

## CONTENTS

1. <i>National News</i> .....	3
2. <i>International News</i> .....	8
3. <i>Important Dates and Events</i> .....	11
4. <i>Sports News</i> .....	13
5. <i>Awards &amp; Recognitions</i> .....	15
6. <i>Defence News</i> .....	16
7. <i>Science &amp; Technology</i> .....	20
8. <i>Economy &amp; Finance</i> .....	22
9. <i>Reports &amp; Indices</i> .....	30
10. <i>Environment</i> .....	34
11. <i>Government Initiatives</i> .....	38
12. <i>Appointments/Person in News</i> .....	42
13. <i>Important Maps &amp; Articles</i> .....	44
14. <i>Important MCQ for Competitive Exams</i> .....	76



**NIMBUS**  
ACADEMY FOR IAS  
तमसो मा ज्योतरिगमय ॥

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## NATIONAL NEWS

### JAGANNATH RATH YATRA -

- The Jagannath Rath Yatra officially begins in Puri, Odisha. This year, the festival commenced on June 20, 2023 and will culminate on June 28, 2023.
- Jagannath Rath Yatra is an annual Hindu festival that celebrates the journey of Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Lord Balabhadra, and his younger sister Goddess Subhadra from their home temple in Puri, Odisha to their aunt's temple in Gundicha, about three kilometres away.
- The legend behind the festival is that once, Goddess Subhadra expressed her desire to visit her aunt's place in Gundicha.
- To fulfil her wish, Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra decided to accompany her on a chariot ride. This event is commemorated every year by taking the deities on a similar journey.
- The festival dates back to at least the 12th century CE, when the Jagannath temple was built by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva. However, some sources suggest that the festival was already in practice since ancient times.
- The festival is also known as Festival of Chariots, as the deities are carried on three massive wooden chariots that are pulled by devotees with ropes.
- It begins on the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashadha (June-July) and lasts for nine days.
- The rupakar servitors are skilled craftsmen responsible for carving intricate figures of birds, animals, flowers, and guardian deities on the chariots.



### NITI AAYOG AND UNITED NATIONS JOIN HANDS TO ACCELERATE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA-

- The Government of India and the United Nations have signed the Government of India – United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2023-2027 (GoI-UNSDCF).
- This collaboration between NITI Aayog, the government policy think tank, and the UN in India aims to advance India's sustainable development goals. The framework focuses on key areas such as gender equality, youth empowerment, human rights, and overall sustainable development, aligning with the 2030 Agenda.





**MANY POLITICIANS OF THE SOUTHERN STATES ARE RAISING VOICES OVER DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES BASED ON POPULATION, WHICH THEY CONSIDER TO BE UNFAIR -**

- Southern states that followed population control policies are now facing potential disadvantages despite their success in controlling population growth.
- Delimitation means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body.
- Delimitation for LS (Lok Sabha) and LA (Legislative Assembly) is different from that of Local bodies.
- The Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India (ECI).
- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. The first delimitation exercise was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission) in 1950-51.
- The last delimitation exercise that changed the state-wise composition of the Lok Sabha was completed in 1976 and done on the basis of the 1971 census.
- The Constitution of India mandates that the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha should be based on the population of each state so that the ratio of seats to population is as close as possible to being equal across all states. It is intended to ensure that each person's vote carries roughly the same weight, regardless of which state they live in.



**Concerns Related to Delimitation-**

- Disparity in representation between north and southern part of India in the Lok Sabha due to population as a deciding factor.
- The delimitation based solely on population disregards the progress made by the southern states in population control and may lead to disparities in the federal structure.
- Despite having only 18% of the country's population, the southern states contribute 35% to the country's GDP.

