIMSTEC CHARTER

- Lower House of Nepal's Federal Parliament endorsed the Charter of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).
- **BIMSTEC Charter**
 - It is a **foundational document** that outlines the **goals, principles, and structure** of BIMSTEC group.
 - **Signed and adopted in March 2022** during 5th BIMSTEC Summit.
 - Charter has provision that it will **come into force only after its endorsement by all member countries**. (Except Nepal, respective parliaments of other members endorsed the charter).

- BIMSTEC was **formed in 1997 to enhance regional cooperation** on issues like economic prosperity, social progress etc.
 - **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

2.5.2. ASEAN FUTURE FORUM

- External Affairs Minister for India participated virtually in the **first 'ASEAN Future Forum'**, held in Hanoi, Vietnam.
 - ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is an **intergovernmental organization** aimed primarily at **promoting economic growth and regional stability** among its **10 members**.
- **About ASEAN Future Forum**

- It was **proposed by Vietnam** at the **43rd ASEAN Summit** in 2023.
- It is a **common platform for ASEAN member states** as well as **partner countries** to share new ideas and policy recommendations.
- It aims to contribute to **promoting and shaping ASEAN's development path**.

2.5.3. UKRAINE'S FOREIGN MINISTER PAID OFFICIAL VISIT TO INDIA

- Foreign Minister visits amid efforts to seek a peaceful resolution to the more than two-year-old Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- Ukraine expects India to participate in the **Peace summit** to be hosted by Switzerland based on Ukrainian President's 10 points peace formula.
 - **10 points peace formula** aims to bring **lasting peace to Ukraine** and put an end to war.
- A Review meeting of the **Inter-governmental Commission (IGC)** was also held to restore cooperation prior to war level.
- **About India- Ukraine Relationship**

- **Political:** India was one of the first countries to recognise Ukraine (1991).
- **Trade and Economic Cooperation:** India is Ukraine's major export destination in the Asia-Pacific (2020).
- **Cultural:** Elements of India's soft power such as dances, yoga, philosophy, Ayurveda and spirituality have considerable impact in Ukraine
 - ✓ People to people connect through training programs by India such as ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) scholarship; Kendriya Hindi Sansthan Scholarship program was quite good before War.
- **Education:** One of the most preferred destination for medical education, about 18,000 Indian students were studying in Ukraine before the conflict.

India's stand on Ukraine –Russia Conflict

- India advocates **peaceful resolution** of the conflict through **dialogue** and **diplomacy**.
- It is open to engaging all ways and means that would help achieve to end the war.
- Also, it is providing continuous **humanitarian assistance** to Ukraine.



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3. ECONOMY

3.1. HIGH INCOME AND WEALTH INEQUALITY IN INDIA

Why in the news?

Several reports have underscored high income and wealth inequality in India, triggering a debate on economic inequality, concentration and distribution of wealth.

About Economic Inequality in India

- **Wealth Inequality:** India is one of the most unequal countries. **Rich are getting richer at a much faster pace** while the poor are still struggling to earn a minimum wage (**Oxfam report**).
- **Income Inequality: 22.6% of the national income went to the top 1%** (World Inequality database, 2022-23). It is among the very highest in the world, higher than even the US.
 - **Rural-Urban Divide: Average Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure** is Rs. **3,773 in rural** and Rs. **6,459 in urban India** (Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23).
 - **Gender Pay Gap:** In India, men earn 82 % of the labour income, whereas women earn 18 % of it (World Inequality Report 2022).

Key findings of the Oxfam Report

- **Top 1 % income shares have consistently increased.**
- **Share of the income of the bottom 50% has consistently declined.**
- **The top 5% of Indians own more than 60 % of the country's wealth**

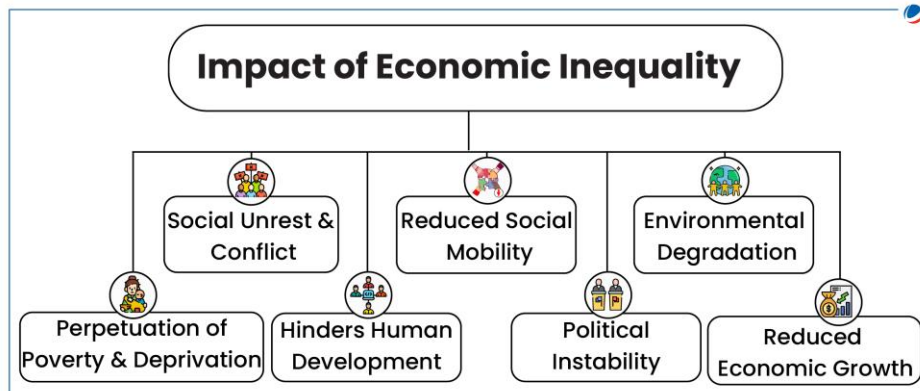
Reasons for Rising Economic Inequality

- **Uneven Economic Growth:** Benefits of economic growth have been unevenly distributed, with the **certain states, and certain sectors benefiting disproportionately**.
 - E.g., Service sector which contributes about 60% of the GDP is mainly concentrated in Maharashtra, Karnataka etc.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** COVID-19 has led to the diminishing of wealth for the bottom 50% of the Indian population.
 - Total number of **billionaires in India increased from 102 in 2020 to 166 billionaires in 2022**, while the **number of hungry Indians has increased from 19 crores to 35 crores**.
- **Tax System:** Government **reduced corporate tax slabs from 30% to 22%**, while excise duties and GST on goods and services were substantially increased.
 - Approximately **64% of the total GST in the country came from the bottom 50% of the population**, while only 4% came from the top 10%.
- **Lack of Quality Education and Healthcare:** It **perpetuates intergenerational poverty and limits economic mobility**, especially in rural areas and among marginalized communities.
 - **Lack of education, have trapped some people in low-paid jobs** and depressed the growth of the bottom 50 % and middle 40 % of Indians (world Inequality lab).
- **Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG):** Telecom and civil aviation benefitted the most from LPG reforms while **agriculture and small-scale industries remained neglected**.
 - Large proportion of India's workforce employed agriculture and small-scale industries, often receives low wages, lack of social security etc.

Measures Undertaken to Reduce Economic Inequality

- **Inclusive Growth:** Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission aims to reduce poverty by enabling poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.
 - **Other initiatives:** Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Skill India Mission etc.



- **Financial Inclusion:** PRADHAN MANTRI JAN-DHAN YOJANA to ensure access to financial services, namely, Banking/ Savings, insurance, remittance etc.
 - **Other Initiatives:** Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, Stand-Up India Scheme etc.
- **Social security Measures:** Atal Pension Yojana is an old age income security scheme for unorganized sector in the age group of 18-40 years.
 - **Other Initiatives:** Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (Accident Insurance), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana etc.
- **Promoting Gender Equality:** Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme launched to prevent gender biased sex selective elimination, ensure education and participation of the girl child etc.
 - **Other Initiatives:** One Stop Centre Scheme, SWADHAR Greh, **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** etc.
- **Sustainable Development:** National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture launched to make agriculture more productive, sustainable, and remunerative and climate resilient.
 - **Other initiatives:** National Mission on Enhanced Energy Efficiency, National Action Plan on Climate Change etc.

Challenges in Countering the Wealth and Income Inequality

- **Size and Diversity of the Population:** India's massive and diverse population of over 1.3 billion makes it challenging to implement uniform policies and initiatives effectively.
- **Persistent Social Inequalities:** Based on caste, gender, and other factors continue to perpetuate economic disparities, hindering the impact of policies aimed at reducing inequality.
- **Limited Resources:** India's limited financial resources often constrain the government's ability to allocate sufficient funds for comprehensive programs targeting economic inequality.
- **Governance and Implementation Challenges:** Inefficient governance, corruption, and poor implementation of policies and programs.
- **Resistance to Structural Reforms:** Vested interests and resistance to structural reforms, such as land reforms, labor reforms, and progressive taxation.

Way Forward

- **Inclusive Economic Growth:** Promote policies that create job opportunities and support entrepreneurship, especially in rural areas and for marginalized communities.
 - **Investing in rural infrastructure and development** to bridge the urban-rural divide.
- **Access to Education and Healthcare:** Enhancing budgetary allocation of the health sector, ensuring quality education etc. is crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality.
- **Strengthening Social Security Measures:** Cash transfers, subsidies, and pension schemes, to provide a safety net for the economically disadvantaged.
- **Taxing India's Wealthiest:** Taxing even 1% is enough to fund major government schemes. Additionally, easing the tax burden on the poor could reduce economic inequality.
- **Addressing Social and Cultural Barriers** that perpetuate inequality, such as caste-based discrimination and gender disparities.

3.1.1. INHERITANCE TAX AS A TOOL OF WEALTH REDISTRIBUTION

Why in the news?

The use of inheritance tax, a system similar to an existing tax system in the U.S. to address **economic inequality** is widely debated in India.

What is Inheritance Tax?

- **Inheritance tax** is levied on **property/asset inherited** upon an **individual's death**. It differs from **estate tax**, which is levied on the **total value of a deceased person's estate**.
- It is levied by many countries. E.g. Japan (tax rate is 55%), South Korea (tax rate is 50%) etc.

History of Inheritance Tax in India

- **In India**, currently there is **no inheritance tax**.
- Earlier, **estate duty** was imposed in 1953. The tax rate reached up to 85%, making it highly unpopular. Thus, it was abolished in 1985.
- Similar to Estate duty, **gift tax** and **wealth tax** were imposed in India.
 - These were abolished in 1998 and 2015 respectively. However, **gift tax** was re-introduced in 2004.
 - ✓ Under **Gift Tax**, any gifts received exceeding Rs 50,000 in a financial year is added to the person's "income from other sources" and taxed according to the income tax slab.
 - ✓ Exceptions include donations, inheritance, and gifts from close relative, gifts during weddings etc.

Benefits of Inheritance Tax

- **Revenue Generation**: It may lead to an increase in **revenue generation** for the government which can be used for social sector programs to uplift poor people.
- **Reducing Wealth Inequality**: It can **mitigate the concentration of wealth and reduce economic inequality** by redistributing a portion of inherited wealth to fund public programs and services.
- **Promoting Meritocracy**: Taxing inherited wealth can help create a more **level playing field** and promote a meritocratic society. This is because, taxing inherited wealth ensures that success is based more on individual effort and talent rather than family wealth and privilege.
- **Encouraging Productive Investment**: It can **encourage wealthy individuals to invest their wealth more productively** during their lifetimes, rather than simply passing it on to their heirs.
- **Intergenerational Equity**: Inheritance tax can help ensure that resources are more evenly distributed across generations, rather than perpetuating dynastic wealth accumulation.

Implications of Inheritance Tax

- **Potential Tax Evasion**: Due to the **high taxation rate**, loopholes such as tax evasion and avoidance can be used. Also, it may lead to distressed sales for depositing taxes.
- **Discourage savings and investment**: As individuals may be reluctant to accumulate wealth if a significant portion is to be taxed on inheritance.
- **It will discourage individuals from working hard**: It may amount to double taxation as **assets inherited** might have been **already taxed**.
- **Affect Business**: Many businesses may move their businesses abroad to avoid taxes. It may also force the sale or break-up of family-owned businesses to pay the tax liabilities.
- **Double Taxation Concerns**: Critics argue that inheritance taxes represent double taxation, as the wealth being transferred has already been subject to income and other taxes.

Conclusion

Inheritance tax can effectively **reduce wealth inequality**, but implementation requires careful balancing to **avoid unintended consequences**. A **well-designed progressive inheritance tax system** with measures against avoidance can **promote wealth equity** while **raising revenue** for social programs.

3.2. UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Why in the news?

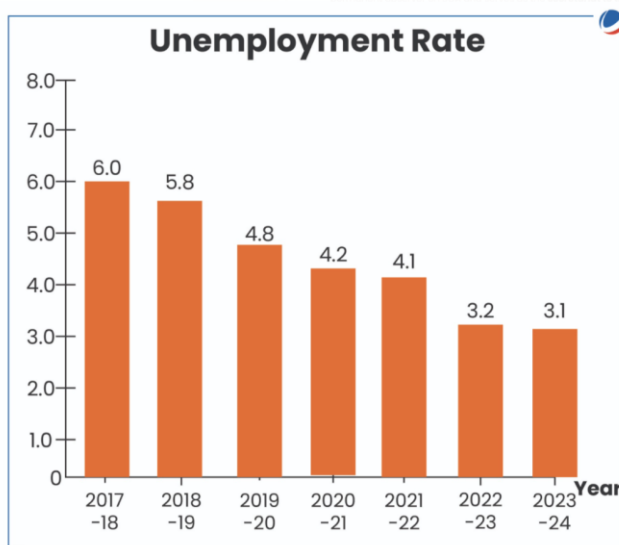
Recent data from **Global IIT Alumni Support Group** regarding campus placements at prominent IITs is prompting concerns about unemployment in India.

Status of Unemployment in India

- **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy**: Unemployment rate saw an increase from 7.4 per cent in March 2024 to 8.1 per cent in April 2024.
- **NSSO Data**: According to **Periodic Labor Force Survey (PLFS)** for Calendar Year 2023 released by **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**, unemployment rate was **3.1%** for calendar year 2023 (in contrast to global unemployment rate of 5.1% in 2023).

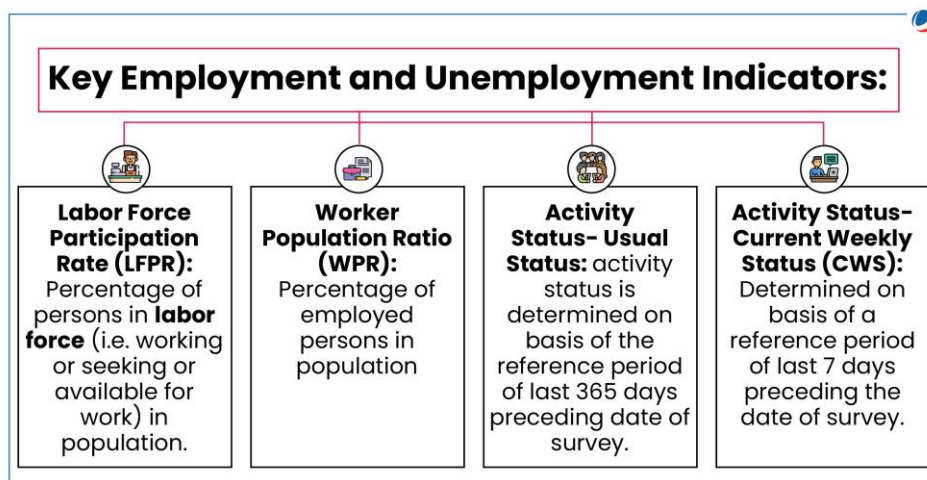
- **Urban unemployment rate (5.2%)** for calendar year 2023 was higher than rural unemployment rate (2.4%).
- According to PLFS for Calendar Year 2023 **women's labor force participation rate** was **41%**.

- **World Bank Report:** In the “**South Asia Development Update Jobs for Resilience**” report, highlighted **below average employment ratios for women** in India.
- **International Labor Organization (ILO) report:** The “**India Employment Report 2024**” revealed that **one out of every three unemployed individuals** was **young**.



Reasons behind Unemployment in India

- **Higher population Growth:** World Bank has warned that South Asia region including India was not making use of its demographic dividend.
 - The World Bank report states that during the **period between 2000-23**, employment grew 1.7 per cent a year while **working-age population** expanded **1.9 per cent** a year.
- **Illiteracy:** According to the **ILO report**, despite the considerable progress, the level of educational attainments at higher levels remains low and quality is a concern. This acts as a challenge to employment.
- **Skill gap & Challenges in Skill Development:** Only about **4.7% of Indian labor force** has undergone any formal skill training.
 - **National Skill Development Corporation** conducted a skill gap study between **2010 and 2014**. Study found that 29.82 crore workers need to be **skilled, reskilled, and up skilled**.
 - **Expansion of skills training** faces many challenges in India. These include low training capacity in poorer regions, low levels of socio-economic inclusion in training programs etc.
 - Implementation of **institutional measures suggested by the Sharada Prasad Committee** on Skill India reforms.
- **Impact of automation and technology on job market:** Manufacturing is becoming more capital-intensive and automated, which provides growth but doesn't provide mass employment.
 - By some estimates, it has been predicted that 69% of jobs in India are threatened by Automation.
- **Seasonal nature of employment in certain industries:** About 45.76% of the total workforce is engaged in agriculture (Seasonal employment) and allied sector during 2022-23.
- **Casual and informal labor:** Due to a scarcity of jobs, individuals often resort to informal sector employment, characterized by low and inconsistent wages.
 - India's labor market is **predominantly** characterized by **informal employment** (approximately 90 per cent of adult and youth workers).



Steps Taken towards employment generation

- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY):** It has been launched as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat package 3.0 to incentivize employers for creation of new employment along with social security benefits.
- **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY):** Provides collateral free loans upto Rs. 10 lakh to micro/small business enterprises and individuals to enable them to setup or expand their business activities.

- **Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi Scheme):** To facilitate collateral free working capital loan to street vendors to restart their businesses, which were adversely impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **PM Vishwakarma Scheme:** To provide end-to-end support to artisans and crafts people of rural and urban areas across the country. The Scheme aims to strengthen and nurture Guru-Shishya parampara.
- **National Education Policy 2.0:** It integrates vocational education into mainstream education and proposes that all students receive vocational education from Class 9 onwards. It aims to increase the **employability of future generations** by **emphasizing skill development**.
- **Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM):** A scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development that organizes rural poor women into Self Help Groups.
- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana:** Launched by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and implemented by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), this Skill Certification scheme enables the youth to take up industry relevant skill training.
- **Others:** Make in India, Start-up India, Stand-up India, Digital India, Smart City Mission, Rozgar Melas, etc.

Way Forward

- **Make production and growth more employment intensive**
 - **Boost productive non-farm employment**, especially in manufacturing and emerging services sectors.
 - Focus more on **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)**
 - ✓ **Infrastructure investment** (E.g. Store, Transport etc.) is required for increasing competitiveness of MSMEs Export.
 - **Increase agriculture productivity** and promotion of entrepreneurship
 - ✓ Labor and tax regulations can be streamlined to **remove impediments to start-ups**
 - Adopting policies and measures to take advantage from **new technologies**.
- **Improving quality of jobs**
 - Investing in and regulate **emerging care (E.g. Childcare and care for elderly) and digital economies**.
 - **Inclusive urban policy** is required to address the needs of **migrants, women** and workers from **poor households**.
- **Addressing issues related to Skill Training**
 - Imparting **quality skill training and mainstream** it into the **education system** to improve employability.
 - ✓ **Wide disparities in skills training** across socio-economic groups & regions needs to be addressed.
- **Addressing of labor market inequalities**
 - Improving ICT access and **bridge the digital divide**.
 - **Increasing the flexibility of labor laws and regulations** could boost employment, especially in formal sector.
 - ✓ **Restrictive minimum wages and employment protection** laws have been associated with weaker employment in emerging markets economies.
- **Increased Female labor force participation**
 - Monetary incentives such as wage subsidies or tax benefits.
 - Closing gaps between the quality of boys' and girls' schooling.
 - Broadening women's access to finance and other inputs.

3.3. GROSS FIXED CAPITAL FORMATION (GFCF)

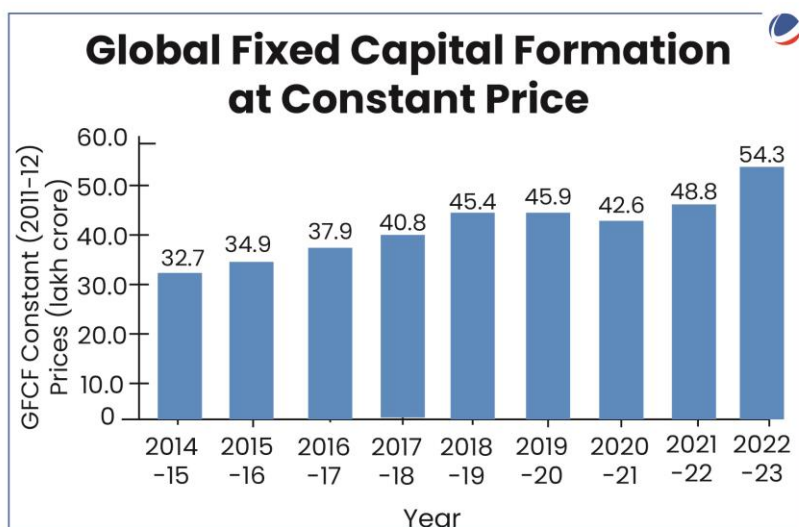
Why in the news?

The sluggish growth of private Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices has been a significant challenge for the Indian economy.

More about the news

- **Evolution of GFCF (also called Investment):**
 - From **independence to economic liberalisation**, investment largely remained either slightly **below or above 10% of the GDP**.
 - It rose **from around 10% of GDP in the 1980s to around 27% in 2007-08**.

- From **2011-12 onwards**, however, **private investment began to drop** and **hit a low of 19.6% of the GDP in 2020-21**.
- In **absolute terms**, **GFCF** in the Indian economy increased from Rs. 32.78 lakh crore (constant 2011-12 prices) in 2014-15 to Rs. **54.35 lakh crore in 2022-23** (Provisional Estimates).
- **Reasons for fall in Private GFCF:**
 - Historically, in India, **higher consumption has led to lower private investment**.
 - **Unfavourable government policy and policy uncertainty** act as major issues affecting private investment. E.g., disputes associated with tax laws.
 - ✓ The **drop in private investment** is due to the **slowdown in the pace of reforms in the last two decades**.



What are Capital Formation (CF) and Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)?

- **Capital formation:** It refers to the process by which resources are invested in assets like plants, equipment, machinery, etc. as well as in human capital through education, health, skill development, etc.
- **Gross Capital Formation (GCF):** It refers to the growth in the size of fixed capital in an economy. It includes
 - **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF):** Like land improvements; plant, machinery, and equipment purchases; and the construction of roads, etc.
 - **Change in stock (CIS) of raw materials, semi-finished and finished goods:** Stocks of goods held by firms to meet temporary fluctuations in production or sales.
 - **Net acquisition of valuables:** like gold, gems, ornaments and precious stones etc.
- **Net capital formation (NCF)** is distinguished from GCF in that NCF includes **depreciation, obsolescence and accidental damage to fixed capital**.

Know the term

- **Capital goods:** All goods produced for use in future productive processes machinery, equipment, plants, other buildings and structures, and producers' stocks of raw materials etc. are called capital goods.

GFCF includes	GFCF does not include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Structure equipment such as airport, roads etc. ● Addition to livestock used repeatedly (such as dairy cattle, sheep etc.) ● Addition to cultivated crops harvested repeatedly. ● Major repair and maintenance that prolong economic life of assets. ● Intangible assets like software or artistic originals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transaction intended as intermediate consumption. ● Machinery and equipment intended for household final consumption expenditure. ● Losses due to natural disaster (flooding, forest fire, etc.)

Why GFCF is an important economic variable?

- **Growth Multiplier:** **GFCF and GDP are positively correlated** and indicate that an increase in GFCF invariably leads to an increase in GDP.
- **Boosts productivity and living standards:** GFCF helps workers produce a greater amount of goods and services each year, helps boost output and improves living standards.
- **Promotes Self-sufficiency:** Growth in GFCF enables the creation of capital assets, thus improving self-sufficiency in production as well as research in the longer term.
- **Indicator of Market Confidence:** GFCF is considered a meaningful indicator of **future business activity, business confidence and future economic growth patterns**.
 - For example, **Private GFCF can serve as a rough indicator** of how much the **private sector in an economy is willing to invest**.

- **Reflects overall output: GFCF as an indicator** helps to determine the **overall output of an economy** and hence what consumers can actually purchase in the market.

What is hindering the growth of GFCF?

- **Slow pace of reforms** especially land acquisition has deterred investors from investing in the economy.
- **Financial problems of Indian banks** and many large corporations. This indirectly locks the capital available in the market which cannot be reinvested in new projects.
- **High cost of borrowing** slows down the cycle of lending and borrowing, thus deterring effective channelling of investment.
 - High cost of borrowing stems from higher lending rates, which in turn is affected by high inflation.

Conclusion

For India to realise its dream of a \$ 5 trillion economy, investment will have to play a major role. To ensure a seamless development of capital formation, economic reforms accompanied by stability in other macroeconomic variables (such as inflation) should be the way forward.

Scan the QR code to know more about **Investment in India**.

Weekly Focus #114: Investment Ecosystem in India



3.4. START-UPS IN RURAL INDIA

Why in the news?

Start-ups are emerging as a beacon of hope in Rural India, especially in the realm of agriculture.

Role of Start-ups in Rural Economy

- **Rural Development:** Scaling startups focused on tackling issues in traditional livelihood practices can push for overall **rural economic improvement** and achieve the vision of 'Atmanirbhar gaon'.
- **Employment Generation:** Rural startups not only provide innovative solutions to problems but also create employment and livelihood opportunities in rural India. E.g., **Meesho, Udaan** etc.
- **Education and Skill Development:** Rural-urban divide in accessing education has been abridged by the emergence of rural Ed-tech startups. E.g., **Paathshaala, Learning Delight** etc.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Fintech start-ups are working towards providing access to affordable financial services like microcredit, insurance, and digital payments in rural areas. E.g., **Bank Saathi**

Start-ups in Rural India



Rural start-ups

Range from agri-tech and e-commerce platforms to healthcare and education services which are specifically catering demand of rural communities.



Enabling Factors

- Internet Penetration and digital inclusion.
- Government support.
- Huge unserved customer base.
- Rising education level.
- Financial inclusion.

Types of Rural Start-ups



Founders based in urban areas with solutions catering to rural areas: ex-Jai Kisan



Founders belonging to rural areas with solutions catering to rural areas: ex – Miticool



Self-Help Groups: Ex – Anand Milk Union Ltd. (AMUL)



Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs): More than 50% of total MSMEs in India are in rural areas.

- **Women Empowerment:** The SHG led startups have led to the socio-political and economic empowerment of rural women. E.g., **Lijjat Papad, SARAL JEEVAN SAHELIS, FARM DIDI ETC.**
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Rural startups have been contributing to the vision of clean and green India by focusing on harnessing renewable energy. E.g., **AgriVijay, Earthshastra Ecotech pvt. Ltd.**
- **Water Governance:** Several Start-ups are striving to make water accessible and affordable, save agriculture water etc. E.g., **Water lab India, Kheyti, boon** etc.
- **Agricultural innovation:** such as Irrigation as a Service (IaaS).
 - IaaS is an irrigation technology that provides **hassle free, pay per use and cost effective** on demand irrigation to small and marginal farmers.
 - It functions on a **subscription or pay-per-use basis meaning** farmers pay a fixed monthly fee or a fee based on water usage.
 - **Benefits:** Improved water efficiency and crop yields, beneficial for water intensive crops like sugarcane, soil health monitoring etc.

Initiatives Undertaken

- **Startup India:** Launched in 2016 to build a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation and startups in the country which will drive economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme:** It aims to provide financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization.
- **NewGen Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development Centre:** It has a mission to promote knowledge based and technology-driven startups by harnessing young minds and their innovation potential in an academic environment.
- **Innovation & Agri-Entrepreneurship Programme:** Aims to nurture and promote agri-entrepreneurs by providing financial assistance and nurturing the innovation ecosystem in the agriculture sector.
- **Agriculture Accelerator Fund (AAF):** Under the AAF, financial support is provided to entrepreneurs in the field of agriculture and allied sectors to set up their startups.

Challenges Faced by the Rural Startups

- **Connectivity gap with Suppliers in Urban Areas:** It results in delays, increased costs, and logistical complexities for rural startups and impacts their overall operational efficiency.
- **Financial Accessibility:** Rural startups face financial accessibility issues such as reluctance of lending by financial institutions, limited availability of banking services in rural areas.
- **Lack of Support System:** The absence/lack of mentorship, networking opportunities, and incubation centers has impeded the growth of rural startups.
- **Difficulty in Finding Early Adopters in Rural Areas:** Rural startups have faced issues of limited communication channels, lower income, and lower digital penetration to find early adopters in rural areas.
- **Limited Funding Mechanism in Rural Areas:** Rural startups often face ignorance on the part of the venture capitalists and angel investors.
 - Urban startups in Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai have collectively accounted for **92% of startup** funding over the past 9 years.

Way Forward

- **Policy Support:** To address the challenges faced by rural startups such as infrastructure gaps, access to finance, and skill development.
- **Institutional Support:** A comprehensive network of relevant institutions is vital for the transformation of agri-startup intentions into profitable enterprises.
- **Community Engagement:** The startups led by SHGs must be promoted through adequate policy support, as these lead to the development of local community.
- **Government and NGO Collaboration:** To align efforts and resources for rural startup development.
- **Sustainability instead of Scalability:** The rural startups must aim to evolve into sustainable employment generating enterprises, aligning with the broader vision of Vikasit Bharat.

3.4.1. GLOBAL UNICORN INDEX 2024

Why in the news?

The 'Global Unicorn Index 2024' released by research group Hurun.

Key-findings of the report

- In 2023, India had 67 unicorn startups (68 in 2022) and placed **third** globally. E.g., Delhivery, Nykaa etc.
 - USA led with 703 unicorns, followed by China with 340.
 - The US has 50% of the world's known unicorns followed by China (25%) and Rest of the World (25%).
- **Founders from India produced more offshore unicorns** than any other country, co-founding 109 unicorns outside of India compared with 67 in India.
- A unicorn startup is a **privately held company, without any listing** on public exchanges, **valued at \$1 billion** or more and **supported with venture capital**.
 - **Gazelles:** Start-ups most likely to 'go unicorn' within 3 years.
 - **Cheetahs:** Start-ups most likely to 'go unicorn' within 5 years.

Factors behind decline of Unicorn in India

- **Sustainability of the models:** High cash burn rates and heavy discounts to attract customers have eroded profitability and raised concerns about the **long-term viability** of these companies.
- **Overvalued startups:** Several Indian startups were too richly valued and could not justify their valuations.
 - Paytm's stock has gone down by 80 per cent since its 2021 listing.
- **Slowdown in funding:** Funding to Indian startups declined significantly in 2023 compared to last year.

Measures to be taken

- **Sustainable business models:** Unicorns will need to prioritize profitability over rapid expansion, invest in **technology and innovation**, and diversify their revenue streams.
- **Fair Valuation:** There is a need for better **regulation of valuation**.
- **Regulatory environment:** Simplification and rationalization of legal and compliance requirements can provide stability and confidence to the Unicorns in future.

3.5. INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RUPEE

Why in the news?

Recently, Prime Minister asked the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to prepare a **10-year strategy to make the Indian rupee a globally accessible and acceptable currency**, enabling its internationalization.

About internationalization of currency

- An **international currency** is one that is **used and held beyond the borders** of the issuing country, not merely for transactions with that country's residents, but also, **for transactions between non-residents**.
- **Currency internationalization** has thus been described as the **international extension of a national currency's three basic functions** of serving as a unit of account, medium of exchange and store of value.
- Currently, the **US dollar, the Euro, the Japanese yen and the pound sterling** are the leading reserve currencies in the world.
- India moved toward **partial convertibility in the late 1990s** and made subsequent progress with multiple reforms.
 - India has **enabled capital-account transactions**, such as permitting corporate entities to raise resources through **external commercial borrowings and Masala bonds** (rupee-denominated bonds issued by Indian entities outside India).

Determinants of Internationalization of currency



Economic fundamentals such as economy's size and trade network.



Depth and liquidity of capital markets.



Stability and convertibility of currency.

Benefits of Internationalization of Currency

- **Limit exchange rate risk:** It allows the country's exporters and importers to limit exchange rate risk as domestic firms can settle their exports/imports in their currency.
- **Access to international financial markets:** It permits domestic firms and financial institutions to access international financial markets without assuming exchange rate risk.
- **Boost capital formation:** A larger, efficient financial sector reduces capital cost and widens set of financial institutions.
- **Financing budget deficit:** It may allow a country's government to finance part of its budget deficit (or current account deficit) by issuing domestic currency debt in international markets rather than issuing foreign currency instruments.
- **Regulating Capital Flows:** It results in lowering the impact of sudden stops and reversals of capital flows and enhances the ability to repay external sovereign debt.
- **Reducing requirement of forex reserves:** It reduces the requirement to maintain and depend on large foreign exchange reserves in convertible currencies to manage external vulnerabilities.
 - Presently, India's foreign exchange reserves are at a record high of \$642.63 billion as of March 2022.

Do you know?

> Indian rupee was the legal tender in some Gulf countries, like Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and UAE, till the early 1970s.

Challenges in Internationalization of Currency



Exchange Rate Volatility

- May result in a potential **increase in volatility** of its exchange rate in the initial stages.



Monetary Policy Dilemma or Triffin Dilemma

- It is a conflict that arises when a country needs to supply enough of its currency to meet **global demand** while also maintaining its **domestic monetary policies**.



Vulnerability to External Shock

- May accentuate an external shock, given the open channel of the flow of funds **in and out of the country** and from one currency to another.



Macroeconomic Stability

- Integration of financial markets could affect **stability in the long-term**.

Approach for internationalization of Rupee

- **Capital Account Convertibility:** INR (Indian National Rupee) is fully convertible in the current account but partially in the capital account.
 - There is need to **review extant Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) provisions** and extending incentives for international trade settlements in INR.
 - **Banking Services** (loans, guarantees, credit lines, etc.) **in INR** through offshore branches of Indian banks.

- **Promoting international use of INR:** To facilitate international financial transactions in INR, an **efficient settlement mechanism**, **availability of liquidity** and development of **robust cross-border payments system** would be required.
 - **Currency Swaps and Local Currency Settlement (LCS):** These provide currency diversification that stabilises the local currency, protect businesses against currency risk exposure and reduces transaction costs.
 - **Internalisation of Indian Payment Systems:** Extension of global reach of India's payment systems including Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS), National Electronic Funds Transfer (NEFT) and Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
 - **Inclusion of INR in Continuous Linked Settlement (CLS):** CLS is a global **system for the settlement of foreign currency transactions** on a Payment vs Payment (PvP) basis.
 - ✓ CLS system currently settles trades in 18 currencies. However, **INR is not among those currencies.**
 - **Creation of an Indian Clearing System:** Clearing system would provide its member banks with a market to purchase currencies against their domestic currency.
 - **INR as a vehicle currency/contender to Special Drawing Rights (SDR) basket:** It can be taken forward by encouraging trade invoicing in INR by expanding trade relations with other economies.
- **Strengthening Financial Markets:**
 - **Harmonisation of KYC (Know Your Customer) norms of RBI and SEBI** to ease access of foreign investors to INR assets.
 - **Global 24x5 INR market:** While customer transactions are facilitated round-the-clock in the offshore market, the inter-bank market operates only for a limited set of hours onshore.
 - **Inclusion of Indian Government Bonds in Global Bond Indices:** It will enable widening of investor base, stable passive flows, appreciation of INR, and reduction of overall borrowing costs.

Know the term

- **Capital account convertibility** is the ability or freedom to convert domestic currency for capital account transactions.

Know the term

Special Drawing Rights (SDR)

- SDR is an **international reserve asset**, created by the **IMF** in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves
- The value of the SDR is calculated from a **weighted basket of 5 major currencies**, including the U.S. dollar, the Euro, Japanese yen, Chinese Renminbi, and British pound.

Steps taken towards internationalization of Rupee

- **Use of Indian Payment Infrastructure:** India initiated interlinkage of UPI with Singapore's PayNow and is reaching out to jurisdictions to increase global outreach of UPI system.
- **Special Vostro Rupee Accounts (SVRAs):** RBI has put in place the mechanism for INR trade settlement with 22 countries by allowing banks from these countries to open SVRAs for settling payments.
- **INR as a Designated Foreign Currency in Sri Lanka:** Paved the way for INR-based bilateral trade.
- **Asian Clearing Union (ACU):** RBI had proposed inclusion of INR as one of the settlement currencies under the ACU.
- **Developments in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City):** It hosts Financial Market Infrastructures (FMIs), such as two international exchanges and a depository.
- **Bilateral Swap Arrangements (BSA):** India currently has a BSA with Japan for an amount up to USD 75 billion as a backstop line of support in case of any balance of payments issue.
 - Also, India has recently signed a 35 billion rupees currency swap agreement with UAE.

Scan the QR code to know more about **Internationalization of Rupee.**

Weekly Focus #105: Internationalisation of Rupee: Indian Currency's Global Ascent



3.6. BASEL III ENDGAME

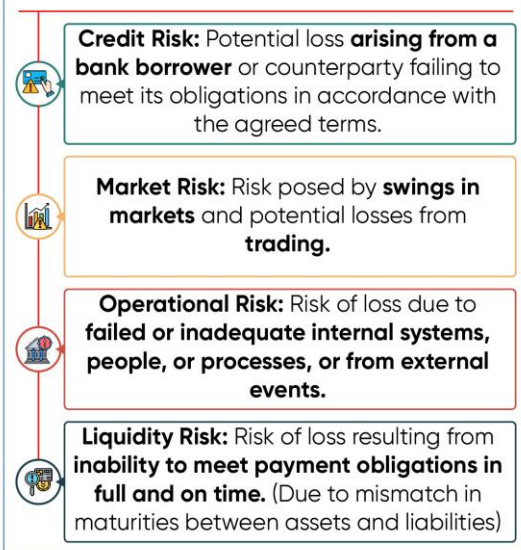
Why in the news?

Consumer Bankers Association (CBA) recently released a White Paper, “The Impact of the **Basel III Endgame Proposal** on Consumers on the Margins of the U.S. Financial System,”.

About Basel III Endgame

- The **final set of rules of Basel III norms** has been called “Basel III Endgame.”
 - **Basel III is a set of measures** developed by the **Basel Committee on Banking Supervision** to strengthen the regulation, supervision, and risk management of banks.
 - **Potential impact of the Endgame** includes **Globally Systemically Important Banks (G-SIBs)** experiencing an increase of 21% in capital requirements.
 - **Proposed changes** are aimed at improving the “**strength and resiliency**” of the **banking system** while also improving transparency and consistency in banks’ capital frameworks.

Various Types of Risks Faced by Bank



BANK FOR
INTERNATIONAL
SETTLEMENTS

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision



Genesis: It was established by **central bank Governors of G10** countries at the end of 1974.



Members: Its 45 members comprise central banks and bank supervisors (**RBI is one of its member**).



Functions:

- It was established to **enhance financial stability** by improving the quality of banking supervision worldwide.
- It also serves as **forum for regular cooperation** between its member countries on banking supervisory matters.



Governance: BCBS reports to its oversight body “**Group of Central Bank and Governors and Heads of Supervision (GHOS)**”.



Implementation of decisions: its decisions do not have legal force.

Basel Norms (Refer box at the end of this article for key terminologies associated with Basel Norms):

- **Description:** These rules focus on the **amount of capital** that banks must have against the credit, operational, and market risk of their business.
 - Banks face **significant risk** primarily due to being one of the most heavily leveraged sectors.
 - Heavily leveraged sectors **rely extensively on debt** for financing their operations and investments.
- **Basel I Norms (1987):**
 - In 1987, the Committee introduced capital measurement system which **focused on the credit risk and risk-weighting of assets**.
 - These norms set minimum level of capital requirements that banks should have.

- **Basel II norms (2004):**
 - These updated norms sought to improve the risk calculation in capital measurement by introducing three important pillars: **Minimum capital requirements, Supervisory Review and Market Discipline.**
- **Basel III Norms (2010):**
 - Released in response to the financial crisis of 2007-08.
 - It aims to build robust capital base for banks and **ensure sound liquidity and leverage ratios.**

Key Features of Basel I, II and III Compared				
Pillars	Key Components of Pillars	Basel I	Basel II	Basel III
Pillar I (Capital Requirements)	Minimum Ratio of Capital to RWAs	At least 8% (CAR)	8%	8% + 2.5% of Capital Conservation Buffers
	Tier 1 capital to RWAs	At least 4%	4%	6%
Pillar II (Supervisory Review Process)		No provisions for Supervisory Review	Risk Based Supervision introduced	Enhanced Supervisory Process
Pillar III (Disclosure & Market Discipline)		No Provisions related to Market Discipline	Quantitative and Qualitative disclosures prescribed at Quarterly, Half-Yearly and Yearly intervals	Enhanced Disclosure Norms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Banking Capital Requirement Parameters Introduced by Basel III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Capital Conservation Buffers to RWAs: Banks have to maintain a capital conservation buffer of 2.5 %. ○ Leverage Ratio: Banks have to maintain a leverage ratio of 3 %. ○ Counter Cyclical Buffer: A buffer ranging from 0 % to 2.5%. ○ Minimum Liquidity Coverage Ratio: It should be $\geq 100\%$. ○ Minimum Net Stable Funding Ratio: NSFR should be $\geq 100\%$. 				

Significance of Basel Norms:

- **Development of better risk assessments system:** Through capital requirement parameters, it provides **an edge over other banks**, by focusing on only those target segments, markets and customers **who have high risk ratio.**
- **Robust risk management process:** It results in **serving the customers better** including **small and medium sized businesses.** It leads to better liquidity for small businesses and help in their growth and expansion needs.
- **Improved Corporate Governance:** Norms also offer banks with **business benefits like improving corporate governance** and allocation of capital.
- **Stable financial System:** New liquidity and leverage framework under Basel norms will not only **enhance the risk absorbency** of individual banks but also aid in Strengthening **soundness of financial system** during extreme stress.
- **Minimizing Economic Spillovers:** These Norms ensure that the **banking system as a whole** does not crumble and its spill-over impact on the real economy is minimized.

Basel norms implementation in India:

- **Basel 1 norms** were adopted in India with the announcement by RBI in its Mid-term Review of Monetary and Credit Policy for 1998-99 to raise Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) from 8 per cent to 9 per cent.
 - In 2007, RBI announced the final **guidelines for implementation of Basel II.**
- **Draft guidelines** for implementation of Basel III capital regulations were issued in Dec 2011.
 - **The Basel III capital regulations (Pillar I of Basel III Norms)** were implemented in India with effect from **April 2013** and have been **fully implemented as on October 2021.**
 - As compared to the Basel norms, **the RBI's prescribed norms are stricter and more prudential.**

Conclusion

The **Capital Accord of 1988**, which set global standards for regulation and supervision, has emerged as **one of the most significant developments.** The biggest contribution of the Basel Accord has been to arrive at a **common definition of capital**, while capital adequacy norms have been adopted in different countries with certain country-specific adaptations.

Important Terminologies related to Basel Norms

- **Tier I capital (Core Capital):** It include **paid up share capital, stocks and disclosed reserve.**
 - These are more **permanent in nature** and as a result, have **high capacity** to **absorb losses.**
- **Tier II capital (Supplementary Capital):** It includes all other capital e.g. **Undisclosed reserve, revaluation reserves, general provisions and loss reserves.**
 - It is **considered less reliable than Tier 1 capital** because it is more difficult to accurately calculate and more difficult to liquidate.
- **Risk weighed Assets (RWA):** RWA is linked to minimum amount of capital that banks must have relative to bank's risk from its lending activities. The more the risk, the more the capital needed to protect depositors.
- **Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) or Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio:** CAR is a percentage that measures a bank's financial health by comparing its capital to its risk-weighted assets.
- **Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR):** LCR is a requirement that requires banks to maintain a minimum amount of liquid assets to withstand cash outflows over a 30-day period.
- **Leverage ratio:** The leverage ratio i.e. **ratio of Tier I capital to the bank's average total consolidated assets** (sum of the exposures of all assets and non-balance sheet items).
 - Leverage ratio shows **how much of a company's capital comes from debt**, or how well it can meet its financial obligations.
- **Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR):** It is a **liquidity standard that measures the amount of stable funding** a bank has relative to amount it needs.
 - It promotes resilience by creating incentives for banks to fund their activities with more stable sources of funding.
- **Capital Conservation Buffer:** Banks are required to hold **capital conservation buffer** to ensure **cushion of capital** that can be used to **absorb losses during financial stress.**
- **Countercyclical Buffer:** It is a mechanism that allows banks to **build up capital during periods of excessive credit growth** to help the banking system absorb losses during downturns.

Important Ratios Related with Basel Norms:

$$\text{Leverage Ratio} = \frac{\text{Tier 1 capital}}{\text{Exposure Measure}}$$

$$\text{LCR} = \frac{\text{High quality liquid assets}}{\text{Total net cash outflow over next 30 days}}$$

$$\text{NSFR} = \frac{\text{Available Stable Funding}}{\text{Required Stable Funding}}$$

$$\text{CAR} = \frac{\text{Capital (Tier I and Tier II)}}{\text{Risk Weighed Assets}}$$

3.7. ASSET MONETIZATION

Why in the news?