**COROMANDEL EXPRESS DERAILS AND COLLIDES WITH TWO OTHER TRAINS IN ODISHA -**

- A devastating train accident occurred in Odisha, resulting in a tragic triple train crash involving Coromandel Express and two other trains. The incident claimed the lives of at least 275 people and left approximately 800 injured. The details surrounding the cause of the Coromandel Express derailment and subsequent collisions are still under investigation.
- The state government has declared a day of mourning, and rescue operations are underway to aid the victims and their







- The party's recognition as a national party is based on its electoral performance in four states- Delhi, Goa, Punjab, and Gujarat.
- With this recognition, the AAP joins the list of national parties in India such as the Bharatiya Janata Party, Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, and Communist Party of India (Marxist).
- The recognition also means that the party can contest elections in all states and union territories of India.
- On the other hand, the national party status of the All India Trinamool Congress, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and Communist Party of India (CPI) has been withdrawn by the Election Commission.
- Additionally, the state party status of RLD in Uttar Pradesh, BRS in Andhra Pradesh, PDA in Manipur, PMK in Puducherry, RSP in West Bengal, and MPC in Mizoram has been revoked.
- The decision was taken based on the performance of these parties in the recent Assembly elections and Lok Sabha polls. As per the rules laid out by the Election Commission, a political party is recognised as a national party if it secures at least 2% of the total votes polled in Lok Sabha elections in at least three states or wins at least 6% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from at least three states. The party should also have at least four members in the Lok Sabha.



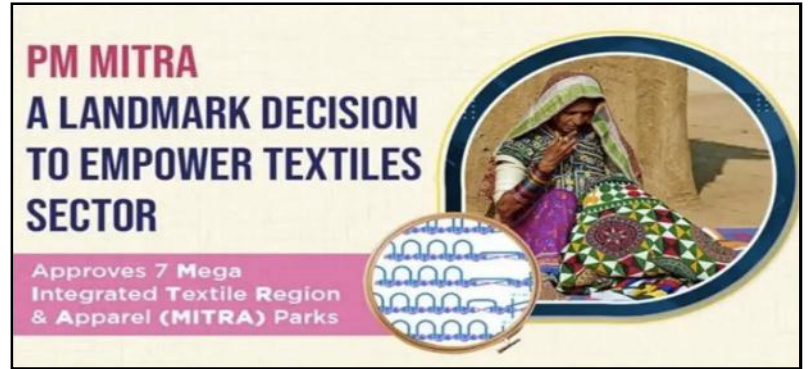
#### **SUPREME COURT VERDICT ON ECI APPOINTMENTS-**

- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court (SC) unanimously ruled that the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners shall be made by the President on the advice of a Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition of the Lok Sabha and Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- In case no leader of Opposition is available, the leader of the largest opposition Party in the Lok Sabha in terms of numerical strength will be a part of such committee.
- SC stated that a reading of the debates of the Constituent Assembly (CA) on the appointment of ECI makes clear that all the members were of the clear view that elections must be conducted by an independent Commission.
- The government had argued that in the absence of such a law by parliament, the President has the constitutional power and asked the SC to exhibit Judicial restraint.
- As the constitution places the power to make any law on appointment of ECI in the hands of Parliament, SC ruling on this issue poses a question of Separation of Power.
- However, SC has stated that this ruling will be subject to any law made by parliament, which means parliament can bring a law to undo it.
- Another view is that since there is no law made by parliament on this issue, the Court must step in to fill the "constitutional vacuum."
- Originally the commission had only one EC but after the Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989, it was made a multi-member body (1 CEC & 2 other ECs.).



**SEVEN PM MITRA (PRADHAN MANTRI MEGA INTEGRATED TEXTILE REGION AND APPAREL) PARK SITES ANNOUNCED-**

- Ministry of Textiles, has issued a notification to set up 7 Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks with a total outlay of Rs. 4,445 crore.
- Seven sites were chosen out of 18 proposals for PM MITRA parks which were received from 13 States.
- The Parks will come up in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.



**KEY FEATURES of PM MITRA Parks-**

- These Parks will offer an opportunity to create an integrated textiles value chain right from spinning, weaving, processing/dyeing and printing to garment manufacturing at 1 location.
- Intended to generate 1 lakh direct and 2 lakh indirect employment per park.
- Proposals of State Governments having ready availability of contiguous and encumbrance-free land parcel of 1,000+ acres along with other textiles related facilities & ecosystem are welcome.