Recently, the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) raised its highest-ever monetization value of Rs. 15,624.9 Crore through the Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) mode.

About Asset Monetization (AM)

- **Genesis:** The idea of AM was first suggested by a committee led by economist **Vijay Kelkar in 2012.**
 - AM was announced in the **Union Budget 2021-22** through the **National Monetisation Pipeline.**
- **Definition:** AM is the process of creating new sources of revenue for the government and its entities by unlocking the economic value of unutilised or underutilised public assets.
 - **A public asset** can be any property owned by a public body, roads, airports, pipelines, etc.
- **Authority:** An authorised **Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetisation (CGAM)** has been constituted under the chairmanship of the **Cabinet Secretary** to implement and monitor the project.
- **Process of Asset Monetisation (AM)**
 - AM involves the **license/lease of a government-owned asset** to a private sector entity for a specific period.
 - The transfer of rights in exchange for payments is governed by a **concession agreement** that facilitates **balanced risk-sharing** between the **public authority** and the **private party.**

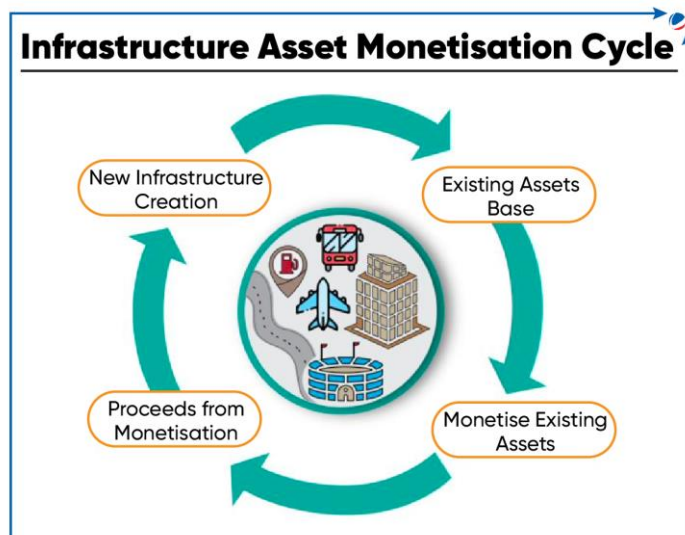
Know the term

○ **Concession Agreement (CA):**

It is a contract that gives a company the right to operate a specific business within a government's jurisdiction or on another firm's property, subject to particular terms.

Need for Asset Monetisation in India

- **Fund the National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP):** NIP is aimed to provide world-class infrastructure to citizens and attract investments into this sector.
 - NIP envisages an investment of 111 lakh crore over 2020 to 2025.
- **Reduction of the fiscal strain:** The capital invested by private parties during AM can reduce the fiscal burden on the public sector and free up resources for developing new infrastructure projects.
- **Provision of finance to the State for the creation of new infrastructure:** AM plays an important role in providing finance to the State for the creation of new infrastructure.
- **Benefit from private sector efficiencies:** AM will invite private sector efficiencies and transparency in the management of public assets.
- **Facilitate economic development of the country:** A robust AM plan could upgrade economic productivity, encourage demand, create jobs, boost growth prospects, and accelerate the country's economic development.



Initiatives taken for Asset Monetization

- **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP):**
 - **Sectors:** The government has identified **13 sectors to monetise its brownfield infrastructure assets**.
 - ✓ **These top 5 sectors capture ~83% of the aggregate pipeline:** Roads (27%), Railways (25%), Power (15%), Oil & Gas pipelines (8%), and Telecom (6%).
 - **Potential:** Monetisation potential of **Rs 6.0 lakh crores through core assets** of the Central Government, over four years, from FY 2022 to FY 2025.
- **Various assets/ asset classes targeted for monetisation:**
 - Railways will monetise **Dedicated Freight Corridor** assets for operations and maintenance, after commissioning.
 - Airports will be monetised for **operations and management** concession.
- **National Land Monetization Corporation:** It is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for undertaking surplus land monetization of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and other Government agencies.
- **Asset Monetisation dashboard:** For tracking progress and for providing visibility to investors.

Challenges faced in Asset Monetization

- **Valuation Challenge:** Accurately valuing public assets, especially brownfield projects, can be complex and may lead to disputes. E.g., According to CAG report, gross undervaluation of assets was observed in case of disinvestment in Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation of India.
- **Implementational challenge:** The ambitious target of monetizing assets within four years seems difficult given the experience in meeting the disinvestment targets.
 - For instance, **the Ministry of Railways and the Department of Telecom** have been unable to monetise assets in comparison to the given targets.
- **Transparency challenge:** There is a larger question of where within the budget will such proceeds from monetisation be accounted for, and how these proceeds will be spent.
- **Lack of a clear sector-specific roadmap** for monetisation is also a major roadblock in the process.
- **Other challenges:** Limited interest and participation of bidders, technical competence of bidders to operate and develop assets, closing of transactions on time etc.

Way forward

- **A clear road map:** The monetisation of brown-field assets will need to address the conceptual and operational issues, besides a clear roadmap of implementation with scenario planning in place.

- **Regulatory clarity:** Clear policies with respect to legal disputes between concessioning authorities and concessionaires, could help the private sector to monetise their assets and invest in new projects.
- **Capacity building support on asset monetisation processes:** Providing training on asset valuation, revenue projections, and effectively utilizing expert support, etc.
- **Structuring of the Assets:** The market in India comprises myriad investors with varying risk appetites. Product packaging and structuring have to be customised for diverse investors.
- **Supporting States:** States have significant potential for asset monetisation but need to provide reassurance to investors about the risk characteristics of their assets.
 - Support from the central government in this regard could be helpful.

3.8. ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANIES

Why in the news?

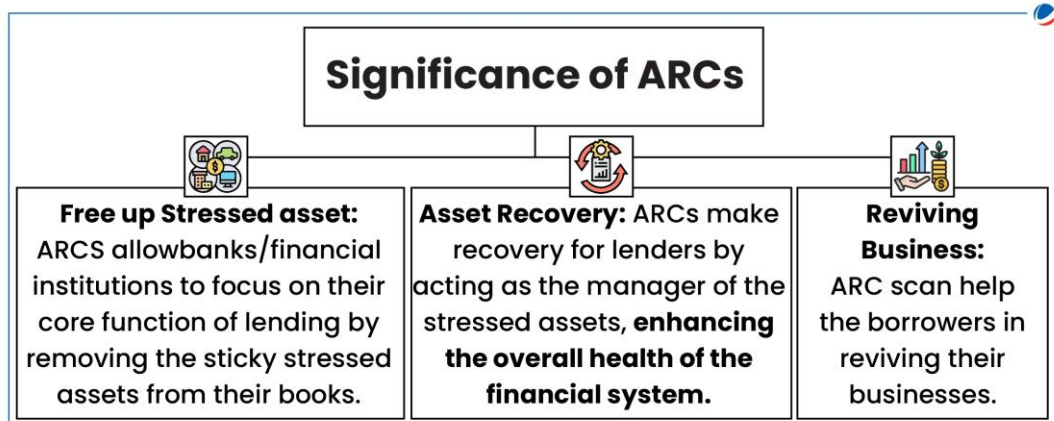
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued **master Direction – Reserve Bank of India (Asset Reconstruction Companies) Directions, 2024**.

More on the news

- **Issued Under:** The powers conferred by Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (**SARFAESI Act, 2002**).
 - **Applicable** for every ARC registered with the Reserve Bank under Section 3 of the SARFAESI Act, 2002.
- **Aim:** To streamline and regulate the functioning of ARCs in India, ensuring transparency, accountability, and integrity in the financial system.

About ARCs

- **Definition:** ARC is a financial institution that buys the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) or bad assets from banks and financial institutions so that the latter can clean up their balance sheets.



- ARCs are required to **resolve the assets within a maximum of 8 years of acquisition** of financial assets and redeem the SRs representing the assets.
- **Genesis: SARFAESI Act in 2002** envisaged that ARCs would be registered and regulated by RBI. There are 29 ARCs in operation in India (2022).
 - **Narsimham Committee – II (1998)** proposed asset reconstruction companies, on the similar lines of asset management companies' prevalent globally.
- **Types:** Based on ownership, ARCs could be **public, private or public-private partnership**.
- **Examples:** **National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL), India Debt Resolution Company Ltd etc.**

How ARCs Work?

- **Asset Acquisition:** ARCs acquire financial assets from banks/ FIs either on their own books or in the books of a trust set up for the purpose of securitisation and/ or reconstruction.
- **Security Receipts:** Lenders sell stressed loans to ARCs at a discount. Unless the transaction is entirely in cash, ARC issues security receipts that are redeemable as and when it recovers the specific loan.
- **Management Fee:** ARCs also charge bad-loan sellers a management fee of **1.5% to 2% of the value of the asset every year**.

Need of Reforms in ARCs

- **Sub-optimal performance of the ARCs:** Banks and FIs could **recover only about 14.29%** of the amount owed by borrowers in stressed assets sold to ARCs from FY04 to FY13.
- **Sales of stressed assets to ARCs Decreased:** It has gradually decreased over the years. In **2021-22, only 3.2% of the previous year's gross NPAs were sold to ARCs.**
- **Other:** Vintage NPAs being passed on to ARCs, lack of debt aggregation, Lack of skill for holistic resolution of distressed borrowers, emergence of IBC as alternative resolution mechanism etc.

Key Provisions of Master RBI (ARCs) Directions, 2024

- **Net Own Fund (NOF):** To commence the business of securitisation or asset reconstruction, an ARC is required to have a **minimum NOF of Rs300 crore** and thereafter, on an ongoing basis.
- **Registration:** Before commencing the business of securitisation or asset reconstruction, an ARC shall apply for registration and obtain a certificate of registration (CoR) from the RBI.
- **Leadership Positions:** It set age limit of **70 for MD/CEO or Whole-time Director** and tenure of 5 years at a time, with a **maximum tenure of 15 years** continuously.
- **ARCs shall report to IBA:** Details of CAs, advocates and valuers (who committed serious irregularities in professional services) for including in **Indian Banks' Association (IBA)** database.
- **Internal audit:** ARCs shall put in place an effective internal control system providing for periodical **checks and review** of the asset acquisition procedures and asset reconstruction measures.
- **Other Provisions:**
 - ARCs are **prohibited from raising money by way of deposit.**
 - They are also **mandated to maintain a capital adequacy ratio** of a minimum of 15% of its total risk-weighted assets.

Know the term

- **Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR)** is a measure used to assess the financial strength and stability of banks and other financial institutions
- **Formula to calculate CAR**
(Tier 1 Capital + Tier 2 Capital) / Risk-Weighted Assets

Other recent changes by RBI in ARCs Regulations

- **Strengthened corporate governance of ARCs:** RBI mandated that the chair of the board and at least half the directors in a board meeting must be **independent directors.**
- **Increased Transparency:** ARCs **must disclose their track record on returns generated** for the security receipt investors, and engagement with ratings agencies of schemes floated in the last eight years.
- **Fair Practices Code (FPC):** In order to achieve the **highest standards of transparency and fairness** in dealing with stakeholders, ARCs are advised to put in place a Board-approved FPC.
- **Member of CIC:** Every ARC shall become a **member of at least one credit information company (CIC)** which has obtained certificate of registration from the RBI.

Way Forward

- **Broaden scope of ARCs:** Consider permitting ARCs to **acquire financial assets from all regulated entities**, including FPIs, and all NBFCs irrespective of asset size and from retail investors.
- **Regulatory Disincentives:** For **delay by lenders in internally resolving the NPA assets** to ensure disposal of NPAs in time.
- **List of NPAs (intend to sell/auction):** This should be prepared **by all regulated lenders and disclosed to ARCs** after entering into a confidentiality agreement for **increasing predictability of stressed assets.**
- **Fraud Accounts:** **Sale of fraud accounts** to ARCs may be permitted with **appropriate safeguards**, without diluting the fixing of accountability at banks/FIs level or affecting criminal proceedings against the responsible persons by competent authorities.
- **Asset Acquisition from Foreign:** For debt aggregation, ARCs may be allowed to acquire stressed loans to domestic borrowers from **regulated overseas banks and FIs.**

To know more about the NPAs, kindly refer to Article 3.3 in January 2024 edition of VisionIAS Current Affairs Magazine.

3.9. ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENTS (APAS)

Why in the News?

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has signed highest ever record 125 APAs (including Unilateral and Bilateral APAs) in FY 2023-24 with Indian taxpayers.

About Advance Pricing Agreements (APAs)

- It is an agreement between a **taxpayer and tax authority**.
- APAs endeavors to **provide certainty to taxpayers** in domain of **transfer pricing** by specifying **methods of pricing**.
 - APA helps **determine arm's length price (ALP) of international transactions** in advance for a maximum of five future years.
 - Further, taxpayer has option to **roll back APA for four preceding years**, as a result of which, tax certainty is provided for nine years.
- **Types of APAs**
 - **Unilateral APA:** It involves only the tax payer and the tax authority of the country where the tax payer is located.
 - **Bilateral APA:** It includes the **taxpayer and tax authority of the country** where the taxpayer is located, as well as an **associated enterprise (AE) of the taxpayer** in another country, along with the **corresponding foreign tax authority**.
 - **Multilateral APA:** It involves **tax payer**, two or more **AEs of tax payer in different foreign countries**, tax authority of the country where the tax payer is located, and the tax authorities of AEs.

Significance of APAs

- **Double Taxation Avoidance:** Clarity with respect to tax outcome of the tax payer's international transactions reduces the risk of potential double taxation.
- **Promoting ease of doing business:** Especially for Multinational entities which have a large number of cross-border transactions within their group entities.
- **Reduction of compliance costs to companies:** It eliminates risk of future tax audit and time consuming tax related litigation.
- **Reduced cost of administration:** Due to reduced future tax litigation, reduced time and effort are needed on audit tasks by tax authorities and consequently it also frees scarce resources of government.
- **Less burden of record keeping:** As the taxpayer knows in advance the required documentation to be maintained to substantiate the agreed terms and conditions of the agreement.

Know the term

- **Transfer Pricing:** It is the price of goods and services exchanged between companies that are under common ownership or control.
- **Arm's Length Principle of Pricing:** This principle states that the price agreed in a transaction between two related parties must be the same as the price agreed in a comparable transaction between two unrelated parties.

Mutual Agreement Procedure:

- MAP is an **alternative available to taxpayers** for **resolving double taxation disputes** whether juridical or economic in nature.
- MAP is a **mechanism laid down in tax treaties (E.g. DTAA)** to ensure that taxation is in accordance with the tax treaty.
 - A tax treaty is a **bilateral (two-party) agreement** made by two countries **to resolve** issues involving **double taxation of passive and active income** of each of their respective citizens.
- **Difference between MAP and APAs:**
 - MAP resolves transfer pricing disputes while APAs prevents transfer pricing disputes.
 - Tax payers file MAP for **pending disputes** while they opt for APA for same transactions **for future years** as an effective dispute resolution/ avoidance strategy.

Indian Advance Pricing Agreement Regime:

- **APA Scheme in India:**
 - Ministry of Finance had notified **APA Scheme** in 2012 through the insertion of sections **92CC and 92CD in the Income-tax Act, 1961**.
 - ✓ APA rules were notified by CBDT subsequently.
 - Under it, an agreement is **signed between CBDT and any person** determining in advance arm's length price in relation to an international transaction.


- **Nature of Scheme:** APA **process is voluntary** and supplements appeal and other Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) mechanism for resolving transfer pricing dispute.
- **Term of APA:** Maximum five years.
- **Rollback provisions:** Allows Arm's Length Price as agreed in APA, to be rolled back to a period prior to the commencement of the APA.

Issues with Advance pricing Agreement in India:

- **Complex International transactions:** Many international transactions involve intricate business structures and operations, making it challenging to accurately determine arm's length prices.
- **Lack of Internal Co-ordination:** It has been experienced that different entities take different technical positions on similar international transactions. Creating uncertainty for taxpayers and stalling of APA negotiations.
- **Delay in Processing APAs:** Scarce human resources allocated to the process leads to delay in processing as process is usually fact intensive and need a lot of data analysis.

Conclusion

Apart from **reducing company's compliance requirements** as well as forging **strategies for dispute prevention**, APA program has also assured **revenue flow to the Indian treasury**. To address APA issues, **Outsourcing subject matter experts** from private sector can not only solve human resource crunch issue but will also bring clarity to emerging complexities with their expertise.



Central Board of Direct Taxes

Genesis: It is **statutory authority** formed under **Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963**.

Ministry: It is part of **Department of Revenue in Ministry of Finance**.

Functions: CBDT provides essential **inputs for policy and planning of direct taxes in India**.

➤ Also responsible for **administration of direct tax laws through Income Tax Department**.

Composition: CBDT consists of a **Chairman and six Members**

Related News

Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA)

- India & Mauritius signed (not yet ratified) a protocol amending the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA).
- Amendment included **Principal Purpose Test (PPT)** to avail tax benefits under the DTAA to plug the abuse of treaty for tax evasion and avoidance.
 - PPT lays out the condition that the **tax benefits under the treaty will not be applicable if obtaining that duty benefit was the principal purpose** of any transaction or arrangement.
 - Protocol to amend DTAA is aimed at making it compliant with **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) Minimum Standards**.
- **DTAA** is an agreement between two countries/territories with an objective to avoid double taxation on same declared asset in two different countries/territories.
 - **DTAA between India and Mauritius was first signed in 1982** and amended in 2016.
- **Significance of DTAA**
 - **Promotion of cross-border investment** by reducing tax burden on foreign investors.
 - **Equitable allocation of right to tax** between the 'source' and 'residence' countries.
 - **Provides legal certainty** on taxing international income.
- **Issues associated with DTAA**
 - **Treaty Shopping:** Takes place when residents of a country, which is not a party to the DTAA, take advantage of the provisions through indirect routes.
 - **Double non-taxation:** Abuse of DTAA to avoid paying taxes in both countries.
 - **Differential interpretations** of tax treaties leading to protracted litigations.

Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)

- Refers to **tax planning strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules** for tax avoidance by **shifting profits from higher tax to lower tax jurisdictions**.
- **Multilateral Convention to Implement Tax Treaty Related Measures to Prevent BEPS** aims to update international tax rules and lessen opportunity for tax avoidance by multinational enterprises.
 - **India signed the convention in 2017.**

3.10. FINANCING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2024

Why in the News?

2024 Financing for Sustainable Development Report was recently released by the **Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development**.

About Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development

- It comprises over 60 United Nations agencies, programmes and offices, regional economic commissions and other relevant international institutions.
- UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) serves as its coordinator of the initiative.
- It was convened by the United Nations (UN) Secretary General to follow up on the seven action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

Key highlights of the report

- **Progress towards SDGs:** Countries are **off track** on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with **around half** of 140 SDG targets, **deviating from the required path**.
- **Financing gaps in sustainable development:** Report estimates SDG financing and investment gaps at **between USD 2.5 trillion and USD 4 trillion annually**.
- **Finance divides:** Developing countries are faced with **significantly worse terms of access to both long-term and contingency financing**, implying a finance gap, which is largest in **Middle-Income Countries (MICs)**.
- **Weak enabling environment for SDGs:** Currently, **public subsidies and private investment in fossil fuels** and brown activities are still very high.

About Financing for Sustainable Development

- It is **centered around supporting** the follow-up to the agreements and commitments **on Financing for Development**:
 - in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002;
 - in Doha, Qatar in 2008; and
 - in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2015.
- **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** provides a **new global framework for financing sustainable development**.
 - It aligns **all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities** and ensures that financing is stable and sustainable.
 - It identified **seven action areas** for financing sustainable development (see infographic).
 - It **mandates the Task Force to**
 - ✓ **report annually on progress in implementing the Addis Agenda** and other Financing for Development outcomes and the means of implementation of the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**.
 - ✓ **advise the intergovernmental follow-up process on progress, implementation gaps and recommendations for corrective action**.
 - **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** was adopted at the **Third International Conference on Financing for Development** held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in 2015.
- **Financing challenges** are at the heart of the current sustainable development crisis.



Challenges in financing sustainable development

- **Rise in Systemic Risks:** E.g., Covid 19 pandemic, Rise in frequency of disasters etc.
 - **Climate crisis** and more frequent and intense **disasters** raising **stresses on public and private balance sheets**.
 - ✓ **Annual economic disaster damage estimated at \$173 billion** between 2020 and 2023, up from \$108 billion during the first decade of the century.
- **Challenging Global Economic Environment:** A **sluggish world economy** has led to subdued growth prospects with **GDP growth rates in developing countries falling** to just over 4% annually on average between 2021 and 2025.
- **Sovereign Debt burden:** Many countries are faced with **high risks of debt distress**, with **median debt service burden for LDCs** rising from 3.1% of revenue in 2010 to **12% in 2023** –highest level since 2000.
 - **40% of global population** live in countries where **governments spend more on interest payments than on education or health**.
- **Rising geopolitical tensions:** Geopolitical tensions, violence, conflict and war have contributed to challenging global macro-environment, risking **severe fragmentation of global trading system** (which could **cost up to 7% of global GDP**).

Actions required for bridging financing gap for sustainable development

- **Enabling Environment:** Countries' efforts to create enabling environments for private investment must be **aligned with the SDGs**, setting the right incentives through fiscal and tax policies.
- **Strengthening Public Development Banks (PDBs):** PDBs usually provide longer-term funding, and their development focus makes the financial durations of their lending better aligned with social and environmental sustainability.
- **Integrated Financing Approaches:** More than 80 countries are now using **Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs)** to develop national financing strategies and integrate planning and financing policy functions.
 - The concept of INFFs was **first introduced in the Addis Agenda**.
- **Reforms in multilateral system:** There is a need for reforms to enhance coherence between trade, investment and sustainable development.
 - This includes **World Trade Organization (WTO) reform**, with a focus on dispute settlement, updating rules to reflect global economic changes, and continued efforts to update investment treaties.

3.11. SETTLEMENT CYCLE

Why in the news?

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) introduced beta version of T+0 rolling settlement cycle on optional basis in addition to the existing T+1 settlement cycle in Stock Markets.

More on News

- **Settlement Cycle** refers to the period **within** which securities and funds are delivered and settled after a trade is executed between a buyer and a seller.
 - Traditionally, Indian exchanges followed a **T+2 settlement cycle**, meaning trades were settled in **two** business days after the trade execution date (T).
 - ✓ **T+2** was shifted to **T+1** (1 day settlement) in January 2023.
 - T+0 Settlement Cycle refers to a system where Settlement of trades shall happen on the **same day** after the closure of **market**.

Reasons for shift to shorter settlement cycle

- **Evolution:** The significant evolution of **technology, architecture and capacity** of Market Infrastructure Institutions or MIIs (stock exchanges, clearing corporations and depositories), presents opportunities for **further advancing** clearing and settlement timelines.
- **Becoming a Global leader:** To ensure that India's market infrastructure emulates the **global best practices**.
- **Efficiency:** It will bring cost and time efficiency.

Impact of shorten settlement cycle

- **Enhanced Liquidity Management:** This allows investor to reinvest proceeds or deploy capital into new opportunities without waiting for settlement cycles.
- **Increased Trading Opportunities:** Investors can **react quickly** to market developments, execute trades promptly, and optimise their investment strategies in real-time.
- **Reduced Settlement Risk:** T+0 settlement **eliminates the need to wait** for an additional day for trading confirmation and settlement.
- **Global Competitiveness:** Adopting a T+0 settlement cycle can attract foreign portfolio investors (FPIs).

3.12. CONSUMER CONFIDENCE SURVEY

Why in the news?

Recently, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released the results of January 2023 round of its **bi-monthly Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS)**.

About Consumer Confidence and Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS)

- It is an economic indicator that **measures the degree of optimism or pessimism** that consumers feel about **overall state of the economy and personal financial situation**.
 - It serves as an **indicator of the health of the economy** from the perspective of the consumer.
 - **High consumer confidence** in the economy is usually related to **higher spending by Consumers**.
- It is measured through a **bi-monthly Consumer Confidence Survey (CCS) conducted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**.
- Survey obtains **current perceptions** (*vis-à-vis* a year ago) and **one year ahead expectations** on general economic situation and own income and **spending across 19 major cities**.
 - Survey obtains **information on urban consumer sentiments** and **captures qualitative responses** to questions pertaining to general economic conditions.
- CCS responses are measured through **two indexes**:
 - **Current Situation Index (CSI)** - Consumer sentiment about current economic, employment, and price conditions as compared to a year ago.
 - **Future Expectation Index (FEI)** - Expectations about economic, employment, and price conditions a year ahead.
 - ✓ **Businesses** often use it **to make better-informed decisions or adjustments** in strategy such as **investments in new projects or launch of new products**.

Findings of the latest Consumer Confidence survey

- **Consumer confidence improved** both for the current period as well as for the year ahead.
- **Current situation index (CSI)** continued on its **recovery path** since the historic low recorded in mid-2021.
 - **It increased** on the back of improved sentiments on general economic situation and household income.
- **Future expectations index (FEI):** Rose to its two-year high on the back of improved optimism on general economic situation, employment and income over the next one year.

Conclusion

Consumer confidence does give a meaningful clue as to the economy's strength, both in the present and the future. There is a need for further consideration for joining it with other forecasting information for better future economic predictions.

3.13. INSURANCE REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF INDIA (IRDAI)

Why in the news?

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) celebrated its 25th Anniversary.



Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)



- Genesis:** Formed based on **Malhotra Committee** recommendations.
 - ❖ Constituted **as an autonomous body in 1999** and incorporated as a **statutory body in 2000**, under the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999**.
- Objectives:** Speedy and orderly growth of insurance industry, speedy settlement of genuine claims, effective grievance redressal mechanism, etc.
 - ❖ Focus of IRDAI is to strengthen the three pillars of the entire insurance ecosystem viz. insurance customers, insurance providers and insurance distributors.
- Ministry:** Ministry of Finance
- Composition:** IRDAI is a **10-member** body- a chairman, five full-time members and four part-time members.
- Role of IRDAI**
 - ❖ Issue to the applicant a certificate of registration, renew, modify, withdraw, suspend or cancel such registration.
 - ❖ Protect the interest of the policyholders.
 - ❖ Adjudication of disputes between insurers and intermediaries or insurance intermediaries.
 - ❖ Promoting and regulating professional organisations connected with the insurance and reinsurance business.

Significance of IRDAI in transforming the Insurance sector

- **Insurance Growth:**
 - **Insurance penetration** (percentage of insurance premium to GDP) at **4.2%** in **2021-22** compared to **2.71%** in **2001-02**.
 - **Insurance Density** (ratio of premium to population) at **\$91** in **2021-22** compared to **\$11.5** in **2001-02**.
- **'Insurance for All' by 2047:** IRDAI has committed to enable 'Insurance for All' by 2047, where every citizen has an appropriate life, health and property insurance cover etc.
- **Expanded regulatory role:** New intermediaries have started operating in the market, like **corporate agents, Bancassurance** (selling insurance products through banks), **on-line sales, etc.**
 - The digital transformation accelerated by the authority's guidance on e-KYC, paperless policies, digital payments, etc.

Recent Regulatory Governance Reforms by IRDAI

IRDAI has **replaced 34 regulations with 6 regulations** and introduction of 2 new regulations enhancing clarity and coherence in the regulatory landscape.

- **IRDAI (Insurance Products) Regulations, 2024:** merged 6 regulations into a unified framework aimed at enabling insurers to swiftly respond to evolving market demands, enhancing the ease of conducting business, and boosting insurance penetration.
- **IRDAI (Corporate Governance for Insurers) Regulations, 2024** aim to establish a robust governance framework for insurers, defining the roles and responsibilities of the board and management.
- **IRDAI (Registration, Capital Structure, Transfer of Shares & Amalgamation Insurers) Regulations, 2024:** Streamlined 7 regulations into a single comprehensive framework. It aims to foster the growth of the insurance sector by simplifying various processes.

Major Initiatives by IRDAI

- **Bima Sugam:** An online insurance marketplace for buying, selling, and servicing insurance policies as well as settling claims.
 - It is a part of IRDAI's Bima Trinity - Bima Vistaar, Bima Vahak, and Bima Sugam.
- **Saral Jeevan Bima:** Provides basic protection to self-employed individuals or people in low-income groups.
- **Integrated Grievance Management System:** To create a central repository of grievances across the country and provides for various analyses of data indicative of areas of concern to the insurance policyholder.
- **Pan India survey:** Through the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in a bid to improve on its strategy of creating insurance awareness.

- **Mandating Board Approved Policy for Insurers:** Insurers are mandated to have Board approved Insurance Awareness Policy with action plan for organizing various activities promoting consumer awareness on various aspects of insurance.

Conclusion

As the insurance sector continues to evolve, IRDAI remains committed to adapting and enhancing its regulations to meet the changing needs. IRDAI's initiatives in areas such as promoting financial inclusion, encouraging innovation, etc. will be instrumental in driving the sustainable growth of the insurance sector.

To know more about Insurance Sector in India, refer Article 3.3 of the February Monthly Current Affairs 2024.

Related News

Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) releases **2023-24 – List of D-SIIs**.
 - Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re) and New India Assurance Company continue to be identified as D-SIIs.
- D-SIIs refer to **insurers of such size, market importance**, and domestic and global inter **connectedness**, whose distress or failure would cause a **significant dislocation in the domestic financial system**.
 - D-SIIs are perceived as 'too big or too important to fail' (TBTF).
 - D-SIIs are **subject to additional regulatory measures**.

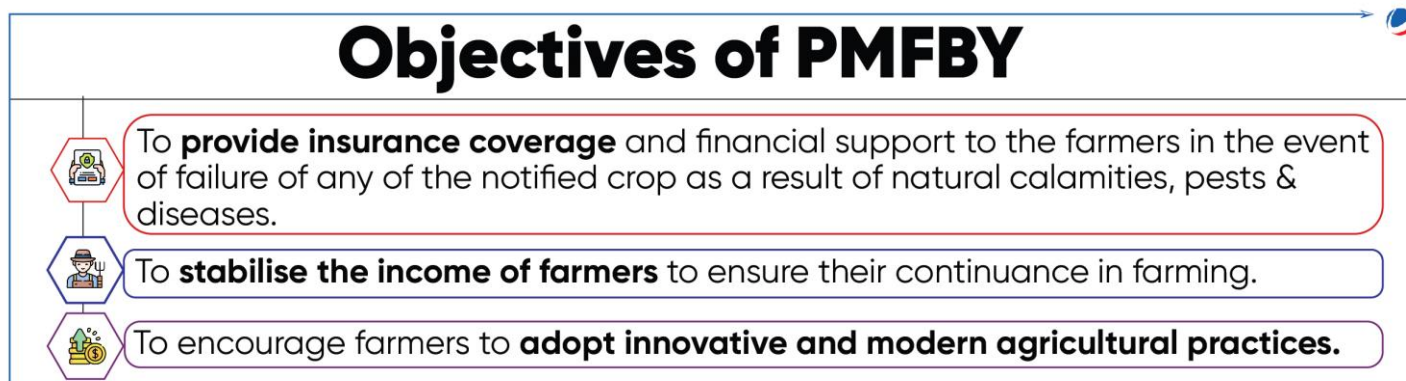
3.14. PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY)

Why in the news?

The enrolment of farmers under the PMFBY has crossed a record **40 million in 2023-24**, an increase of **27% from the 31.5 million enrolled in FY23**.

More on the news

- **Claims:** Around Rs. 500 paid as claims to farmers under PMFBY for every 100 rupees of premium paid (2016 - 2023).
- **Claim recipients:** Over 23.22 crore farmer applicants received claims under PMFBY in the past 8 Years of its implementation.



Salient features of PMFBY (launched in 2016)

- **Purpose:** Comprehensive crop insurance from pre-sowing to post-harvest period
- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Nature:** Demand-driven scheme and is voluntary for the States as well as farmers
- **Implementing Agency:** Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DAC&FW), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) and the concerned State.
- **Coverage of Farmers:** All farmers including sharecroppers and tenant farmers can avail it.
 - However, in 2020, the scheme was made **optional** for all farmers including farmers who have taken agri-loans.

- **Coverage of Crops:** Food crops (Cereals, Millets and Pulses); Oilseeds; Annual Commercial / Annual Horticultural crops, etc.
- **Premium to be paid:** Premium is paid as % of the sum assured or Actuarial Premium Rate (APR), whichever is less. APR is the premium rate set by insurance companies.
 - Premium by farmers:
 - ✓ 2% for Kharif crops
 - ✓ 1.5% for Rabi crops
 - ✓ 5% for commercial horticulture crops
- **Other notable features:** Compulsory use of at least 0.5% of the gross premium collected by insurance companies for IEC activities; intensive use of technology; freedom to States to choose risk cover as per requirements, etc.

Key Initiatives under PMFBY

- **DigiClaim:** Under it all the claims are worked out through National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP).
- **CROPIC** (Collection of Real Time Observations and Photo of Crops)
- Weather Information Network Data Systems (**WINDS**) portal
- Yield Estimation System, based on Technology (**YES-TECH**) Manual
- **Door enrollment app AIDE/Sahayak.**
- Forecasting Agricultural output using Space, Agro- meteorology and Land based observations (**FASAL**) project.
- National Agricultural Drought Assessment and Monitoring System (**NADAMS**)
- **ISRO's Geo-platform, Bhuvan**, provides data on plantation, pest surveillance and weather

Challenges in FMBY

- **Higher cost of premium subsidy:** In several states, the claims have exceeded the gross premium and the states found that a substantial part of their agriculture budget was going to pay premium subsidies.
- **Premium deducted from non-participating farmers:** Lack of awareness among farmers about the procedure to opt out of the crop insurance scheme often leads to unintended deduction of premium amounts from their bank accounts.
- **Crop yield estimation problem:** Disputes on the quality of yield data have been a challenge in the effective implementation of the Scheme.
- **Delays in settlement:** The delayed release of premium subsidies by states, yield-related disputes between insurance companies and states, and non-receipt of farmers' account details contribute to delayed settlement.
- **Defaulting Insurance Companies:** Delays in taking action against defaulting insurance companies due to procedural complications.
- **Difficulties to assess crop damage:** By the insurance companies due to the localised nature of crop damage, possible negligence or even false claims by unscrupulous persons and the non-availability of data at the local level.

Way forward

- **Ensure timely release of premium subsidy:** To maintain strict financial discipline, subsidy payment should be streamlined through an escrow account jointly administered by the State government and the Centre.
 - Also, all financial transactions (subsidy or claims) shall be routed through **the National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP)**.
- **Presence of insurance companies in every tehsil of the district:** It will be crucial for farmers in order to mitigate the problems faced in availing the scheme benefits.
- **Penalties for companies:** Effectively penalising defaulters in a time-bound manner.
- **Adoption of smart sampling techniques:** By all states using technological interventions such as satellite data or the use of drones.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Insurance companies can plan to spend a share of their profits towards CSR in the districts from where profits are earned.

3.15. NEWS IN SHORTS

3.15.1. 30 YEARS OF MARRAKESH AGREEMENT

- World Trade Organization (WTO) is celebrating 30 years of the Marrakesh Agreement.
- Marrakesh Agreement was **signed in Marrakesh, Morocco, by 123 countries in 1994** after the conclusion of the **Uruguay Round**.
 - It led to the **establishment of the WTO** in 1995, **replacing General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** as an international organization.
- **About Marrakesh Agreement:**
 - It serves as **basic framework for trade relations** among all WTO members.
 - It **expanded the scope beyond trade in goods** to trade in services, intellectual property, and other topics.
 - It established **modern multilateral trading system**, facilitating negotiations, dispute settlement, and economic cooperation among members.
 - It created **WTO's governance**, establishing the **Ministerial Conference (highest decision making body)**, General Council, and specialized councils.
- **Achievements of WTO**
 - **Lowering trade barriers:** Since 1995, real volume of world trade has expanded by **2.7 times** and **average tariffs have almost halved**, from 10.5% to 6.4%.
 - **Rise of Global Value Chains:** Trade within these value chains today accounts for almost 70% of total merchandise trade.
 - **Growth in developing countries:** Fastest poverty reduction since 1995 and increased purchasing power in all countries.
 - **International Trade Agreements and Rules:** TRIPS Agreement, Nairobi Package, Trade Facilitation Agreement, Doha Development Agenda etc.

To know more about WTO, kindly refer to Article 3.1. World Trade Organization in March 2024 edition of VisionIAS Current Affairs Magazine.

3.15.2. UNCTAD REBRANDED AS UN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) **rebranded as UN Trade and Development**.
- The **rebranding** marks the start of the **60th anniversary** of the organization.
 - This strategic move underscores the organization's commitment to increasing its global voice on the behalf of developing countries.

• Key Achievements:

- Implementation of **Financing for Development**, as mandated by the global community in the **Addis Ababa Agenda (2015)**, together with four other major institutional stakeholders.
 - ✓ The institution includes the **World Bank**, the **International Monetary Fund**, the **World Trade Organization**, and the **United Nations Development Programme**.
- Assisted countries under the **Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) Programme**.



Genesis: Established as a **permanent intergovernmental body** by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964 has **now been rebranded as UN Trade and Development**.

Objective: To aid **developing countries**, particularly **the least developed ones**, and **transitioning economies**, in integrating effectively into the global economy.

Members: 195 nations

Is India a member ✓

Functions: It helps countries to address **macro-level development challenges**, **diversify economies** to make them less dependent on commodities & **limit their exposure to financial volatility**.

Organisational Structure: Substantive work is carried out by five divisions, under the leadership of the Secretary-General.

Flagship Reports: Trade and Development Report, World investment Report, Digital economy report

3.15.3. LIVING WAGE AND MINIMUM WAGE

- The government sought technical assistance from ILO to create a framework for living wage
- Presently, India **follows the minimum wage**, which has remained stagnant since 2017.
- **The Code on Wages passed (2019)**, proposed a universal wage floor which shall apply to all states once implemented.

- **Issues with the present system**
 - The Minimum Wages Act, 1948 provides guidelines but **does not specify the minimum wage**.
 - **Fixing minimum wages in some jobs** falls under both the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, leading to potential confusion.
 - **Wage payment discrepancies** due to the lack of enforceability of the national wage floor across states.
 - **Gender disparity** as scheduled employment with more women workers has lower minimum wages than those with more men.
- **Advantages of Living Wage:**
 - Accelerate Poverty alleviation efforts, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - Addresses wage insufficiency, especially considering inflation, and fosters a more equitable and sustainable economy.
- **Challenges of Living Wage:**
 - Implementing a national living wage framework across states due to the diversity of living costs in different regions of India.
 - Financial strain especially for small businesses and MSMEs, due to increased labour costs.

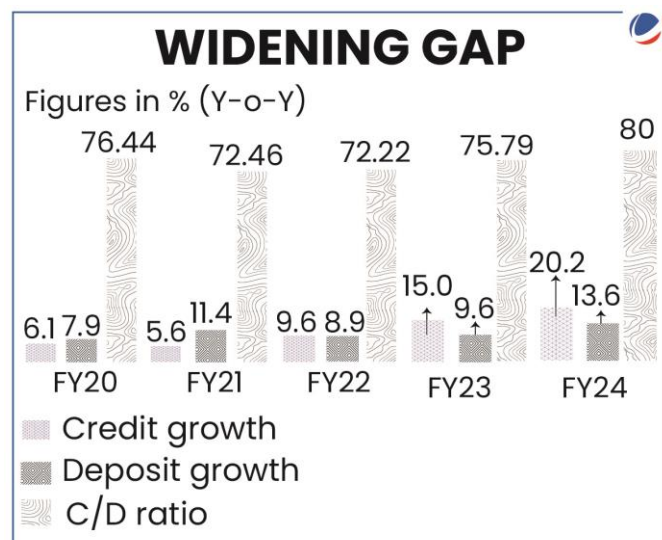
Difference between living wage and minimum wage

Differential Aspects	Living Wage	Minimum Wage
Definition	The wage level necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families.	The lowest legal hourly wage that employers must pay their workers.
Aim	To improve workers' quality of life.	To protect workers from exploitation.

3.15.4. CREDIT DEPOSIT RATIO (CDR)

- Indian banks are **battling the worst deposit crunch in 20 years** and at 80%, the credit-deposit ratio is at its highest since 2005.

- **About CDR:**
 - It is the ratio of how much a **bank lends out of the deposits it has mobilised**.
 - A higher CDR suggests that a **significant portion of the bank's resources are allocated to loans**.
✓ It could potentially **stimulate economic growth** but also implies **higher risk**.
 - Regulators often **monitor CDR** to ensure banks maintain a **prudent balance between lending and risk management**.



3.15.5. SEBI COMPLAINT REDRESS SYSTEM (SCORES 2.0)

- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) launched **SCORES 2.0 version** which **strengthens investor complaint redress mechanism** in securities market by making process more efficient.
- **SCORES** is an online system where **investors in securities market can lodge their complaints** through web URL and an App.
- **Salient features of SCORES 2.0**
 - Reduced timelines for redressal of investor complaints across Securities Market i.e. **21 Calendar days from date of receipt of complaint**.
 - **Introduction of auto-routing of complaints** to concerned regulated entity to eliminate time lapses.
 - Integration with **KYC Registration Agency database** for easy registration.

3.15.6. CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (CDP) – SURAKSHA

- Several states are using **SURAKSHA platform for disbursing subsidies to horticulture farmers under the CDP**.

- CDP is a component of the central sector scheme of National Horticulture Board (NHB).
- **About CDP-SURAKSHA**
 - SURAKSHA stands for ‘**System for Unified Resource Allocation, Knowledge, and Secure Horticulture Assistance**’.
 - It allows an instant disbursement of **subsidies to farmers** in their bank account by utilising the e-RUPI voucher from the NPCI.
 - Its key features are **database integration with PM-KISAN**, UIDAI validation, geotagging, geo-fencing etc.
 - CDP-SURAKSHA allows access to farmers, vendors, Implementing Agencies, Cluster Development Agencies etc.

3.15.7. EXPERT COMMITTEE REPORT ON GIFT CITY

- Expert Committee on developing GIFT IFSC as ‘Global Finance and Accounting Hub’ submitted report to IFSCA.
- Committee was formed following a **Ministry of Finance notification**.
 - The notification classified **book-keeping, accounting, taxation, and financial crime compliance** as ‘**financial services**’ under **International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Act, 2019**.
- **Gujarat International Finance Tech- City (GIFT City)-IFSC was established as Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 2015, in Gujarat.**
 - An IFSC caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy. Such centres deal with flows of finance, financial products and services across borders.
- **Opportunities for GIFT IFSC to become Global Finance and Accounting Hub**
 - Strong **technology-driven outsourcing capabilities**.
 - **Large talent pool of skilled manpower** in the fields of accounting, etc.
 - “**Accounting and finance services**” recognised as one of the **12 Champion sectors in services for exports**.
- **Recommendations**
 - **Proposes a new regulation**, providing for comprehensive and inclusive definition for Bookkeeping, Accounting, Taxation, and Financial Crime Compliance Services.
 - ✓ Only firms that are registered as a **company or a Limited liability partnership** should be allowed to offer these services.

- **Long-term strategies** for education and skill acquisition through developing specialized degree or diploma programs, etc.

IFSC Authority

- **IFSC Authority** is a **statutory body** established under **IFSC Act, 2019**.
- A **unified regulator** for development and regulation of financial products, financial services and financial institutions in IFSCs in India.