**About PM MITRA Scheme-**

- It will offer the opportunity to create an Integrated Textiles Value Chain right from spinning, weaving, processing/dyeing and printing to garment manufacturing etc. at one location and will reduce the logistics cost of the Industry.
- A Special Purpose Vehicle owned by the Centre and State Government will be set up for each park which will oversee the implementation of the project.

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## **PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI RECENTLY DISCUSSED COOPERATION IN BRICS (BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA, AND SOUTH AFRICA) WITH THE SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT -**

- BRICS is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS).
- The British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term "BRIC" in 2001 to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- Chairmanship is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S. Together, BRICS accounts for about 40% of the world's population and about 30% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), 16% of the global trade.
- Initiatives- New Development Bank (NDB), Contingent Reserve Arrangement, BRICS Payment System Customs Agreements, Remote Sensing Satellite, De-dollarization: reducing dependence on the US dollar for trade.
- First BRIC Summit: the first BRICS Summit took place in 2009 in the Russian Federation.



## **THE KAKHOVKA DAM IN UKRAINE -**

- The Kakhovka Dam was a major hydroelectric power plant and reservoir on the Dnieper River in southern Ukraine. It was destroyed on June 6th, 2023, in an explosion that caused massive flooding and a humanitarian crisis in the war-torn region.
- Ukraine and Russia have blamed each other for the attack, which has escalated the tensions between the two countries.
- The Kakhovka Dam was built in 1956 as part of the Soviet Union's ambitious project to harness the Dnipro River for irrigation, power generation and navigation.
- The dam was 30 meters tall and 3.2 kilometers long, creating a reservoir that covered 2,155 square kilometers and held 18 cubic kilometers of water. The dam also supplied water to the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, and to the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, which is under Russian control.
- The floodwaters inundated (cover land with water) dozens of towns and villages on both sides of the river, displacing thousands of people and damaging infrastructure, crops and livestock.
- The explosion also cut off electricity to millions of people and disrupted water supplies to Crimea and Zaporizhzhia.





- Adding a new dimension to the conflict, the collapse of the dam has introduced an unexpected element to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. It remains unclear whether either side benefits from the dam's damage since both Russian-controlled and Ukrainian-held lands are at risk.
- Approximately 22,000 people in Russian-controlled areas and 16,000 people in critical zones in Ukrainian-held territory are at risk.

**22ND SUMMIT OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION -**

- The 22nd Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is set to take place on 4th July. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, the summit will be conducted in a virtual mode. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) recently announced this decision.
- Originally, India was expected to host the physical meeting of the SCO Summit. However, the ongoing global situation has prompted the shift to a virtual mode. This move ensures the safety and well-being of all participants, given the prevailing circumstances.
- The recent visit of Pakistan's foreign minister to Goa for the SCO Foreign Ministers Council meeting showcased the importance of regional cooperation. This meeting marked the first official visit by a Pakistani foreign minister since 2011, emphasizing the significance of the SCO platform.
- Furthermore, amidst the border standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the foreign ministers of India and China, S. Jaishankar and Qin Gang respectively, have met twice recently. The G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting in New Delhi and the SCO Foreign Ministers Council meeting in Goa facilitated discussions despite the ongoing tensions.



**INDIA OPERATIONALIZED SITTWE PORT IN MYANMAR, WITH THE FIRST SHIPMENT DEPARTING FROM THE SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE PORT IN KOLKATA -**

- The Sittwe Port in Myanmar has been put into operation by India, with the first shipment departing from the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata. The project is a part of the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport initiative. The inaugural shipment, carrying 20,000 bags of cement weighing 1,000 metric tonnes, is expected to arrive at the Sittwe Port.
- Constructed with grant aid from the Indian government, the port has been established based on a framework agreement between India and Myanmar for building and running a multimodal transit transport facility on the Kaladan river. Once the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP) is fully operational, it will provide an alternative route for connectivity from India's eastern coast to the northeastern states through



the Sittwe port. The port links to Paletwa in Myanmar via an inland waterway and from Paletwa to Zorinpui in Mizoram via a road segment.

- In a ceremony held in Kolkata, the Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Shantanu Thakur, launched the MV-ITT LION (V-273). The port's establishment is anticipated to enhance trade and commerce between India, Myanmar, and the surrounding regions.

#### **SAUDI, IRAN AGREE TO RESTORE DIPLOMATIC TIES -**

- Recently, Saudi and Iranian officials held bilateral talks that concluded with an agreement to restore diplomatic ties which have been severed since 2016.
- The major diplomatic breakthrough negotiated by China in Beijing.
- It comes as diplomats have been trying to end a long war in Yemen, a conflict in which both Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply entrenched.
- The two countries plan to reopen their respective embassies in Tehran and Riyadh.
- They also vowed to respect countries' sovereignty and not interfere in internal affairs. They also agreed to activate a 2001 security cooperation agreement, as well as a general economy, trade and investment agreement signed in 1998.



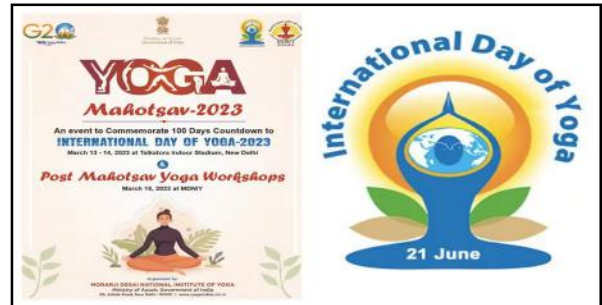
#### **Conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia-**

- Saudi Arabia broke off ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters invaded Saudi diplomatic posts after Saudi Arabia had executed a prominent Shiite cleric days earlier.
- Saudi Arabia has long portrayed itself as the world's leading Sunni nation while Iran views itself as the protector of the Islam's Shiite minority.
- Since US's withdrawal from Iran's Nuclear deal, Iran was blamed for a series of attacks including one targeting the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry in 2019.
- Western nations and experts have blamed the attack on Iran though the latter has denied launching the attack.
- Iran and Saudi Arabia exploited these upheavals to expand their influence, notably in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen, further heightening mutual suspicions.

# IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS

## INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY 2023-

- International Yoga Day 2023 is celebrated every year on June 21st to promote the numerous benefits of practicing yoga. The chosen date coincides with the summer solstice, the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.
- This day serves as a platform to raise awareness about the holistic approach to well-being that yoga offers. It highlights the importance of finding balance in our fast-paced, modern lives and encourages physical, mental, and spiritual harmony. Yoga fosters mindfulness, stress reduction, and overall health and vitality.
- In its 9th edition, this year's International Day of Yoga will be led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN Headquarters on June 21st. This marks the first time a yoga session will be conducted by the Prime Minister at this location.
- The theme selected for this year's International Day of Yoga 2023 is "Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam," which represents our shared desire for "One Earth, One Family, One Future."
- During his speech at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi put forward the concept of a dedicated yoga day. On December 11, 2014, all 193 member states of the United Nations unanimously agreed to observe the International Day of Yoga on June 21.
- The inaugural celebration occurred on June 21, 2015. Millions of people around the world participated in yoga events on this day, and the event was widely covered by the media. Since then, International Yoga Day has become a global phenomenon, and it is now celebrated in over 190 countries.



## WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR 2023 OBSERVED ON 12 JUNE-

- World Day Against Child Labour, observed on June 12th, aims to inspire a global movement against child labour. With the slogan "Social Justice for All. End Child Labour!" in 2023, it highlights the connection between social justice and the eradication of child labour.
- The International Labour Organization initiated this event in 2002, turning it into an international occasion. Its purpose is to motivate individuals, organizations, and governments to combat child labour and work towards its permanent elimination.
- The theme for World Day Against Child Labour 2023 is "Social Justice for All. End Child Labour!" This theme highlights the connection between social justice and the issue of child labour.