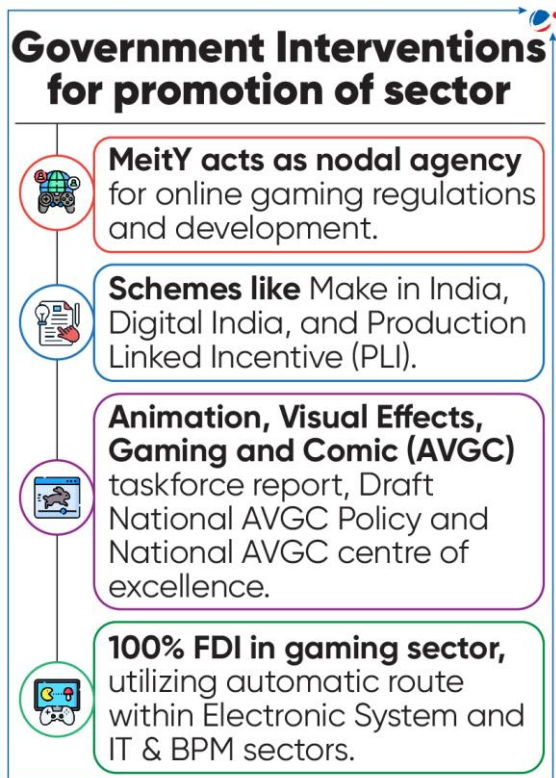
3.15.8. PAYMENT AGGREGATOR (PA)

- **PayU has received an in-principle approval** from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a PA.
- **About PAs**
 - It is a **financial technology company that simplifies the process of accepting electronic payments** for businesses. E.g., GooglePay, PhonePe, Cashfree etc.
 - It acts as an **intermediary between the business and the financial institutions**.
 - It is incorporated as a company under the **Companies Act, 1956 / 2013**.
 - Non-bank PAs require authorisation from RBI under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.

3.15.9. INDIA GAMING REPORT 2024 RELEASED

- **Interactive Entertainment and Innovation Council (IEIC) and WinZO released India Gaming Report 2024 .**
- **Key findings:**
 - With 568 million users, **India is officially the largest gaming market** and accounts for **every one in five online gamers** globally.
 - Indian gaming market is expected to reach **\$6 Billion by 2028**.
 - **Number of Indian gaming companies** surged from **25 in 2015 to over 1400 in 2023**.
- **Factors responsible for boost in gaming industry:**
 - Rise of **affordable high-speed internet** (\$0.17/GB) and increase in **smartphone penetration** (820 million users).
 - Burgeoning share of **young population** (~600 million) and rising **disposable income**.
 - **Supply side factors** include global investments in game development, rewarding gaming career, vernacular language content and gamification of Indian culture etc.
- **Gaming’s contribution to society:** Reduction in social isolation, community building, especially for women gamers, and its role in enhancing research, education and skilling.

- It also improves penetration of emerging technologies like Virtual Reality, Artificial Intelligence among others.
- **Challenges to gaming sector:**
 - Sustainability issues from 'internet pollution' (3.7% of Greenhouse Gas emissions).
 - **Financial literacy gaps**, regulatory complexities, and **data security challenges**.
 - Gaming can have a detrimental impact on physical and mental health in certain cases. E.g., issues like 'Blue Whale Challenge'.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Utilise **green innovations** and **virtual environments** for sustainable gaming.
 - Establish a **global gaming cluster** with policy support, supporting startups and talent development.
 - Prioritise **R&D for online safety and digital literacy**.



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ENGLISH 2024 : 19 MAY

हिन्दी 2024: 19 मई

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Smart and Effective **UPSC Prelims** Preparation Strategy

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Achieving success in this exam transcends mere hard work; it necessitates a holistic and adaptive approach to preparation.



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Key Strategies for Prelims Preparation



Strategized Preparation Plan: Allocate your study time wisely across subjects, ensuring you have enough time for revision and practice mocks. Pay attention to your weak areas.



Resource Optimization: Choose study materials that are both thorough and to the point. Focus on quality over quantity to prevent getting overwhelmed.



Strategic Use of PYQs and Mock Tests: Use past year papers to understand the exam pattern, important topics, and question trends. Regularly practicing and assessing progress with mock tests improves preparation and time management.



Systematic Current Affairs Preparation: Keep abreast with Current affairs through newspapers, magazines and integrating this knowledge with static subjects to improve understanding and retention.



Smart Learning: Focus on understanding concepts rather than rote learning, use mnemonics, infographics, and other effective learning tools for better retention.



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4. SECURITY

4.1. INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS

Why in the news?

India delivered the first batch of BrahMos to the Philippines.

More on News

- BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited (BAPL) had signed a contract in 2022 for supply of Shore Based Anti-Ship Missile System to Philippines.
- Recent years **have witnessed a steady increase in India's defence exports to countries such as Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius and Ecuador.**

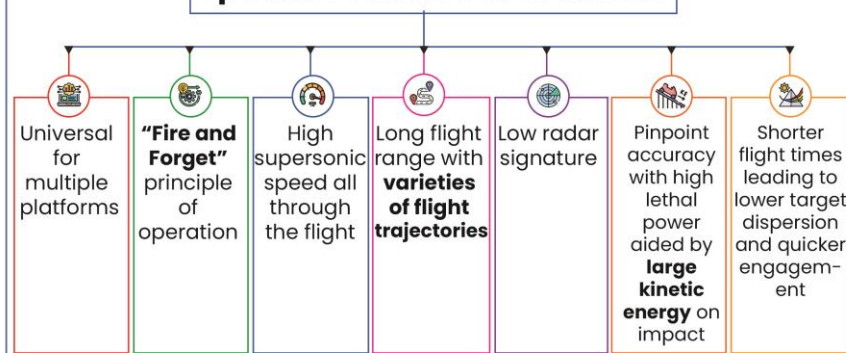
About Brahmos

- Developed by:** BrahMos Aerospace - a joint venture between Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.
 - The company was established in India through an Inter-Governmental Agreement signed in 1998.
- Name represents **Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia) rivers.**
- Two-stage missile:**
 - First stage:** Solid propellant booster engine which brings it to supersonic speed and then gets separated.
 - Second stage:** Liquid ramjet takes the missile closer to 3 Mach speed in cruise phase.
- Flight range:** Up to **290 kilometres** at supersonic speed.
- Missile is **capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea, and air** against surface and sea-based targets and has been inducted by the Indian Navy, Army and Airforce.

BrahMos



Special Features of Brahmos




Reasons for rise in India's Defence exports

- Financial push:**
 - Enhanced Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limit:**
 - ✓ Up to **74% through the Automatic Route** for companies seeking new defence industrial licenses.
 - ✓ Up to **100% through the government route** wherever it is likely to result in **access to modern technology.**
 - Venture Capital funds:** Agreement to facilitate infusion of Venture Capital into the defence ecosystem through the iDEX Innovators Hub (iIH).
 - Financing from Exim Bank for defence exports**
- Encouraging Private Sector Participation:** Government has earmarked 25% of the defence research budget for the private sector in 2022-23.
- Initiatives to promote indigenous innovation:** E.g.,
 - Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX)** was launched to achieve self-reliance and foster innovation and technology development in defence sector.
 - Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti to inculcate and strengthen Intellectual Properties into defence manufacturing.
- Reduced dependence on foreign equipment manufacturer:** E.g., 5th Positive Indigenisation List was announced in October 2023, listing Defence Items to be procured from indigenous sources.
- Defence diplomacy:** It includes measures like-

- **Line of Credit** (e.g. to African countries for purchase of weaponry),
- **Defence Offset Policy** (to leverage capital acquisitions to develop Indian defence industry)
- **Marketing products to potential buyers from overseas, etc.**
- **Infrastructure:** Defence Industrial Corridors established in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have attracted large scale investments.

Benefits of Rising Defence Exports

- **Defence Export as a Strategic Tool:**
 - **Increases diplomatic leverage and scope of strategic partnership** with partner nations.
 - ✓ Moreover, **technological dependencies** (related to maintenance, repair, spares, components, future upgrades) influence geopolitical stance of nations
 - **Compatibility between exporting and receiving nations enhances military interoperability** through the conduct of military exercises and joint operations.
 - **Integration with defence value chain** by exporting to major countries.
 - ✓ It also insulates country from supply line disruptions during conflicts such as Russia, Ukraine conflict, Israel-Hamas war etc.
- **High Value Nature of defence exports:** It adds to economic strength through earnings of **forex reserves**, **creation of high-skilled job opportunities**, new market opportunities for domestic defence manufacturing etc.
- **Other benefits:**
 - **Enhances R&D base in defence** through involvement of private players.
 - **Strengthens national security**
 - **Self-reliance through Indigenization of Defence.**



Data Bank

Current Status of India's Defence Exports (FY 2023-24)

- **Rs 21,083 crore** (~ US\$ 2.63 Billion) **Defence exports**
- **32.5%** growth over the last fiscal year.
- **31 times** growth in last 10 years.
- **1,507 export authorisations** (rise from 1,414 in FY 2022-23)
- **Contributions:**
 - **60%** from private sector
 - **40%** from Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs)

Challenges faced in India's defence export

- **Inadequate R&D spending:** India is spending is less than 1% in R&D as a part of total defence budget expenditure.
 - China and USA spend around 20% and 12% respectively.
- **Limited budget:** The defense allocation for FY 24-25 is just about 1.9% of the GDP.
- **Credibility issues:** Indian defence products have less credibility than their counterparts (USA, France, Russia) because of their dependency on imports for advanced weapons.
 - As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India has been the **world's highest arms importer** from 2019 to 2023.
- **Inadequate capacity:** Massive gap exists with respect to India's manufacturing & export capacity as compared to dominant players.
 - Even though India exports military hardware to 85 countries, its share in world export is minuscule.
 - India remains **outside the top 25 arms exporters** in the world.
- **Over-reliance on DPSUs:** It leads to supply monopolies and creates hurdles in integrating private sector into defence innovation and industrial ecosystem.
- **Other issues:** Diplomatic issues and competition from other nations; Non-timely delivery of services due to lack of proper infrastructure; Lack of cohesion and coordination between the Indian Armed Forces, the DPSUs, private manufacturers, and the Ministry of Defence etc.

Way Forward

If India to become a dominant force in the global arms market meet its target of **US\$5 billion in export revenue**, following measures can be taken:-

- **Use of Export revenue to enhance funding of DPSU R&D budgets or capital expenditure of the government.**

- **Utilization of Present opportunities in the geopolitics and external factors such as** weak and inconsistent performance of China's arms export. (**Myanmar's grounding of Chinese jets**)
- **Establishment of a single point agency** responsible for coordination between all stakeholders, executing plans, and meeting the targets for defence exports.
- **Quality Assurance and Standardization** by adhering to international standards and obtaining certifications thereby enhancing global credibility of Indian defence products.
 - **MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification schemes** which strives to create an ecosystem of competitive, clean and quality manufacturing, could be leveraged.
- **Invest in international marketing and branding** to change perceptions about the quality and reliability of its defence products.
- **Promote Public-Private Partnerships** by greater involvement of the private sector through by offering incentives, facilitating technology transfer, and promoting joint ventures.
- **Securing export deals of high value weapons** (e.g Pinaka, AKash, Dhruva). by offering of incentives through lines of credit, government-to-government route

Conclusion

Defence exports provide an opportunity to embellish India's growing stature on the global table and improve its strategic leverage with partner nations.

4.2. VIRTUAL ASSETS AND TERROR FINANCING

Why in the news?

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has recognized deficiencies in enforcing its standards regarding virtual assets (VAs) and **virtual asset service providers (VASPs)**.

More about the news

- FATF closely monitors developments in the cryptosphere and has issued global, binding standards to prevent the misuse of virtual assets for money laundering and terrorist financing.
- FATF had in February 2023 agreed on a **road map to strengthen the implementation of its standards on virtual assets and VASPs**.

Virtual assets and virtual asset service providers (VASPs)

- Virtual assets refer to any digital representation of value that can be digitally traded, transferred or used for payment.
 - Example are **Bitcoin**, Litecoin, Ethereum or Dogecoin. It **does not include** digital representation of **fiat currencies (government-issued currency)**.
- **VASPs refers to** any natural or legal person conducting one or more of the following transactions on behalf of another natural or legal person as a business:
 - **Providing exchanges between virtual assets or fiat currencies.**
 - **Transferring between virtual assets.**
- VASPs encompass entities such as **cryptocurrency exchanges, ATM operators, wallet custodians, and hedge funds**.

Reasons for use of Virtual Assets Used in Terror Financing

- **Anonymity:** Virtual Assets are considered **high risk** due to anonymity and **decentralization of peer-to-peer online transactions**, which also enable criminals to **use VPNs to obfuscate location** and the origin/destination of transactions.
- **Absence of global standard regulations:** VASPs located in one jurisdiction may offer their products and services to customers located in another jurisdiction where they may be subject to **different Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) obligations and oversight**.
 - Lack of a clear regulatory framework, as highlighted by **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, for virtual assets creates significant risks for investors and potential financial stability implications.

- **Crowdfunding with Virtual Assets:** Terrorist groups leverage crowdfunding platforms and social media to solicit funds globally, using virtual assets for anonymous and borderless transactions.

How do the FATF Standards apply to virtual assets?

Countries need to:	Virtual Assets service providers need to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the money laundering and terrorist financing risks the sector faces • Licence or register virtual asset service providers • Supervise the sector, in the same way it supervises other financial institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the same preventive measures as financial institutions, including customer due diligence, record keeping and reporting of suspicious transactions • Obtain, hold and security transmit originator and beneficiary information when making transfers

Regulation of Virtual Assets and VASPs in India

- **PMLA Compliance:** In March 2023, India subjected Virtual Digital Assets Service Providers (VDASPs) to the AML-CFT regulations of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002.
- **Register with Financial Intelligence Unit India (FIU IND):** VDASPs are required to register with FIU IND and fulfill reporting and record-keeping duties.
- **Permanent secretariat:** India has proposed a permanent secretariat to coordinate bid to fight terror funding.
 - 'Beyond-Border Cooperation' is the basis for countering terror funding in the global level.
- **'Travel rule' for VASPs:** India has enacted the **'travel rule' for VASPs** which requires securely collecting and transmitting originator and beneficiary information.

Way Forward

- **Effective global implementation of FATF standards:** It will create a **level playing field** and prevent criminals from exploiting weakly supervised jurisdictions.
 - In 2018, G20 member countries committed to the implementation of these FATF standards on AML/CFT for VDAs at the Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors'
- **Preventive measures by financial institutions:** such as **customer due diligence (CDD)**, **record keeping and suspicious transaction reporting (STR)** to **ensure transparency** of virtual asset transactions.
- **Strengthening Financial Intelligence:** Accurate and well-linked financial intelligence (including from private sector) can reveal the structure of terrorist groups and also the activities of individual terrorists.
- **International Cooperation:** Cooperation between **law enforcement authorities** and **involvement of the Financial and Banking sector** are essential for combating such cross-border challenges.
- **Technological upgradation:** Evolving money laundering threats from emerging technologies require advanced countermeasures like **big data and artificial intelligence**.

4.3. WEAPONISATION OF SPACE

Why in the News?

Russia vetoed a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) draft resolution on a weapon-free outer space jointly proposed by the **United States and Japan**.

About UNSC resolution

- The vetoed resolution would have affirmed **that countries which ratified the 1967 Outer Space Treaty** must comply
- with their obligations not to put in orbit around the Earth **"any objects" with weapons of mass destruction**, or install them "on celestial bodies, or station such weapons in outer space."
- **Russia's stand:** Vetoed resolution **focused solely on weapons of mass destruction** including nuclear arms, and made **no mention of other weapons in space**.

Do you know?

- > In the United Nations Security Council, decisions are made with a **majority of 9 votes of the 15 Council members' votes**.
- > All decision is **rejected if one of the five permanent members of the Security Council** (China, United States, France, United Kingdom, Russia) **makes use of its veto**.

About Weaponisation of Space

- Weaponization of space defines the process which results in **deployment of weapons in space** which may then become a theatre of conflict through use of weapons **aimed at destroying targets either in orbit or on Earth's surface**.
 - On the other hand, militarisation of outer space refers to the use of space in support of ground, sea and air-based military operations.

Important Global Initiatives for Peace in Space

- **Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS, 1959)**: To govern the exploration and use of space for the benefit of all humanity.
- **Outer Space Treaty (1967)**: Prohibits nuclear weapons or any other weapons of mass destruction in outer space.
- **Rescue Agreement (1968)**: Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts, the Return of Astronauts and the Return of Objects Launched into Outer Space.
- **Space Liability Convention (1972)**: Launching state is liable for damage caused by its space objects.
- **Launch Registration Convention of (1975)**: Launching State shall register the space object in an appropriate registry and inform the same to Secretary-General of UN.
- **Moon Agreement (1979)**: The agreement forbids the establishment of military bases, installations and fortifications on the Moon and, the testing of any type of weapons on the Moon.

Note - India is a **party to Outer Space Treaty, the Rescue Agreement, the Liability Convention and the Registration Convention**.

India has also **signed the Moon Treaty but not ratified**.

India also **actively participate in COPUOS**.

Emerging Challenges with weaponisation of Space

- **Arms Race and Deterrence**: Major powers, such as the US, China, and Russia, now have their military units specialized in space operations, indicating that space has become a new war-fighting domain.
- **Debris and Congestion**: Space conflict would most likely result in the undesired proliferation of space debris with irreversible impact on the space environment.
- **Dual-Use Technologies**: Many space technologies (space launch vehicles, small satellites, GPS trackers, active debris removal systems etc) have both civilian and military applications, **blurring the line** between peaceful and military uses of space.
- **Outdated Outer Space Treaty (OST)**: Constructed under different geopolitical and technological circumstances, they are not well-suited for addressing contemporary challenges.

Steps taken by India to enhance space capabilities

- **Defence Space Agency (DSA)**: established in 2018 to enhance coordination among military space activities
- **Mission Shakti**: India's first ever Anti-Satellite (ASAT) Missile Test successfully conducted in 2019 to defend its assets in outer space
- **IndSpaceEx**: first simulated space warfare exercise in **2019** to assess potential threats and formulate a joint space warfare doctrine.

Way forward

- **International cooperation**: Start negotiations for a **legally-binding treaty to prohibit** weaponization of outer space.
 - The treaty could ban basing of all kinds of weapons, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and conventional or simple hit-to-kill weapons.
- **Space-domain awareness**: Need Investment in space-domain awareness and diplomatic agreements,
 - such as the 'Combined Space Operations Initiative' (CSpO) between the 'five-eyes' states plus Germany and France, that facilitate **information sharing on space activities**.
- **Mitigating space debris**: Enhance Space Situational Awareness (SSA), which is the ability to keep track of **everything in space** including space debris, rogue satellite behaviour, anti-collision mechanisms and possible signs of weaponisation by others.
- **Enforceable space law**: Law that delivers immediate and significant diplomatic, political and even economic consequences for a state which violates the norms of responsible behaviour.
 - For e.g., **Proposed Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS)**, It is a UN resolution seeking a ban on the weaponization of space.

Related News

Sweden Becomes 38th Country to Join Artemis Accords

- Artemis Accords was **established in 2020 by NASA**, in coordination with the US Department of State, together with **seven other founding member nations**.
- **About Artemis Accords**
 - Grounded in **Outer Space Treaty (OST) of 1967**, these are a **non-binding set of principles** designed to **guide civil space exploration and use** in the 21st century.
 - It represents **multilateral leadership in civil space diplomacy** and brings together a diverse set of nations with a shared vision of peaceful space cooperation.
 - India is a **signatory to the Artemis Accords**.
- **Commitment of Signatories under the Accords**
 - Broad dissemination of national **space policies and scientific information** resulting from their activities.
 - Recognize **development of interoperable and common exploration infrastructure and standards** such as communication systems, landing structures, etc.
 - Implement **MoUs** between governments or agencies as per the **Outer Space Treaty 1967**.
 - **Preserve outer space heritage**, including **historic landing sites and evidence of activity on celestial bodies**.
 - **Mitigate orbital debris** and induce **safe and timely disposal of spacecraft** at the end of missions.

Recently, **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** debated rising veto power use in the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**.

- Since the UN's inception, vetoes have been used **more than 300 times**.
- **Reason of growing use of Veto power**
 - **National interest:** Permanent members use the veto to defend their national interests or to uphold a tenet of their foreign policy.
 - **Increase in global conflict and crises:** Russia's annexation of Crimea and subsequent invasion of Ukraine, and the war between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas etc.
 - **Political polarization:** for e.g., United States use its veto power to protect Israel.
- **Impact of Overuse of Veto power**
 - **Affected Humanitarian efforts:** Delays in the deployment of peacekeeping forces, the provision of humanitarian aid, or the approval of critical interventions to safeguard civilians.
 - **Deadlocks and inaction:** one permanent member's objection impede progress and create a sense of **diplomatic paralysis**, even when the majority of member states support a proposed resolution or course of action.
 - **Credibility of UNSC:** It can be seen as incompetent and unable to carry out its main duty of preserving world peace and security.
 - **Erosion of Multilateralism:** It might cause states to rely more on other forums or take unilateral action, which would reduce the value of international cooperation in resolving disputes.

Scan the QR code to know more about **Hybrid Warfare**.

Weekly Focus #73: Hybrid Warfare: New age war warrants a new age response



4.4. ARMED FORCES (SPECIAL POWERS) ACT (AFSPA)

Why in the news?

The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, **1958 (AFSPA)** has been extended by the Centre to eight districts in **Nagaland** and three districts in **Arunachal Pradesh**.

More on News

- Currently, AFSPA is in effect in **parts of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Also, **AFSPA remains in force in Jammu and Kashmir** through the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990.
- However, it was lifted from **Tripura in 2015, Meghalaya in 2018** and **Mizoram** in the 1980s.

About AFSPA, 1958

- An Act to **enable certain special powers to be conferred upon members of the armed forces** in **disturbed areas** in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura that lies in the **North Eastern sector**.
- **Power to declare areas to be disturbed areas under Section 3 of the Act: Governor of that State or the Administrator of that Union territory or the Central Government**, as the case may be, may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare the whole or such part of such State or Union territory to be a disturbed area.
 - **Disturbed area** is an area in such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.
- **Special powers of the armed forces under Section 4:** Any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces is given "special powers" under AFSPA, although they must be exercised with extreme caution.
 - **After giving due warning as considered necessary, Fire upon or use force, even causing death, against any person** acting in contravention of laws:
 - ✓ **Prohibiting assembly of 5 or more persons**
 - ✓ **Prohibiting carrying weapons** or firearms/ammunition/explosives.
 - If reasonable suspicion exists, can also **arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search a premises without a warrant**
 - **Unless otherwise authorized by the central government**, Army soldiers operating under the AFSPA are **shielded from all legal actions**.

Whether AFSPA is to be repealed?

Arguments in favour of Repealing AFSPA	Arguments Against Repealing AFSPA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colonial-era law: AFSPA is compared to the Rowlatt Act, allowing arrests based on suspicion without due process. • Violations of fundamental right: It violates citizens' fundamental rights under Articles 14, 19, 21, 22, and 25 of the Constitution. • Violates International Law: AFSPA, by its form and in its application, violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Convention against Torture. • Lack of Accountability: AFSPA grants sweeping powers to armed forces and immunity from prosecution without central government approval. • Militarization of Governance: Critics argue that AFSPA contributes to the military ruling, undermining democratic principles and civilian authority in conflict-affected areas. • Centre-State conflicts: Law and order is a state subject, and concerned states are always in a better position to carry out direct assessment on ground. However, AFSPA erodes states' autonomy even during peaceful times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard boundaries: AFSPA has enabled military forces to protect national borders effectively. • Constitutionality Valid: SC upheld the Act in the Naga People's Movement of Human Rights v Union of India (1997) case, with guidelines to prevent abuse, such as consulting the state government before declaring a region as disturbed and there must a periodic review of the situation. • Effective counter-insurgency: AFSPA is essential for combating insurgent groups, particularly in kashmir and the northeast. • National Security Imperative: AFSPA ensures a coordinated response to insurgency and terrorism, which individual states may lack. • Measures to curb misuse: In the Extra Judicial Execution Victim Families vs Union of India & Anr (2016) Case, SC ruled that AFSPA does not provide invincible immunity to armed forces from prosecution.

Committees Related To AFSPA



Justice B P Jeevan Reddy committee (2004): Recommends the incorporation of AFSPA in the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**



2nd ARC 5th Report (2007): Recommended the repeal of AFSPA since it would remove the feeling of **discrimination and alienation**



Santosh Hegde committee (2013): Act must be properly reviewed every six months to see if its implementation is necessary



Justice Verma Committee (2013): Recommended that any sexual violence against women by members of the armed forces must be brought within the purview of the ordinary criminal law.

Way Forward

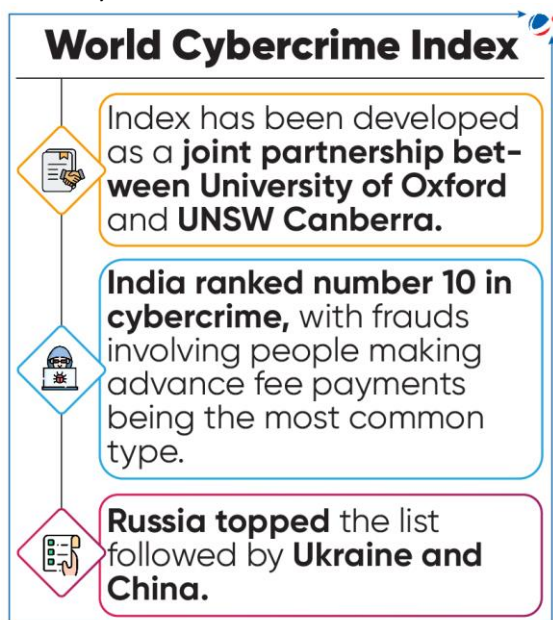
- **Building trust and confidence:** Implement a **bottom-up governance model** to empower grassroots communities and bridge gaps between people and government.
- **Prioritizing Peace Accords:** To remove AFSPA, first, the **government must push for formalising a concrete peace accord** with such insurgent groups and this can be done by **providing proper rehabilitation**.
- **Enhanced Connectivity:** It will directly impact the security scenario of India's North East and in the long run, will contribute to the complete removal of AFSPA.
- **Adherence to human rights norms** which strengthens the counterinsurgency operations.

4.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

4.5.1. CYBER RISK: CONCERN FOR MACRO-FINANCIAL STABILITY

- Rising Cyber Threats Pose Serious Concerns for Macro-Financial Stability, warns International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- According to **IMF's Global Financial Stability Report 2024**,
 - **Risk of extreme losses** from cyber incidents has increased to **\$2.5 billion**.
 - **Number** of cyberattacks has almost **doubled since COVID-19 pandemic**.
 - Attacks on financial firms account for nearly one-fifth of total, of which banks are most exposed.
- **Reasons Behind Rising Cyber Incidents in Financial Sector**
 - **Increased digital financial services** offer target-rich environment for hackers.
 - **Insider threats i.e. users** have authorized access to assets and misuse their privileges deliberately or accidentally for **monetary gain**.
 - **Cybersecurity skills gap** leaving financial firms vulnerable to cyber threats.
 - **Geopolitical tensions**. E.g. Surge in cyber-attack after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- **Impact of Cyber Attacks on Macro-financial Stability**
 - Data breach lead to **loss of confidence** in viability of targeted institution, resulting in high deposit outflows.
 - Cyber-attacks on payment networks can **halt trading, online banking etc.**, and **undermine country's financial stability**.
 - Cyber-attacks **propagate rapidly within a network of financial systems** through financial linkages, thus **impacting market stability**.
- **Policy Recommendations**
 - **Strengthen reporting of cyber incidents by financial firms** to supervisory agencies.

- Financial firms should **develop and test response and recovery procedures** to remain operational in face of cyber incidents.



4.5.2. TRENDS IN WORLD MILITARY EXPENDITURE, 2023 REPORT

- It was **released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**.
 - Established in 1966, it is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- Key findings**
 - India was fourth largest military spender** in world in 2023 with an expenditure of \$83.6 billion **after United States, China and Russia.**
 - In 2023, military expenditure by NATO member states reached \$1341 billion or 55% of world spending.
 - World military expenditure**, driven by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and geopolitical tensions, reached to an **all-time high of \$2443 billion.**

4.5.3. INITIATIVES FOR PREVENTION OF CRIMES AGAINST PEACEKEEPERS

- India-led **Group of Friends (GOF)** launched a **new database designed to record crimes against Peacekeepers** & monitor progress in **holding perpetrators accountable.**
 - The GOF was **launched by India in 2022** to promote **accountability for crimes against the Blue Helmets** during its presidency of the UN Security Council
- UN peacekeeping forces **are employed to maintain or re-establish peace in an area of armed conflict.**

However, they sometimes face violence in deployed regions.

- These forces are also referred to as **Blue Helmets** as they are equipped in blue-coloured helmets.
- They won the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1988.**


4.5.4. INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL BOARD (INCB)

- India's Jagjit Pavadia has been **re-elected to INCB** for the third term from 2025 to 2030.
- About INCB**
 - It is **independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body** for implementation of UN international drug control conventions.
 - It was **established in 1968** in accordance with **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.**
 - Members:** 13 members (elected by UN Economic and Social Council for five years)
 - Its functions are laid down in:**
 - ✓ **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961.**
 - ✓ **Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971.**
 - ✓ **United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.**

4.5.5. INDIGENOUS TECHNOLOGY CRUISE MISSILE (ITCM) FLIGHT TESTED

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted test from the **Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur** on the eastern coast.
- About ITCM**
 - Developed by the **Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE)** of DRDO.
 - It is a **long-range subsonic cruise missile** powered by an indigenous propulsion system.
 - ✓ The propulsion system is developed by **Gas Turbine Research Establishment.**
 - ✓ Cruise missiles are **unmanned vehicles that remain within the atmosphere** and can fly as low as a few meters off the ground.
 - ✓ Subsonic cruise missile flies at a **speed lesser than that of sound (around 0.8 MACH)**
- Reasons for Missile and Satellite launch from the Eastern coast**
 - A satellite launched from the sites near the equator towards the east direction **gets an initial boost equal to the velocity of Earth's surface.**
 - ✓ It helps in cutting down the cost of rockets used to launch the satellites.
 - In case of the failure of satellite/missile, the Bay of Bengal provides a safe corridor** that does not fall on built-up hinterland.

- Does not have **major international maritime or airline routes crisscrossing** testing..
- ✓ During test launches, the few existing routes can be closed temporarily without causing much disruption.



Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE)

Bengaluru



About: It is a key Aeronautical Systems Design House involved in the design and development of **state-of-the-art Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV)** and Aeronautical Systems and technologies.

Ministry: It is a research establishment under the **Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO)**, Ministry of Defence.

Major activities:

- **ABHYAS:** High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT).
- **Rustom-1:** the first Indian Remotely Piloted Aircraft System to have conventional take-off and landing capabilities.
- Provided state-of-the-art inertial and **Global Navigation Satellite System** sensors for the UAV flight control and guidance.

4.5.6. AGNI PRIME SUCCESSFULLY FLIGHT-TESTED

- Agni-prime the new generation ballistic missile flight tested successfully.
- It was conducted by **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)**, along with the **Defence Research and Development Organisation** from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island.
 - SFC is responsible for the management and administration of the **country's tactical and strategic nuclear weapons stockpile**.
- **About Agni prime**
 - **Two-stage canisterised solid propellant** ballistic missile, with a maximum range of 1,000 to 2,000 km.
 - **A nuclear-capable** advanced variant of the Agni class of missiles.
 - Lighter than **all the earlier Agni series of missiles** and will be guided by inertial navigation systems (INS) based on advanced ring-laser gyroscopes.

- First of the new generation of missiles after the end of the **Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP)**.

About IGMDP

- It was started in 1983 to enable India to attain **self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology**.
- The missiles developed under the program were
 - Short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile **Prithvi**.
 - Intermediate-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile **Agni**.
 - Short-range low-level surface-to-air missile **Trishul**.
 - Medium-range surface-to-air missile **Akash**.
 - Third-generation anti-tank missile **Nag**.

• Significance

- **As the warhead is preloaded**, it offers the ability to launch with minimal preparation time.
- It can be **stored for many years together**, with minimum inspection at periodic intervals.
- It has **very high accuracy**, which is useful for precise targeting.

4.5.7. SUBMERSIBLE PLATFORM FOR ACOUSTIC CHARACTERISATION AND EVALUATION (SPACE)

- SPACE, a premier testing and evaluation hub for sonar systems for Indian Navy, set up by DRDO.
- **About SPACE**
 - It will **consist of two distinct assemblages** –
 - ✓ a **platform which floats on water surface**,
 - ✓ a **submersible platform** which can be **lowered to any depth upto 100 m**.
- **Significance**
 - Evaluation of **sonar systems**, allowing for **quick deployment and easy recovery of scientific package**.
 - Help to **survey, sampling, and data collection of air, surface, mid-water, and reservoir floor parameters** using modern scientific instrumentation.
 - Boost **anti-submarine warfare** research capabilities.

4.5.8. HYPERSONIC MISSILE

- Russian President confirmed that the 3M22 Zircon hypersonic missile had been used in battle.
- **Hypersonic Missile**
 - Missile that can **travel at Mach-5 or faster, or at least five times the speed of sound**.
 - They fly at **lower altitudes than ballistic missiles**, making them harder to track.
 - Their **extreme speed and manoeuvrability** make them **very difficult to defend against**.

- **Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGV)** and **Hypersonic Cruise Missiles** are two types of hypersonic weapons systems.

4.5.9. CRYSTAL MAZE 2

- The Indian Air Force has successfully tested a new version of a medium-range ballistic missile
- **About Crystal Maze 2 (aka ROCKS):**
 - **Origin:** medium-range ballistic missile developed by Israel.
 - **Range:** strike range of over 250 km
 - **Type:** Air-to-surface missile
 - **Aim:** designed to strike high-value stationary and relocatable targets in GPS-denied environments
 - Missile can target long-range radar and air defense systems.

4.5.10. C-DOME DEFENSE SYSTEM

- Israel deployed **C-Dome defense system** for the first time.
- **About C-Dome**
 - It is a **naval version of the Iron Dome air defense system** used to shield against advanced ballistic, aerial, and surface-to-surface threats.
 - ✓ **Iron Dome is a missile defense system** that can protect deployed and maneuvering forces,

as well as civilian areas against a wide range of indirect and aerial threats.

- **Handles saturation attacks by engaging multiple targets** simultaneously, with **short reaction time**.
- Unlike Iron Dome which has its own radar, C-Dome is **integrated into the ship's radar to detect incoming targets**.

4.5.11. EXERCISES IN NEWS

- **Exercise 'Gagan Shakti'**
 - The **Indian Air Force** is conducting its biggest exercise '**Gagan Shakti**' at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in **Jaisalmer district**.
 - In the exercise, all the major **fighter aircraft and modern helicopters** of the Air Force **will demonstrate their striking capabilities**.
- **Exercise Poorvi Lehar or XPOL:** Indian Navy conducted Exercise Poorvi Lehar on East Coast under the Operational Control of Eastern Naval Command.
- **Tiger Triumph 2024:** Harbour Phase of the exercise Tiger Triumph is being **conducted at Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh)**.
 - Tiger Triumph is a **Bilateral Tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Amphibious Exercise** between India and the US.



PRELIMS & MAINS INTEGRATED MENTORING PROGRAM 2025

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5. ENVIRONMENT

5.1. CONSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Why in the news?

The Supreme Court (SC), in a recent judgment, stated that the right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change should be recognised by **Articles 14 and 21** of the Constitution.

More about the news

- **Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution of India** guarantee the fundamental rights to equality and life respectively.
- The judgment was made under the writ Petition '**M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others v. Union of India and Others**' regarding the protection of Great Indian Bustard and its habitat.
- It is an example where the **SC has used its power to widen the scope of fundamental rights**, particularly **Articles 21** (right to Life), **14** (right to equality) and **19** (right to freedom of speech, etc.), under the Constitution to tackle environmental issues.

Note: The judgement is discussed in detail in the subsequent article.

Powers of Supreme court to protect environmental rights under the Constitution

- **Article 32:** SC can issue directions, orders or writs to protect fundamental rights (High Courts can do the same under Article 226)
 - This can be viewed in combination with **Article 13(2)** which prohibits the State from making any law which takes away or abridges the fundamental rights.
- **Article 142:** SC can pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

Other SC judgements regarding constitutionalization of environmental issues

- **Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra vs. State (1988):** Recognised the right to live in a healthy environment as part of Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India (1987):** Treated the right to live in pollution free environment as a part of fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Virender Gaur vs. State of Haryana (1995):** Stated that protection and preservation of the environment, ecological balance free from pollution as part of Article 21.
- **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union Of India & Ors (1996):** Expanded 'forest' meaning to preserve green expanses, irrespective of their nature, classification or ownership.
- **Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum vs. Union of India (1996):** Observed that "the Precautionary Principle" and "the Polluter Pays Principle" are essential features of "Sustainable Development."

Know the term

- **Precautionary principle:** It allows decision-makers to take precautions when scientific evidence of environmental or health hazards is inconclusive.
- **Polluter pays principle:** It is a practice in which those who produce pollution bear the costs of managing it to prevent damage to human health or the environment.

Other Constitutional provision regarding Environment

- **Article 48A:** State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country.
- **Clause (g) of Article 51A:** Makes it the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures.

Challenges in implementation

- **Judicial delays:** The overburdened judicial system can result in lengthy delays in resolving environmental disputes and cases, affecting timely compliance and enforcement.

- **Difficulty in identifying polluters:** Pollution can be caused by a chain of activities, making it challenging to identify the source.
- **Development and environment conflict:** Often the environmental law and ruling come in conflict with the development for ex-construction of infrastructure projects.
- **Difficulty identifying and addressing risks and environmental impacts:** Of development projects and industries due to lack of clear provisions.
- **Weak monitoring:** Regulatory bodies such as State Pollution Control Boards suffer from insufficient funding, lack of modern equipment and infrastructure etc. to monitor compliance.
- **Lack of public awareness and sensitisation:** They are unaware of their right and duties towards the environment.

Way forward

- **Effective implementation:** The government can set up more separate machinery, like the National Green Tribunal, to reduce the delays that are hindering implementation.
- **Global action:** As environment concern often not confined to boundaries, commitment by various countries such as in Paris agreement should be fulfilled.
- **Legislation regarding climate change:** As said by the SC in **M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others v. Union of India** case there is need for umbrella legislation which relates to climate change and the attendant concerns.
- **Strengthen institutional capacity:** by allocating adequate financial resources and investing in capacity building of environmental agencies.
- **Rights awareness:** The European Court of Human Rights ruling supported a citizen lawsuit against the government for climate change inaction. Such cases can generate awareness globally.

5.1.1. PROTECTION OF GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

Why in the news?

Recently, the Supreme Court modified its earlier order to place a blanket direction for undergrounding high-voltage and low-voltage power lines in the Great Indian Bustard habitat.

Background of the case

- A 3-Judge bench of the SC was **hearing an application for modification** by the Union MoEFCC, Ministry of Power, and Ministry of New and Renewable Energy against earlier order.
- Earlier in 2021, the **Court placed restrictions on setting up** of overhead transmission lines.
 - It appointed a committee **to evaluate the laying of underground high-voltage lines** on a case-to-case basis.
 - **All low voltage powerlines were directed** to be laid underground in the “priority” and “potential” habitats of GIB in the future.
 - On existing power lines, bird diverters were to be installed **pending the conversion of overhead power lines into underground power lines.**

Judgement of the SC

- **Removed blanket** direction for undergrounding high voltage and low voltage power lines in the entire region.
- **Constituted an Expert Committee** to
 - Determine the **scope, feasibility, and extent of overhead and underground electric lines** in the area identified as priority areas.
 - **Review international best practices** for conservation of similar species such as the Houbara Bustard in the Middle East.
 - **Facilitate conservation and protection measures** for GIB as well as other fauna specific to the topography.
- **Reasons for reversing earlier judgment:**
 - **Diverse factors are responsible for reduction in GIB population** like low fecundity, fragmentation, habitat loss, predators, loss of prey etc.




- **Issues in laying underground cables:** risk to the safety of farmers under whose land the cables are laid; higher transmission loss; increase in electricity plant downtime; unsafe and impractical to underground high-voltage cables in deserts; high cost; issues related to land acquisition, etc.
- Supreme court observed that there was a dilemma between **safeguarding biodiversity and mitigating the impact of climate change**.

About the dilemma

- **Need of renewable energy to fulfil climate commitments:** Rajasthan and Gujarat (primary GIB habitats) are important for generation of solar power and other renewable energy sources.
 - As per India's Nationally Determined Contribution, it aims to generate **50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources** by 2030.
- **Threat to GIB:** Projects like **solar power plant or wind mill in the area** can harm the critically endangered Great Indian bustard.

Solution for the dilemma (Given in the judgement)

- **Holistic approach to conservation** by incorporating environmental conservation, social equity, economic prosperity and climate change.
- **Adopt a balanced approach by government and court** which does not sacrifice either of the two goals at the altar of the other.
- **National goals regarding climate change** require a holistic understanding of sustainable development that balances immediate needs with long-term sustainability.
- **An expert committee appointed** to balance the need for the preservation of the GIB with the need for sustainable development to bring expert opinion.

<p>About Great Indian Bustard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Males have larger black crowns and a black band across the breast. ○ An agro-grassland bird endemic to the Indian Subcontinent. ○ An omnivorous bird. • Habitat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mainly survives in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan (about 100 individuals). ○ Mainly confined to Rajasthan, Gujarat and few tracts of Andhra Pradesh 	<p>Protection status of Great Indian Bustard</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div style="margin-left: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>CITES Appendix I</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>IUCN STATUS CR</p> </div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>WPA, 1972 Schedule I</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 5px;"> <p>Among 22 species covered under Species Recovery Programme? ✓</p> </div> </div> </div>
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5.2. ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

Why in the news?

2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the Chipko movement.

About Chipko movement

- The Chipko movement was a nonviolent resistance against forest cutting that began in the Reni village in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district.
- **Meaning of 'chipko':** It comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees and encircled them to prevent being hacked.
- **Origin of the movement:** Dates back to the 18th century and was started by **Rajasthan's Bishnoi community**.
 - It was led by **Amrita Devi against the orders of then King of Jodhpur**.
 - It resulted in passing of a royal decree that **banned cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages**.

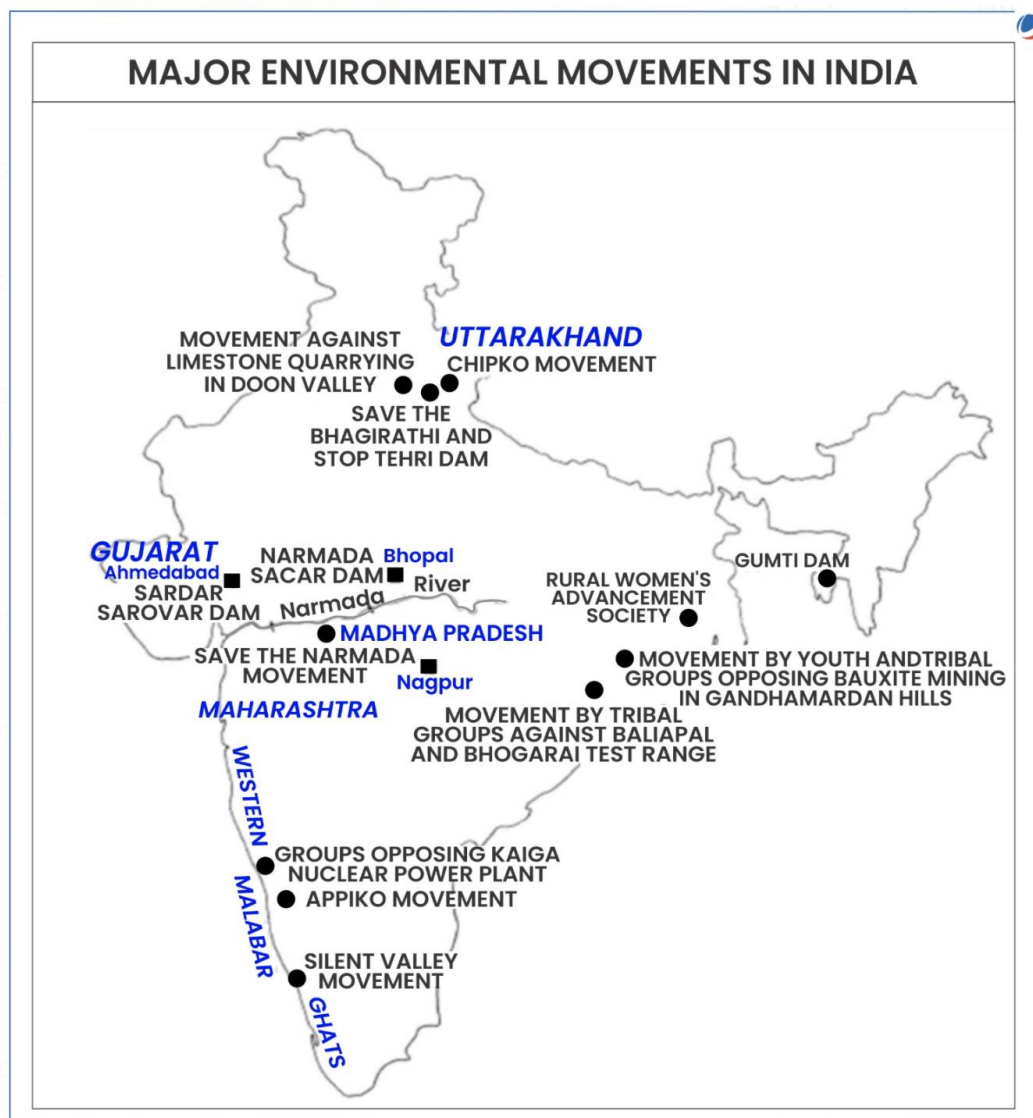
- **Movement's leaders and activists:** Primarily village women, acting to save their means of subsistence and their communities.
 - **Major leaders:** Sunderlal Bahuguna, Chandi Prasad Bhatt, Gaura Devi, etc.
- It is **renowned for its collective mobilization of women** in the effort to conserve forests, manifesting the philosophy of **Eco-feminism**.