## ON MAY 28TH 2023, THE PRIME MINISTER INAUGURATED THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING, WHICH IS PART OF THE CENTRAL VISTA REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT-

- On May 28th 2023, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the new Parliament building, which is part of the Central Vista redevelopment project.
- One of the highlights of the event will be the installation of a historic golden sceptre, called Sengol, near the Speaker's seat. The Sengol is a symbol of India's independence and sovereignty, as well as its cultural heritage and diversity.



- The Sengol is profound in meaning, derived from the Tamil word "Semmai", it means "Righteousness". It was made of gold or silver and was often decorated with precious stones.
- A Sengol sceptre was carried by emperors on ceremonial occasions, and used to represent their authority. It is associated with the Chola Empire, one of the longest-ruling and most influential dynasties in South India.
- The Cholas ruled over parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Sri Lanka from the 9th to 13th century CE. They were known for their military prowess, maritime trade, administrative efficiency, cultural patronage, and temple architecture.
- The Cholas had a tradition of handing over the Sengol sceptre from one king to another as a mark of succession and legitimacy. The ceremony was usually performed by a high priest or a guru who blessed the new king and conferred him with the Sengol.
- Before independence from the British rule in 1947, the then Viceroy - Lord Mountbatten posed a question to the to-be Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru: "What is the ceremony that should be followed to symbolise the transfer of power from British to Indian hands?"
- PM Nehru then consulted C. Rajagopalachari, commonly known as Rajaji, who went on to become the last Governor-General of India. Rajaji suggested that the Chola model of handing over the Sengol sceptre could be adopted as a suitable ceremony for India's independence.
- The Sengol sceptre was presented to PM Nehru by Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam (a 500-year-old Saivaite monastery) on August 14, 1947.
- A golden sceptre was crafted by Vummidi Bangaru Chetty, a famous jeweller in Madras (now Chennai).
- The Nandi, with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of "Nyaya", is hand-carved at the top.



#### **NATIONAL TECHNOLOGY DAY 2023-**

- The Prime Minister of India recently inaugurated the National Technology Day 2023 program.
- The event marked the beginning of the celebration of the 25th year of National Technology Day, which would be held from May 11th to May 14th featuring dedicated multiple projects related to scientific and technological advancement in the country, with a total worth of more than Rs 5,800 crore. The theme of the event was "School to Start-ups - igniting young minds to innovate."
- The projects for which the foundation stone was laid include Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory - India (LIGO-India) in Hingoli, the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in Jatni, Odisha, and the Platinum Jubilee Block of Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai.
- The PM also highlighted the significance of May 11th in India's history, as it commemorates the day when India's scientists achieved a remarkable feat in Pokhran Nuclear Testing.
- Addressing the role of technology in defence, the PM mentioned Innovations for Defense Excellence (iDEX) and India's goal of a self-reliant defence sector. He also highlighted advancements in the space sector, such as SSLV and PSLV orbital platforms, and the need to provide opportunities for youth and start-ups in this domain



## SPORTS NEWS

### MASCOT LAUNCHED FOR 37TH EDITION OF INDIAN NATIONAL GAMES -

- Goa's Chief Minister Pramod Sawant launched 'Moga' at a launch ceremony held at Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Stadium in Taleigao, Goa. 37th edition of the national games of India will be held in various locations in the state of Goa.
- It will feature competitions in a total of 43 disciplines. It will also feature 'Gatka', a traditional martial art form associated with Punjab.
- National Games in India are organised by the Indian Olympic Association. The Indian sports ministry, has affirmed that the National Games will be held every two years, except in years where the Olympics and Asian Games are held.
- PT Usha is the president of Indian Olympic Association which is headquartered in New Delhi.
- Maharashtra was the winner of 36th National Games which was held in Gujarat. 'Savaj' which represents an Asiatic lion was the mascot for the 36th National Games.



### INDIA WINS MAIDEN TITLE OF WOMEN'S JUNIOR ASIA CUP 2023 HOCKEY -

- The Indian Women's hockey team defeated Republic of Korea to win the Women's Junior Asia Cup 2023 title in Kakamigahara, Japan.
- This is the first time India have won the Women's Junior Asia Cup. Recently, India had secured a spot in the FIH Women's Junior World Cup 2023 in Chile.
- Japan beat China 2-1 to become the third team to qualify for the World Cup scheduled this year. For India, Annu and Neelam were on target while Seoyeon Park scored the solitary goal for Korea.