About Eco-feminism

- It is a **philosophical and political movement** that examines **connections between ecological concerns and women**.
 - It contends that our culture is dominated by a **capitalist patriarchal system**, where societal values and ethics are dictated by a **profit-driven, sexist, and male-centric society**.
- **Reasons behind emergence of Eco-feminism:**
 - **Interconnectedness** of exploitation and degradation of the natural environment and the subjugation of women in patriarchal societies.
 - **Significance of traditional knowledge** often held and transmitted by women, in promoting sustainable practices.
 - **Women's lived experiences** where women have close and direct relationship with natural environment, being responsible for collecting water, firewood, etc.
- **Contemporary relevance of Eco-feminism:** Critique of capitalist exploitation, valuing traditional ecological knowledge, recognition of Environmental Justice, etc.

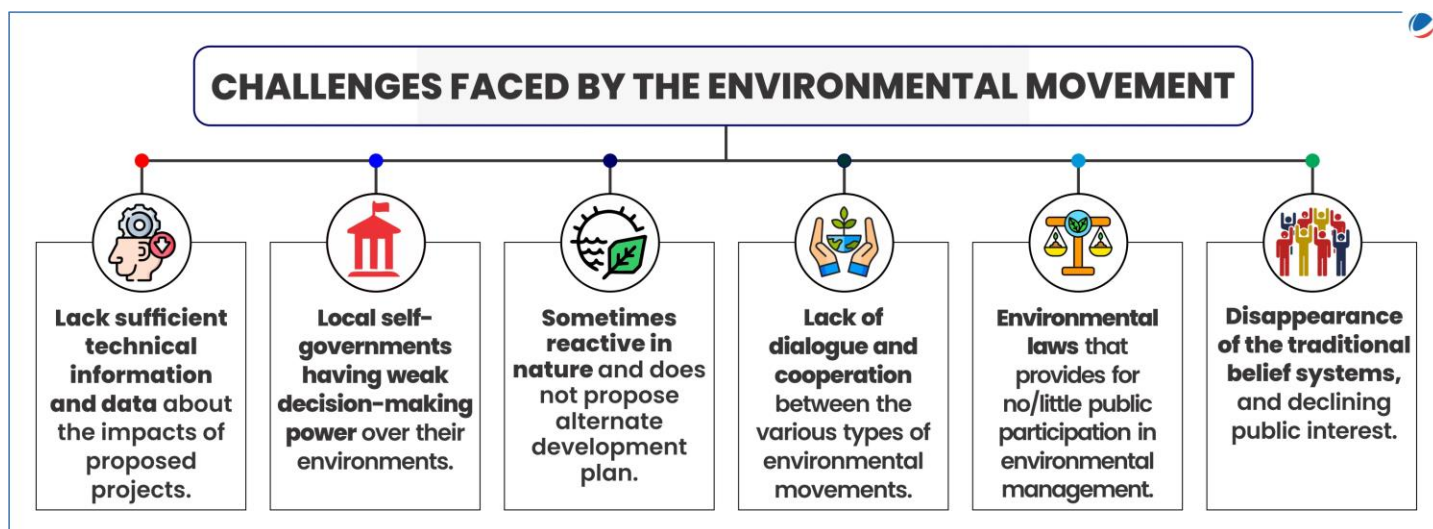
Other Major environmental movements

- **Silent Valley Movement (1973):** Against hydro-electric dam, to be built on the Kundapuzha River, in the Palakkad district of Kerala.
- **Appiko movement (1983):** Led by Panduranga Hegde in Karnataka. It was inspired by the Chipko movement and included **women in Karnataka's Western Ghats** embracing trees to prevent deforestation.
- **Narmada Bachao Andolan (1985):** Led by environmental activist Medha Patkar against construction of large dam on Narmada.
- **Other important environmental movements:** Chilika Bachao Andolan, Against Bauxite Mining in Kashipur, Gandhamardan Environment Protection, etc.



Impacts of environmental movement in India

- **Leadership to women:** In many environmental movements, women took the lead, both as leaders and the participants. E.g., Medha Patkar, Gaura Devi.
- **Push to Environmental Policy and Legislation:** Influenced the formulation of policies such as Forest Right Act 2006, which involves local communities in forest management.
- **Continued Legacy of nonviolent protests:** In almost all movements, the people adopted the Gandhian Concept of nonviolence and Satyagraha.
- **Sustainable development:** These movements checked development at the cost of the environment by raising awareness and mobilizing public support. E.g., Narmada Bachao Andolan.
- **Protecting cultural identity:** The movements stressed that **Indigenous and local communities** were best suited to conserve natural resources as **their culture is closely tied to their relationship with the environment**.
- **Advocated the ideology of 'environmentalism of the poor':** The movements criticised modern developmentalism and strongly advocated the revival of traditional sustainable practices.



Way forward

- **Alternative people friendly development plans** can be proposed by movements that will move society towards becoming sustainable and equal.
- **Enhance public participant of development** by campaigning for laws that will give more control to people to manage their environments.
 - E.g., They can campaign for **environmental impact assessments to be done by impacted populations** rather than by project proponents.
- **Technical and data related knowledge** should be incorporated in the movement so that demands can be more beneficial to the people affected.
- **Link local and global issues** such as resource conservation and environmental protection to global environmental issues such as sustainability.
- **Promoting individual action along with movements.** E.g., **LiFEstyle for Environment (LiFE)** is a public movement to mobilize individuals to become 'Pro-Planet People' based in the traditional way of life.

Indian Customs and tradition for sustainable development

- **Compassionate capitalism:** As seen in Gandhiji Sarvodaya, Indian tradition believes in uplifting all and providing equal opportunities to all.
- **Circular economy:** In India resources are used as long as possible, extracting maximum value followed by recovery and regeneration of products and materials at the end of each service life. E.g., reuse of old clothes.
- **Energy conservation:** Indian house construction utilizes local materials like bamboo, stones, and clay, requiring less energy to cool or warm.

- **Sacred groves:** These are patches of forests or natural vegetation that are usually dedicated to local folk deities (Example – Ayyanar and Amman) or tree spirits (Vanadevatais).
 - This tradition helps in carbon sequestration and maintains moisture-retaining properties of soil while maintaining biodiversity.
- **Conservation of Animals:** In India, animals are symbolically significant as vehicles of gods and goddesses or deities themselves.
- **Health:** India is known for practising traditional medicinal systems– Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani, Sowa-Rigpa and Homeopathy.

5.3. SUSTAINABLE FINANCE FOR TIGER LANDSCAPES CONFERENCE (SFTLC)

Why in the News?

Recently, SFTLC was hosted by the **Bhutan government** and supported by the **Tiger Conservation Coalition**.

More on News

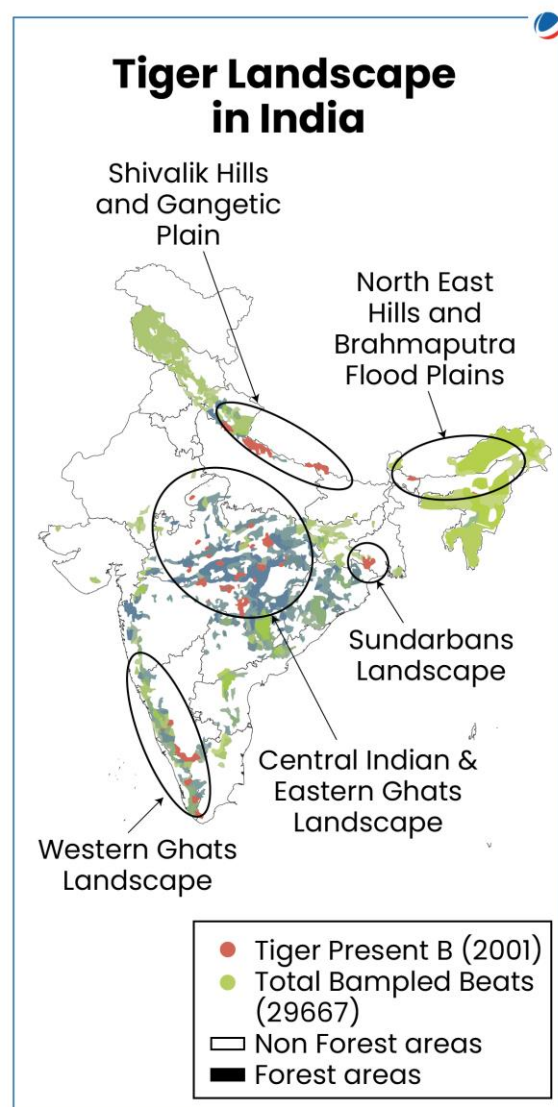
- As per a Global Tiger Forum (GTF) estimate in 2020 an additional **US\$ 138 million in financing annually** was needed to **secure the last remaining tiger landscapes in Asia**.
 - Tiger population increased from **3,200 in 2010 to around 4,500 in 12 years** but **tigers inhabit fewer areas now than in 2010**.
 - Today, tigers' landscapes comprise **less than 8% of the area they originally occupied** in Asia.
 - **Tiger Landscape** includes large blocks of ecologically connected areas of suitable tiger habitat.
- Apart from finance, the tiger landscapes are also impacted by infrastructure development.
 - For e.g. development of 8 lane (Greenfield highway) roads passing through Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan) has led to landscape fragmentation.
- The SFTLC seeks to increase support for **tiger protection and tiger landscape** by using **new financial strategies** and promoting global partnerships as stated in the **Paro statement**.
 - It seeks to mobilize **US\$1 billion** in additional funding for tiger conservation by **2034**.

Sustainable financing initiatives in the conference:

- **Tiger Landscapes Investment Fund:** Presented by the UNDP. It is a new blended financial mechanism under development that would catalyze nature-positive businesses with positive impacts on tigers, biodiversity, and people.
 - Nature-positive business approach means adopting innovative strategies that not only minimize harm to the environment but also actively enhance it.
- **Tiger Bonds:** The Asian Development Bank intend to explore innovative financing instruments such as a **tiger bond** to engage private sector investors and promote nature based solutions.

What is the need to conserve Tiger landscapes?

- **Tigers are umbrella species:** The status of their population provides a measurable indicator of the health of the biodiversity dependent on them.
 - As apex predators, tigers regulate **prey populations and influence the behavior of other species in the food chain**.
- **Cultural identity:** Tigers are deeply rooted in the cultural identity and heritage of Asia. In many cultures, they are deeply embedded in social and religious beliefs and are revered and considered symbols of power, strength, and good luck.



- **Mitigate climate change:** Protecting large intact forests can help in mitigating the effects of climate change and control the **spillover of zoonotic diseases like Ebola**.

To know more about the Project Tiger and Tiger, kindly refer to Article 5.1. 50 YEARS OF PROJECT TIGER in January 2024 edition of VisionIAS Current Affairs Magazine.

5.4. E-WASTE

Why in the news?

Recently, the **Global E-Waste Monitor 2024** was released.

More on the News

- The report is funded, and prepared in partnership, by the **United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)** Sustainable Cycles (SCYCLE) Programme, **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** and Fondation Carmignac.
- **United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)** is a dedicated training arm of the UN system which provides innovative learning solutions to individuals, organizations and institutions.
 - SCYCLE, started in 2022, is a programme under the UNITAR **Division for Planet**.
 - Its mission is to promote sustainable societies with a focus on the development of **sustainable production, consumption and disposal patterns for electrical and electronic equipment (EEE)** etc.
- **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)** is a UN specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Key Highlights of the report

- **E-Waste generated:** 62 billion kg globally in 2022.
- **Collection and recycling:** 22.3% formally collected and recycled
 - Just 1% of rare earth element demand is met by e-waste recycling
- **Increasing rate:** After 2010, world's generation of electronic waste is rising almost 5 times faster than documented e-waste recycling.
- **Estimated economic value of metals in the e-waste:** ~ USD 91 billion
- **Region wise e-waste per capita generated:** Highest in Europe, followed by Oceania and America.
- **Policymaking:** 81 countries (**42% of all countries worldwide**) have **adopted e-waste policy**, legislation or regulation.
 - **67 countries** (including India) have legal provisions on EPR for e-waste.
- **Findings for India:** Ranked **3rd largest e-waste generator** (4,100 billion kg generated), following only China and the USA.

- **Tiger Conservation Coalition is an independent group of organisations** that have worked extensively together under a common vision for tiger conservation.
 - **Tiger Conservation Coalition** brings together leading biologists and experts in wildlife crime, human-wildlife coexistence, etc with focus on achieving tiger conservation.
 - Members' organization includes International Union for Conservation of Nature, United Nations Development Programme, Wildlife Conservation Society, World Wide Fund for Nature, etc.
- **Tiger Range Countries** are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russia Thailand and Vietnam.

About E-waste

- It includes electrical and electronic equipment, including solar photo-voltaic, **discarded as waste without the intent of reuse**, as well as rejects from manufacturing, refurbishment and repair processes.

E-waste Management in India

- **Hazardous waste (Management and Handling) amendment rules, 2003:** First time covered the Hazardous materials in e-waste composition.
- **E-waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011:** Introduced the concept of **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**.
- **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016:** Introduced concept of **Producer responsibility Organization**.
- **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022** aim to promote circular economy through EPR regime.

- **E-Waste (Management) Second Amendment Rules, 2023:** Its major provisions include-

- It provides more clarity to the **exemption of reduction of harmful substances**.
- Determination of **the conversion factor of EPR certification generation**.
- Management of **refrigrant by the producers**.

- **E-Waste (Management) Amendment Rules, 2024:** Its major provisions include-

- **Relaxation of timelines for filing of returns or reports:** By a manufacture, producer, refurbisher or recycler for a period not exceeding nine months.
- **Central Government can** establish one or more platform for exchange or transfer of EPR certificates.
- Exchange price of EPR certificate to be between **the highest and lowest prices fixed by central pollution control board**.

Know the term

- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** An environmental policy approach in which a producer's responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of a product's life cycle.

Need for e-waste management



Environmental risks

Not biodegradable and accumulates in the environment.



Health hazards

Contains over 1,000 toxic materials such as mercury and lead.



Economic benefits of recovering of Valuable materials

Such as precious metals like gold, silver and platinum, etc.



Landfill space

Takes up significant space in landfills.

Challenges associated with E-Waste in India

- **Informal recycling:** Around 85% of e-waste is managed by the unorganised sector, primarily consisting of scrap dealers scattered across the country.
- **Inadequate e-waste management infrastructure:** There is a huge gap between present recycling and collection facilities and the quantum of E-waste that is being generated.
- **E-waste imports:** Cross-border flow of waste equipment into India- 80% of E-waste in developed countries meant for recycling is sent to developing countries such as India, China, Ghana and Nigeria.
- **Poor awareness and sensitization:** Limited reach out and awareness regarding disposal, after determining end of useful life.
- **Technological advancement:** A focus on electronic solutions and short product lifecycles has raised consumption and e-waste generation.
- **Other Issues:** Limited repair options; adverse environmental impact of improper e-waste handling and recycling etc.



Data Bank

Status of E-Waste in India

- **16.01 lakh tonnes** total e-waste generated (2021-22)
- **~33%** of total e-waste generated was collected and processed
 - **Haryana followed by Uttarakhand collected and processed** highest e-waste.
- **567 e-waste processing facilities** with a capacity of **~17.23 lakh tonnes** annually.

Global initiatives/effort to check e-waste

- **The Basel Convention:** A global treaty that aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between countries, including e-waste.
- **The Global E-waste Statistics Partnership (GESP):** Collaboration between the United Nations University and the International Telecommunication Union to improve the monitoring and reporting of e-waste data worldwide.
- **E-waste Challenge:** A global initiative by the World Economic Forum that aims to create a circular economy for electronics.
- **E-waste Coalition 2018:** A non-binding Letter of Intent was signed by seven organisations from the United Nations system, active in addressing the global e-waste challenge.

Way forward for management of e-waste in India

- **Corporate Responsibility:** Encouraging companies to adopt green policies, support recycling initiatives, and reduce waste.
- **Informal Sector:** Upgradation of skills of informal sector through provisions for utilisation of indigenous technology and capacity development.
- **Recycling and Disposal:** Setting up efficient recycling facilities and collaborating with specialized companies.
 - E.g., **Co-locating E-Waste Management Industrial Cluster** with Manufacturing Clusters
- **Technological Development:** assessment of technical and technological solutions available in India and globally.
 - E.g., the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has developed indigenous technology for recovery of precious metals and plastics from e-waste.
- **Stringent monitoring and enforcement:** Ensure that the provisions of the E-Waste (Management) Rule 2022 and EPR targets are met and there is transparency in information about 'recycled' e waste.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** Informing the public about responsible e-waste management and its impacts, and promoting sustainable behaviours.

5.5. MILLETS

Why in the news?

Recently, the Closing ceremony of the **International Year of Millets 2023** took place at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy.

More about the news

- The United Nations General Assembly declared 2023 the **International Year of Millets (IYM 2023)** at its 75th session in 2021.
 - The decision was motivated by **India's proposal at the United Nations which was endorsed and supported by more than 70 countries.**
- The IYM 2023 **aims to create domestic and global demand for millets** and **raise awareness of the benefits of millets** like nutrition, health, environmental sustainability, economic development etc.




About Millets

- Millets are **small-grained, annual, warm-weather cereals** belonging to the grass family.
- They are **staple crops of the semi-arid tropical region** and are **one of the oldest foods known to humankind.**
- Depending upon their size, **they are broadly divided into:**
 - **Major millets** (E.g., sorghum, pearl millet, finger millet) and
 - **Minor millets** (E.g., little millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, and kodo millet).

Millets in India


- **India is the largest producer of Millets in the world (~41%)** followed by **Niger (~12%)** and **China (~8%).**
- India is the **5th largest exporter of millets in the world (2020).**
- The **total production** of millets stands around **16 Mn tonnes.**
- Six states namely **Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat** accounts for more than **83 % of millet production** in the country.

MAJOR MILLETS GROWN IN INDIA

Millet	Features
 Jowar (Sorghum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referred as “King of Millets” Rainfall: 250–300 mm Soil: Clayey deep regur and alluvium Used mainly as a fodder crop in the Kharif season in Northern States
 Bajra (Pearl Millet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a short-duration crop and can be grown in both rain fed and irrigated conditions. Rainfall: 400–500 mm Soil: Loamy soil with proper drainage
 Ragi (Finger Millet)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly grown in South India (Karnataka Largest producer) Rainfall: 600–750 mm Soil: Loamy soil and black soil with proper drainage



Significance of Millets

Farmers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They require low input cost and also consume less water as compared to staple crops like Rice and Wheat. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.g. While 1 Kilogram of Rice requires around 5000 Litres of water, Millet requires only around 250-300 litres. They are Short-duration crops (90-180 days) and can fit into any cropping season. They also serve as fodder for the needs of the livestock.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are Gluten free and have low glycemic index making them ideal for diabetic patients Their Micronutrient composition is better than Rice and Wheat, hence can be effectively used against Malnutrition.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are C4 category crops (refer diagram) which have higher efficiency in absorbing and utilising Carbon-dioxide. They exhibit resilience to climate variability and extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, and heat waves. Promotes Sustainable agriculture by improving soil health by enhancing soil structure, increasing organic matter content and reducing soil erosion.


 **C3 Plants**

C3 plants are plants in which the initial products of the assimilation of carbon dioxide through photosynthesis is 3-phosphoglycerate, which contains 3 carbon atoms.

EXAMPLES:



 Rice
 Wheat

vs

 **C4 Plants**

A C4 plant is a plant that utilizes the C4 carbon fixation pathway. This pathway is when the CO₂ is first bound to phosphoenolpyruvate in the mesophyll cell.

EXAMPLES:

 Corn
 Sugarcane

Challenges in mainstreaming Millets

- Lack of public awareness:** about the nutritional benefits of millets has led to limited adoption of millet-based products.
- Multiple processing requirements:** Some millets require multiple processing to optimise grain recovery and polishing to retain their nutritional value.
- Poor Shelf life:** Millets have an active enzyme called **lipase** that reduces the shelf-life of millet-based products
- Supply chain issues:** Millet supply chains suffer from inconsistent supply and demand that prevents their commercial viability.
- Lack of access to High-yielding variety (HYV) seeds:** has led to low crop productivity of millets.

Initiatives for the promotion of millets in the country

- Shree Anna Scheme:** Launched in 2023, the scheme aimed at popularising millets and raising their consumption in the country.

- Under the scheme, **Indian Millets Research Center Hyderabad** would be promoted as a Center of excellence.
- **Production Linked Incentive Scheme** for Food Processing Industry for Millet-based products during 2022-27 by the **Ministry of Food Processing Industries**.
- **Millets rebranded as “Nutri-Cereals”** and 2018 was declared as “**National Year of Millets**”
- **Other efforts:**
 - **Millets included in POSHAN Mission Abhiyaan** by the Ministry of Women and Child Development.
 - **Sub Mission on Millets** launched under the **National Food Security Mission** in 2018.

Conclusion

The usage of millet has enormous potential. But to realise the significant effort has to be made to improve the popularity, affordability, supply chains and R&D of millet and millet-based products.

5.6. BASEFLOW

Why in the news?

A recent study has highlighted that Baseflow has contributed significantly to the flooding of rivers in peninsular India

More about the news

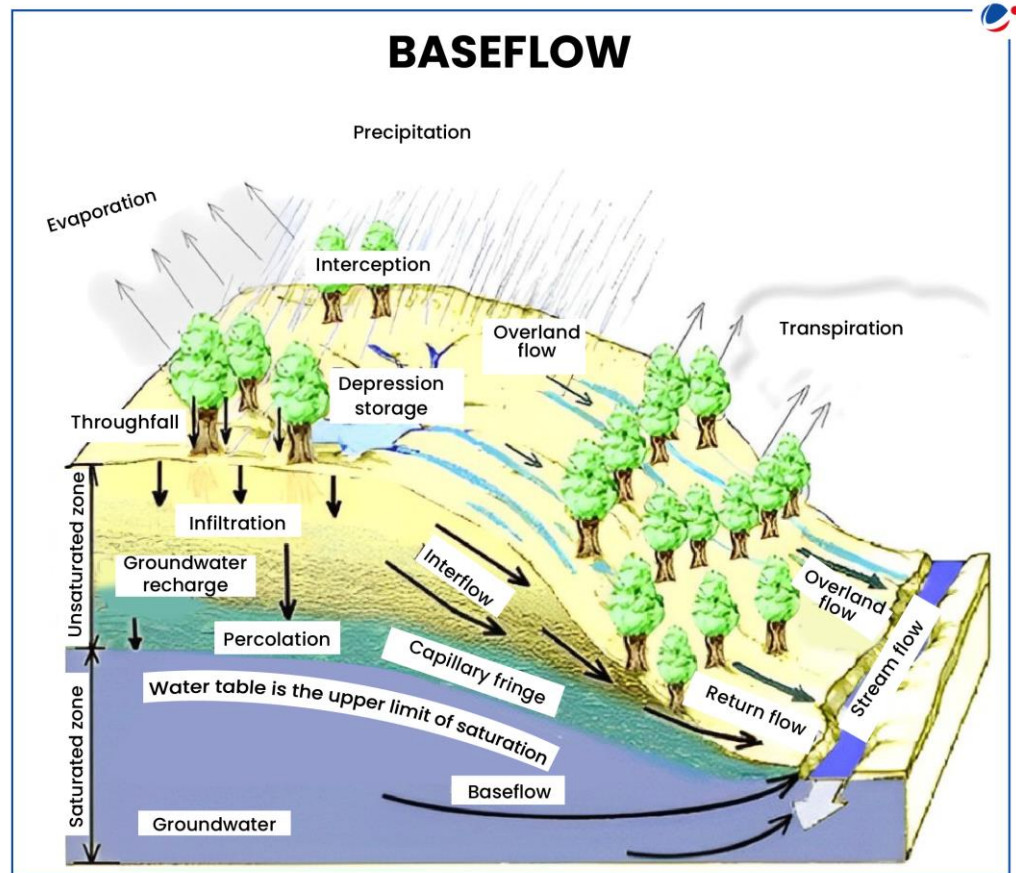
- The study **examined six major river basins** of peninsular India namely **Narmada, Tapi, Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Cauvery**.
- It used discharge data from river basins to improve understanding of the influence of process-based factors (rainfall, soil moisture, and baseflow) on riverine floods.
- The study revealed that **catchments with higher baseflow lead to an increased likelihood of rapid runoff** with incoming rainfall events in shorter time lags.

What is Baseflow?

- Baseflow refers to the **portion of stream flow that originates from groundwater discharge** seeping into the stream or river over an extended period.
- Groundwater **discharges into the water bodies when the water table intersects the surface of the ground** along rivers or wetlands, contributing to their flow.

Factors influencing Baseflow

- **Topography of the land:** affects the movement of water across the surface and the subsurface, thereby influencing infiltration and flow process.
- **Nature of the Soil:** influences the rate of infiltration, hydraulic conductivity and groundwater recharge.
 - Hydraulic conductivity is a measure of how easily water can pass through soil or rock.



- **Land use pattern:** The conversion of forest to urban land increases baseflow owing to the presence of impervious surfaces in urban areas.
- **Climate Change:** Changes in precipitation volume and timing can alter infiltration and groundwater levels, which in turn affect the baseflow discharge.

Environmental significance of Baseflow

- **Maintains the river flow and ecosystem:** Baseflow recharges the river runoff and replenishes water demand during the dry season.
- **Reduces silt accumulation:** Additional flow streams along with higher water quantities help decrease silt accumulation.
- **Maintains the water quality:** Groundwater is subject to natural filtration, thus the water added via baseflow improves the overall quality of river water.

Potential effects of change in Baseflow

- **Increases Flood Risk:** Catchments with higher baseflow reflect more wet conditions, which increases the chances of rapid runoff during heavy rainfall.
 - Alternatively, prolonged periods of below-average precipitation and high temperatures lead to a decrease in the groundwater recharge rate leading to a situation known as **baseflow droughts**.
- **Affects the riverine ecosystem:** Reduced baseflow leads to stagnant condition of water in river beds which also leads to depletion of dissolved oxygen thereby threatening the riverine species.
- **Affects the water temperature:** As the groundwater is cooler than the surface water, reduced inflow of baseflow water in a stream increases its temperature.
- **Other effects** include alteration in downstream flow, water utilization patterns and increased silt accumulation among others.

Conclusion

Baseflow of a river can be effectively managed through integrated water management approaches like optimal land use policies, recharging of groundwater, continuous monitoring and assessment of the river basins among others.

5.7. NEWS IN SHORTS

5.7.1. GREEN CREDIT RULE

- Recently, the Ministry of Environment and Forests issued **further guidelines on its Green Credit Programme (GCP)**.
 - In February 2024, the ministry released rules for calculating green credit for tree plantations.
- The new guidelines have been issued for **the preparation of cost estimates for the eco-restoration of degraded forests**.
- **Key Provisions of the new guidelines**
 - Focus of work for plantation on degraded forest areas under the GCP to be on **eco-restoration of degraded forests**.
 - Number of trees to be planted depends **upon site characteristics and may vary as per the site conditions**.
 - **Activities for eco-restoration not to be limited to the plantation of trees** and also include other activities (see image).
 - ✓ Fencing may also be provided if protection against anthropogenic pressures.
 - **Preference to indigenous species**.

- **Plantation of high-quality seedlings** to ensure their healthy growth.
- **Retention of Naturally growing seedlings.**
- Cost estimates may be titled as '**Ecorestoration of the identified degraded forests**'.

*To know more about Green Credit Rules and Green Credit Programme, please refer to **March 2023 Monthly Current Affairs Article 5.3. Green Credit Programme**.*

Activities for eco-restoration under the Guidelines



Plantation of shrubs, herbs, grasses.



Soil and moisture conservation works.



Terracing.



Rain water harvesting etc.

5.7.2. UNUTILIZED FUNDS WITH CPCB

- A CPCB Report to NGT showed that 80% environmental funds remained unutilized.
- **Despite collecting** a total of Rs 777.69 crore through **Environment Protection Charge (EPC)** and **Environmental Compensation**, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has utilized only 20% of these funds.
 - These funds **were utilised for**: R&D on air quality, health impact studies, infrastructure development for air and water quality surveillance, remediation of contaminated sites etc.
- **CPCB receives compensation under two heads**:
 - **Environment Protection Charge (EPC)**: The dealer/manufacturer is required to pay **one per cent EPC** for specified new diesel vehicles, registered only in Delhi and NCR.
 - ✓ It is received as per order of **Supreme Court**.
 - **Environmental compensation is policy instrument** for protection of environment which **works on the Polluter Pay Principle**.
 - ✓ It is received as per **orders of NGT**.
 - ✓ It is utilized to **protect environment** through strengthening of laboratories/monitoring network, projects in compliance of NGT orders, capacity building of pollution control boards, etc.
- CPCB is **Statutory Body** formed under **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
 - Also, it is entrusted with powers and functions under **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
 - Functions under **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**

5.7.3. GEOPARKS

- UNESCO endorsed the addition of 18 new Geoparks to the **Global Geoparks Network (GGN)**.
- Latest addition raises the number of total Geoparks to 213 which are **spread across 48 countries (no geopark in India)**.
- **Some major geoparks added to GGN are**:
 - **Land of Extinct Volcanoes (Poland)**: Features distinctive remnants of Paleozoic and Cenozoic volcanoes
 - **Impact Crater Lake (Finland)**: Europe's largest impact crater lake formed through a collision with a meteorite 78 million years ago.
 - **Uberaba (Brazil)**: Its tag line 'Land of the Giants' refers to its rich palaeontological heritage.

UNESCO's Global Geopark (UGGPs)

-  **About:** Internationally geologically significant landscapes are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.
-  **Genesis:** Geopark concept arose in mid-1990's and **was created in 2015**.
-  **Management:** By a body having a **legal existence** recognized under national legislation.
-  **Designation is not permanent:**
Designation is for four years after which it is reassessed.
-  **Mandatory Networking:** Membership of the Global Geoparks Network (GGN) is obligatory for UGGPs.
-  **Significance:** Giving local people sense of pride and strengthen their identification, Geotourism.

Global Geoparks Network (GGN)

- It is a **non-profit International Association** officially established in 2014.
 - GGN was founded as an **international partnership developed under** the umbrella of UNESCO.
- **Networking and collaboration among Global Geoparks** is an important component of the GGN.

5.7.4. CLIMATE TECHNOLOGY CENTRE AND NETWORK (CTCN)

- Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) marks its **10th anniversary**.
- **About CTCN**
 - **Headquarters:** Copenhagen, Denmark.
 - Established in 2014, it is the **implementation arm of Technology Mechanism of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**.
 - ✓ Technology Mechanism was **established in 2010** for accelerating and enhancing **climate technology development and transfer**.
 - It is hosted by the **UN Environment Programme**.

- It promotes accelerated **transfer of environmentally sound technologies** for low carbon and climate resilient development at the request of developing countries.

5.7.5. MYAC (ONE MILLION YOUTH ACTIONS CHALLENGE)

- **1MYAC (One Million Youth Actions Challenge)** is promoted by the **One UN Climate Change Learning Partnership (UN CC:Learn)**.
- **About 1MYAC**
 - Aims to **encourage youth aged 10 to 30 years old** to take concrete actions for a more **sustainable future**.
 - It works to **promote four Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
 - ✓ It includes **SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation)**, **SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production)**, **SDG 13 (climate action)** and **SDG 15 (life on land)**.
- **UN CC: Learn** is a collaborative initiative of 36 multilateral organizations working together to help countries build the knowledge and skills they need to take action on climate change.

5.7.6. CLIMATE PROMISE INITIATIVE

- UN Development Programme unveiled **Climate Promise 2025**, next stage of its Climate Promise Initiative.
- **About Climate Promise Initiative**
 - It is an **initiative to support developing countries on their climate action**.
 - It is **world's largest offer of support** to developing countries on **NDC (Nationally Determined Contribution) enhancement and implementation**.
 - ✓ **Each Party to Paris Agreement** is required to establish an NDC, which includes targets for mitigating the greenhouse gas emissions and for adapting to climate impacts.
- Climate Promise 2025 aims to **align next generation of developing countries' NDCs** to the goals of 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

5.7.7. ANNUAL LAND USE AND LAND COVER (LULC) ATLAS OF INDIA

- Atlas, released by the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)**, aims to **systematically examine land utilization patterns** to offers invaluable insights into the evolving dynamics of our environment.
- **Key highlights of the Atlas**
 - **Agriculture:** Over the past 17 years, **Kharif and Rabi cropland has expanded** by 46.06% and

35.23% respectively, as **fallow land diminished** by 45.19%.

- ✓ **Double/ triple/ annual cropping areas have also increased** by 82.22%. (Double/ triple crop land are areas where crops are sown and harvested twice/ thrice in one crop year. Annual crop are perennial and grow throughout year such as sugarcane)
- ✓ Since 2005, **shifting cultivation increased until 2016-17**, after which it witnessed a decline.
- **Water resources:** Indicated by minimum water body surface **showed an increase by 146 % since 2005**.
- **Built-up land: Shows an increase** with an overall growth of 30.77% since 2005.
 - ✓ **Built-up area** refers to an area with buildings, paved surfaces, commercial and industrial sites, and urban green areas.
 - ✓ **Wastelands (degraded and unproductive lands)** contributed significantly to built-up area expansion by 12.3%.
- **Reasons for changes in LULC:** Improved availability of farm inputs such as improved irrigation facilities, urbanization and infrastructure development, etc.

5.7.8. GREEN AND SOCIAL BOND IMPACT REPORT 2023

- **International Finance Corporation (IFC)** released Green and Social Bond Impact Report 2023.
 - Established in **1956**, it is a **member of World Bank Group** and largest global development institution focused on private sector in developing countries.
- IFC launched **Green Bond Program in 2010** to unlock investment for private sector eligible projects that seek to mitigate climate change and **Social Bond Program in 2017**.
- **Key Highlights**
 - **\$2 billion raised through Green bond** is expected to **reduce 3.3 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent** per year.
 - **\$1.2 billion raised through Social bonds** will cater sectors like Agribusiness, Gender finance, Education, etc.
- **About Green Bonds**
 - **Debt securities designated to finance environment-friendly projects** like Sustainable Water and Waste Management, Green Buildings, Pollution control etc.
 - In 2022, **Ministry of Finance** approved **India's First Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs) Framework** which **excludes projects** like nuclear power generation, landfill projects, hydropower plants larger than 25 Megawatt etc.

- India's **First Green Bond** was issued by Yes Bank Ltd in 2015.
- In 2023, India issued first tranche of its first SGBs worth Rs. 80 billion.
- **About Social bonds**
 - **Financial instrument issued by governments; corporations to raise funds for projects** to address social issues like affordable housing, healthcare etc. to benefit vulnerable populations.
 - In 2023, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) raises more than Rs. 1000 crore via social bonds.

5.7.9. STATE OF GLOBAL CLIMATE REPORT 2023

- **Released by:** World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
- **Key Findings**
 - **2023 was the warmest year on record**, with the global average near-surface temperature at **1.45 degree Celsius above the pre-industrial baseline**.
 - **Extreme climate conditions exacerbated humanitarian crises**, with millions experiencing acute food insecurity and hundreds of thousands displaced from their homes.
 - **Greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification**, etc. reached record high.

5.7.10. CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITIONS PROGRAMME (CETP)

- **International Energy Agency (IEA)** released **Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP)** Annual report 2023.
- **About Clean Energy Transitions Programme (CETP)**
 - It was launched in 2017 by IEA.
 - It is leading the global fight against climate change by **accelerating clean energy transitions**.
 - ✓ Under CETP, IEA provides **technical assistance, insights etc.**
 - Its objectives are aligned with **2015 Paris Agreement** and the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

5.7.11. UNEP REPORT FOR BUILDINGS AND CONSTRUCTION 2024

- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released **Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction (Buildings-GSR) 2024**.
- Report was published jointly by **UNEP** and **Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction (GlobalABC)**.

- **Key findings**
 - Building and Construction Sector (BCS) accounts for about **21% of global Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions**.
 - In 2022, buildings were responsible for **34% global energy demand** and **37% of energy and process-related carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions**.
 - India is attributing **40% of its CO2 emissions to buildings**.
 - **Need to Decarbonise BCS:**
 - ✓ **Limit global warming to 1.5°C (Paris agreement)** and **achieve net zero by 2050** by reducing **embodied carbon** in building materials.

About GlobalABC

- **Founded at COP21**, it is leading **global platform** for all built environment stakeholders committed to a common vision: A zero-emission, efficient and resilient buildings and construction sector.

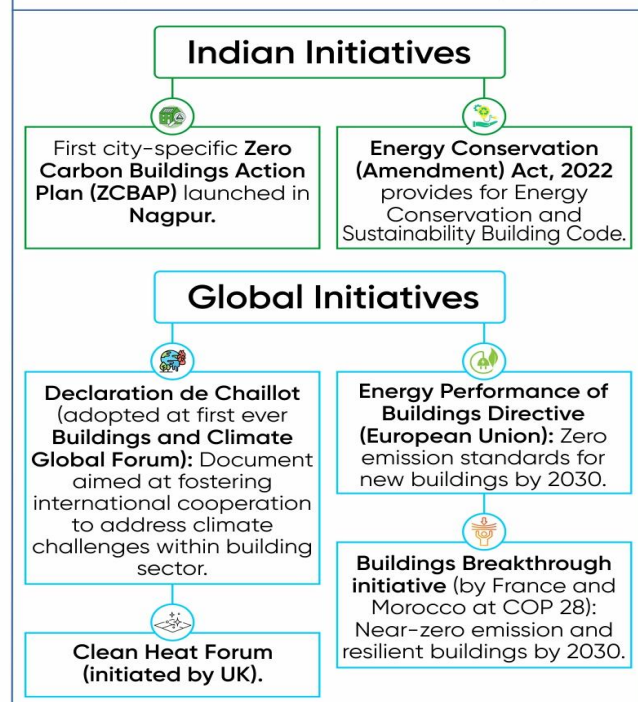
Challenges in Decarbonising BCS

- **Poor building practices** can contribute to maladaptation, leading to increased energy consumption and GHG emissions.
- Continued construction of **carbon intensive new buildings in climate risk exposed areas**.

Recommendations

- Developing **building energy codes** aligned with **Zero-Emissions Building principles**.
- **Providing financial incentives** for greater investment in decarbonizing BCS.

Initiatives taken for Sustainable BCS



5.7.12. PERMAFROST REGION

- As per a recent study the northern permafrost region has been projected to shift from a net sink to a net source of carbon under global warming.
 - This is first ever comprehensive estimation of quantities of emission and capturing of **carbon dioxide (CO₂)**, **methane (CH₄)** and **nitrous oxide (N₂O)** between **2000 and 2020** in and around the Arctic.
 - The permafrost region overall emits **methane and nitrous oxide**. However, the research was uncertain whether it was a source of a sink of carbon dioxide.
- **About Permafrost**
 - Permafrost is a permanently frozen layer **on or under Earth's surface**. It consists of soil, gravel, and sand, usually bound together by ice.
 - Permafrost usually remains at **or below 0°C (32°F) for at least two years**.
 - Permafrost is often found in Arctic regions such as Greenland, the U.S. state of Alaska, Russia, China, and Eastern Europe.
 - As Earth's climate warms, the permafrost is thawing. That means the ice inside the permafrost melts, leaving behind water and soil.
- **Impact of thawing permafrost**
 - **Net source of carbon:** As permafrost thaws, microbes begin decomposing plant material in the soil. This process releases greenhouse gases to the atmosphere
 - **Disease Outbreak:** When permafrost thaws, so do ancient bacteria and viruses in the ice and soil. These newly-unfrozen microbes could make humans and animals very sick.
 - **Infrastructure stability:** Thawing permafrost can destroy houses, roads and other infrastructure as towns and cities built on top of what was once considered permanently frozen ground.

5.7.13. FOURTH GLOBAL MASS CORAL BLEACHING EVENT

- **NOAA's Coral Reef Watch (CRW) and International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI)** confirm 4th global mass coral bleaching event.
- Mass bleaching of coral reefs, since early 2023, has been confirmed in **at least 53 countries, territories, and local economies including Australia's Great Barrier Reef**.
 - It is **second such event in the past 10 years** with earlier event lasting from 2014 to 2017.
- Corals are **invertebrate animals** belonging to a large group of animals called **Cnidaria**.

- Generally classified as **"hard coral"** (reef building corals having rock-like calcareous skeleton) or **"soft coral"**.
- Coral reefs are formed by polyps of hard corals, which establish **symbiotic relationship with microscopic algae, called zooxanthellae**, which give them their characteristic colours.
- **Growth Conditions for Coral Reefs:** Warm (23–29°C), salty (32–42 ppt), clear, shallow marine waters with stable temperatures and abundant sunlight.
- **Significance of reefs:** Often called **rainforests of the ocean** due to high biodiversity and productivity, support around **25% of marine life**, minimize **storm impact**, promote **tourism**, act as **carbon sink** etc.
- **Coral Bleaching:** When corals are **stressed by changes in conditions** such as temperature, light, or nutrients, they expel symbiotic algae, causing them to turn **completely white**.
 - **Factors Responsible:** Increased Ocean temperature due to climate change, runoff and pollution, extreme low tides, Ocean acidification etc.

Measures Taken for conserving coral reefs

- **Global:** ICRI, Global Fund for Coral Reefs, Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN), **Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI)**, etc.
 - **Coral Triangle** is a marine area located in the **western Pacific Ocean**. It includes the waters of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Solomon Islands.
- **India:** Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and coral restoration through Biorock technology (technique to preserve coral reefs by constructing materials under the sea that resemble rocks), etc.

5.7.14. GAPE LIMITATION

- Gape limitation is a concept in ecology that refers to the **physical constraint on the size of prey** that a predator can consume. This limitation is primarily determined by the size of the **predator's mouth or "gape"**.
 - This means, **Small predators can only eat small prey, while bigger predators can eat bigger prey**.
 - For example, lions can take down large prey like zebras due to their large gapes, while smaller predators like hawks are limited to eating rodents or insects.
- **Importance of Gape limitation in ecology**
 - **Shaping Food Webs:** Gape limitation dictates the dietary choices of predatory and ultimately sculpting the intricate structure of food webs.

- ✓ It determines who eats whom, influencing the energy flow and interconnections between different species.
- **Driving adaptations:** Some may evolve cooperative hunting strategies or the ability to use tools to capture larger prey beyond their gape size. Others may adapt to specialize in consuming smaller prey within their gape range.
 - ✓ Crocodiles use cooperative hunting techniques or tools to capture larger prey beyond their usual gape size.
- **Regulating predator-prey balance:** By limiting the range of prey sizes accessible to predators, gape limitation plays a role in regulating predator-prey population dynamics.
 - ✓ This contributes to maintaining the delicate balance within an ecosystem.
- **Predicting ecosystem changes:** Understanding gape limitation allows scientists predict how environmental disturbances, such as introduction of invasive species or removal of top predators, impact the overall ecosystem structure and function.

5.7.15. VASUKI INDICUS

- Paleontologists have unearthed a giant predator snake in Gujarat's **Panandhro Lignite Mine in Kutch** named **Vasuki indicus**.
- **About Vasuki indicus:**
 - Likely lived **47 million years ago** during the **Middle Eocene Period**.
 - **Length range:** 36-49 feet.
 - It's a member of the **Madtsiidae snake family** that appeared roughly **90 million years ago** but went **extinct** about **12,000 years ago**.
 - It spread from **India** through **southern Eurasia** and into **north Africa** after the **Indian subcontinent** collided with **Eurasia** around **50 million years ago**.

5.7.16. BUTTERFLY CICADA

- A new species of cicada discovered in Meghalaya.
- **About Cicada**
 - It belongs to genus **Becquartina** and marks the **first-ever record of this genus in the country**
 - The species in this genus are often called "**Butterfly cicadas**" because of their **colourful wings**.
 - The present discovery extends the **distributional range of the genus Becquartina** from **Southeast Asia** into **Northeast India**.
 - It **increases the total number of known Becquartina species to seven**.

Butterfly Cicada



5.7.17. AROGYAPACHA (TRICHOPUS ZEYLANICUS)

- 'Arogyapacha' (*Trichopus zeylanicus*) found endemic to Agasthyar hills of Kerala is **used by the local 'kani' tribe as a health food for getting instant stamina, ever green health and vitality**.
- **About Arogyapacha**
 - The term arogyapacha literally mean '**the green that gives strength**'.
 - Arogyapacha is a small medicinal plant with **slender stems and thick leaves**. It grows in **shade near the banks of streams and rivulets**. Only tender fruits of this plant are edible.
 - **Medicinal properties:** Anti-oxidant, anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, anti-tumour, anti-ulcer, anti-hyperlipidemic, hepatoprotective and anti-diabetic, etc.
 - Arogyapacha is a subspecies of *Trichopus zeylanicus*.
 - ✓ The subspecies found in India is called ***Trichopus zeylanicus travancoricus***.
 - ✓ Though the main species, *Trichopus zeylanicus*, is found in Sri Lanka and Thailand, only the Indian variety is proved to have medicinal qualities.
- A drug named '**Jeevani**' has been developed using "Arogya Pacha" with three more ingredients by Tropical Botanic Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.
 - Kani Tribes gets a share of 50% on commercial returns.

Arogyapacha



5.7.18. RINGWOODITE

- Researchers have uncovered a vast reservoir of water, dubbed the "Ringwoodite Ocean," concealed within the Earth's mantle, over 700 kms beneath the surface.
 - "Ringwoodite Ocean" is a **vast reservoir of water trapped within the mineral ringwoodite** in the Earth's mantle.
- **About Ringwoodite**
 - It is a **vivid blue mineral** formed under high temperatures and pressures in **Earth's mantle**.
 - It is one of the **most typical high-pressure mineral in meteorites**.
 - Named after Australian earth scientist **Alfred E. Ringwood** who studied polymorphic phase transitions in common mantle minerals, olivine and pyroxene.

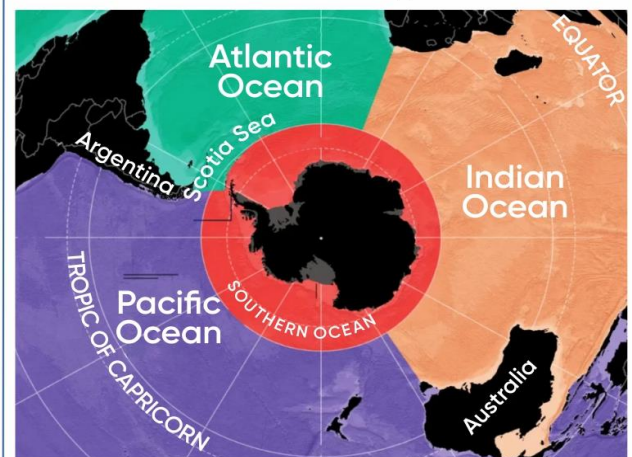
5.7.19. BAOBAB TREE

- Global Society for Preservation of Baobabs and Mangroves has initiated a mission to rejuvenate baobab trees.
- **About Baobab Tree (Genus: Adansonia)**
 - **Long-lived deciduous**, small to large trees from **20 to 100 ft tall** with **broad trunks** and **compact tops**.
 - Grows in **Africa, Madagascar and Australia**.
 - Also found in **Mandu**, in **Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh**.
 - Also known as **upside-down tree**, because in dry season they are devoid of leaves, and their bare grey and gnarled branches resemble roots.
 - Fiber from bark is **used to make rope, cloth, musical instrument strings etc.**

5.7.20. REASONS FOR CLEANEST AIR IN SOUTHERN OCEAN

- **Scientists discover the reason** behind the cleanest air in the Southern Ocean region.
- Clean air refers to the **low levels of aerosols in the atmosphere**.
 - Aerosol is the **suspension of fine solid particles or liquid droplets** in air.
- **Reasons for the low level of aerosols in Southern Ocean region**
 - **Reduced Human activity in the region**, resulting in minimal emissions and fossil fuel usage.
 - Phytoplankton that are a source of airborne sulfate particles are fewer in winter, resulting in **fewer sulfate particles during winter**.
 - **Role of Clouds and Rain**
 - ✓ **Honeycomb-structured clouds** play a crucial role in the region's climate.
 - ✓ Open honeycomb clouds **allow sunlight to pass and tend to produce more intense, sporadic rainfall**, which "washes" the aerosols out.
 - These clouds are **more common in the winter**.
 - ✓ Closed honeycomb clouds **reflect sunlight** leading to low rainfall and thus less effective at removing aerosols.
- **About Southern Ocean (Antarctic Ocean)**
 - **Geologically the youngest** of the world's oceans.
 - Dominated by the clockwise circulating **Antarctic Circumpolar Current**.
 - **Known for its strong winds, intense storms, dramatic seasonal changes, and cold temperatures**.

Southern Sea (Antarctic Ocean)



5.7.21. AFAR TRIANGLE

- Geologists predict potential emergence of a new ocean at the Afar Triangle (also known as the Afar Depression), located in the Horn of Africa.
- About Afar Triangle**
 - It represents the **northernmost portion** of the **Great Rift Valley**.
 - It is on one of the most geologically active regions on earth, where **Nubian, Somali and Arabian** Plates converge.
 - It will be inundated by Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden when new ocean basin will be formed. This could lead to the birth of a distinct continent in East Africa.
 - It encompasses **sections of Eritrea, Djibouti, and Ethiopia**.
 - Awash River** is the main river that flows through the Afar Triangle.

5.7.22. ARAL SEA

- Study has found that the desert which emerged due to the drying up of the Aral Sea has made Central Asia a much dustier place.
- About Aral Sea**
 - It was once-large saltwater lake of **Central Asia**.
 - Lies on the **boundary between Kazakhstan** to the north and **Uzbekistan** to the south.
- Other important lakes that shrunk in last few decades:**
 - Lake Urmia:** Lies in the bottom of the large central depression of the Azerbaijan region in **northwestern Iran**.
 - Lake Hamoun:** Freshwater Lake in Iran on Iran – Afghanistan border.

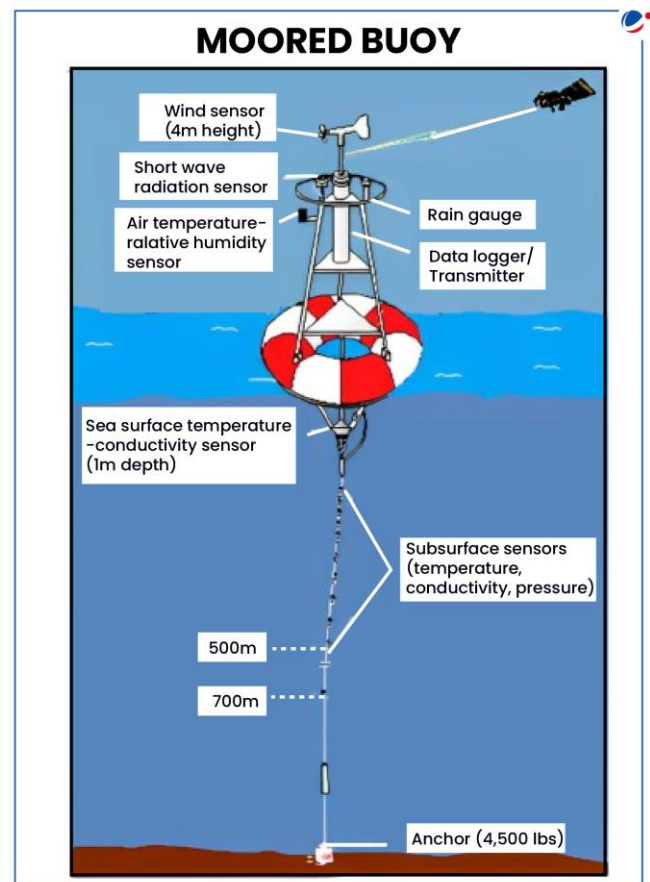
5.7.23. VOLCANIC VORTEX RINGS (VVR) OBSERVED FROM THE MOUNT ETNA

- VVR**, also known as volcanic smoke rings, are generated when gas, predominantly water vapor, is released rapidly through a circular vent in the volcanic crater.
- Mt Etna** is the world's most active **volcano**, located on the east coast of Sicily (Italy).
 - Also, it is the largest volcano of Europe.
 - It lies in the **highly active tectonic zone** of **Mediterranean Sea region** which is part of the Mid-continental Volcanic Belt.
 - ✓ The other important belt includes **Circum pacific (ring of fire)** and **Mid-Atlantic belt**.
- Why Mediterranean Sea region has highly active tectonic zone?**

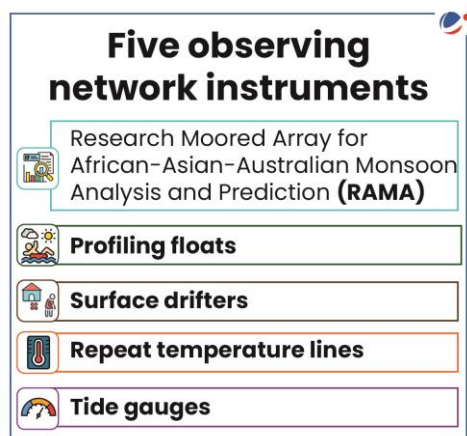
- Located **on the convergent boundary between the Eurasian and African continental plates**, and other minor plates.
- Convergence of plates creates **subduction zone** in western part of sea, leading to formation of volcanoes.
 - ✓ A **subduction zone** is a collision between two of Earth's tectonic plates, where one plate sinks into the mantle underneath the other plate.
- Chains of submarine volcanoes have been created in the sea.
- The important volcanoes in the region are **Mt Vesuvius, Stromboli, etc.**

5.7.24. INDIAN OCEAN OBSERVING SYSTEM (INDOOS)

- Recently, **India and the US have decided to reactivate the IndOOS**, which had been in despair since the COVID pandemic
- About IndOOS:**
 - It is a **network of 36 moored buoys** on the high seas to collect high-resolution ocean and atmospheric data for weather forecasts.
 - ✓ A **moored buoy** is an **oceanographic instrument** designed to stay in one place and has multiple sensors to collect data.



- Established in 2006, its objective include:
 - ✓ To provide sustained, high-quality oceanographic and marine meteorological data for weather and climate forecasts and environmental assessments.
 - ✓ To foster agreements and partnerships among Indian Ocean countries and to enhance their long-term monitoring and forecasting capacity.
- It was initially set up to understand and forecast the monsoon.
- Components of IndOOS: It is a system of five observing network instruments deployed in the Indian Ocean to measure-
 - Seawater temperature,
 - Salinity,
 - Ocean currents,
 - Atmospheric humidity, and
 - Wind.



5.7.25. NEGATIVE LEAP SECOND

- Researchers have shown that increased ice melting may have delayed need for adding negative leap second.
- Negative leap second is a second that is subtracted from clocks to keep them aligned with Earth's rotation.
 - It is done when Earth is spinning more quickly and length of day is decreasing.
- It is opposite of positive leap second (one-second addition to clocks).
 - It is done when length of day is rising (Earth is spinning more slowly).

- So far, there have been 27 positive leap seconds, but no negative leap seconds.

5.7.26. ZERO SHADOW DAY

- Recently, Bengaluru experienced a rare celestial phenomenon known as 'Zero Shadow Day'.
- About Zero Shadow Day
 - It occurs when the sun aligns perfectly overhead, causing vertical objects to cast no shadows.
 - This phenomenon occurs twice a year (once during Summer Solstice and once during Winter Solstice) in regions situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn.
 - The zero shadow days are different for different places.



5.7.27. ERRATA

- January 2024 Monthly Magazine
 - In Article 5.3. Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023, the Evaluation parameters of Swachh Survekshan 2023 mentioned in the infographic are incorrect. Refer to updated infographic given below:

Components of Swachh Survekshan 2023

Part 1 Service Level Progress (SLP)	Part 2 Certification	Part 3 Citizen Voice	Final Score
Data provided by ULBs & Documents assessment	Based on GFC Star rating, ODF+/ODF++/Water+	5 components Feedback, engagement, experience, Swachhita app, innovation	Cities are ranked based on marks obtained from Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3
51% Total Marks: 4,830	26% Total Marks: 2,500	23% Total Marks: 2,170	100% Total Marks: 9,500

- February 2024 Monthly Magazine
 - In Article 5.1. Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), in an infographic titled 'Important Migratory Species in India', the IUCN status of Black-necked cranes is incorrectly mentioned as 'Vulnerable'. The correct information is that the Black necked crane is categorized as 'Near threatened' under IUCN's red list.

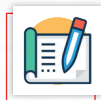
 SMART QUIZ	<p>You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of Environment at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.</p>	
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Answer Writing for **CIVIL SERVICES** **MAINS EXAMINATION**



Answer writing holds paramount importance in the UPSC Mains exam as it serves as the primary means for candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, analytical ability, and time management skills. Effective answer writing is pivotal in showcasing one's ability to synthesize information, critically evaluate diverse perspectives, and present balanced arguments concisely. Proficient answer writing is instrumental in securing high scores and distinguishing candidates in a competitive environment, ultimately determining their success in the rigorous selection process for the UPSC Mains examination.

COMPONENTS OF AN IMPACTFUL ANSWER



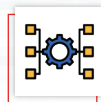
Identification of Context: Understanding the specific theme or topic of the question, and situating the response within its relevant context.



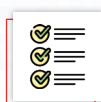
Content Competence: Demonstrating a comprehensive grasp of the subject matter, supported by accurate facts, relevant examples, and insightful analysis.



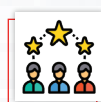
An impactful Introduction: Engagingly setting the stage for the answer, capturing the examiner's attention while providing a brief overview of the discussion to follow.



Structure and Presentation: Organizing the answer coherently with clear headings, subheadings, or bullet points, and presenting information logically and aesthetically for easy comprehension.



Balanced Conclusion: Summarizing key points concisely, offering insights or recommendations if applicable, and providing a satisfying closure to the argument or discussion.



Language: Employing precise, formal language appropriate to the context, avoiding jargon, colloquialisms, or ambiguity, and demonstrating fluency and clarity in expression.

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6. SOCIAL ISSUES

6.1. URBAN POVERTY IN INDIA

Why in the News?

Recently, the India Employment Report (IER), 2024 was released which highlighted **coexistence of higher unemployment and wages in urban areas and called for** further investigation to understand its implications for the urban poor.

More on News

- IER, 2024 was jointly published by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)** and the **Institute for Human Development (IHD)**.
- The report **poses questions on the trickle-down effect of benefits to the working class** in the backdrop of a 5.4% average real economic growth, from 2015-16 to 2022-23.
 - The **trickle-down effect** assumes that the **tax cuts and wealth of the rich and the corporates** will ultimately **reach down to the working class and lower class** to uplift their economic situation.

Key highlights of the report

- **Higher unemployment in urban areas:** The incidence of unemployment was higher among young people in urban areas than in rural areas and among younger youths (aged 15–19) than older youths (aged 20–29).
 - However, there is a **coexistence of higher unemployment and wages** which requires further

investigation to understand its implications for the urban poor.

- **Persistence of gender gap:** In both rural and urban areas in 2022, the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of young men (at 61.2%) was almost three times higher than that of young women (at 21.7%).
- **Decline in urban poverty:** The proportion of poor individuals in urban areas decreased from 13.7% in 2012 to 12.55% in 2022 at the all-India level.

About urban poverty

- Urban poverty similar to poverty in rural areas is closely linked to **inadequate access to employment, food, health care and education** as well as a **lack of voice in the settlements** in which they live.
- However, cities impose certain characteristics on **urban poverty that differentiate it from the rural**.

The infographic is titled 'International Labour Organization' with the ILO logo and 'Geneva' on the right. It contains several sections: 'Genesis' (formed in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles), 'Relation with UN' (specialized agency since 1946), 'Tripartite Structure' (brings together governments, employers, and workers), 'Member states' (187), and 'Strategic objectives' (four points: set standards, create opportunities, enhance social protection, and strengthen tripartism). It also lists 'Important reports' like the Global Wage Report and World Employment and Social Outlook. A box asks 'Is India a member' with a checkmark.

International Labour Organization Geneva

Genesis: Formed in 1919 under Treaty of Versailles to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it's based on social justice.

Relation with UN: ILO became specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

Tripartite Structure: Brings together governments, employers and workers to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.

Member states: 187. **Is India a member** ✓

Strategic objectives

- Set and promote standards and fundamental principles and **rights at work**.
- Create greater **opportunities for women and men to decent employment** and income.
- Enhance the coverage and effectiveness of **social protection for all**.
- Strengthen **tripartism and social dialogue**.

Important reports

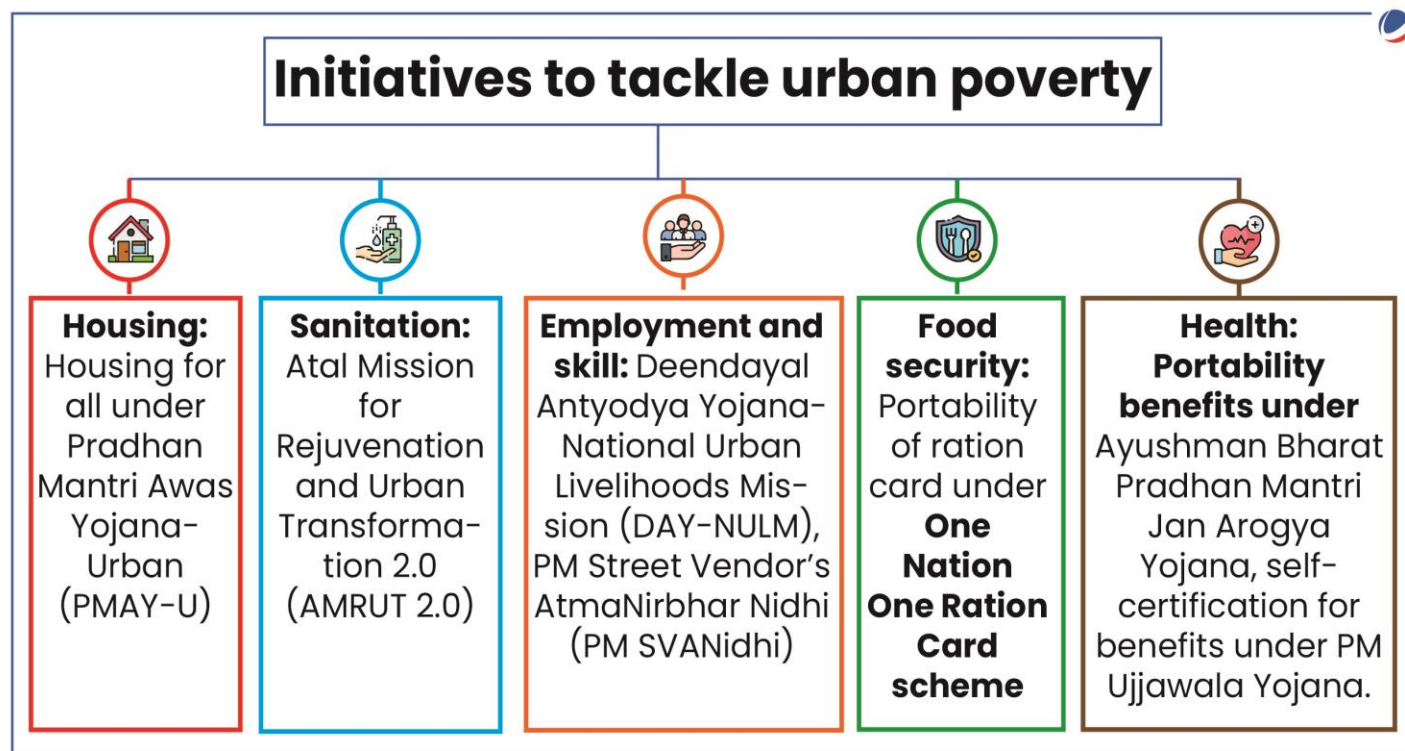
- Global Wage Report
- World Employment and Social Outlook
- World Social Protection Report, etc.

Differences between Urban and Rural Poverty

- **lack of adequate housing and security** of tenure for the same since they are generally unauthorised.
- **Lack of basic services** toilet facilities, especially for women; lack of drinking water, clean air and ventilation; and exposure to disease make
- **Challenges of transport**, the dangers of **extortion** and increased **vulnerability to crime**.
- **Social networking of the urban poor is also weaker** as compared to rural areas, where community ties and traditional support structures may be stronger.
- **Poverty is more visible in urban areas**, leading to greater feelings of deprivation and social exclusion among the urban poor. In rural areas, poverty tends to be more widespread and uniform.
 - **For example**, the co-existence of Dharavi, one of the largest slums in Asia, and skyscrapers, luxury hotels, etc., in Mumbai.

Reasons for prevalence of Urban Poverty

- **Urbanisation of poverty:** The existence of migration of the **rural poor into cities in search of a better livelihood** is acknowledged as a key reason for urban poverty.
- **Exclusionary urbanization:** The urban planning processes largely disregard people living in informal settlements like slums.
 - Inadequate access to basic services such as healthcare, education, etc. in such areas perpetuates the cycle of poverty.
- **Regional disparity in urbanization:** Insufficient development of Tier II and Tier III cities has led to excessive population pressure on megacities like Delhi, Mumbai, etc. exacerbating issues like the development of slums in megacities.
 - **Higher per capita infrastructure investment costs in smaller cities** are one of the reasons for unbalanced urbanization (2011, High Powered Expert Committee Report on Infrastructure).
- **Inaccessibility to social security:** Many poor migrants in urban areas lack proof of residency or identity, which excludes them from government welfare programs and traps them in a cycle of poverty.
 - Such poverty was more visible during the COVID-19 induced lockdown which led to mass migration urban poor to rural areas.
- **Financial insecurity:** High prevalence of **informal employment, underemployment**, as rapid urbanization has not been accompanied by the creation of enough job opportunities and also job opportunities for low skills.



Way Forward

- **Inclusive urbanization:** Decentralize decision-making and involve local communities for holistic and inclusive urban development planning.
 - Encourage **community-driven initiatives** and **support self-help groups in slums** and low-income settlements in urban areas.
 - Promote **mixed-use development and inclusive zoning policies** to prevent the formation of ghettos and ensure access to employment opportunities.
- **Regionally distributed development:** Promote balanced regional development by incentivizing economic activities, entrepreneurship and job creation in **smaller towns and cities to reduce pressure from megacities**.
 - **Improve rural infrastructure, employment opportunities, and agriculture-industry linkages** to reduce distressed migration to urban centres.
- **Sustainable livelihoods and skill development:** Encourage the growth of **labour intensive industries and small-scale enterprises** in urban areas through improved access to credit, business development services, and market linkages.
 - **Kudumbashree** (a women's community network) involved by Kerala in the implementation of the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM).
- **Portability of social security programmes:** This would facilitate expanding access to social security nets and financial services such as banking, credit, and insurance for urban poor.

6.2. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION (ECCE)

Why in the News?

Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) launched Aadharshila a National Curriculum for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for Children from Three to Six Years, 2024

About the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

- Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in the Indian context is generally defined as the care and education of children from birth to eight years. It includes:
 - Early stimulation programmes through **crèches/homes stimulation for 0-3 year olds**.
 - **Early childhood education (ECE) programmes for 3-6 year olds** (as seen in anganwadis, balwadis, nurseries, preschools, kindergartens, preparatory schools, etc.).
 - Early Primary Education Programmes as part of **schooling for 6-8 year olds**.
- Government of India adopted the **National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy in 2013**.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and **National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS) 2022** have recognized the critical role of ECCE in the country.
 - The NCF-FS institutionalized guidelines specifically tailored for fostering **high-quality ECCE for 3-6 years and the age group of 0-3 years**.
- **Aadharshila, the National Curriculum for ECCE 2024** address this need.
 - Objective of the National ECCE Curriculum 2024 (3-6 years) is to improve the quality of early childhood education **transacted at the Anganwadi Centre, by prioritising competency-based lesson plans and activities**, covering all learning domains.
- 85% of brain development occurs before the age of 6 years.

Integrating Panchkosha Concept & Holistic Development of Child



Annamay kosha

Physical Layer

Age-specific balanced physical development, fitness, Flexibility, cultivation of habits for a healthy lifestyle



Pranamaya kosha

Life Force energy Layer

Balancing, retaining, fostering positive energy, enthusiasm and activation of the nervous system.



Manomaya Kosha

Mind Layer

Socio emotional and ethical development, emotional intelligence, handling emotions, connection with environment



Vignanamaya kosha

Intellectual layer

Cognitive Development, Intellectual development, promoting analytical ability, logical reasoning, Cognitive skills



Anandamaya kosha

Inner self Layer

Aesthetic and cultural Development

Key highlights of the policy

- **ECCE is based on the Panchakosha concept.** It is rooted in ancient wisdom and provides clear pathways toward a holistic education and ensures a comprehensive and balanced approach to nurturing the child's body, mind, and spirit.
- **Teaching Language and Literacy in Early Years:** Focus on developing children's emergent Literacy Skills like print awareness, drawing, scribbling, etc.
 - It also focus on developing Mathematical Concepts.
- **Positive Learning Habits (Executive Function and Self-Regulation Skills):** Focus on establishing routines, establish an atmosphere of positive relationship, empowering the child to lead and make independent choices.
- **Play as Learning:** Knowledge acquired through play becomes a lasting part of the child's experience.
 - Some of the play-based activities are, puzzles, roleplaying, reading books, Story creation, language and math games, guided walks.
- **Others**
 - **Embracing learning diversity** in the Anganwadi Centre is crucial for Anganwadi educators.
 - **Ensuring gender equality from an early age is crucial**, because gender initiation and internalization start early, influencing children's self-concept, aspirations, and behaviour.
 - **Divyang Inclusion**
 - ✓ The Anganwadi Protocol for Divyang Children was released by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in 2023, providing for screening, inclusion and referrals of children with disabilities.

Initiatives for ECCE in India

- **The Integrated Child Development Services, 1975** aimed at addressing malnutrition, health and also development needs of young children, pregnant and nursing mothers.
- **Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0:** They are Integrated Nutrition Support Programme that seeks to address the challenges of malnutrition in children, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- **Palna (PROVISION OF ANGANWADI CUM CRECHES) and Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)** Schemes under Mission Shakti.
- **Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi launched in 2023.**
- **Other policies:** National Policy for Children (1974), National Policy for Education, (1986), National Plan of Action for Children (2005),

Global initiatives:

- UNESCO established **Global Partnership Strategy for Early Childhood**
 - The overall goal of the GPS is to ensure that ECCE, Early childhood development, and Early childhood investment services are fully inclusive, accessible, affordable, gender-responsive and equitable for each child
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and Education for All (EFA) 1990** which has postulated ECCE as the very first goal to be achieved for **Education For All, since "learning begins at birth"**.
 - India is also a signatory to both.
- **The SDG4 - Education 2030** agenda marked the first global commitment to ECCE beyond the education community.

Challenges of ECCE

- **Inadequate funding:** In 2020-21, the public expenditure on early childhood care and education **was a mere 0.1 percent of GDP.**
- **Infrastructure, Material and Classroom Environment:** ECCE centres are lacking in age and developmentally appropriate equipment and play materials.
- **Teachers:** Issues with the teachers pertain to their qualification, appointment, salary and training/ capacity building.
 - It is a challenge for the ECCE teacher/ caregiver to cope with different languages at the same time in an early childhood setting.
- **Uncertain process of Admission:** There is not much clarity and transparency on the process of admission of children in ECCE centres in terms of date of admission, age, etc.
- **Monitoring and supervision:** There is **no clear monitoring and supervision** mechanism for ensuring **the quality of ECCE centres at macro and micro level.**
- **Overburdened India's childcare support system:** There is one Anganwadi worker for every 22 children under Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0, and one District Child Protection Officer for every 69 children under Mission Vatsalya.

- **Convergence/Coordination:** Different ministries and institutions address different needs of the children related to their education, care, health and safety.

Way forward

- **Expansion and strengthening of ECCE facilities:** Universal access to high-quality ECCE in the country, with a special focus on districts and locations that are particularly socio-economically disadvantaged, will be provided in a phased manner.
- **Regulatory framework:** States must create a regulatory framework for early education, including registration and accreditation of centers, to ensure quality outcomes.
- **Research, Evaluation and Documentation:** Action research and impact studies should also be taken up to generate innovative and successful models.
- **Recognise ECCE as a statutory obligation of MoWCD:** The overall charge of the entire gamut of ECCE (including the 'care' components) should be retained with MoWCD.
 - The responsibilities of providing **pre-school education** (ECE or early childhood education) can be undertaken by **the Ministry of Education**.
- **Others**
 - Pedagogy should be **more child-led than teacher-led**.
 - Need to advocate for ECCE and ensure government funds are invested in sustainable solutions.
 - Ensures availability and time dedication of Anganwadi teachers (AWTs).
 - **CSR** funds can help in expanding the quality and coverage of childcare

Related News

- MoWCD has also launched a **National Framework for Early Childhood Stimulation for Children from Birth to Three Years**

About Early Childhood Stimulation (ECS)

- The Early Childhood Stimulation begins from the **biological and sensory growth** of the child right from **their gestation in the mother's womb**.
- **The Framework for Stimulation (0-3 years)** aims to fill the **gaps in implementing care and stimulation from birth until the first three years** of a child's growth.
- The framework guides **engagement inside the home as well as at Anganwadi centres or creches**
- In order to **facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities**, an **age-appropriate screening tool** has been included.

Objectives of ECS



Ensure the healthy development of the child through breastfeeding, immunisation, etc



Develop trust and emotional security in the child by making them feel loved, valued, safe, etc.



Stimulate the child's intellectual curiosity.



Enhance the child's language development by talking, reading, and singing to them



Develop adequate muscular coordination, basic motor skills, and personal hygiene habits

6.3. ORGAN TRANSPLANTATION

Why in the News?

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued a **directive to states/UTs to allocate a unique National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)-ID** to all cases of organ transplants.

Key highlights of directives

- **NOTTO-ID** must be generated **by the hospital from the NOTTO website**.
 - **NOTTO-ID** is mandatory for considering the **allocation of organs** in case of a **deceased donor transplant**.

- In case of a **living donor transplant**, NOTTO ID shall also be generated **maximum within 48 hours after the transplant surgery** is done.
- **Appropriate Authority of the State**, appointed under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994, should **investigate transplants involving foreign nationals**.
 - Any complaints of rule violations must also be investigated and appropriate follow up action to be taken.
- Devise a **system of regular inspection of the registered hospital** for transplant/ retrieval by and to monitor them onsite on the **quality of transplantation, post operative follow-up of the donor and recipient, and outcomes**.

The directives were issued **taking the cognizance of surge in the number of organ transplants related to foreigners** in the country and recognising the need for monitoring of such transplantation.

About organ transplantation in India

- Organ transplantation is the **life-saving therapy for end-stage organ failure**. It refers to the **grafting of any human organ from any living person or deceased person** to some other living person **for therapeutic purposes**.
- India is the **3rd country** in the world after the USA and China, in terms of the **total number of transplants done in a year**.
- Organ transplantation in India **relies predominantly on living donor procedures for kidney and liver** transplantation.
 - Heart, lung, Pancreas, and Small bowel transplants are therefore less frequent.
- 2023, revised guidelines for organ donation and transplantation by Centre included following changes
 - **The upper age limit of 65 years** for eligibility for registration to receive deceased donor organ **has been removed**.
 - **Removal of the domicile requirement** of the state for registration of patients requiring organ transplantation from deceased donors.
- **National Organ Transplant Program (NOTP)** being implemented by the Centre to promote organ donation and transplantation across all States/UT. Following bodies have been established under the Act:
 - **National Organ & Tissue Transplantation Organization (NOTTO)** located at New Delhi, the apex center for All India activities of coordination and networking for the procurement and distribution of Organs and Tissues.
 - **5 Regional Organ and Tissue Transplant Organizations (ROTTOS)**
 - **14 State Organ and Tissue Transplant Organizations (SOTTOs)**
- **THOTA, 1994 as amended** in 2011, is the primary legislation for **regulating Organ Retrieval, Storage and Transplantation** for therapeutic purposes and prevent commercial dealing in **human Organs and tissues**.
 - It **does not deal** with the transplant of **artificial organs**.

Do you know?

➤ The world's **first successful organ transplant** was **kidney transplantation** which was undertaken by David Hume and Joseph Kelly in Boston in 1954.

Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994 as amended in 2011

- **Source of Organs for Transplant**
 - **Living Donor Transplant:** Near Relative donor, Other than the near relative donor (with specific conditions), by Swapping of near relative donors between pairs of unmatched donor and recipient.
 - ✓ It is **not allowed** if the **recipient is a foreign national** and the **donor** is an **Indian national unless they are near relatives**.
 - ✓ Where the **donor or the recipient being a near relative is a foreign national**, **prior approval** of the Authorisation Committee shall be required
 - **Deceased donor Transplant:** Donor after Brain stem death or BSD (also known as brain death), Donor after cardiac death (DCD)
- Provision of **mandatory 'Transplant Coordinator'** in all hospitals registered under the Act.
- **Brain Stem death (BSD)** is recognized as a **legal death** provides for the **constitution of Brain death certification board**.

Issues associated with organ transplantation

The organ donation rate in India has remained stable to less than **1 per million population (PMP) since 2013**. To achieve self-sufficiency in organ donation the estimated rate would be around 124 PMP.

Some of the key issues associated with organ transplants are as follows

- **Hospital Issues:** Lack of information and training of BSD identification, certification and maintenance of organ donors, coupled with a shortage of manpower, suboptimal utilization, and lack of infrastructure.
- **Inadequate government health budget:** The vast majority of **potential donors are indigent motor vehicle accident victims** who are primarily **treated in public hospitals**.
 - These hospitals generally lack the necessary infrastructure to support deceased donations.
- **Private sector dominance:** The advanced living donor infrastructure in India is increasingly accessed by foreigners, and private Indian hospitals are the preferred destination for it.
 - Because of this the **revenue, infrastructure, and expertise** generated has **been limited to the private sector**.
- **Accessibility issues:** Tertiary hospitals handle most organ donations, but they are mostly located in urban areas.
- **Abuse of law:** Despite the THOTA, organ commerce and kidney scandals are regularly reported in the Indian media.
- **Misconceptions:** Lack of awareness about organ donation, also doctors are unwilling to ask for deceased donor organs. There is no incentive and also a fear of reprisals.

Ethical issues with Commercial dealings in human organs

- **Exploitation of vulnerable donors:** Poor people may be coerced or manipulated into selling their organs for financial gain.
- **Undermining informed consent:** Coercion, misinformation, or lack of informed consent can compromise the autonomy and well-being of donors.
- **Commodification of the Human Body:** Treating organs as objects to be bought and sold rather than as integral parts of individual identity and dignity undermines the intrinsic value of human life and raises ethical questions about the limits of market transactions.
 - It **goes against the Kantian ethics of treating human beings as an end in themselves** and not as a means to something else.

Way Forward

- **Infrastructure development:** A dedicated Department of Intensive Care Medicine, **Non-Transplant Organ Retrieval Centers (NTORC)** and **Organ Transplantation** should be created **in all medical colleges and major Government Hospitals**.
- **Strengthening NOTTO:** There should be **more manpower and budget** in the NOTTO office for service, research, etc. An **audit should be conducted at the level of NOTTO** to evaluate the work done by ROTTO and SOTTO and they should be made accountable
- **Affordability**
 - **PMJAY- Ayushman Bharat Scheme:** It included **Kidney and Bone Marrow** transplantation. There is a need to widen its ambit to include the Heart, Lungs, Liver, Pancreas and other Organs and the amount should be increased.
 - **Drugs like Immuno-Suppressants,** Preservative solutions for Organ transportation & other Consumables required for Organ Transplantation **should be made tax-free**.
- **Investment in R&D:** Research on **Organ Preservation and Organ Resuscitation** using modern technology should be permitted using discarded/unutilised deceased donor Organs
- **Awareness:** Organ Donation Pledges have significantly increased in the country but awareness and ease of doing should be publicised. All driving licences should include a provision for pledging of Organs.
- **Collaborative approach:** Foster collaboration among different stakeholders to establish ethical guidelines and policies to govern emerging technologies in transplantation, such as xenotransplantation and gene editing.

6.4. DOPING IN SPORTS

Why in the news?

India recorded **highest percentage of doping offenders (3.26%)**, according to the 2022 testing figures released by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

More about the news

- India is followed by **South Africa and Bangkok** in the percentage of doping offenders.
- In 2022, nearly all drug classes saw an increase in the number of individual Prohibited Substances compared to 2021.

About Doping

- It is the act of consuming banned artificial and often illegal substances to gain an advantage over others in sporting competitions.
- Doping may also include other methods like **increasing oxygen in the bloodstream** through blood transfusions.

WADA World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)



Genesis: Established in 1999, after the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)** convened the **First World Conference on Doping in Sport**, in Lausanne, Switzerland.

- It resulted in the **Lausanne Declaration on Doping in Sport** which provided for the creation of an independent international anti-doping agency to be operational for the **XXVII Olympiad in 2000**.



About: An independent international agency composed and funded equally by the Olympic Movement and Governments of the world.



Function: To lead a collaborative worldwide movement for doping free sport.

- The **Anti-Doping Administration & Management System (ADAMS)** of WADA coordinates and simplifies anti-doping activities.

DIFFERENT KINDS OF DOPING USED BY ATHLETES



Androgenic agents like anabolic steroids to train harder and build more muscle



Stimulants to be more alert and hide fatigue by increasing heart rate and blood flow.



Diuretics & masking agents to remove fluid from the body and used to falsify the results of doping controls.



Peptide hormones like Erythropoietin to increase bulk, strength and red blood cells.



Glucocorticoids to mask serious injury as they're anti-inflammatories.



Beta blockers to keep the heart rate low and reduce tremble in hands.

Reasons for high doping incidents in Indian sport

- Recognition and rewards:** Winners get instant recognition, financial rewards and government jobs.
- Easy accessibility and availability:** Despite regulations and efforts to curb banned substance distribution, these substances remain readily available in various forms.
- Lack of comprehensive education and awareness:** Athletes are not well aware of the risks and consequences of doping to the health or integrity of sports, particularly at the grassroots level.
- Lack of sports infrastructure and support:** This drives athletes to seek alternative means, including doping, to get an edge over their athletes from better-equipped nations.
- Societal pressure:** Sport as a career is often looked down upon in India, making Athletes feel pressured by coaches, family and society to perform well.
- Ineffective testing and monitoring:** Smaller competitions in many parts of the country have no anti-doping officials.

WHY DOPING IN SPORTS IS PROBLEMATIC?



Ethical implications: Against integrity of sports and violates the values of hard work, dedication, and fair competition.



Health impacts: Lead to Long- and short-term impacts include organ damage, hormonal imbalances, etc.



Impacts on athletes: Can damage person's reputation and social relations, and sets poor example for other athletes.



Governance issues: Difficulty in maintaining integrity of competitions and enforcing rules and regulations



Societal impact Erosion of Trust: in sports and athletes of public and normalization of cheating behavior.

Efforts to stop doping in India

- **National Anti-Doping Act, 2022:** To strengthen the framework and mechanisms for carrying out the doping control program.
 - It provided for the constitution of National Anti-Doping agency as a statutory body.
- **National Anti-Doping Agency(NADA):** An autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports to implement the anti-doping programme in India, in line with the World Anti-doping Code 2021.
 - It was set up as a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act of 1860** in 2005.
- **Key Initiatives of NADA:**
 - **Program for Education and Awareness on Anti-Doping in Sports (PEADS)** for education and awareness regarding doping.
 - **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with South Asia Regional Anti-Doping Organization (SARADO)** to increase the Regional Cooperation in anti doping in sport.
 - **Anti-Doping helpline number** for the athletes and athlete support personnel to provide information about Anti-Doping rules and guidelines.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985:** It prohibits any individual from engaging in any activity consisting of production, cultivation, sale, purchase, transport, consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance.
- India has **signed and ratified the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization International Convention** against Doping.

Way forward to prevent doping in India

- **Education:** Athletes of all ages need to be educated about the dangers of banned substances.
- **Regulating supplements:** Food safety and standards Authority of India (FSSAI) can issue certification to supplements that they do not contain banned substances.
- **Enhance testing and monitoring:** To act as a deterrent, NADA can increase the frequency and quality of doping tests, both in-competition and out-of-competition.
- **Strengthening sports infrastructure:** Enhancing availability of trained athlete support personnel, along with advanced instruments.
- **Developing positive attitude towards sports in society:** There is a need to address societal barriers and biases to reduce pressure on athletes.

6.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

6.5.1. CHILD CARE LEAVE (CCL)

- Denying Women Child Care Leave (CCL) is violation of Constitution said Supreme Court (SC).
- Recently, a 2-judge bench of the SC directed the government of Himachal Pradesh to review its policies on CCL concerning working mothers, especially mothers of children with special needs.
- **Key highlights of the SC Directive**
 - Court observed that **where the state is the employer** of a working mother, it **cannot be ignorant of her responsibilities at home** while serving the state.
 - **Participation of women in workforce** is a constitutional entitlement **protected by Article 15** of the Constitution.
 - ✓ **Article 15** provides that State shall not discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.
 - **Maternity benefits** given for delivering the child were **not sufficient and are perhaps distinct from the concept of CCL**.

- **About Child Care Leave (CCL)**

- **Rule 43-C of the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972** provides for 2 years (730 days) of CCL to **female employees and single male parents** (unmarried or widower or divorcee).
 - ✓ It is available for taking care of **two eldest surviving children upto the age of 18 years**.
 - ✓ There's **no age limit in case of disabled child**.
 - ✓ **State of Himachal Pradesh has not adopted** these provisions of CCL.

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017

- Provides for **26 weeks of paid maternity leave** to women workers.
 - Out of these 26 weeks, **not more than 8 weeks shall be preceding the expected date of delivery**.

6.5.2. 98% OF URBAN WOMEN INVOLVED IN HOUSEHOLD FINANCIAL DECISIONS

- AMFi-CRISIL released a report titled 'Mutual Growth' which states that **financial decision-making** and **labour force participation** rate (LFPR) of women are rising in India.

- **Key highlights of the report**
 - **Female Labour Force Participation Rate** has increased to **37.0% in 2023** from 23.3% in 2017-18.
 - **Female LFPR rose to 37%** (PLFS of Oct 2023) against 23.3 five years back.
 - **47% of women** take **financial decisions** on their own.
 - Autonomy of women in taking financial decisions depends on **income source, age, and stage of affluence**.
- **Significance of increasing role of women in financial decision-making**
 - **Social:** Women's overall empowerment by addressing gender disparities, reduced domestic violence and conflict, etc.
 - ✓ **Intergenerational impact** such as greater proportion of resources allocated towards children's education, healthcare, etc.
 - **Economic: Financial literacy and inclusion** resulting in better financial planning and wealth management for families and communities.
 - ✓ Increased financial intermediation and market depth, tapping into talents and skills of women to help drive entrepreneurship and innovation, etc.
- **Challenges in women's financial autonomy**
 - **Socio-cultural:** Deep-rooted patriarchy, gender stereotypes, etc., which limits women's financial independence.
 - **Economic disparities:** Lower participation in formal workforce, gender pay gap [share of female labour income was just 18% (World Inequality Report, 2022)], etc.
 - ✓ **'Dual-burden' of work**, unpaid and unrecognized **domestic and care work by women**, etc.