### AUSTRALIA CROWNED WITH ICC WORLD TEST CHAMPIONSHIP 2023 -

- Australia clinched the title of World Test Champions in a commanding fashion, securing a resounding 209-run victory over India in the thrilling WTC Final at The Oval.
- Travis Head and Steve Smith's remarkable centuries in the first innings laid the foundation for Australia's early control of the Test. Despite India's valiant response, the match extended to a fifth day, but they fell short of an extraordinary record chase, ultimately being bowled out for 234. Australia scripted history on Sunday, June 11 as they became the first men's team in world cricket to win an International Cricket Council (ICC) world title in all three formats.
- Player of the Match: Travis Head (163 off 174 balls in 1st innings, 18 off 27 balls in 2nd innings). Australia won the ICC Test Championship mace for the first time, and were also awarded the cash prize of US\$1.6 million, while India won US\$800,000.



### AUSTRALIA'S ICC TITLE'S (MEN'S CRICKET)

- 50-over World Cups: 1987, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2015/ Champions Trophy: 2006, 2009/ T20 World Cup – 2021

### ANURAG THAKUR LAUNCHES LOGO, MASCOT, TORCH, ANTHEM & JERSEY OF KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES 2022 -

- Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur launched the official logo, mascot, torch, anthem, and jersey of the Khelo India University Games Uttar Pradesh 2022 on the auspicious occasion of Buddha Purnima in Lucknow. The Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Shri Yogi Adityanath was also present at the occasion.
- Addressing the gathering, Shri Yogi Adityanath welcomed all participating athletes, coaches, officials, and support staff to the 3rd Khelo India University Games Uttar Pradesh 2022. He noted that the environment and perception of Uttar Pradesh has undergone a massive transformation, with peace and the rule of law prevailing. This is why sports and sportspersons are flourishing in the state.
- The Khelo India University Games 2022, Uttar Pradesh, is set to be a grand celebration of sportsmanship, heritage and culture. The event, officially scheduled from May 25 to June 3, 2023, will see more than 4000 athletes from 200 Indian universities competing in 21 sporting disciplines in the cities of Varanasi, Noida, Gorakhpur and Lucknow.
- The official logo of the Khelo India University Games 2022 Uttar Pradesh represents the rich heritage of Uttar Pradesh, India's largest state. The logo is a representation of the state's rich traditional and historical legacy which has been the foundation for its development in all aspects viz; education, infrastructure and sports.
- The mascot, Jitu, represents the Barasingha, an incredible mammal that embodies the spirit of Khelo India University Games, Uttar Pradesh. Jitu will serve as a source of excitement, fostering fan engagement and building team spirit throughout the tournament. The mascot will also help promote team sponsors, merchandise, and other marketing activities, making him an essential part of the event's success.





# AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

## GITA PRESS, GORAKHPUR AWARDED GANDHI PEACE PRIZE FOR 2021 -

- The Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021 will be conferred on Gita Press, Gorakhpur, in recognition of its “outstanding contribution towards social, economic and political transformation through non-violent and other Gandhian methods”, the ministry of culture announced.
- The decision to confer the award on Gita Press was taken by a jury headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Gandhi Peace Prize is an annual award instituted by Government of India in 1995, on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi as a tribute to the ideals espoused by Mahatma Gandhi. The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or gender.
- The award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 crore, a citation, a plaque and an exquisite traditional handicraft/handloom item.
- The past awardees include organisations such as ISRO, Ramakrishna Mission, Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, Akshaya Patra, Bengaluru, Ekal Abhiyan Trust, India and Sulabh International, New Delhi among others.
- The prestigious award has also been awarded to luminaries like Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa and Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania among many other personalities. Some recent awardees include Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said, Oman (2019) and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (2020), Bangladesh.
- Gita Press was established in 1923, Gita Press is one of the world's largest publishers, having published 41.7 crore books in 14 languages, including 16.21 crore Shrimad Bhagvad Gita. The institution has never relied on advertisement in its publications, for revenue generation.