6.5.3. UNESCO'S "TECHNOLOGY ON HER TERMS" REPORT

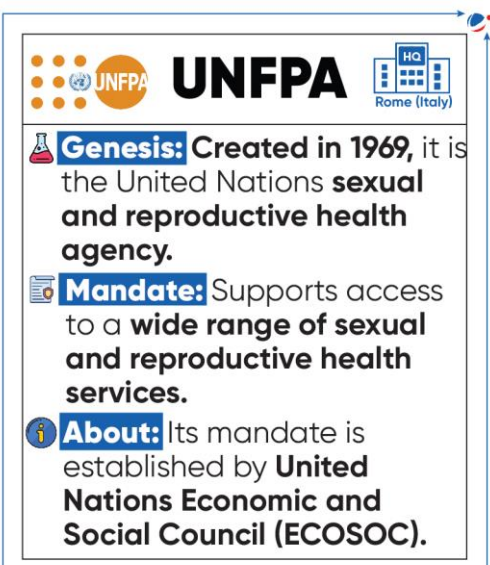
- UNESCO released 2024 gender report of the Global Education Monitoring Report, titled "Technology on her Terms".
- The report looks at **impact of technology on girls' education** opportunities and outcomes, and **role of education on the shape of future technological development**.
- **Impact of technology on girls' education:**
 - ICT can **overcome barriers to education** access for girls in crisis context.
 - ✓ For instance, in Kenya, **M-shule platform** delivers education through text message without need for internet connection.
 - **Digital divide:** Girls and women are **less able to access technology** with 130 million fewer women than men owning mobile phone and 244 million fewer women having Internet access.
 - **Social media negatively affects well-being and reinforces gender norms.** Greater interaction on social media at age 10 is associated with **worsening socioemotional difficulties with age among girls**.
 - **Cyberbullying** is common and is exacerbated by the **danger of deepfakes** made using AI.
- **Role of Education in shaping technological development:**
 - **Average share of STEM** is 15% among young female graduates and 35% among young male graduates.
 - **Underrepresentation in technological design and deployment:** In 2022, women held less than 25% of science, engineering and ICT jobs.
 - **Negative gender stereotypes**, reinforced by low expectations from parents and teachers, impact girls' STEM aspirations.

Recommendations from the report:

- **Establish bodies to evaluate education technology and algorithms**, to assess where they may be amplifying negative gender stereotypes or negatively affecting well-being.
- Encouraging more **girls to study towards scientific careers** and **promote female leadership in artificial intelligence** and technology development.
- Avoid infrastructure-only approaches and **invest in gender-responsive education and training programmes** to enhance digital literacy and skills for all.

6.5.4. STATE OF WORLD POPULATION - 2024 REPORT

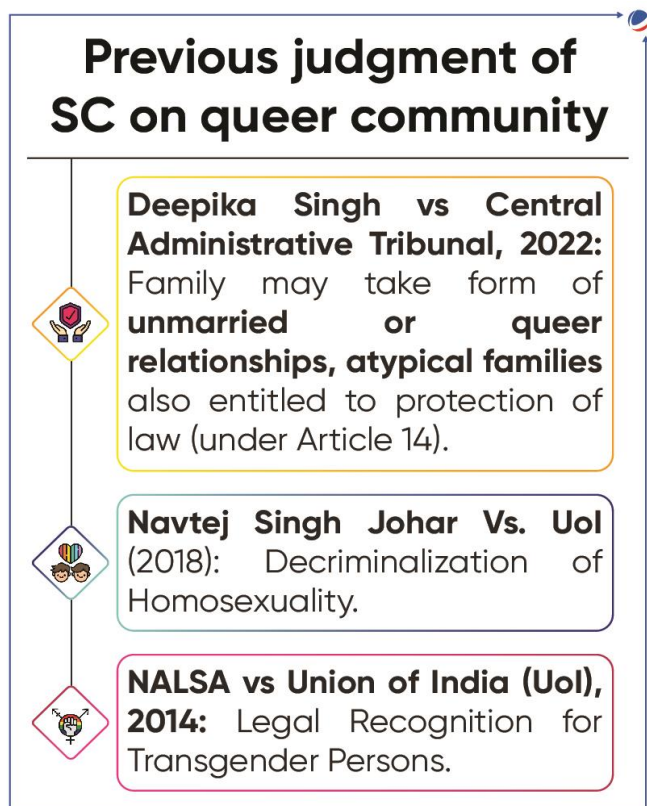
- **United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA)** released the State of World Population 2024 report.
- Report is titled "Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope: Ending Inequalities in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Rights".
 - Women's SRHR includes right to be free from torture, right to health, privacy, education, life, and prohibition of discrimination.
- **Key findings**
 - **India leads globally with an estimated population of 144.17 crore**, followed by China (142.5 crore).
 - ✓ India's population is estimated to **double in 77 years**.
 - **68% of India's population belongs to age group of 15- 64 years**, followed by 10-24 years group (26%),
 - **India's Total Fertility Rate** i.e. births per woman in reproductive age is estimated at **2.0**.
 - In India, **life expectancy at birth** is estimated at **71 and 74 years for men and women** respectively.
 - **Child marriage rates** in India was 23% between 2006-2023.
 - **Women with disabilities** experience up to 10 times more **gender-based violence** than women without disabilities.
 - 30 years (1994-2024) of progress in SRH has mostly **ignored the most marginalized communities**.
- **Initiatives taken to improve SRH**
 - **India:** Janani Suraksha Yojana, Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024 etc.
 - **Global:** International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action in Cairo, Egypt, 1994, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 etc.



6.5.5. LONGEVITY INDIA INITIATIVE (LII)

- Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has launched the 'Longevity India' Initiative to support ageing research in India.
- **About LII**
 - Seeks to **enhance understanding of ageing** through both **fundamental and applied research**, and to develop solutions that can improve quality of life.
 - Brings together a **multidisciplinary team of experts** from academia, and industry to promote healthy ageing across India.
 - **Research focus** includes identifying early disease indicators, investigating ageing biomarkers, and developing new therapeutics and technologies to aid in healthy ageing.

6.5.6. PANEL FOR QUEER COMMUNITY NOTIFIED



- **Ministry of Law and Justice notifies panel** to address issues related to the queer community.
- The committee headed by **Cabinet Secretary** was constituted in compliance with the direction of the Supreme Court (SC) in **Supriyo v Union of India case (2023)**.
 - In this case, SC had **refused to grant legal recognition for same-sex marriages** observing that it was a matter for the Parliament to decide

- Committee will **recommend measures to ensure**
 - **no discrimination in access to goods and services** for the queer community
 - queer people are not subjected to **involuntary medical treatments, violence, coercion, etc.**
- **Queer community**
 - It refers to **people who identify themselves as** (or LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex)
 - Many such people face issues like **Social Exclusion, homelessness, low education, low accessibility to health care, etc.**
 - **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019** provides for the protection of their rights and their welfare.

6.5.7. UNHRC ADOPTED FIRST RESOLUTION OF ITS KIND FOR INTERSEX RIGHTS

- Resolution is adopted at the 55th Session of the **United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC).**
- **Resolution calls on states:**
 - To combat discrimination, violence and harmful practices against persons with **innate variations in sex characteristics** and
 - Address their root causes as well as help **intersex** people 'realize the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health'.
- **Intersex** people are born with **sex characteristics** (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit **typical binary notions of male or female bodies.**
 - They may have any gender identity or sexual orientation.
 - Experts estimate that up to 1.7 % of the population are born with intersex traits.
 - Intersex people are **different from transgenders.**
 - ✓ Transgenders are born with a body that has unambiguous sexual characteristics (either male or female) but they don't match the person's gender identity.
- **Key issues with Intersex People:** They are subjected to human rights violations because of their physical characteristics.
 - Society has created harmful stereotypes and pathologization (treating intersex persons as necessarily ill or disordered) towards them.
 - They face issues like Infanticide, forced and coercive medical interventions, discrimination in different sphere, legal recognition, etc.



About UNHRC

Geneva, Switzerland

Genesis: Established in 2006 by the General Assembly. UNHRC replaced the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

About: It is the main **intergovernmental body** within the United Nations for Strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights.

Key Mandate: Reviews the human rights records of all UN Member States via the **Universal Periodic Review**, Authorizes **commissions of inquiry** and fact-finding missions on war crimes and crimes against humanity etc.

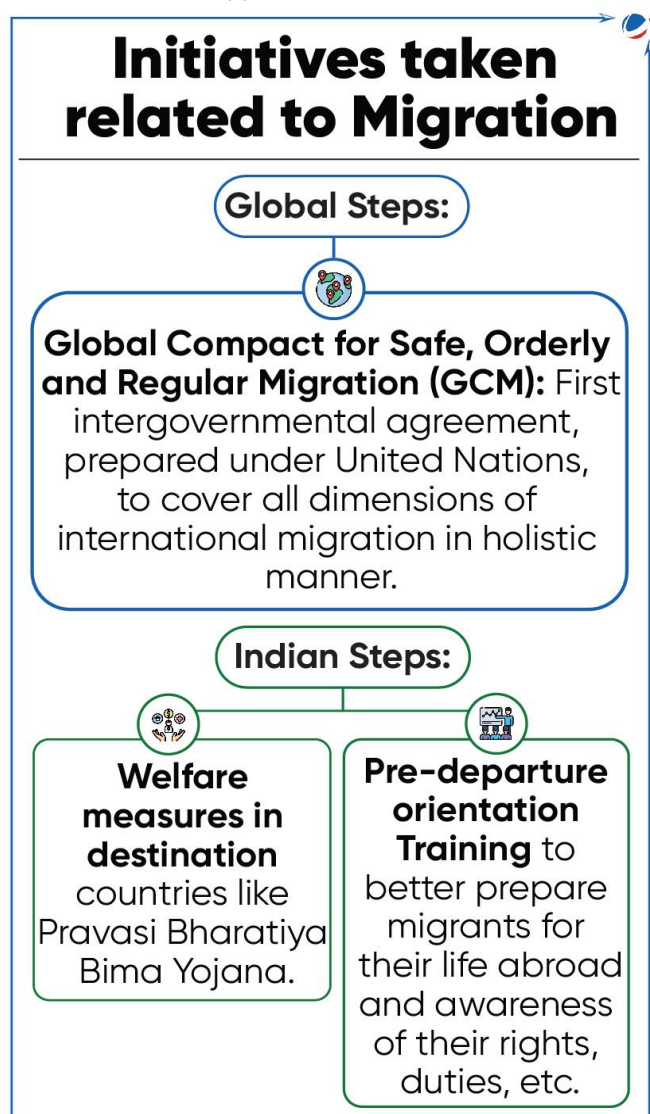
Members: Made of **47 Member States**

Is India a member ☒

6.5.8. IOM RELEASED "A DECADE OF DOCUMENTING MIGRANT DEATHS" REPORT

- International Organization for Migration (IOM) released a report "**A Decade of Documenting Migrant Deaths**".
- Report was released on completion of **ten year of IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP).**
 - MMP was launched in 2014 to **document deaths and disappearances of people in migration process** towards an international destination.
 - IOM, **Established in 1951**, is leading intergovernmental organization in field of migration.
 - ✓ Headquartered at **Geneva** (Switzerland) and consists of **175 member states (including India).**
- **Key findings**
 - **More than one in three migrants** whose country of origin could be identified comes **from countries in conflict.**

- **More than two-thirds** of those whose **deaths were documented** through IOM's MMP are **unidentified**.
- **Major causes of death:** Drowning; Vehicle accidents; Suffocation due to fuel inhalation, Inadequate shelter, healthcare etc.
- **Migration** refers to movement of persons away from their place of usual residence, either across an international border or within State.
- **Factors behind Migrations:** Urbanisation, Marriage, Economic disparities, Political instability, Impacts of climate change, etc.
- **Consequences of migration**
 - Intermixing of diverse cultures and **evolution of composite culture**.
 - **Overcrowding in cities** led to their haphazard growth and slum development.
 - Changes resource- population ratio.
 - **Brain drain** i.e. skilled people migrate from poorer countries to developed countries for better economic opportunities.



6.5.9. FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2024

- **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Launched** Food Waste Index (FWI) Report 2024.
- Report co-authored with **WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)** was published ahead of **International Day of Zero Waste** (observed annually on 30 March).
- FWI tracks **global and national generation of food and inedible parts wasted at retail and consumer (household and food service) levels**.
 - It supports the **goals of two indicators of SDG 12.3** which is to be achieved by 2030 i.e.
 - ✓ **SDG 12.3.1 (a), Food Loss Index (FLI)**, reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses. **Food and Agriculture Organization is custodian** of FLI.
 - ✓ **SDG 12.3.1 (b), FWI**, halve per-capita global food waste at retail and consumer levels. **UNEP is custodian** of FWI.
- **Key findings**
 - Households across all continents **wasted over 1 billion meals a day in 2022**, while 783 million people were affected by hunger and a third of humanity faced food insecurity.
 - Food Waste **generates an estimated 8–10% of global greenhouse gas emissions**.
 - **Issues**
 - ✓ Due to **lack of robust cold chains**, hotter countries generate more food waste per capita in households.
 - ✓ **Insufficient Data for retail and food service sectors**, particularly in low and middle-income countries.
 - ✓ **Fragmented food system**.

About WRAP

- It is a **climate action NGO (established in UK in 2000)** working to tackle causes of climate crisis and give the planet a sustainable future.

Suggestions for reducing food waste through collaborative approach

- Systemic action through **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model**. Example, Courtauld Commitment 2030 (UK), Australian Food Pact etc.
- Establish a roadmap or delivery plan, targeting priority areas or “hotspots” of waste.

6.5.10. THE GLOBAL NETWORK AGAINST FOOD CRISES (GNAFC)



- The GNAFC launched the **Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)** which is produced **annually** by the **Food Security Information Network (FSIN)**.

- **About GNAFC:**

- It was launched in **2016**.
- By the **European Union**, the **UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and the **World Food Programme (WFP)**.
- It seeks to better **link, integrate and guide** existing

initiatives, partnerships, programmes and policy processes to address the root causes of food crises.

- It brings together **governments, international organisations, and NGOs** to improve humanitarian responses and reduce the number of people facing acute food insecurity.

 <p>SMART QUIZ</p>	<p>You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of Social Issues & Social Schemes at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.</p>	
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CSAT

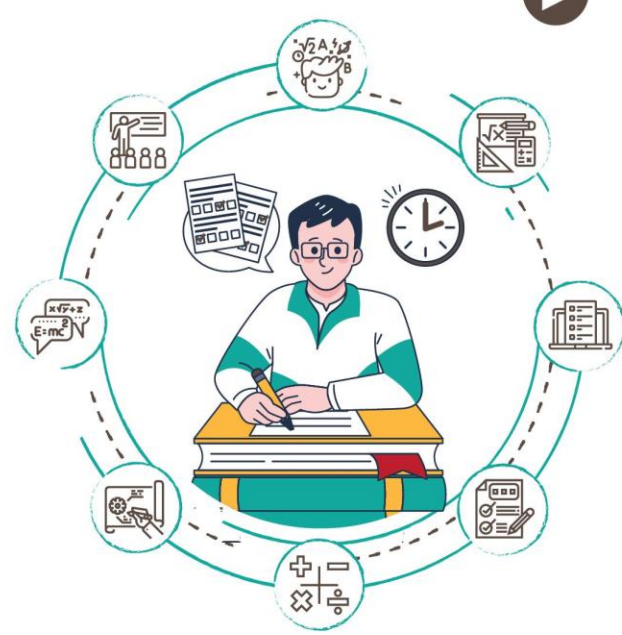
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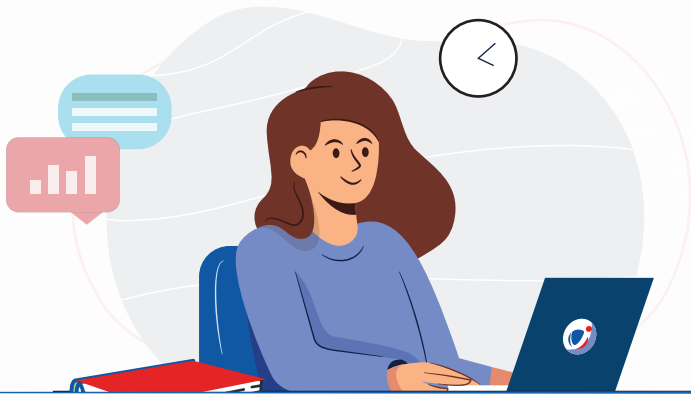
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Mastering CSAT:

A Strategic Roadmap for

UPSC Prelims Examination

The UPSC Prelims is the initial, highly competitive stage of the Civil Services Examination, consisting of two objective-type papers: General Studies and the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT). These papers assess a candidate's knowledge, understanding, and aptitude.

With the CSAT's growing complexity, achieving the 33% qualifying score is challenging. Aspirants must navigate time management, adapting to changing difficulty levels, maintaining balance with General Studies, and finding quality practice materials. This underscores the importance of a well-planned strategy.



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Strategic Framework for CSAT Preparation



Initial Self-Assessment: Begin with a self-evaluation using the previous year's CSAT papers to identify strengths and areas for improvement.



Study Plan: Develop a structured study plan, focusing on high yielding areas and selecting reliable study sources.



Regular Practice and Post-Test Analysis: Solving and analyzing previous year papers and mock tests to familiarize with the exam format and question types, ensuring a strategic approach to covering the comprehensive syllabus effectively.



Seeking Personalized Mentorship: Engage with mentors to receive customized strategies for improvement. Alongside essential stress management guidance, ensuring a focused and balanced preparation journey.



Reasoning: Sharpen your logical and analytical reasoning by practicing diverse question types from Clocks, Calendars, Series & Progression, Direction, Blood Relation, Coding-Decoding, Syllogism, and so on.

Focus on understanding patterns and building a step-by-step approach to solving problems.



Maths and Basic Numeracy: Strengthen foundational mathematics by revisiting basic concepts and practicing regularly.

Utilize shortcuts and mental math techniques for quicker calculations.



Comprehension: Improve your reading speed and comprehension by regularly reading newspapers.

Practice summarizing paragraphs and infer the main ideas to enhance understanding.



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7. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

7.1. HIGGS BOSON

Why in the News?

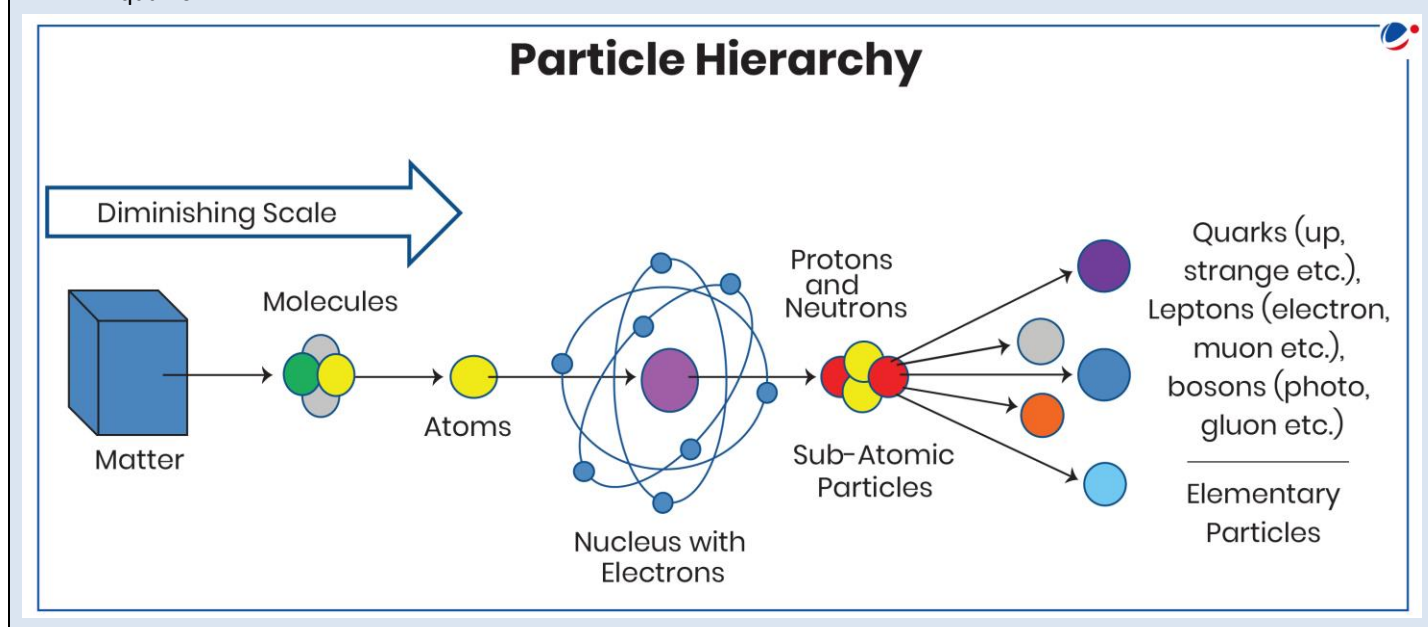
Nobel Laureate Physicist Peter Higgs passed away recently.

About Peter Higgs

- Peter Higgs **proposed the Higgs field in 1964** as a **new field** that **fills the entire Universe** and gives **mass** to all elementary particles.
 - Also, he **proposed a new fundamental particle 'Higgs Boson'**.
- His idea was validated in 2012 through a **Toroidal LHC Apparatus (ATLAS)** and **Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS)** experiments at the **European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)'s Large Hadron Collider**.
- The discovery was followed by the award of a **Nobel Prize in 2013**.

About Elementary Particles (Fundamental Particles)

- **Elementary particles** are the smallest **known building blocks** of the universe.
- These particles **join together to create the more well-known particles**, such as the neutron and the proton.
 - E.g. Protons are made from two up quarks and a down quark, while neutrons are composed of two down and an up quarks.



Relationship between Higgs Field and Mass of Elementary Particles

- **Mass from interaction:** The idea of the Higgs field highlights that particles do not have a mass of their own, they get their mass by interacting with the Higgs field.
 - This **mass-giving interaction** with the **Higgs field** is known as the **Brout-Englert-Higgs mechanism**, proposed by theorists Robert Brout, François Englert and Peter Higgs.
- **Quantity of mass:** The **intensity of interaction** between the field and the particle decides the quantity of mass of the particle. It means that stronger the interaction of the particle with the Higgs field, heavier the particle ends up being.
 - Photons, for example, do not interact with this field and therefore have no mass.
 - Other elementary particles, including electrons, quarks, and bosons, do interact and hence have a variety of masses.

About Higgs Boson

- It is an **elementary particle** and it is popularly known as the **God particle**.
- It is a type of **boson**, a force-carrying subatomic particle.
 - **Other bosons** include **photons** (light, carrying electromagnetic force), **gluons** (particles that act as force carriers in the nucleus), etc.
- It **gets its mass** just like other particles—from its interactions with the Higgs field.
- **Properties of Higgs Boson:**
 - **Mass:** It has a **mass of 125 eV/c²** (a unit of mass used for subatomic particles), which is about **130 times the mass of a proton**.
 - ✓ A Higgs boson can **also interact with another Higgs boson** (this property helped in knowing that mass of Higgs's Boson is greater than that of protons or neutrons).
 - **Spin:** It is a **scalar particle and has '0' spin** that is why it does not possess any angular momentum.
 - ✓ It is the only elementary particle with no spin.
 - **Lifetime:** **Very short** and it **rapidly decays into other particles** after it is produced in high-energy collisions.
 - **Detection:** It is **detected indirectly** by observing the particles it decays into.
 - ✓ It **normally decays into pairs of photons or pairs of W or Z bosons** (the recent discovery has found the Higgs Boson decaying with a photon and Z boson, which is unusual)
- **Importance/Relevance:**
 - The Higgs bosons have **confirmed the predictions of the standard model of particle physics**.
 - ✓ Also, recent evidence of its decay can provide indirect evidence of the existence of **particles beyond those predicted by the Standard Model**.
 - It can be a unique portal to finding signs of **dark matter** due to its **distinctive characteristics** and properties.
 - ✓ Indirectly, it can help in **providing clues about the conditions of the early universe**.

To read about the Standard Model of Particle Physics refer to article 7.2 Ghost Particles, March, 2024

Related Information

Large Hadron Collider (LHC)

- It is the **world's largest and most powerful particle accelerator**, set up in 2008 at CERN near Geneva.
- The LHC consists of a **27-kilometre ring of superconducting magnets** to boost the energy of the particles along the way.
- The **particle beams travelling close to the speed of light are collided** inside the LHC.
- Primary goal of the LHC project is to **understand the fundamental structure of matter** by re-creating the extreme conditions that occurred in the first few moments of the universe according to the big-bang model.

White Rabbit (WR) Technology

- CERN has launched the **White Rabbit Collaboration (WRC)** to foster the **uptake of White Rabbit technology by Industry**.
 - The Collaboration aims to provide **dedicated support and training, facilitate R&D projects** in the technology.
- **WR technology**
 - It was developed at CERN to provide **sub-nanosecond accuracy and picosecond precision of synchronisation** for the **Large Hadron Collider (LHC)** accelerator chain.
 - It was **first used in 2012** and in 2020, it was included in the worldwide industry standard known as **Precision Time Protocol (PTP)**.



European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)



Geneva, Switzerland

About: Founded in 1954, researchers at CERN are **probing fundamental structure of the universe** and study basic constituents of matter the fundamental particle.

Members: 23 Members Is India a member? 

Mission: To perform **research in fundamental physics**.

- To provide a unique **range of particle accelerator facilities**.
- To use its flagship accelerator, **Large Hadron Collider (LHC)**, to its **maximum potential**.

Key Achievements: Higgs Boson, W Boson, Z Boson, LHC, etc.

7.2. SPACE TOURISM

Why in the news?

Space startup Blue Origin has announced that Gopi Thotakura will be part of its New Shepard's 25th Mission (NS-25 mission).

What is Space Tourism?

- Space tourism is the commercial practice of sending **private individuals to space for recreational, adventure, or leisure purposes**.
 - At present, it is in a **nascent stage**. Companies like Virgin Galactic, SpaceX are making efforts to promote space tourism.
 - The global space tourism market size is estimated at USD 851.4 million in 2023.
- Types:**
 - Suborbital:** In it, passengers are taken between 50 and 70 miles above Earth (crossing the **Kármán line** and back).
 - Orbital:** In it, passengers are taken significantly above the Kármán line. Passengers may spend several days or weeks in the space.
 - Other:** Lunar Space Tourism, Interplanetary Tourism etc.
- India:** Currently, there is not much endeavour on space tourism in India.
 - However, the possible success of India's maiden human **spaceflight programme 'Gaganyaan'** may lay down the foundation of space tourism in the country.

Know the term

- ◉ **Kármán line:** It is a boundary **62 miles (100 kilometers) above mean sea level** that borders Earth's atmosphere and the beginning of space.
- ◉ **Kessler Syndrome:** It is a phenomenon in which the amount of **junk in orbit around Earth reaches a point where it just creates more and more space debris**, causing big problems for satellites, astronauts and mission planners.

ADVANTAGES OF SPACE TOURISM



Promoting **Space Infrastructure Development**



Technological Advancement
(improving spacecraft and rocketry)



Promoting **International Collaboration**
(will space habitation and exploiting space resources)

Initiatives which could pave way for Space Tourism in India

- Space Policy 2023:** It allows private players into the sector and is expected to give academia, startups and the industry a fillip in the Space Sector.
- Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe):** It is an autonomous agency under the Department of Space (DoS).
 - Its role includes regulating, promoting, guiding, monitoring, and supervising the space activities of Non-Governmental Private Entities (NGPEs) in India.
 - It can also allow a NGPEs to use the facilities of DoS.
- Indian Space Association (ISpA):** Established in 2020, ISpA is an apex non-profit industry body, setup for development of the private space industry in India.
 - Represented by leading domestic and global corporations, it aims to build global linkages, bringing critical technology and investments to the country.

Challenges associated with Space Tourism

- High Costs:** Currently, the cost of flights is quite high. These costs are further increased by the need for **specialized training and health checks** for the passengers.
 - It requires **building specific spacecraft** which provide adequate facilities to the passengers ranging from food to medical services.
- Limited Market Demand:** The potential market for space tourism is comprised mainly of wealthy individuals willing to pay a high price for a **once-in-a-lifetime experience**.

- **Rights and obligations:** Whether the passengers should be granted a status similar to that of astronauts. This question could have a considerable impact on passenger rights and obligations, including the associated liabilities.
- **Safety Concern:** Due to the involvement of complex technological set-up and mechanism the risk of **failure and explosion is quite high during launch and re-entry**.
 - E.g., Death of Kalpana Chawla due to the failure of STS-107 Columbia Mission.
- **Lack of Regulation:** Currently, there is **no specific treaty** to deal with issues related to space tourism.
- **Space Debris:** There is inherent fear that space debris will increase due to potential collision of rockets with satellites. It can aggravate the **Kessler syndrome**.

Way Forward

To encourage the development of Space Tourism in India, several steps would have to be taken from developing a global standard (like the Outer Space Treaty (1967)) to ironing out passenger challenges such as safety and application of rights. Additionally, research should be encouraged towards sustainable technology, in order minimize the environmental impact of Space Tourism and the issue of Space debris.

Scan the QR code to know more about **SpaceTech Industry**.

Weekly Focus #112: SpaceTech Industry: From Curiosity to Reality



7.3. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN HEALTH CARE

Why in the News?

World Health Organization unveiled a **digital health promoter prototype S.A.R.A.H harnessing generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)** for public health.

About S.A.R.A.H.

- It is a **Smart AI Resource Assistant for Health** which uses new language models and cutting-edge technology.
- It can provide **information across major health topics**, including healthy habits and mental health.
- It aims to provide an additional tool for people **to realize their rights vis-a-vis health**.
- It can support people in **developing better understanding of risk factors** for some leading causes of death. E.g., **cancer, heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes**.

Developments in the sphere of AI Health Care In India

- **iOncology.ai.:** Designed for the early detection of breast and ovarian cancer.
 - Launched by **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Delhi, in collaboration with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune**.
- **AI based Health Care Start-ups:** E.g., a non-profit AI based healthcare start-up, Wadhvani AI is developing various interventions related to the TB patient care and helping India's **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)** become AI-ready.
- **Maharashtra government** has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **NITI Aayog** to unveil the **International Centre for Transformational Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI)**, focusing on rural healthcare.
- NITI Aayog, is closely working with technology giant Microsoft and the medical start-up Forus Health to develop **automated solutions for early detection of diabetic retinopathy** (disease of the retina).
- Indian Council of Medical Research released **Ethical Guidelines for Application of Artificial Intelligence in Biomedical Research and Healthcare**.

Potential of AI in Health Care

- **Diagnosis and Treatment Planning:** AI can be used to analyze imaging (such as X-rays), help doctors identify diseases and plan treatment more effectively.
 - E.g., Apollo hospitals launched Apollo Clinical Intelligence Engine, a clinical decision support (CDS).
- **Predictive Analytics:** Electronic health records and other patient data can be analyzed by **AI to predict which patients are at risk of developing certain conditions**.

- **Clinical research and discovery:** AI can be used to examine data on drug interactions and side effects, as well as to predict which compounds will be most effective in treating certain conditions.
 - E.g. ProteinSGM, a Generative AI model from the University of Toronto is used for protein designing.
- **Robotic Surgery:** AI integrated Robot surgeries will minimize surgery-related complications and can assist doctors in precision oriented tasks.
- **Workforce optimization:** Workflows automated with AI capabilities can help extend scarce labor resources, reduce work fatigue and burnout, and enable operational and cost efficiencies.
 - It can also be used to automate routine administrative tasks, such as scheduling appointments and processing insurance claims. E.g. Virtual Assistants and Chatbots
- **Healthcare supply chain resilience:** Predictive models driven by data provide longitudinal visibility of supply with real time information regarding shortages and surpluses.

To read more about applications of Artificial Intelligence refer to article 7.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI): Regulation and Application, November, 2023

Initiatives facilitating Integration of AI in Current Healthcare Ecosystem

- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):** Providing unique digital health ID for each citizen.
- **Healthlocker/Personal Health Records (PHR):** Digital national health database backed with cloud-based storage system which serves as a single source of health data for the nation.
- **National Health Stack (NHS):** It includes National Health Analytics Platform etc.

Concerns Associated with AI in Health Care

- **Data Privacy and Security:** The use of AI in healthcare requires large amounts of patient data, which raises concerns about data privacy and security.
- **Biasness:** Biased result can be produced from AI based healthcare models if they are not trained by data which represent wider section of the society. This may lead to inaccurate or unfair results, particularly for marginalized communities.
- **Lack of Transparency:** The internal workings of the AI Based model is not known by the user. Because of this property, AI models are considered "**black boxes**", making them **less trustable**.
- **Regulation and Governance:** Lack of clear regulations and guidelines for the use of AI in healthcare.
 - This raises question who will take responsibility of any mistake committed by AI based system (E.g. any mistake committed by AI based robotic surgeon).
- **Other:** Equitable use (in the initial phase will be unaffordable for a lot of people), fear of job loss, etc.

Guiding Principles for use of AI in Health Care (Proposed by World Health Organisation)



Protect **autonomy**



Ensure **transparency, explainability and intelligibility**



Foster **responsibility and accountability**



Ensure **inclusiveness and equity**



Promote **human well-being, human safety and the public interest**



Promote AI that is **responsive and sustainable**

Conclusion

AI has immense potential but it needs to be accompanied with adequate regulation and governance mechanism. In this regard, World Health Organisation has released guidance on the ethics and governance of AI for health.




7.4. GLYCEMIC INDEX

Why in the news?

A recent scientific study has revealed the relationship between the Glycemic Index in food to the risk of Type II diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

About Glycemic Index (GI)

- **Definition:** GI is a measure of how quickly a carbohydrate-containing food raises blood sugar levels after it is consumed.
 - The index ranks the carbohydrate-rich foods on a scale of 0 to 100 based on their ability to raise blood sugar levels as compared to pure glucose (which has a GI of 100).
- **Proposed by:** Prof. David Jenkins of the University of Toronto in 1981.
- **Factors that determine GI:** The GI of a food is determined by various internal factors like amylose, lipids, protein, phytic acid, dietary fibre, resistant Starch etc. and external factors like cooking, processing, retro-gradation, soaking and germination.

GI Index	Examples
 High (>70)	Wheat, White rice, potatoes, white bread etc.
 Medium (56-69)	Orange juice, honey, and wholemeal bread etc.
 Low (<55)	Fruits, Non Starchy vegetables (Carrots, Spinach, Tomatoes etc.), Whole Grains, Legumes etc.

About Glycemic Load (GL)

- **Glycemic Load (GL):** It uses GI and the amount of total Carbohydrates in a serving of a specific food to estimate how quickly and how much blood sugar will rise after its consumption.
- **Calculation:** The GL of a food, is obtained by multiplying the quality of carbohydrate in a given food (GI) by the amount of carbohydrate in a serving.

Link between GI and Human Health

- **Complications for people with diabetes:** High GI foods cause rapid fluctuations in blood sugar levels, which may strain the body's ability to produce insulin or utilize it effectively.
 - Focus on low-GI foods can improve blood sugar control and overall diabetes management.
- **Issues to Cardio Vascular Health:** Diets rich in GI lead to weight gain, higher triglyceride levels and blood pressure in the body thereby making the individual susceptible to Cardiovascular complications in the long run.

7.5. INDIA TUBERCULOSIS (TB) REPORT 2024

Why in the news?

Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released **India TB Report 2024**.

Major Findings of the Report

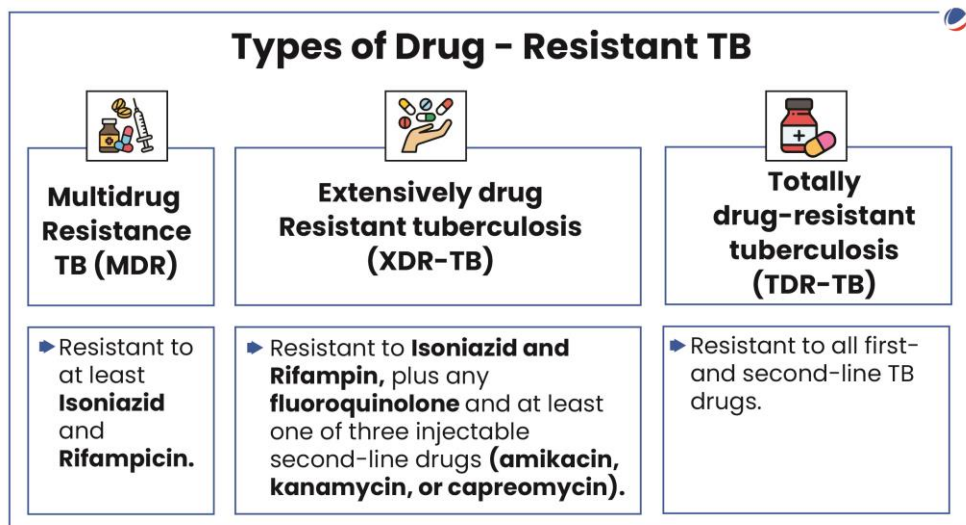
- **Notified TB patients:** 25.52 lakh TB patients in 2023 (increase from 24.22 lakh cases in 2022).
- **Reporting of cases:** ~67% reporting being done by the public sector and ~33% from private sector.
- **Treatment Success rate among notified Drug-Resistant TB (DR-TB):** 65%

- **Achievements:**

- **Target of initiating treatment in 95% of patients** diagnosed with the infection was achieved in 2023.
- **Decline in Incidence** of TB (new cases emerging each year): **16% in comparison to 2015**
- **Reduction in mortality:** 18% in comparison to 2015
- **Increase in proportion of notified TB patients receiving financial support through Direct Benefit Transfer:** 70% (against a target of 90% by 2023)

About Tuberculosis

- It is an infectious disease caused by bacillus **Mycobacterium tuberculosis** bacteria which most often **affects lungs** and is known as **pulmonary TB**.
 - **Extrapulmonary TB** is the TB which affects **other areas of the body**. (e.g. gastrointestinal TB, skeletal TB, liver TB)
- **Transmission:** By air when an infected person coughs, speaks, laughs, sings, or sneezes.
- **Common symptoms:** Prolonged cough (sometimes with blood), chest pain, weakness, fatigue, weight loss, fever, night sweats.
- **Tests for Identification:** Xpert MTB, RIF Ultra and Truenat assays.
- **Treatment:** Tuberculosis is **preventable and curable**.
 - Most common medications include **isoniazid, rifampin, ethambutol, pyrazinamide, streptomycin** etc.
 - **Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG)** vaccine is also available for its prevention.
- **Drug-Resistant TB** are Tuberculosis that doesn't respond to standard drugs.



Challenges in eradication of TB in India



Social Stigma and Taboo

- ▶ Leads to delayed diagnosis and social isolation of patients



Poor Healthcare Infrastructure

- ▶ E.g., lack of diagnostic facilities in rural areas



Poverty and Malnutrition

- ▶ Weakens immune system, increases transmission risk



Comorbidities (with HIV, diabetes)

- ▶ Increases vulnerability of patients



High Treatment Costs

- ▶ In private hospitals and in cases of Drug Resistant-TB



High- dropout rates

- ▶ Due to migration, absence of regular follow up etc.

Way Forward

- **Enable Early Detection by increasing the use of chest X-ray, strengthening of referral networks** for better screening of patients.
- **Precise Treatment Categorization** such as **resistance status of TB** at the beginning of diagnosis can help in assigning appropriate treatment regimens.
- **Long-term and sustained treatment** should be ensured by regular follow-ups and considering portability of treatment.
- **Nutritional Support to patients** (E.g. a 2023 Lancet study found that nutritional support in a 'RATIONS' trial in Jharkhand reduced the risk of death in lung TB patients).
- **Dynamic Notification System** for improved notification system to capture real-time TB data.
- **Decentralizing TB service delivery** to the level of "Ayushman Arogya Mandirs".
 - E.g., TB-WIN platform was launched in India for registration of the Adult BCG Vaccination beneficiaries.
- **Increase Investment can lead to better outcomes.**
 - As per WHO study, for every dollar spent on screening of TB, there is potential benefit of \$39.

India's Initiatives

- **The National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP):** Aims to reduce TB burden by 2025, five years ahead of global target of 2030.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan:** Launched to provide additional patient support, **augment community involvement** and leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities.
- **Nikshay Poshan Yojana:** It has been launched to provide for **financial incentive of Rs 500** for TB patients registered on Nikshay Portal.
- **National TB Call Centre – Ni-kshay SAMPARK:** To address patients' queries related to TB and providing tele-counseling on treatment.
- **TB Mukht Panchayat Initiative:** Aims to empower Panchayati Raj Institutions to understand TB issues, take necessary actions.
- **Tribal TB Initiative:** To address TB among the tribal communities of India.
- **Mission Indradhanush:** BCG vaccine is provided under the mission.

WHO Initiative

- **#ENDTB Strategy** with goals of-
 - 95% reduction by 2035 in number of **TB deaths** compared with 2015.
 - 90% reduction by 2035 in **TB incidence** rate compared with 2015.
 - Zero TB-affected families facing **catastrophic costs** due to TB by 2035.
- **TB vaccine accelerator Council:** To facilitate the development, testing, authorization, and use of new TB vaccines.

7.6. NEWS IN SHORTS

7.6.1. HUBBLE TENSION

- As per recent study, scientists are looking for a new model to explain Hubble tension which is not explained by Λ (Lambda) cold dark matter or lambda CDM model.
 - **Lambda CDM** explains various features of the universe, including radiation leftover from the Big Bang, etc.
- **About Hubble Tension**
 - Refers to the discrepancy that **two equally valid methods** to measure "how fast the universe is expanding" have yielded different estimates.
 - ✓ Expansion of Universe is measured by **Hubble Constant**.
 - **The two methods are:**
 - ✓ **Cosmic Microwave Background** based on a sea of photons left after Big Bang theory.

- ✓ **Cosmic Distance Ladder** uses techniques to measure distance to objects that are close, further away, and very far away from the earth.

7.6.2. 50TH YEAR OF ARYABHATA LAUNCH

- ISRO celebrated Satellite Technology Day (STD) commemorating the **50th year of the Aryabhata Launch** in 1975.
- **About Aryabhata**
 - It was **India's first satellite**, named after the famous Indian astronomer in the 5th century.
 - It was **built by the ISRO** and launched by a **Soviet Kosmos-3M rocket from Kapustin Yar (Russia)**.
 - It aimed to conduct **experiments in X-ray astronomy, aeronomics, and solar physics**.

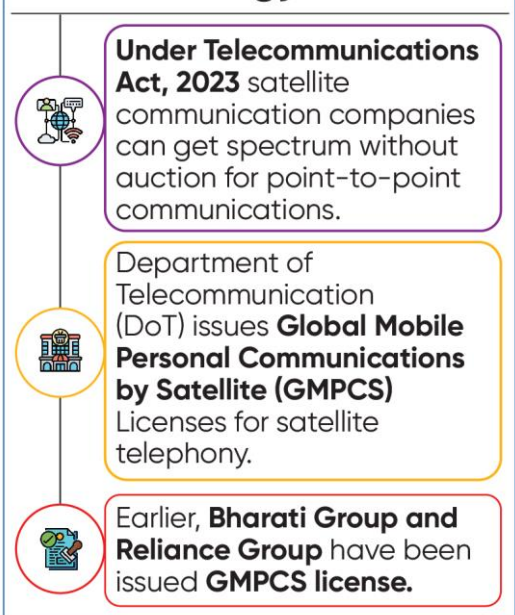
7.6.3. DRAGONFLY MISSION

- NASA has announced that Dragonfly mission to Saturn's massive moon Titan will be launched in 2028.
 - It is fourth mission of **NASA's New Frontiers Program**. The other three are NewHorizons, Juno, and OSIRIS-Rex (also OSIRIS-APEX).
- **About Dragonfly Mission**
 - **Goal:** To explore the chemistry and habitability of multiple surface sites covering a large area. It will help in investigating Titan's habitability.
 - It will reach **Titan in 2034**.
- **Titan** is the only satellite in our solar system **known to be blanketed by a dense atmosphere and host liquid seas on its surface**

7.6.4. Tiantong-1 ALLOWS SMARTPHONES TO MAKE DIRECT SATELLITE CALLS

- **Chinese scientists** have developed world's **first satellite series (Tiantong-1)** capable of **enabling smartphone calls without the need for ground-based infrastructure** such as Base Transceiver Station (BTSs) or cellular towers.
- **About Chinese Satellite Communication Technology (SCT)**
 - **Tiantong-1 series** of satellites consist of **three satellites placed in geosynchronous orbit** at an altitude of ~36000 km, covering entire Asia-Pacific region from Middle East to the Pacific Ocean.
 - ✓ **Geosynchronous orbit** is a low inclination orbit having a period of 23 hours 56 minutes and 4 seconds. It is a special position high above the Earth that allows an object to keep pace with the rotation our planet.
 - In Sep 2023, Huawei Technologies released the **world's first smartphone that supported satellite calls**, by directly connecting to the Tiantong satellites.
- **Significance of SCT**
 - **Accessibility:** Seamless and ubiquitous access to communication services in remote, rural, and hard-to-reach areas.
 - **Contingency planning:** SCT can be crucial during natural disasters or other emergencies when terrestrial networks may be damaged or disrupted.
 - **Military and Defense applications:** Can enable secure and reliable communication, navigation, surveillance, and intelligence gathering.
- **Concerns associated with SCT:** Space debris and orbital congestion, regulatory and governance challenges due to issues of international coordination and liability, cyber threats such as jamming, spoofing, etc.

Satellite Communication Technology in India



7.6.5. TSAT-1A

- Tata Advanced Systems Ltd and Satellogic announced successful deployment of TSAT-1A into space.
- **About TSAT (Tata Satellite) -1A**
 - It is India's first **indigenously developed and built satellite** capable of **sub-meter resolution optical imaging**.
 - It is equipped with both **multispectral and hyperspectral imaging capabilities**.
 - This technology allows TSAT-1A to **collect data across wide range of wavelengths** within electromagnetic spectrum, providing deeper understanding of land, water, and various natural resources.
 - Data collected by satellite has potential to **drive progress in crucial sectors like Agriculture, Disaster Management, Urban Planning and Environmental Monitoring**.

7.6.6. KALAM-250

- Skyroot Aerospace has successfully **test-fired Stage-2 of Vikram-1** space launch vehicle, called **Kalam-250**.
 - Stage-2 is significant because it propels satellites from dense atmosphere of Earth to deep vacuum of outer space.
 - **Vikram-1** is **three-stage, solid-fuel based rocket**.
- **About Kalam-250**
 - It is a **high-strength carbon composite rocket motor**, which uses **solid fuel** and high-performance

Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers (EPDM) Thermal Protection System.

- **Solid propellant** in Kalam-250 was **processed by Solar Industries** at Nagpur facility.
- Earlier, Skyroot had tested **Kalam-100, third stage of Vikram-1**, which was test-fired successfully in 2021.

7.6.7. NETWORK-AS-A-SERVICE (NAAS)

- The **market for NaaS in India** is expected to expand from \$1.18 billion in 2024 to \$7.32 billion by 2029.
- **About NaaS**
 - It is a cloud service model in which **customers rent networking services** from cloud providers.
 - ✓ It provides the **flexibility to pay** for services based on usage and to scale as business needs change.
 - It allows customers to operate the networks **without maintaining their own** networking infrastructure.
 - ✓ The traditional network model requires **capital expenses (CapEx)** for physical networks with switches, routers, and licensing.

7.6.8. SHALLOWFAKE

- A **shallowfake video** of the **US Vice President** has gone viral.
- Shallowfake refers to **altered media** (pictures, videos and voice clips, etc) **created** with conventional and affordable technologies **without the help of AI technology**.
 - Contrary to this, **Deepfakes** are synthesized **images, videos, and other media created by the Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.
- **Shallowfake** is also called as **cheapfake**.

7.6.9. BITCOIN HALVING

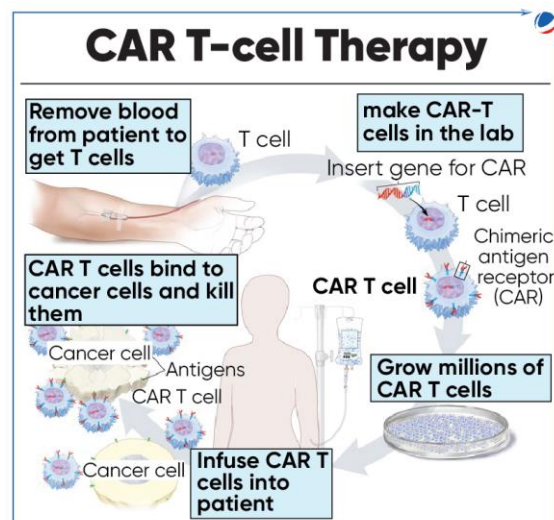
- Experts are expecting that Bitcoin halving event will occur soon.
- **About Bitcoin Halving**
 - Refers to the 50% reduction in the reward paid to **Bitcoin miners**.
 - ✓ **Bitcoin miners** successfully process other **people's cryptocurrency transactions** so that they can be added to the **public digital ledger** known as the **blockchain**.
 - Takes place every four years.
 - The halving policy was written into Bitcoin's mining algorithm to counteract inflation by maintaining scarcity.
 - ✓ In theory, the reduction in the pace of Bitcoin issuance means that the price will increase if demand remains the same.

7.6.10. EXOSKELETON

- Recently, the first international workshop on 'Emerging Technologies and Challenges for Exoskeleton' was held by DRDO.
- **About Exoskeleton**
 - It is a **mobile machine consisting primarily of an outer framework** (akin to an insect's exoskeleton) worn by a person.
 - It is powered by a system of motors, hydraulics, or pneumatics that **delivers energy for limb movement**.
 - **Applications:** Aid for people with disabilities, helps soldiers to carry heavy loads, Factories and assembly lines, etc.

7.6.11. INDIGENOUS CHIMERIC ANTIGEN RECEPTOR (CAR) T-CELL THERAPY LAUNCHED

- India's first homegrown gene therapy (CAR-T cell therapy) for cancer launched by the President
- It is developed through collaboration between **the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, Tata Memorial Hospital, and ImmunoACT**.
- **About Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy**
 - It **modifies immune cells, specifically T-cells**, by turning them into potent cancer fighters known as CAR-T cells.
 - ✓ T-cells are special cells (types of white blood cells) whose primary function is cytotoxic, meaning killing other cells.
 - T cells are taken from patient blood and are changed in lab by **adding a gene for a man-made receptor (called CAR)**.
 - ✓ CARs are proteins that assist the T-cells to **recognise and attach to a specific protein present on cancer cells**.
 - CAR-T cells are then given back to the patient.



- **Benefits of the CAR T Cell therapy**
 - Can treat cancer for an extended period.
 - It has the potential to cure specific cancers completely.
 - Short treatment time is needed and more rapid recovery.
- **Challenges:** CAR T cell therapy for one cancer won't work for another type of cancer, can have negative effects on the nervous system, risk of infection, etc.

7.6.12. MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING (MRI) TECHNOLOGY

- 'Iseult' the World's most powerful MRI scans the first images of the human brain.
- Iseult' can help refine our understanding of **anatomy of brain**.
 - It could also shed light on diseases like **Alzheimer's** or psychological conditions like **depression or schizophrenia**.
- **About Iseut**
 - Iseut has **power of 11.7 teslas** which enables it to **scan images with 10 times more precision** than commonly used MRIs.
 - ✓ Tesla is a measure of **strength of magnetic field** that surrounds a patient when they're in MRI machine.
- **Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) Technology**
 - MRI is **non-invasive medical imaging test** that produces detailed images of almost every internal structure in human body.
 - They use **large magnet and radio waves**. No ionizing radiation is produced during an MRI exam, unlike **X-rays**.
 - Magnetic field inside **works with radio waves and hydrogen atoms** in body to create cross-sectional images.
- **Applications**
 - Images produced by an MRI scan can show **organs, bones, muscles and blood vessels**.
 - MRI is widely used in **medical diagnosis and treatment planning** for brain disorders, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, etc.
 - **Functional MRI (fMRI)**, a special type of MRI produces images of blood flow to certain areas of brain which help in brain surgery.

7.6.13. CORONAVIRUS NETWORK (COVINET)

- World Health Organisation (WHO) has launched a new **CoViNet**.
- **About CoViNet**
 - It is a network of **global laboratories** with expertise in human, animal and environmental coronavirus surveillance.
 - It currently includes 36 laboratories from 21 countries (3 in India) in all 6 WHO regions.
 - It aims to **facilitate and coordinate global expertise for early and accurate detection, monitoring and assessment of SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV and novel coronaviruses** of public health importance.

7.6.14. EUVICHOL-S

- **World Health Organization (WHO)** has prequalified the **Euvichol-S vaccine** for Cholera.
 - It's a **simplified formulation** of the **oral cholera vaccine (OCV) Euvichol-Plus**.
 - Uses **fewer ingredients**, is **cheaper**, and can be **made more quickly than old version**.
- **About Cholera:**
 - It's an acute diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria.
 - It's transmitted through **ingestion of contaminated food or water**.
 - Highest numbers of cases are reported in the **Middle East and Africa**

7.6.15. WEIGHT LOSS DRUGS

- Research reveals that medications designed to combat obesity can also be beneficial in treating a variety of other diseases.
- **How Weight loss drugs work?**
 - Weight loss drugs mimic the action of a gut hormone called **glucagon-like peptide 1 (GLP-1)**.
 - **Glucagon-like peptide (GLP-1)** is secreted from three major tissues in humans' i.e. **enteroendocrine L-cells in the distal intestine, α cells in the pancreas, and the central nervous system**.
 - ✓ GLP-1 increases the **production of insulin** (a hormone that lowers blood-sugar levels) and reduces the production of glucagon (which increases blood-sugar levels).

- ✓ They **suppress appetite and slow digestion**, making people feel full faster and longer, which reduces food intake.
- ✓ GLP-1 is broken down by enzymes in the body very quickly, so it sticks around for **only a few minutes**.
- **Other Benefits of Fat losing drugs:** control type 2 diabetes, reducing heart issues like heart attacks, etc.

7.6.16. SNAIL MUCIN

- Snail Mucin has caught the attention of both beauty enthusiasts and experts alike.
- **About Snail Mucin:**
 - It is a gooey secretion that snails produce **when they crawl**.
 - It protects snails from **cuts and wounds**.
 - It can be used in the form of **serum, moisturizers, and wound healer**.



SMART QUIZ

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ESSAY

ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME 2024

Starts: **27 JUNE**

- ▶ Introducing different stages from developing an idea into completing an essay
- ▶ Practical and efficient approach to learn different parts of essay
- ▶ Regular practice and brainstorming sessions
- ▶ Inter disciplinary approaches
- ▶ **LIVE / ONLINE** Classes Available



Smart and Effective Notes Making for UPSC CSE Principles and Strategies



Why Notes Making?

Note-making for the UPSC exam is a strategic tool that significantly enhances an aspirant's ability to understand, retain, and revise the vast curriculum effectively. This personalized study aid helps in breaking down complex topics into digestible pieces, facilitating easier recollection and efficient last-minute revisions.

Principles of Notes Making

- Personalize Notes:** Understand your learning style for effective customization which should be prepared in an integrated manner for both Prelims and Mains examination.
- Format Choice:** Opt for digital, handwritten, or a hybrid approach based on learning ease.
- Summarization and Organization:** Condense passages, use bullet points for clear organization.
- Current Affairs Integration:** Enhance note relevance by integrating current affairs with static topics.
- Language Precision:** Emphasize keywords, concepts, and examples; avoid complete sentences.



Scan to access
Essential Learning
Resources.

Smart Strategies for Effective Notes Making

- Reliable Sources**
Choose reputable sources that meet the demands of the examination.
- Summarize and Organize**
Highlight or underline important points while reading, then summarize these in your own words.
- Link to the UPSC Syllabus**
To ensure easy referencing of subject, topic, and subtopic for efficient exam preparation.
- Integrate Visual Aids**
Use diagrams, flowcharts, and mind maps to visualize complex relationships between topics.
- Current Affairs**
Create a dedicated section and link it to corresponding static topics for a comprehensive understanding.
- Regular Revision**
Frequently revisit your notes to reinforce your memory and improve your retention.

Use bullet points, headings, and subheadings to structure your notes clearly.

Vision IAS Smart Quality Content

Designed and developed for smooth understanding, learning, retention, and reproduction of content in the UPSC Examination. Further, it also facilitates smart and efficient note-making.

- Simplified Complex Topics:** Makes tough subjects easier and more digestible for better understanding.
- Up-to-date Information:** Offers latest, relevant study materials aligned with current exam requirements.
- Analytical Skills Development:** Boosts essential critical and analytical thinking through quizzes.
- Resource Optimization:** Uses infographics & smart presentations for more efficient time and resource utilization.
- Enriched Presentation:** Utilizes thematic colors and tables for fast information identification and recall.



Scan to know more,
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Content in your learning.

8. CULTURE

8.1. DELISTING OF MONUMENTS

Why in the News?

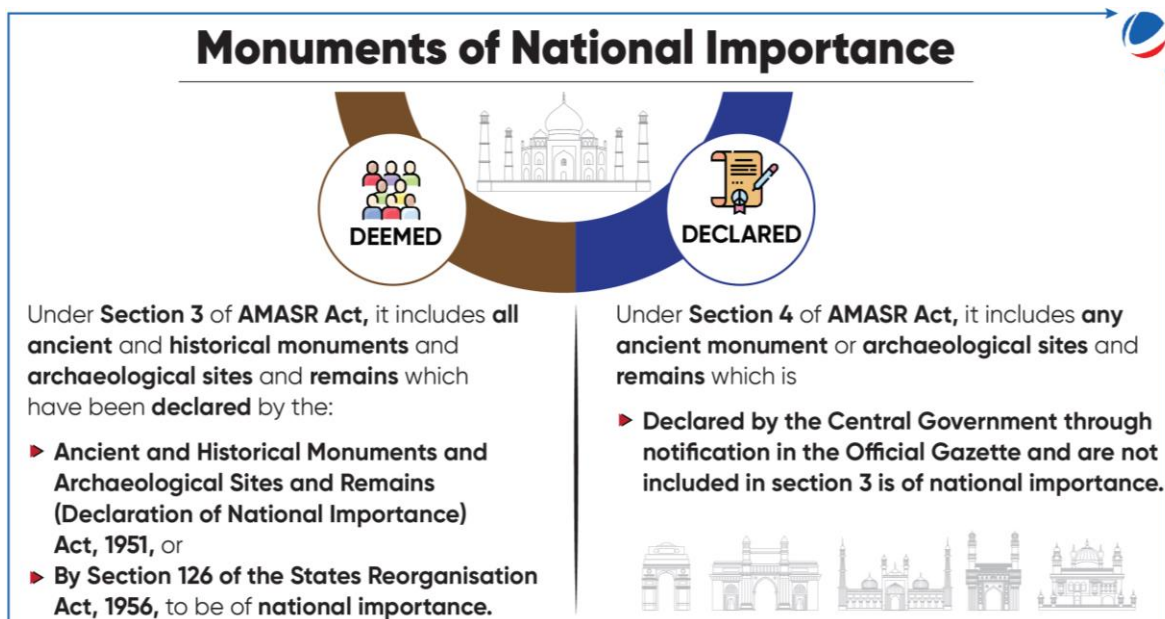
The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) intends to **delist 18 centrally protected monuments out of 24 "untraceable" monuments.**

More about News

- These 18 monuments are part of an earlier list of monuments that the ASI had said were “untraceable” and it **was assessed that they do not have national importance.**
- Untraceable monuments were the protected monuments, under the ASI, **whose exact location and condition could not be determined** due to various factors, such as rapid urbanization, difficulties in tracing in remote locations, dense forests, etc.
- Among the monuments that face delisting now are a medieval highway milestone recorded as **Kos Minar No.13 (Kos Mi) at Mujessar village in Haryana**, Gunner Burkill’s tomb in Jhansi district, the Telia Nala Buddhist ruins in Varanasi etc.
 - The Kos-minars, **erected during reign of Mughal Emperor Jahangir are the earliest known examples of the 'road milestones' in the Indian History.**
 - The kos-minar was **built by Mughal emperor Akbar in A.D. 1575** for administrative convenience and also for the **comfort of travellers.**
- **Decision was based on the report** submitted to parliament by the Ministry of Culture titled **"Issues relating to Untraceable Monuments and Protection of Monuments in India".**

About “Delisting” of monument

- **Delisting** a monument means it will **no longer receive conservation, protection, and maintenance from the ASI.**
 - Once a monument is delisted, **regular construction and urbanization** activities can take place in the area.
- It is done in accordance of **Section 35 of The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958.**
 - It empowers the **Central Government to declare**, whether an ancient and historical monument or **archaeological site and remains have ceased to be of national importance.**
- There is **no term called “Missing Monuments” in the AMASR Act** and the term only came into existence as it was used by the CAG Audit team on their Report.
- **Article 49** of the Constitution directs the state to **protect monuments and places and objects of national importance across the country.**



The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958

- It provides for the **preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites** and remains of national importance.
- It also **regulates the archaeological excavations and protection of sculptures**, carvings and other like objects.
- **Section 4 of the act empowers the Central Government** to declare ancient monuments, etc. to be of National Importance.
- **National Monuments Authority (NMA)** under the Ministry of Culture has been setup under The AMASR (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010.
 - Its function includes **protection and preservation of monuments and sites** through management of the prohibited and regulated area around the centrally protected monuments.
 - It also **grants permissions** to applicants for **construction related activity** in the **prohibited and regulated area**.

Challenges in Protecting the Monuments

- **Uniform Restrictions:** The AMASR Act imposes **uniform 100-meter prohibited and 200-meter regulated zones around monuments**, regardless of their unique characteristics, leading to potential inadequacies in protection measures.
- **Coverage Gaps:** **Smaller monuments** not covered by **national or state lists** lack legal protection, making them **vulnerable to development pressures and neglect**.
- **ASI's Limited Powers:** To **address encroachment** and **delay in publishing notifications**, hindering effective monument protection.
- **Lacks manpower:** ASI faces staffing and budget constraints, impacting security measures and leaving monuments vulnerable to theft and vandalism.
 - As per 2022 report of Ministry of Culture, **only 248 of the 3693 protected monuments have guards**.

Recommendations:

- **Case-Specific Determination:** **Develop a framework for determining prohibited and regulated areas** around monuments on a **case-by-case basis** to ensure tailored protection measures.
- **Flexible Appointment Criteria:** **Review appointment restrictions for National Monuments Authority (NMA)** to include experienced professionals from ASI or Ministry of Culture.
- **Legal Coverage:** **Amend the Constitution to include** "ancient and historical monuments other than those declared to be of national importance" **in the Concurrent List**.
 - This will enable **the central government to enforce provisions for the conservation of monuments** and sites not covered by the Union List or State List.
- **Empower ASI:** It recommends **ministry to prescribe a time-bound limit for ASI to publish the final notification**.
 - Also incorporate **the provisions of encroachment under the Indian Forest Act, 1927** to deal with encroachment of monuments.



The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)



Genesis: Founded in 1861 by **Alexander Cunningham** also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".



Ministry: Ministry of Culture



About: Premier **organization for the archaeological researches, protection and maintenance of ancient monuments of the cultural heritage**.



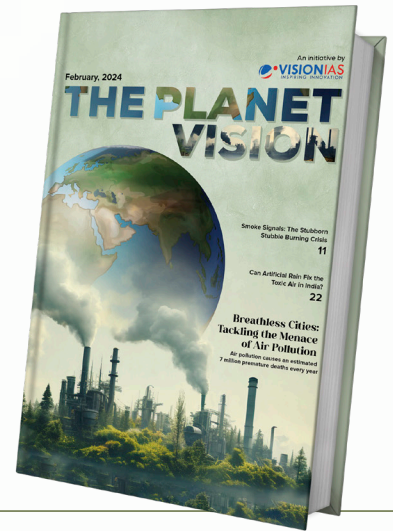
Mandate:

- Regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958** and **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972**.
- In charge of **protection and maintenance of centrally Protected Monuments (CPMs)/Sites of national importance** including World Heritage Property etc

THE PLANET VISION

In a world facing unprecedented environmental challenges, staying informed and empowered is more crucial than ever. Vision IAS brings you 'The Planet Vision', a simplified, informative, and interactive magazine to delve into the complexities of the environment.

With the belief, that individual efforts and awareness are the key to a sustainable future, the magazine seeks to inspire and educate people to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation for the environment, nature & planet.



Objectives of 'The Planet Vision'



Sensitise the young generation: Highlighting pressing environmental issues and their multifaceted impacts.



Inspire Action and Promote Sustainable Lifestyle: Inspiring stories and case studies to motivate readers to make environmentally conscious choices.



Bridge Environmental Science and Public Understanding: Presenting complex scientific concepts in a simple and interactive manner.



Showcase Solutions: Spotlight innovative technologies, projects, and initiatives that offer solutions to environmental challenges.



Highlight Local Efforts: Showcase local conservation efforts, community initiatives, and grassroots projects that make a positive impact on the environment.

Who is the magazine for?

The Magazine is designed for students, eco-conscious individuals, educators, environmentalists, and anyone who cares about the health of our planet.

Key elements of the 'The Planet Vision'



Cover Stories: Thought-provoking articles about a critical ongoing environmental issue, along with the mitigation strategies adopted at the national and international levels.



Briefing and Developments: Stay informed about the latest environmental news, trends, and solutions.



Protect and Preserve: Inspirational stories of local conservation efforts.



Environment and You: Illustrating ways to make environmentally conscious choices in everyday life.



Green Tech: New and emerging technologies in the field of environment.



Interactive elements:

■ **Snapshot:** Telling a story through capturing images.

■ **Quizzes and crosswords:** To test your understanding and knowledge as a reader.

“

Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better. ”

—Albert Einstein



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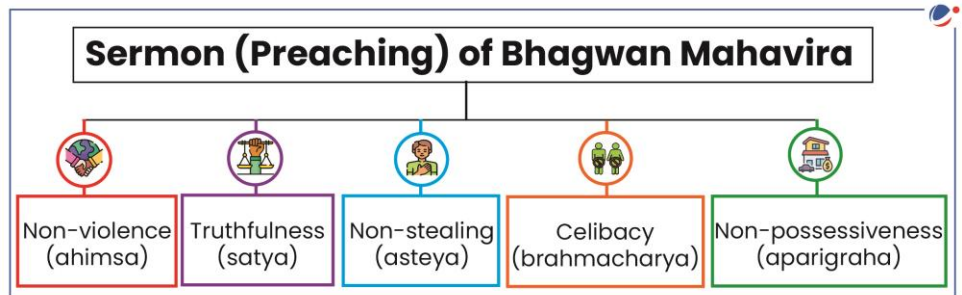
8.2. CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF TEACHINGS OF MAHAVIR JAIN

Why in the news?

Recently, Prime Minister inaugurated the 2550th Bhagwan Mahaveer Nirvan Mahotsav on the occasion of Mahavir Jayanti.

About Bhagwan Mahavira

- He is considered **founder of Jainism (24th Tirthankara of Jainism)** who lived in 6th century CE.
 - He was **Contemporary of Buddha**.
- **Birth:** Named as Vardhamana, he was born in Kundagrama (near Vaishali in present-day Bihar) into the royal Kshatriya family of King Siddhartha of Ikshvaku dynasty and Queen Trishala.
- **Renunciation:** At the age of 30, he left his princely life, family, and worldly possessions to become an ascetic.
- **Kaivalya (Enlightenment):** After years of intense meditation, penance, and self-discipline, he **achieved Kevala Jnana (omniscience)** at the age of 42 to become jina.



Contemporary Relevance of Teachings of Mahavir Jain

- **Conflict reduction:** There is need of peaceful resolution of conflicts, reduction in violence and armed conflicts and war.
 - **Nonviolence or Ahimsa** involves abstaining from all forms of violence and encouraging people to practise nonviolence verbally, psychologically, and physically.
 - **Asteya** advocates for respecting others' property, ideas, and rights that transcend national boundaries and promote the welfare of humanity.
- **Curb Consumerism:** Simple, minimalistic living and avoidance of attachment to unnecessary luxury goods, reverence for nature and the environment is required in today's world.
 - **Aparigraha or detachment** will be able to resolve contemporary issues like anxiety, materialism, greed etc.
- **Promote mindfulness:** Emphasis on self-discipline, self-awareness, and inner peace will promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being and promote mindfulness, self-control, and inner balance.
 - **Bramhacharya** emphasises on **self-discipline, self-awareness, and inner peace that promote physical, mental, and thus reduce stress related disorders**.
- **Ethical Business Practices:** Emphasis on honesty, integrity, and fairness in all dealings will encourage ethical business practices that prioritize social responsibility, transparency, etc.
 - **Satya** encourages **honesty, integrity, and transparency in communication and actions** and crucial for building trust, fostering healthy relationships.
- **Social tolerance:** Today, differences in ideologies among various faiths are the root cause of many misdemeanors present in society like Blasphemy, mob lynching, and religious rioting etc.
 - **Anekantavada** (various viewpoints or angles) suggests considering the existence of other beliefs and also advises the masses to respect them

8.3. VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA

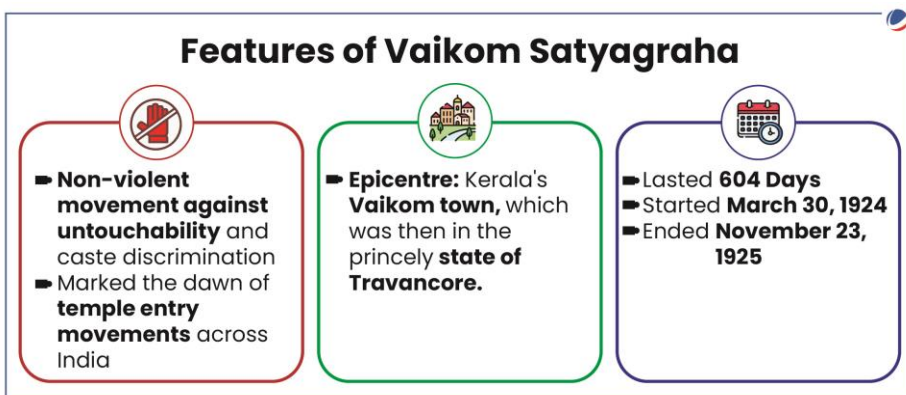
Why in the News?

Recently, India celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Vaikom Satyagraha, a significant movement in Indian history that confronted untouchability and caste-based oppression.

About Vaikom Satyagraha

- It was a **historic non-violent temple entry protest** that began in Vaikom, a town in the princely state of Travancore (Kerala region), on March 30, 1924.

- It was in a response to the discriminatory exclusion of "lower caste" Hindus from accessing the Vaikom Mahadeva temple.
- Despite rise in the educational and economic status the lower caste community especially Ezhavas faced the social discrimination which eventually led to the agitation.
- Satyagrahis went in groups of three to enter the temple but were stopped and arrested by the police.
 - Dressed in khadi and wearing khadi caps, Govinda Panikkar (Nair), Bahuleyan (Ezhava) and Kunjappu (Pulaya), defied the prohibitory orders.
 - The movement gained popularity throughout India and received support from various regions.
 - ✓ The Akalis of Punjab provided food to the Satyagrahis.
 - ✓ Christian and Muslim leaders also supported the movement
- The Vaikom Satyagraha was officially withdrawn on November 30, 1925 after consultations between Gandhi and W.H. Pitt, the then police commissioner of Travancore.



Associated Leaders & support

- **T.K. Madhavan, K.P. Kesava Menon and K. Kelappan** (also known as Kerala Gandhi) are considered the pioneers of the Vaikom Satyagraha movement.
 - **Issue of temple entry** was first raised by Ezhava leader T K Madhavan in a 1917 editorial in his paper **Deshabhimani**.
 - In 1921, the **Travancore Congress Committee**, led by **T.K. Madhavan**, launched a campaign to have the ban lifted.
 - In the **1923 session of the INC in Kakinada**, a resolution was passed by the **Kerala Provincial Congress Committee to take up anti-untouchability as a key issue**.
- **George Joseph**, a well-known independence activist in Kerala, took over the leadership of the Satyagraha in the absence of Kesava Menon.
- **E. V. Ramasamy Naicker**, known as **Periyar**, also called **Vaikom Veerar**, was a key figure in the Vaikom Satyagraha who mobilized volunteers and garnered public support through his speeches. Among the all persons arrested in movement, only **Periyar got rigorous imprisonment**.
- **Mahatma Gandhi's** involvement began in 1921 as he supported a mass agitation led by Madhavan for temple entry.
- **Sree Narayana Guru, Mannathu Padmanabhan, E. V. Ramasamy Naicker**, etc also supported the agitation.
- **Women like Nagammai (wife of Periyar), Kannammal etc.** played key roles empowering women and taking on vital responsibilities.

Outcome of Vaikom Satyagraha

- **Legal Reforms & initiatives:**
 - The Satyagraha's pressure led to the **Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936**, a landmark legal victory granting **access to lower-caste individuals into temples**.
 - It also led to initiatives like the **establishment of the Travancore Public Service Commission** to ensure fairness in government roles.
- **Political Awakening:** It catalysed **political awareness and activism among marginalized communities**.
- **National Impact:** The movement's resonance extended beyond Kerala, inspiring similar protests and campaigns across India against caste-based discrimination.
- **Rift between Mahatma Gandhi and Periyar:** The Vaikom Satyagraha brought open the **rift between Gandhiji and Periyar**.
 - While **Gandhiji saw it as Hindu reformist movement**, Periyar called it a fight against caste-based atrocities.
 - **Periyar was not happy with the partial success attained** (only 3 out of 4 roads leading to the temple were open for all the castes), and he eventually **quit Congress** months later.

Other Anti-Caste Movements

Year	Movement	Leaders	Details
1873	Satyashodhak Movement	Jyotirao Phule	Emancipation of low castes, untouchables, and widows, Against Brahminic dominion
1916	Justice Party Movement	Dr. T.M Nair, P. Tyagaraja Chetti, C.N Mudalair	Against Brahminic control in government, education, and politics
1924	Depressed Classes Movement	BR Ambedkar	Upliftment of depressed classes, Against untouchability, published Marathi Newspaper titled Bahiskrit Bharat (1927)
1925	Self-Respect Movement	EV Ramaswami Naicker (Periyar)	Against caste system and Brahmin bias, Establishment of Kudi Arasu journal (1910)

8.4. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON ART FORMS

Why in the News?

Recently, the fields of Art and Culture are changing dramatically in the rapidly changing digital age.

Role of Digital Technology in various Art Forms

- **Democratisation of Creativity:** The internet era has made artistic expression accessible to people from a wide range of backgrounds by democratising creativity.
 - Aspiring artists can present their work to a worldwide audience with **the use of easily accessible software, social media, and online galleries.**
 - **Cross-cultural interactions** are made easier by digital platforms, which let users interact with and **learn about people from other cultures.**
- **Virtual Projection of Art:** Galleries and museums have begun to offer virtual exhibitions and virtual tours.
 - Through **interactive multimedia elements, 2D, 3D, or 4D projections, virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR)**, there is an unfathomable scope for creating and popularising masterpieces of Art with the help of technology.
 - The **Indian Digital Heritage (IDH) Project** was a unique initiative of the Department of Science & Technology (DST), supporting collaborative projects between researchers in the areas of technology and humanities for the digital documentation and interpretation of our tangible and intangible heritage
- **Generating value:** The art world has been reshaped by **Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs)**, which allow artists to market their digital works as unique properties.
 - NFT art allows artists to **sell or rent their artwork beyond the physical world.**
- **Enhanced reward:** Digital Technology has enhanced artists rewards in many ways - **design innovation, increased access, convenience of working, instant sharing**, increased productivity, wider reach etc.
- **Preserving the traditional art:** Digital preservation techniques, such as digitisation, metadata management, and digital archiving, are essential for ensuring the long-term preservation.
 - Technology helped in **resurrection of Madhubani Painting, Chau dance and many more such forms.**

Concerns associated with Digital Technology in various Art Forms

- **Originality in Work:** As digital manipulation techniques become increasingly sophisticated, distinguishing between original artworks and digital forgeries or replicas becomes more challenging.
 - The proliferation of digital art online makes it difficult to discern the quality and authenticity of artworks, **leading to trust and credibility issues.**
- **Limited to some artists:** Digital art creation requires proficiency in digital tools and software, which may pose barriers **for artists lacking training or resources.**
- **Data Privacy issue:** Collecting and storing personal information, conducting financial transactions, and sharing creative content online carry inherent risks that require robust **cybersecurity measures and data protection protocols.**
- **Ethical issues:** As technology continues to change the landscape of artwork, ethical considerations become increasingly relevant. Questions **concerning ownership, copyright, and the worth of digital art** have been brought up.

Conclusion

Digital technology has transformed how art is made, delivered, and preserved. Adaptation and innovation are crucial to harnessing the full potential of the digital age in the entertainment industry.

8.5. NEWS IN SHORTS

8.5.1. WORLD CRAFT CITY (WCC)

- The World Crafts Council International (WCCI) has picked **Srinagar to map its craft clusters before its final nomination as the WCC.**
 - Local crafts include **Pashmina shawls, walnut wood carving, hand-knotted carpet, Kani shawl, Khatamband (ceiling design), Sozni craft (needle embroidery), Jalakdozi (chain stitch rugs), Namdha (handmade rug), Basholi Painting (depicting Vaishnavism), papier mâché** etc.
- **About WCC**
 - Launched in **2014 by the WCCI.**
 - It recognizes role of **local authorities, craftspeople, and communities** in cultural, economic, and social development worldwide.
 - It establishes a **dynamic network of craft cities** across the globe, aligning with the principles of the **creative economy.**
- WCCI is a **Kuwait-based organization** working on the **recognition and preservation of traditional crafts** across the globe.

8.5.2. PADTA BET

- Archaeological excavation reveals **5,200-year-old Harappan settlement at Padta Bet in Kachchh, Gujarat.**
 - It is near **Juna Khatiya**, an Early Harappan necropolis (mass burial site).
- **Evidence of occupation from Early Harappan to Late Harappan periods:**
 - **Pottery** include **Ceramic artefacts** of novel kinds involving large storage jars, small bowls and dishes.
 - **Artefacts** including **semi-precious stone beads** made of carnelian and agate, terracotta spindle whorls, copper, lithic tools etc.
 - **Remains of animal bones** representing cattle, sheep or goat and **edible shell fragments**, thereby indicating **animal domestication.**

8.5.3. NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN TELANGANA

- Archaeologists have discovered 3 new archaeological sites in Telangana.
- **New Archaeological sites include:**
 - **Ooragutta:** An Iron Age megalithic site.
 - **Two new rock art sites at Damaratogu** in Gundala mandal of Bhadradi Kothagudem district.

✓ **Devarlabanda Mula:** Has only depictions of animals and no humans or weapons.

- Usually in this region, a type of megalithic monument known as **'Dolmenoid Cists'** are found.
 - Dolmenoid cists are **chamber tombs which are semi-subterranean.**
- The three basic types of megaliths are the **chamber tombs, unchambered tombs, and megaliths not connected with burials.**

8.5.4. KESARIYA STUPA

- Kesariya stupa is the **tallest and largest Buddhist stupa** in the world.
- **About Kesariya stupa**
 - Located in East Champaran, **Bihar.**
 - Built in **circular shape** and structure is made of **bricks, mud, and lime mortar.**
 - **Height of 104 feet, taller than Borobodur Stupa** in Java, a world heritage monument.
 - Chinese travellers **Fa-Hien (5th century CE) and Hiuen Tsang (7th century CE)**, who travelled to India, also mention this stupa.
 - Built in 3rd Century BC by **Mauryan emperor Ashoka**, who was **instrumental in spreading Buddhism** across Indian subcontinent.
 - It is believed that stupa was built to **commemorate the spot where Lord Buddha gave his 22nd sermon** and to mark the place where he announced his impending death.
 - Buddha announced **his previous existence as a 'Chakravarti Raja' at this stupa.**
 - Buddha also asked Licchivis to return to Vaishali after giving them **"BEGGING BOWL."**

8.5.5. SOLIGAS TRIBE

- Soligas Tribe are an **isolated tribal community restricted to only Karnataka & Tamil Nadu** (especially in Biligiri Rangana Hills and Male Mahadeshwara Hills).
 - They are popularly known as **Soliga/Sholiga/Soligar.**
 - They are also called the **children of bamboo** because the word is believed to mean that they originated from bamboo.
 - Their settlements are known as **'haaDi' and 'pooDu'.**
 - They speak **"Soliga"** which is one of the **Dravidian Language.**

- **Rituals and Festivals:** They Perform rituals to **invoke rain gods during drought**, using freshly squeezed honey as offerings.
 - There traditional festivals are **Rotti habba, Hosa Ragi habba, Mari habba, Gowri habba, etc.**
 - They follow **Hinduism, with a deep reverence for nature.**
- **Occupation and Lifestyle:**
 - They **practice shifting cultivation and hunting** in tune with the seasonal cycle of the forest.
 - The main **occupation** of Soligas is to **collect minor forest products like gum, honey, soap nuts, root and tubers, tamarind etc.**
 - Soligas use more **than 300 herbs for the treatment of various ailments.**
- **Other details:**
 - To recognise the efforts of the **Soliga Community in biodiversity and conservation**, a new genus of wasp, '**Soliga Ecarinata**,' has been after them.

- **Soligas became the first tribal community** living inside a tiger reserve to **get legal rights to the forest in 2011.**

8.5.6. SHOMPEN TRIBE

- Shompen cast their vote for the first time in Lok Sabha Election.
- **About Shompen Tribe**
 - One of the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.**
 - Reside in dense **tropical rain forests of Great Nicobar island.**
 - Belong to the **Mongoloid group.**
 - According to Census (2011), **estimated population of Shompen is 229.**
 - They are **hunters and gatherers.** They used to hunt wild pig, python, monitor Lizard, crocodile, etc.
 - **Live a semi-nomadic life** and have **not been colonised at one place** in a defined reserve forest.



SMART QUIZ

You can scan this QR code to practice the Smart Quiz of Culture at our open test online platform for testing your understanding and recalling of the concepts.



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- The Course plan (60 classes) covers important current issues from standard sources like The Hindu, Indian Express, Business Standard, PIB, PRS, AIR, RS/LSTV, Yojana etc.

हिंदी माध्यम में भी उपलब्ध

Current Affairs **Quarterly** REVISION

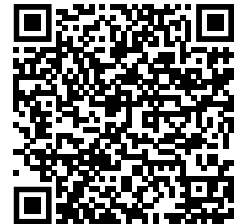


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9. ETHICS

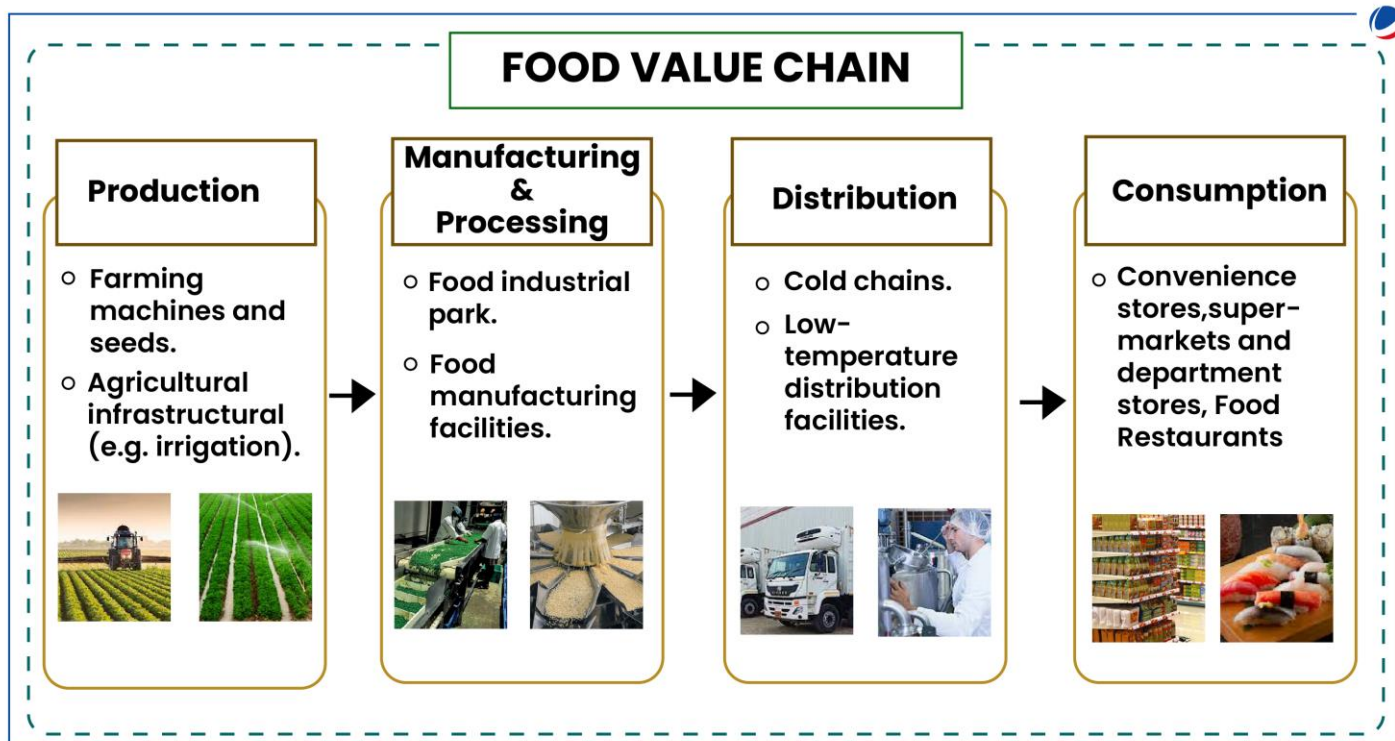
9.1. ETHICS OF FOOD SERVICE AND SAFETY

Introduction

The presence of **carcinogenic pesticide ethylene oxide** in several spice mixes of MDH and Everest was detected in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Maldives. Nestlé India was also found to have **included sugar in infant milk in India but not in Europe**. These instances highlight poor standardization and weakening of Ethics in the Food Industry.

Different stakeholders involved in Food Production and Consumption

Stakeholders	Role/Interests
Consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health and Wellness (Overweight, obesity, and NCDs) Food safety, Food prices & Food security Equality, Social justice & fairness in food services
Companies/ Businesses/ Small-scale producers/ Processors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food quality and safety, Cost Efficiency, Profit and sustainability Customer satisfaction, trust and Loyalty Social Responsibility and Community Engagement Reputation Management
Government/ Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public policy & Regulation Ensuring that food served is of high quality, nutritious, and contributes to public health and safety.
Society/NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable food production and consumption Ensuring that food supply chain follows ethical practices Ensuring Affordability and Accessibility of food Regulatory Compliance and Advocacy
International Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food safety Measures Animal Welfare, Human rights and Social Justice Global Food Security and Environmental Protection Consumer Rights and Transparency



What is Food Ethics?

Food ethics **concerns the morality of food production and consumption**. Food service ethics encompasses moral principles and standards that guide behaviour in the food service industry and across the food value chain.

Key principles of food service ethics

- **Justice: From a Social justice point of view**, the ethics of food safety involves justice for food providers as well as consumers.
 - **Justice for Food Providers:** Food service workers often face issues like low wages, food insecurity, low standard of living etc.
 - **Justice for Consumers:** From the consumer's perspective Access, Security and Affordability of safe and nutritious food are important issues that are often ignored.
- **Autonomy:** It means having the freedom to choose how food is **produced and distributed (autonomy in Supply Chains)**, while also respecting **consumers' ability to make their own decisions (transparency via Labels)**.
- **Non-maleficence:** In the context of food safety, non-maleficence encompasses-
 - Taking steps to prevent contamination and foodborne illnesses,
 - Avoiding harmful practices, such as using unsafe additives, pesticides,
 - Addressing and rectifying safety concerns,
 - Being transparent about food sourcing and production methods etc.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** It involves Responsibility for Food Safety, Addressing Customer Feedback, and Communication with Stakeholders among others.

Regulatory systems for ethics and quality of food products		
Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) The body is responsible for protecting and promoting public health by regulating and supervising food safety and quality in India.	Codex Alimentarius It is a collection of internationally recognized standards , guidelines and codes of practice for food safety and quality, was developed by Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)	State Governments They play an integral role in creation and implementation of regulations on food safety.

To know more about Food Safety, kindly refer to Article 7.3 Food Safety in the June 2022 edition of VisionIAS Monthly Current Affairs Magazine.