## NIRF 2023: IIT MADRAS RETAINS TOP SPOT FOR 5TH CONSECUTIVE YEAR -

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras has retained the top spot in the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF), 2023 for the fifth consecutive year, while the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru has been ranked as the best university, according to the Ministry of Education.
- IISc Bengaluru has bagged the second spot in the “overall” category followed by IIT Delhi.

OVERALL	
Name	2023 Rank
IIT** Madras	1
IIS* Bengaluru	2
IIT Delhi	3
IIT Bombay	4
IIT Kanpur	5

## DEFENCE NEWS

### INDIA GIFTS MISSILE CORVETTE INS KIRPAN TO VIETNAM -

- During a meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Vietnamese General Phan Van Gang, it was revealed that the Vietnam People's Navy will soon receive the INS Kirpan, a warship from the Khukri class commissioned in 1991.
- The announcement was made by Rajnath Singh, indicating the intent to transfer the vessel to Vietnam to bolster its naval capabilities.
- A meeting was held in New delhi to review progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives. It was decided that Khukri class warship INS Kirpan which is scheduled to be decommissioned will be gifted to Vietnam in order to enhance its forces.



- Vietnamese defence minister visited DRDO Headquarters and discussed ways to enhance defence industrial capabilities by joint cooperation of both the countries in defence research.
- India and Vietnam have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership since 2016, and further defence partnerships are a key pillar to enhance the capabilities of their armed forces.

### INDIA APPROVES ACQUISITION OF MQ-9B ARMED DRONES FROM THE US -

- Recently, India's Ministry of Defence has granted approval for the procurement of 31 MQ-9B armed drones from the United States. The deal, worth a little over \$3 billion, is expected to be announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington.
- The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the MQ-9 "Reaper" which was used to launch a modified version of the Hellfire missile that eliminated al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul.



- The MQ-9B has two variants SkyGuardian and its sibling SeaGuardian. The Indian Navy has been operating the MQ-9B Sea Guardian since 2020.
- The drone can operate at over 40,000 feet, giving the Indian military surveillance capacity in the high-altitude Himalayan border areas. The Predator also has the maximum endurance of 40 hours, making it useful for long-hour surveillance.
- MQ-9B drones are equipped with advanced features such as automatic take-off and landing, detect and avoid system, anti-spoofing GPS, and encrypted communication links.
- India needs MQ-9B armed drones to enhance its surveillance and strike capabilities across its land and maritime borders, especially in the context of the ongoing standoff with China in Ladakh and the rising tensions with Pakistan.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to counter the growing presence of Chinese submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean Region, and to protect its vital sea lanes of communication and trade.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to support its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir and other regions.

- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will also create opportunities for India's defence industry, as it will involve technology transfer and joint production under the Make in India initiative.
- India needs MQ-9B armed drones to enhance its surveillance and strike capabilities across its land and maritime borders, especially in the context of the ongoing standoff with China in Ladakh and the rising tensions with Pakistan.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to counter the growing presence of Chinese submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean Region, and to protect its vital sea lanes of communication and trade.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to support its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir and other regions.
- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will also create opportunities for India's defence industry, as it will involve technology transfer and joint production under the Make in India initiative.

**SIPRI YEARBOOK 2023 -**

- Recently, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2023 revealed that China could potentially have as many Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) as U.S. or Russia by the end of the decade.
- Russia has the highest number of stored nuclear arsenals followed by US and China while the US has deployed the highest number of nuclear arsenals followed by Russia and France.