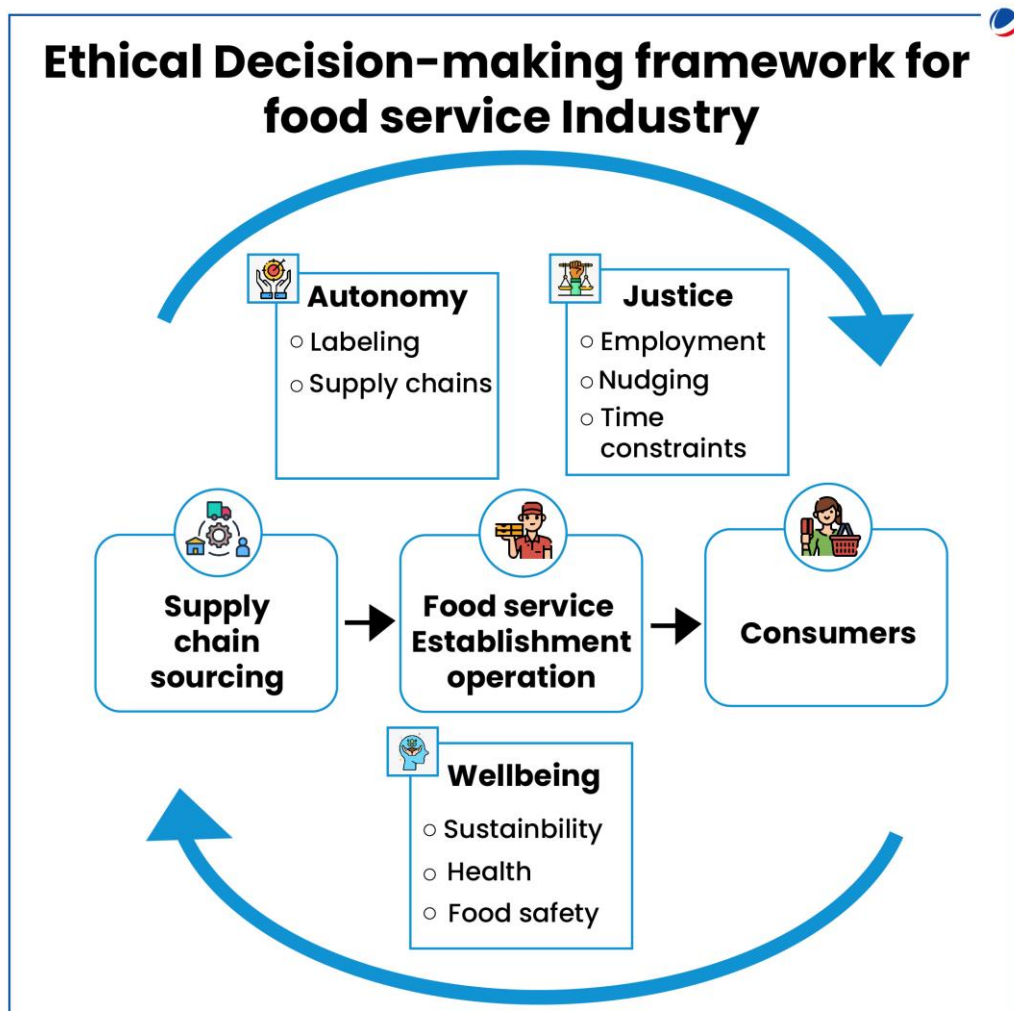
Ethical Dilemmas Involved in Food Service and Safety

- **Assigning responsibility for safety:** Who should take responsibility to **prevent and control foodborne diseases and outbreaks**?
 - According to WHO, 600 million people fall ill and 420,000 die every year from eating unsafe food.
- **Financial Constraints vs. Food Safety:** How to balance **costs and benefits of food safety measures**, especially for **small-scale producers and processors** and at the same time comply with food safety standards.
- **Diverse Individual choices:** How to respect the **autonomy and preferences of consumers**, who may have different tastes or choices.
- **Protecting genuine stakeholders:** Protecting the **privacy and confidentiality of individuals or businesses** involved in foodborne incidents, without compromising the public interest or accountability.
- **Universal application of safety standards:** Another important ethical issue is how to ensure that **food services and safety measures are fair and equitable**, and not discriminate against certain groups based on socioeconomic status, culture, or geography.

Way forward

- **Nudging consumers:** Nudges are small changes in the environment of decision or “choice architecture” (**e.g. display of choices in a cafeteria, restaurant menu, etc.**) to help individuals make choices that are deemed beneficial. **E.g. Eat Right India Campaign**
- **Stakeholder's Capitalism:** Stakeholders' perspectives, including those from environmentalists, consumers, and animal industries, are important in ethical decision-making.

- **Labelling:** Information content and framing on labels need to improve for better communication (E.g. Simple graphical information).
 - Also, consumers need to be better informed through education programs on comprehending this information.
- **Food safety training and education:** Food safety training and education are important for food handlers to prevent food contamination and foodborne disease outbreaks.
- **Triple bottom line (TBL) framework:** It is a framework for measuring sustainability that considers three dimensions of performance: social, environmental, and financial.



Ensuring ethical standards in **food service and safety** is paramount for the **well-being of consumers, the sustainability of businesses**, and the health of our society. By embracing **transparency, accountability, and stakeholder engagement**, ethical complexities of the food industry can be solved while promoting a healthier and more equitable food system for all.

Check your Ethical Aptitude:

A reputed Indian Multinational food and drink processing conglomerate developed an international food product. The company announced that it will soon launch the same product in African market. Accordingly the product got approved by competent authorities and was launched in African Market.

However, international investigations later found out that products in African market contained a cancer-causing ingredient, violating the laid down Local food standards. This investigation adversely affected the reputation and profitability of the food company. Also, this isn't first such case, numerous Indian food products have previously been identified with cancer-causing agents in international markets.

On the basis of the case study answer the following questions:

- Examine the different stakeholders and ethical dilemmas involved in the case.
- What course of action is available with Food Company to resolve the crisis?
- What action should be taken by Indian authorities against the food company?

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Building
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Smart revision is key to mastering the UPSC Prelims. By adopting strategic revision techniques and leveraging VisionIAS Quick Revision Classes, aspirants can enhance their preparation and boost their exam confidence.

9.2. POLITICAL ETHICS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Introduction

Recently a Calcutta High Court judge and a senior IPS officer in West Bengal resigned from their posts and joined political parties. This has once again raised questions of propriety about independent functioning of constitutional authorities and bureaucracy and the conflict of interest in their duties.

Different Stakeholders and associated ethical concerns

Stakeholders	Role/ Interest	Ethical Concerns
Judges/ Bureaucrats	Exercise of individual rights, pursuit of political aspirations, desire for public service, etc.	Maintaining impartiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, upholding the integrity of their offices.
Political Parties	Gaining experienced individuals with governance knowledge, enhancing credibility by leveraging public image of judges/ bureaucrats, etc.	Ensuring no undue influence or favouritism, enhancing trust in public institutions, upholding democratic principles, etc.
Citizens	Fair and impartial justice system, efficient and politically neutral bureaucracy, safeguarding their rights, etc.	Perception of bias or favouritism in implementation of rule of law, erosion of trust in the institutions, etc.
Government	Effective implementation of its policies, ensuring credibility of institutions, having independent policy making capability, etc.	Preventing potential/actual conflicts of interest, ensuring fair and impartial adjudication/ administration, ensuring separation of powers, etc.
Civil Society	Safeguarding public interest, promoting transparency and accountability in governance, etc.	Ensuring ethical conduct among public officials, raising awareness about potential conflict of interests, etc.

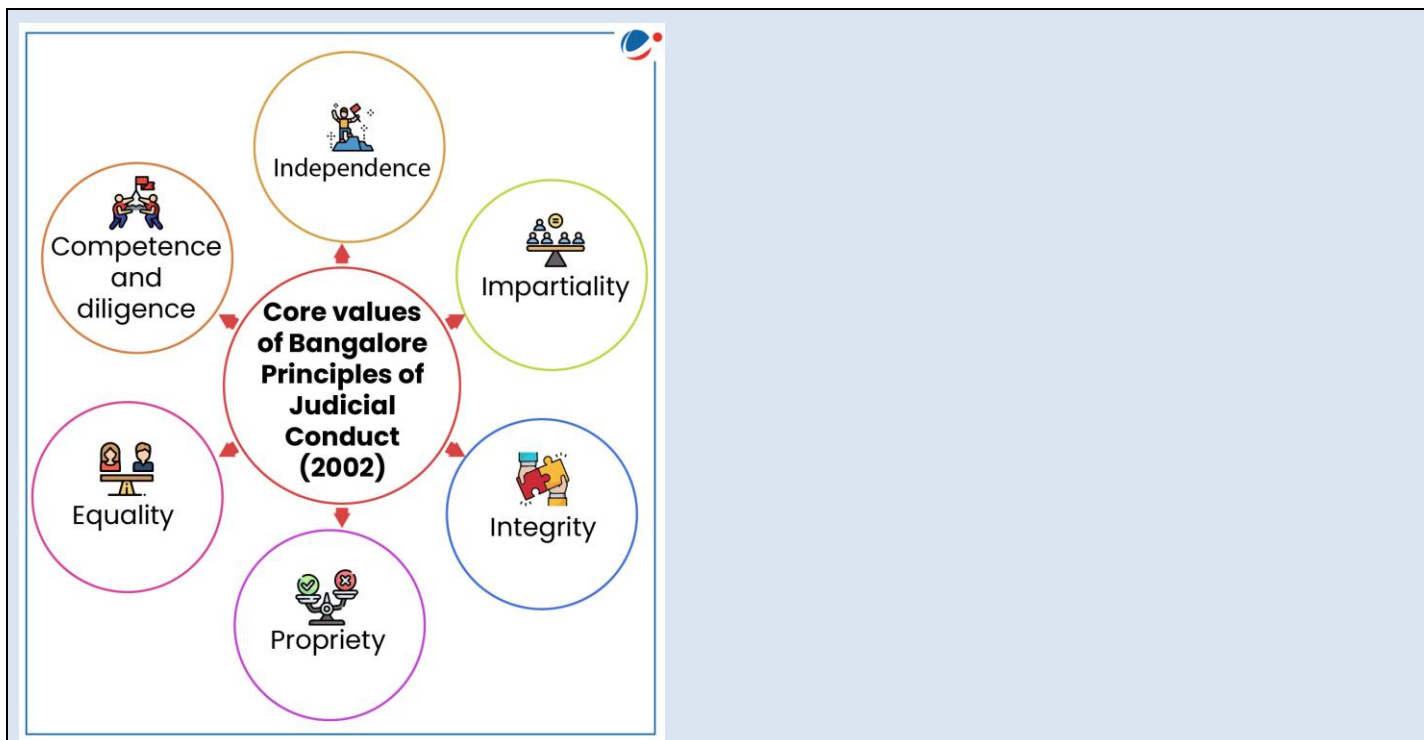
Ethical implications of judges and bureaucrats joining politics

While there is no constitutional bar on politicians and bureaucrats joining politics, critics argue that they jeopardize the essential principles of judicial independence, bureaucratic neutrality, and public trust in these institutions.

- **Separation of powers:** Separation of powers is a fundamental principle in democratic governance, wherein the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government are kept distinct to prevent the concentration of power and keeping checks and balances.
- **Conflict of interest:** Judges or bureaucrats with political aspirations might be swayed by political considerations while performing their official duties, compromising their autonomy and ability to function independently.
 - Since, **Government is the largest litigant** in court of law, prospects of post-retirement appointments may influence judges in deciding cases against the government.
- **Judicial Impartiality:** Credibility of the judiciary hinges on public perception of fairness and impartiality. Post-retirement affiliation with a political party **creates a strong perception of bias regardless of the judge's actual intentions**.
 - Judges are sworn to **uphold the law without fear or favour, affection or ill-will**, rendering decisions based solely on facts and legal principles.
- **Bureaucratic neutrality:** Political affiliations of public servants can lead to **politicization of public services and distortions in implementation of policies**, undermining their intended objectives and outcomes.
- **Erosion of public trust:** Frequent movement between judiciary/bureaucracy and politics can create a perception that these positions are stepping stones for political careers, undermining public trust in institutions.

Ethical Principles guiding judiciary

- **Constitutional oath:** Third Schedule of the Constitution demands a judge-designate to swear inter alia that he will perform his duties without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.
- **Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct (2002):** These intend to establish standards for ethical conduct of judges and offer judiciary a framework for regulating judicial conduct.
- Full Court of the Supreme Court in 1997, adopted the “**Restatement of values of Judicial Life**” which was subsequently ratified by the Conference of Chief Justices in 1999. It also includes values similar to Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct.



Way Forward

- **Cooling-off Period:** It is suggested that there should be **at least two years cooling period** between retirement and joining politics/other appointments.
 - The **Election Commission had in 2012 recommended** to the Union government to provide for a **cooling-off period for top bureaucrats** after their retirement before they could join political parties and contest elections. However, the Government had rejected this recommendation.
 - ✓ Presently, bureaucrats serving in All India Services and Central Service Group 'A' can join any commercial establishment after a **cooling-off period of one year**.
 - The Supreme Court had left it for the legislature to determine whether **a cooling-off period is required for bureaucrats** before they join politics after retirement. As of now, there is also one year of cooling off period for Bureaucrats who wish to join commercial employment (**Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, 2021**).

Arguments for cooling-off period

- **Promoting Public Trust:** A cooling-off period allows for a buffer period to maintain public trust and neutrality and ensure that there is no direct conflict of interest or undue influence when judges or bureaucrats join politics immediately after retirement.
- **Protecting Institutional Integrity:** Cooling-off reduces the perception of a quid pro quo (something for something) system by creating a clear separation between their roles and political activities.
- **Upholding Ethical Standards:** A waiting period reinforces the core principles of impartiality for those previously holding positions of authority and power.

Arguments against cooling-off period

- **No Constitutional bar:** There is no explicit constitutional prohibition on judges joining politics or securing other appointments post-retirement.
- **Against democratic values:** One of the essential features of a democracy is every citizen's right to contest elections and restricting rights of qualified individuals to contest elections goes against the spirit of democracy.
- **Not a valid classification:** It is argued that restrictions on a senior bureaucrat joining private job post-retirement is based on **intelligible differentia** to avoid conflicts of interest.
 - However, such a restriction against officials contesting polls may **not be a valid classification** and would not be in harmony with fundamental right to form association.
- **"Fear or Favor" Considerations:** The "fear or favor" principle already exists in law. Judges can already recuse themselves from cases where conflicts of interest arise.

- **Code of Ethics for bureaucrats:** Prescribe a Code of Ethics, as recommended by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC - II), which would cover broad guiding principles of good behaviour and governance for public officials.
- **Resolving conflict of interest:** Public officials and judges should ensure resolution of any conflict of interest that arises during fulfilment of their duties which can be ensured through **recusal, divestiture, and disclosure**.
 - For instance, whenever there is a potential conflict of interest, a **judge can withdraw from a case**. The practice stems from the cardinal principle of due process of law — *nemo iudex in causa sua*, that is, no person shall be a judge in his own case.
 - ✓ Another principle guiding judicial recusals is 'justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done'.
 - **Netherlands** regulates conflict of interest through **codes of conduct or codes of standards** while **France** regulates it through **mix of laws and codes**.

"The members of judiciary become inviolable role models, the perfect incorruptible ideals of a civilized society. It is this that we have to strive for, attain and sustain."



— Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Check your ethical aptitude

Recently, a judge of a Supreme Court has resigned from his post to contest election to the Lok Sabha. The concerned judge was associated with major decisions which justified the actions of the government in power. This raised the concerns from opposition parties regarding judicial propriety.

On the basis of the above case study, answer the following questions:

- Explain the ethical issues arising out of a Supreme Court judge joining a political party in power.
- Evaluate the arguments for and against judges joining politics, weighing the benefits and risks.
- Discuss the approaches that can be adopted to ensure balance between public trust in judicial institution and actions of individual judges.

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10. SCHEMES IN NEWS

10.1. MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEMES (MGNREGS)

Why in the news?

Recently, the Centre has **notified new wage rates (3-10 % hike, varying from state to state)** for unskilled manual workers under **MGNREGA, 2005** for the financial year 2024-2025.

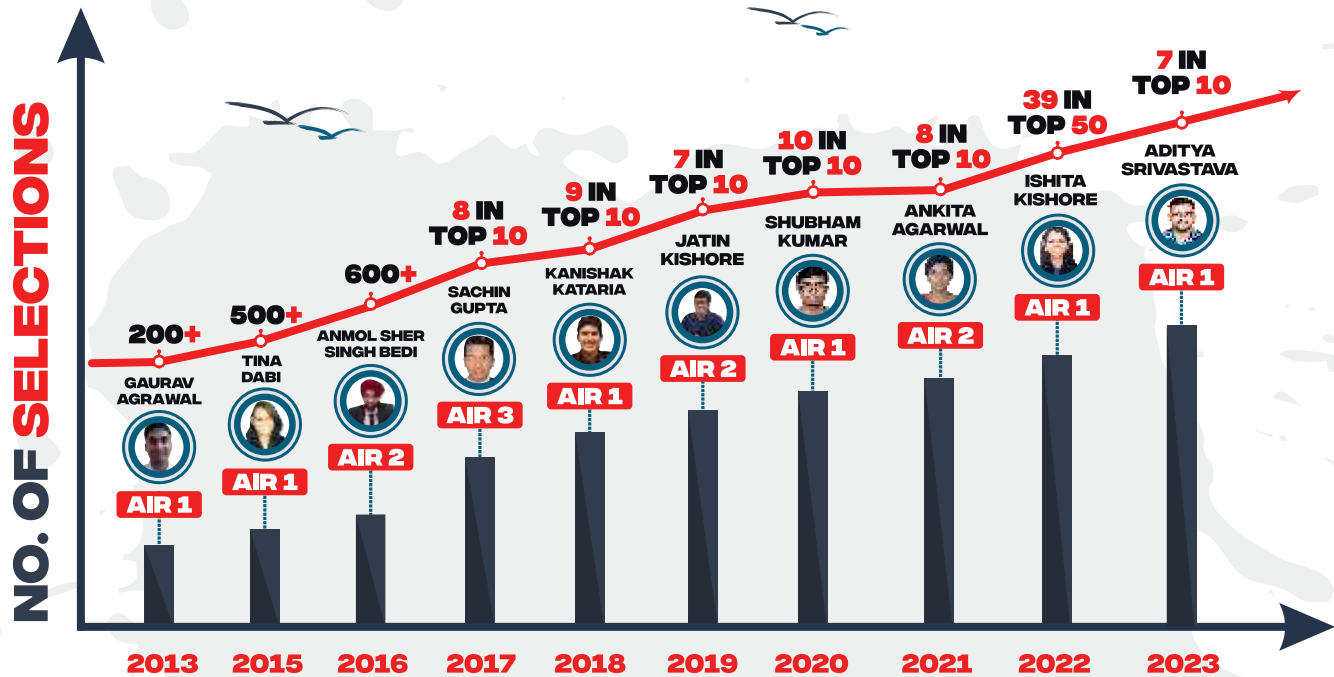
Objectives	Salient features
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. Creation of durable assets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development. Launch year: 2005 Type: Centrally Sponsored Scheme Beneficiaries: All Household members aged more than 18 years and residing in rural area. Coverage: Entire country except districts having 100 % urban populations. Basis for Wage Rates: MGNREGA wages are decided based on changes in the CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index- Agriculture Labor), which reflects inflation in rural areas. Different states have different wage rates. Right to demand and receive work within 15 Days: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional 50 days of unskilled wage employment in a financial year during drought/natural calamity and certain Schedule Tribe Households. Right to unemployment allowance and the payment is to be made in 15 days. Right to worksite facilities: It include medical aid, drinking water and shade. Geotagging of created assets: Through GeoMGNREGA of the Ministry of Rural Development in association with National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO and National Informatics Centre. Key procedural features of MGNREGS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wage to material ratio at 60:40 at GP level. It will not engage any contractor for implementation of the projects under it. At least one-third of the beneficiaries shall be women who have registered and requested for work under this Act. Other key features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Audit: The Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audits of all the projects taken up within the Gram Panchayat (GP) under the scheme. Janmanrega: It is tool to get feedback on MGNREGA assets from citizens. Project 'UNNATI': For skilling MGNREGS beneficiaries so that they can move from the current partial employment to full-time employment.

Fund sharing pattern	
By Centre	By State
100% funding for unskilled labour cost.	25% for the material cost.
75% for the material cost.	Cost of unemployment allowance payable under the Scheme.

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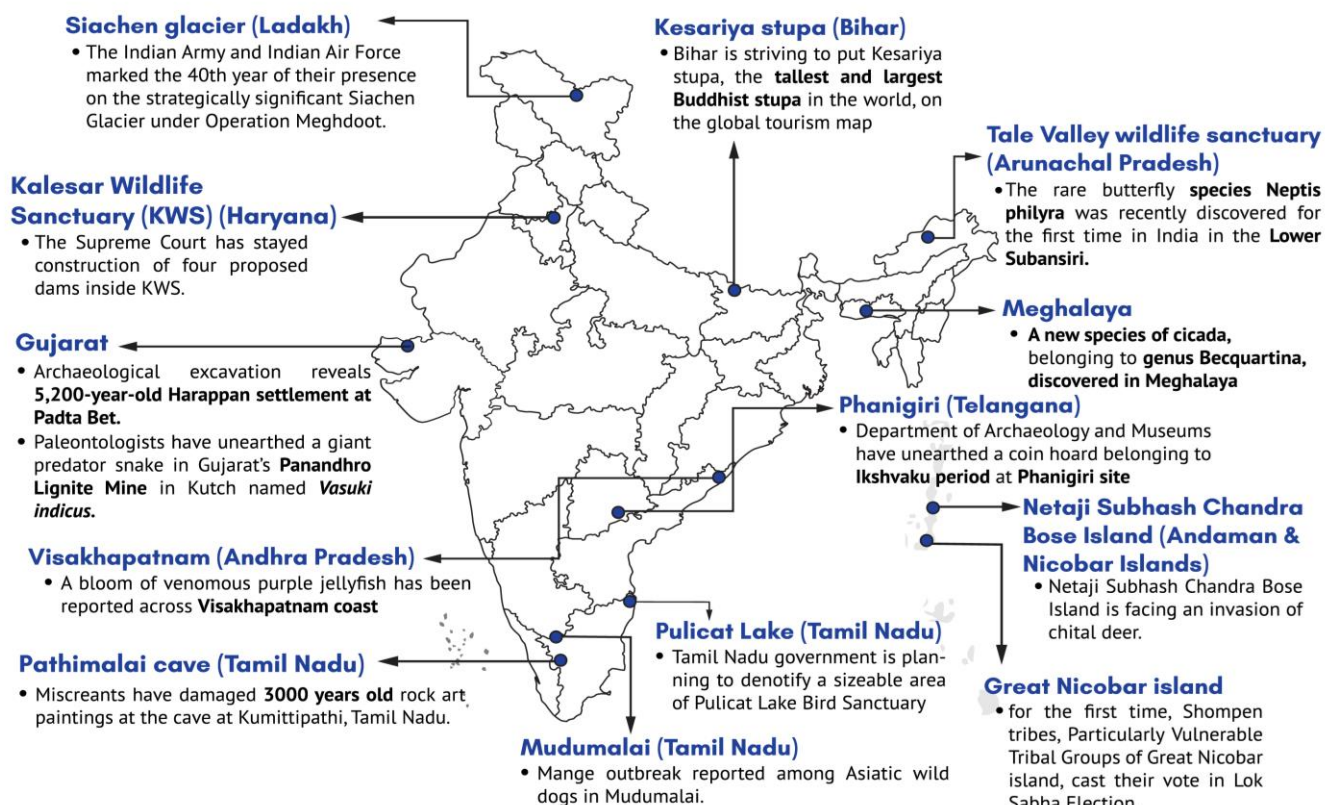
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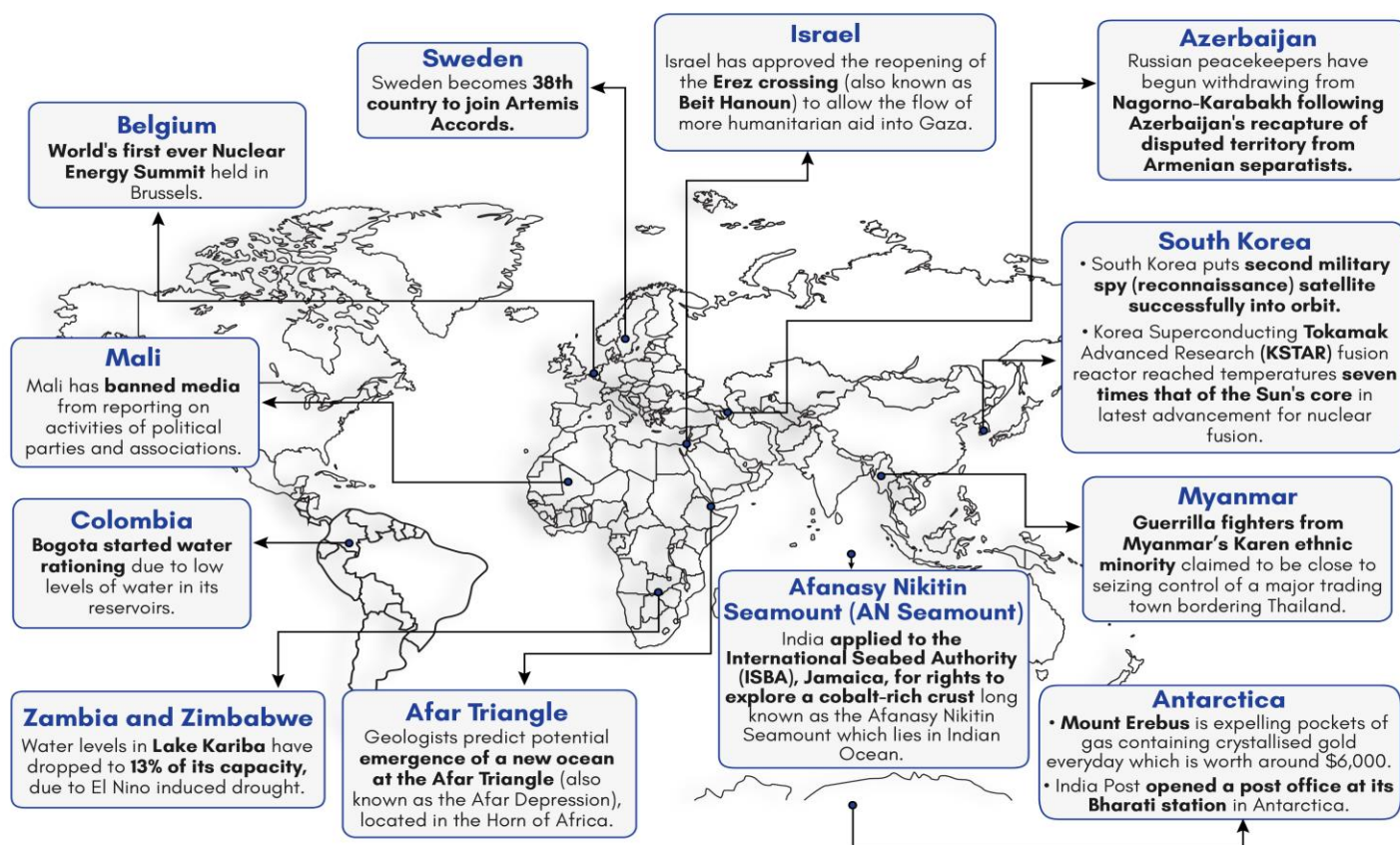
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Places in News: India






Places in News: World





Personalities In News

Personality	About	Ethical Values Exhibited by the Personality
 <p>Dheeran Chinnamalai (1756 - 1805)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dheeran Chinnamalai was remembered on his birth anniversary on 17th April. About Dheeran Chinnamalai (1756 - 1805) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Born as Theerthagiri in present day Tirupur district, Tamil Nadu. He was a master in all arts and crafts of guerrilla warfare. He was a Palayakaarar (Poligars) and chieftain who was the ruler of Kongu Nadu region. Hanged by British at Sankagiri Fort in Tamil Nadu. Key contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He helped Tipu Sultan in his war against British and was instrumental in victories at Chitheswaram, Mazahavalli and Srirangapatna. 	<p>Courage and Patriotism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His participation in guerrilla warfare and his support for Tipu Sultan against the British highlighted his immense courage in the fight for freedom. His resistance against British rule and eventual martyrdom underscored his deep patriotism and dedication to his country.
 <p>Tama Dora</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About Tama Dora <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He was born in Koya Community. Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under his leadership, tribal people of Malkangiri especially 'Koya tribe' rose in revolt against unjust and oppressive policies of Raja of Koraput and British. He defeated British Police of Malkangiri. Colonel Macqoid of Hyderabad contingent marched with 100 men to protect but failed by severe attack of Koya Army. 	<p>Leadership and Empathy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His revolt against oppressive policies demonstrated his strong leadership qualities. His fight against unjust policies showed his empathy towards the suffering of his fellow tribespeople.
 <p>Thakur Ranmat Singh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Tribal Affairs highlighted the contribution of the freedom fighter Thakur Ranmat Singh. About Ranmat Singh <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He held the rank of a Sardar in the service of the Maharaja of Rewa (Madhya Pradesh). Key Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Played a key role in starting Revolt of 1857 in Satna, Madhya Pradesh. He set up his entire military organization in the jungle itself. He attacked the English Residency of Nagaud and killed the Resident. He had a fierce fight with the combined army of the English and Bundelas in the field of Bhelsai. 	<p>Valour and Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> His active role in the Revolt of 1857, including attacks against the British, showcased his bravery. Organizing a military force and leading significant battles against the British highlighted his leadership abilities.

 <p>Kandukuri Veeresalingam (16 April 1848 - 27 May 1919)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was remembered on his birth anniversary. • About <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Born in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh, He was social reformer and nationalist, considered as Father of Telugu Renaissance movement. • Contribution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Worked for upliftment of Harijans, remarriage of widows etc. ▶ Started a girl's school in Dowlaiswaram. ▶ Constructed temple known as 'Brahmo Mandir' and 'Hithakarini School' in Andhra Pradesh. ▶ His novel Rajasekhara Charitramu is considered to be first novel in Telugu literature. ▶ Started Viveka Vardhini journal. 	<p>Justice and Courage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His advocacy for the social reforms under-scored his commitment to justice and equality. • Establishing a girl's school, demonstrated his courage in challenging societal norms.
 <p>Shyamji Krishna Varma (1857- 1930)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid homage to revolutionary freedom fighter Shyamji Krishna Varma on his Punya Tithi. • About Shyamji Krishna Varma (1857- 1930) • Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Born in modern-day Gujarat, he founded Indian Home Rule Society, India House in London to carry out anti-British activities. ▶ Propagated the cause of India's independence through his writings in his publication journal called "Indian Sociologist". ▶ In 1905, he was barred from practicing law by Inner Temple(a professional associations for barristers in London) following charges of sedition for writing against colonial government. 	<p>Patriotism and Selflessness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspired by the ideas of National liberation, he decided to dedicate his whole life for working to hold the cause of independent nation.
 <p>Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 166th birth anniversary of Pandita Ramabai Sarasvati was celebrated recently. • About Pandita Ramabai <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ She was a social reformer, educator, and freedom fighter. ▶ She was one of the ten women representatives at the 1889 Congress. • Key Contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Established Sharada Sadan in 1889. ▶ Testified before the Hunter Commission on Women's Education, ▶ Published 'Stree Dharma Niti', or 'Morals for Women'. ▶ Awarded the Kaiser É Hind Medal in 1919. 	<p>Humanity and Social Reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publishing "Stree Dharma Niti" showcased her commitment to improving the moral and social standing of women in society.

 <p>Narasimha Gopalaswami Ayyangar (1882-1953)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Madras City Cooperative Building Society Ltd. completes 100 years of which N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar was the first president. • About N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar (1882-1953) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ He was an able administrator, freedom fighter and a politician. ▶ In 1905, he joined the Madras Civil Service and was appointed the 'Diwan' or Prime Minister of J&K in 1937. • Key Contribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Elected to Council of States (1943-47). ▶ Part of 7-member Drafting Committee of Indian Constitution. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ He helped put in shape Article 370. ▶ Report on Reorganisation of the Machinery of Government in 1949. ▶ Served as Minister for Defence, Railways and Transport. 	<p>Secularism and Objectivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His role in drafting the Indian Constitution highlighted his commitment to ensuring equal treatment for all religions. • His report on government reorganization emphasized the importance of efficient and unbiased administration.
 <p>Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was remembered on his 49th Death Anniversary. • About Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ He was a distinguished scholar, philosopher, and statesman. • Key Contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ He served as the Vice President (1952-1962) and President of India (1962-1967). ▶ He was elected to the constituent Assembly. ▶ Literary works: The Principal Upanishads, The Hindu view of Life, Dhammapada etc. • Honour and Award: knighthood (1931) and Bharat Ratna (1954) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ His birthday (September 5) is celebrated as 'Teacher's Day' for his contributions to education and philosophy. 	<p>Leadership and Scholar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He introduced the thinking of western idealist philosophers into Indian thought. He placed Indian philosophy on world map. • He was an educator who made significant contributions to the realm of education. The report of the University Education Commission 1940-49 is greatest contribution to educational thinking and practice.
 <p>Laxman Nayak (1899-1943)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of tribal Affairs highlighted contributions of freedom fighter Laxman Nayak. • About Laxman Nayak Bhumia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ He was a tribal leader of Bhumia community from Odisha. ▶ He was famous as the Gandhi of Malkangiri region because he believed and followed Gandhian principles of truth, non-violence and peaceful non-cooperation. 	<p>Non-Violence and Courage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His commitment to Gandhian principles of non-violence emphasized the ethical importance of peaceful resistance in the struggle for independence.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participated in individual Satyagraha in 1940. ▶ During Quit India Movement (1942), he asked his fellow tribesmen to respond to the call of 'Do or die' by Gandhiji. ▶ He strengthened the principle of Swaraj by advocating the use of Charkha through door-to-door campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His leadership during the Quit India Movement demonstrated the value of courage, inspiring his fellow tribesmen to take a stand for their freedom despite the risks involved.
 <p>Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903 – 1988)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, she was remembered on her birth anniversary. • Born in Mangalore, she was a freedom fighter, social reformer, art enthusiast and politician. • Key Contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Played a key role in All India Women's Conference (AIWC). ▶ First woman to run for a legislative seat in India, in the Madras provincial elections. ▶ She convinced Mahatma Gandhi to give women equal opportunity in Salt Satyagraha of 1930. ▶ She joined Seva Dal and trained women activists. ▶ In 1936, she became President of Congress Socialist Party. 	<p>Social Justice and activist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a social reformer, she played a crucial role in bringing back handicrafts, theatre and handlooms to help in uplifting the socio-economic status of the Indian women. • During the Salt March to Dandi, she convinced Gandhi to give women equal opportunity to be in the forefront of the March.
 <p>Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904 – 1986)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently, a book titled 'Rukmini Devi Arundale: Arts Revivalist and Institution Builder' has been published. • About Rukmini Devi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Born in Madurai (Tamil Nadu) ▶ She was an Indian classical dancer and active member of Theosophical movement. • Key contributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Known for catalysing the renaissance of Bharatnatyam. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Earlier, Bharatanatyam was associated with temple dancers (Devadasis) and looked down upon by society. ▶ Founder of Kalakshetra Foundation in Madras (Chennai) to impart the young true spirit of Art. ▶ Played instrumental role in enactment of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 by the Parliament. • Achievements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ She was the first women nominated to Rajya Sabha in 1952. ▶ Awarded Padma Bhushan in 1956, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship in 1967. 	<p>Compassion and Rationalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Her advocacy for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, highlighted the ethical importance of protecting animal rights. • Her revival of Bharatanatyam emphasized the importance of preserving and rationalizing traditional cultural practices for contemporary society.

UPSC TOPPERS PREPARATION APPROACH & STRATEGIES

Insights from Toppers' Talk and Answer Scripts



Ishita Kishore
Rank 1, 2022

Ishita Kishore, the UPSC topper of 2022, serves as a remarkable inspiration for her unwavering determination and relentless efforts making her as a beacon of motivation for aspiring candidates. Through her methodical preparation approach, she emerged triumphant in the esteemed Civil Services Examination securing top rank. Ishita extensively relied on VisionIAS Mains test series to refine her answer writing abilities. To gain further insights into Ishita's answer writing approaches, kindly scan the QR code provided.

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UPSC CSE TOPPERS 2022



**Waseem
Ahmad Bhat**

7
RANK
2022

Waseem Ahmad Bhat, an exceptional achiever who secured an All India Rank 7 in his third attempt in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2022. He also achieved All India Rank 225 in his first attempt in 2020 and currently, he is training as an Assistant Commissioner Income Tax.

Waseem was a student of the **VisionIAS Foundation Course**, Batch in 2019.

Hailing from Doru Shahabad, Anantnag, Jammu & Kashmir, he completed his schooling in Anantnag and holds a degree in Civil Engineering from NIT Srinagar.

Waseem opted for **Anthropology** as his optional subject. His topper's talk covers vital topics such as preparing for the **changing pattern of Prelims**, essay writing and strategy, writing **quote-based essays**, utilizing topper's answer scripts for preparation, and **effective revision strategies**.

TOPPERS' TALK



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**Aniruddh
Yadav**

8
RANK
2022

Aniruddh Yadav, a remarkable achiever who secured an All India Rank 8 in his fourth attempt in the UPSC Civil Services Examination of 2022.

Aniruddh opted for **Anthropology** as his optional subject. He completed his dual degree course in Biochemical Engineering & Biotechnology from IIT Delhi.

His topper's talk covers crucial aspects such as **creating a schedule** and **subject-wise timetable**, honing answer writing skills through topic-based **practice**, **mastering the structure** and format of answers (Introduction, Body, Conclusion), **managing time effectively** during answer writing practice, and preparing **topic-wise notes** with the help of syllabus analysis and previous year questions.

TOPPERS' TALK



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**Siddharth
Shukla**

18
RANK
2022

Siddharth Shukla, belongs to Uttar Pradesh. He completed his BA in History (H) from Delhi University, which was also his optional subject.

He displayed exemplary resilience by appearing in the exam for the fourth attempt and secured AIR 18 in 2022.

The preparation strategy reflected in his talk and answer scripts include the strategy for Essay, **efficient use of PYQs**, **notes making**, among others.

Additionally, he has also focused upon **non-academic aspects** such as **stress management**, **habit formation**, and **role of meditation** which are critical for this examination.

TOPPERS' TALK



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**Anoushka
Sharma**

20
RANK
2022

Anoushka Sharma hailing from Madhya Pradesh completed her graduation from City University, New York with a bachelor's degree in Economics. She gained job experience through a three-month internship with the United Nations prior to taking the civil service examination.

She passed her CSE with AIR 20 in 2022 on her third attempt. **Economics** is her optional subject.

She has a very good command over ethics paper and she has shared her **insights on time management and strategy for attempting questions** in CSE Mains.

TOPPERS' TALK



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UPSC CSE TOPPERS 2021



Gamini Singla

3
RANK
2021

Gamini Singla, hailing from Punjab, completed her graduation in Computer Science Engineering from Punjab Engineering College Chandigarh. Thereafter, she honed her skills through a five-month internship as a finance analyst at JP Morgan.

She secured a remarkable All India Rank of 3 in the UPSC CSE 2021 in her second attempt with **Sociology** as her optional subject.

With her strategic **approach to GS Paper IV (Ethics) and Essay**, Gamini demonstrated her ability to **critically analyze ethical issues** and effectively express her thoughts in a coherent manner.

Her expertise in answer writing provided her with a competitive edge, allowing her to convey her knowledge and insights concisely.

TOPPERS' TALK



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Aishwarya Verma

4
RANK
2021

Aishwarya Verma hails from Madhya Pradesh. After graduating in Electrical Engineering, he opted for Civil Services as a career of choice.

He chose **Geography** as his optional subject and achieved an All-India Rank 4 in UPSC CSE 2021 in his fourth attempt.

Apart from the hard work, determination and resilience shown by Aishwarya, his success can also be attributed to his **short and enriched self-made notes, advanced answer writing skills**, and smart preparation strategy, including S&T.

TOPPERS' TALK



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Utkarsh Dwivedi

5
RANK
2021

Utkarsh Dwivedi, hailing from historic town of Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, a graduate in Mechanical Engineering from VIT Vellore, displayed resilience by attempting the exam for the third time and succeeding with remarkable achievement with the optional subject, **Political Science and International Relations**.

He displayed **exemplary command over Ethics Paper**, specially Case Studies and quotation-based questions. With his deep understanding of the demand of the UPSC Examination and excellent time management skills, he not only optimized his efforts, but also maximized his performance at all stages of the UPSC CSE.

TOPPERS' TALK



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Yaksh Chaudhary

6
RANK
2021

Yaksh Chaudhary, a resident of Amroha, Uttar Pradesh, through unwavering determination secured an All India Rank 6 in the prestigious exam on his third attempt in 2021. With his passion for Sociology, Yaksh opted for it as his optional subject and devised a winning strategy for his preparation.

Yaksh's **exceptional expertise in answer writing** and adeptness in attempting question papers during the mains exam provided him an edge. Moreover, his skill in crafting **well-structured diagrams** for General Studies, Ethics, and Sociology further enriched the quality and visual appeal of his responses. Yaksh's achievements serve as an inspiration to aspiring candidates nationwide, exemplifying the significance of perseverance, dedication, and strategic planning.

TOPPERS' TALK



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UPSC CSE TOPPERS 2020



**Shubham
Kumar**

1
RANK
2020

Shubham Kumar, hailing from Katihar District in Bihar, completed his graduation in Civil Engineering from IIT Bombay. He achieved the remarkable feat of securing All India Rank 1 in the UPSC examination of 2020 in his third attempt.

His success can be attributed to his **unique approach and meticulous preparation**. Shubham emphasized the importance of **regular mock tests** for prelims and carefully analyzing previous years' UPSC prelims questions.

Shubham was a student of the **VisionIAS Foundation Course**.

He also **utilized topper's copies to enhance his skills in ethics answer writing** and emphasized the **use of diagrams and graphs** in GS papers.

TOPPERS' TALK



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**Jagrati
Awasthi**

2
RANK
2020

Jagrati Awasthi, from Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, completed her graduation in Electrical Engineering from NIT Bhopal. She gained two years of valuable work experience at BHEL.

With **Sociology** as her optional subject, she achieved an outstanding All India Rank of 2 in the UPSC examination of 2020.

She has emphasized the **importance of a well-structured daily routine** and shared a **detailed booklist** and recommended sources. Jagrati stressed the significance of thorough reading and utilizing previous years' questions to grasp the exam's demands.

Along with refined **note-making techniques**, she has provided insights on determining the optimal number of questions to attempt in the prelims and leveraging previous year's question papers for **Ethics case studies** preparation.

TOPPERS' TALK



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**Praveen
Kumar**

7
RANK
2020

Praveen Kumar, achieved an impressive All India Rank 07 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2020. Hailing from Jammui, Bihar, Praveen holds a degree in Civil Engineering from IIT Kanpur.

His remarkable journey includes clearing the GATE examination with an AIR 5 and securing AIR 3 in the Indian Engineering Services (IES) exam, all while working for the Indian Railway Service.

Praveen's toppers talk provides invaluable insights, covering motivations for pursuing the IAS, **effective booklists and sources for exam preparation**, **strategies for newspaper reading and content extraction**, **note-making techniques** for mains, and **utilizing flow charts and diagrams** in answers.

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**Satyam
Gandhi**

10
RANK
2020

Satyam Gandhi, an exceptional achiever, secured an All India Rank 10 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2020. Hailing from Bihar, Satyam graduated in Political Sciences (H) from Dayal Singh College, University of Delhi.

With **Political Science and International Relations** as his optional subject, he cleared the exam on his first attempt, displaying remarkable determination.

In addition, Satyam achieved an impressive AIR 242 in the NDA Exam. His toppers talk offers invaluable insights into **time management strategies** for a first attempt success, the **significance of flowcharts and diagrams** in mains answers, **effective essay structuring**, and his experience in obtaining a remarkable 201 marks in the interview.

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Heartiest Congratulations

to all Successful Candidates



**1
AIR**

Aditya Srivastava

79

in **TOP 100** Selections in **CSE 2023**

from various programs of **Vision IAS**



**Animesh
Pradhan**



Ruhani



**Srishti
Dabas**



**Anmol
Rathore**



Nausheen



**Aishwaryam
Prajapati**

39
Selections

in **TOP 50**

in **CSE 2022**



**Ishita
Kishore**



**Garima
Lohia**



**Uma
Harathi N**



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