Country	Deployed warheads <sup>a</sup>	Stored warheads <sup>b</sup>	Total stockpile <sup>c</sup>		Total inventory <sup>d</sup>	
	2023	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
United States	1 770	1 938	3 708	3 708	5 428	5 244
Russia	1 674	2 815	4 477	4 489	5 977	5 889
United Kingdom	120	105	225 <sup>e</sup>	225	225	225 <sup>f</sup>
France	280	10	290	290	290	290
China	–	410	350	410	350	410
India	–	164	160	164	160	164
Pakistan	–	170	165	170	165	170
North Korea	–	30	25	30 <sup>g</sup>	25	30 <sup>g</sup>
Israel	–	90	90	90	90	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 844</b>	<b>5 732</b>	<b>9 490</b>	<b>9 576</b>	<b>12 710</b>	<b>12 512</b>

- The nine nuclear-armed states, including the United States, Russia, and China, continue to modernize and expand their nuclear arsenals, deploying new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2022. Other nuclear-armed countries are UK, France, India, Pakistan, the North Korea and Israel
- As of January 2023, the total global inventory of warheads is estimated at 12,512, with approximately 9,576 warheads held in military stockpiles for potential use.
- India's nuclear arsenal also expanded, increasing from 160 warheads in 2022 to 164 warheads in 2023 and that of Pakistan from 165 to 170 in the same period.
- India's nuclear deterrent, while primarily focused on Pakistan, is placing growing emphasis on longer-range weapons capable of reaching targets across China.
- India is in the process of upgrading its ballistic missiles, with the development of a submarine-launched intermediate-range ballistic missile and the imminent induction of a new generation ballistic missile called 'Agni Prime.'
- China's nuclear arsenal grew from 350 warheads in January 2022 to 410 warheads in January 2023, according to the SIPRI.

**DEFENCE PRODUCTION IN INDIA SURPASSES ₹ 1 LAKH CRORE MARK ON THE BACK OF CRUCIAL REFORMS -**

- India has achieved a significant milestone in its defence sector as the value of defence production in the country crossed ₹1 lakh crore for the first time.



- This achievement is a result of key reforms implemented to boost growth in the sector and reduce reliance on military imports. The value of defence production has nearly doubled over the past five years, reflecting India's efforts to strengthen its position as a weapons and systems exporter.
- The value of defence production reached ₹1,06,800 crore in the financial year 2022-23, compared to ₹95,000 crore in FY 2021-22 and ₹54,951 crore five years ago. This remarkable growth can be attributed to consistent efforts by the defence ministry and the implementation of various reforms.
- The government has taken steps such as banning the import of certain weapons and systems, creating a separate budget for local procurement, increasing foreign direct investment, and improving ease of doing business.



#### **ASEAN INDIA MARITIME EXERCISE, AIME-2023 -**

- Indian Naval Ships Satpura and Delhi on May 1st, 2023, led by RAdm Gurcharan Singh, the Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, arrived in Singapore to participate in the inaugural ASEAN India Maritime Exercise (AIME-2023). The exercise is scheduled to take place from May 2nd to May 8th, 2023.
- The Harbor Phase of AIME-2023 will be held at Changi Naval Base from May 2nd to May 4th, 2023, and the Sea Phase will take place in the South China Sea from May 7th to May 8th, 2023.
- The primary goal of AIME-2023 is to provide an opportunity for the Indian Navy and ASEAN navies to work together closely and conduct seamless operations in the maritime domain.
- INS Delhi, India's first indigenously-built guided missile destroyer, and INS Satpura, an indigenously-built guided missile stealth frigate, are part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet based in Visakhapatnam.
- Both of these ships are fitted with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors and function under the operational command of the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command.



#### **GLOBAL FIRE POWER INDEX, NO CHANGE IN TOP 4 MILITARY RANKINGS-**

- The Global Firepower Index ranks the countries based on their potential military strength. India is ranked fourth in the index. The Global Firepower Index ranked 145 countries. The countries were evaluated based on prolonged offensive and defensive military campaigns.
- The Global Firepower Index is calculated using fifty individual factors from geography to logistical capability.
- It also includes manpower, land forces, airpower, natural resources, naval forces, logistics and financials.

- Under manpower, the factors considered are total population, paramilitary, reaching military age annually, active reserves and active services.
- Under equipment, the factors considered are trainer fleet, aircraft fleet strength, helicopter fleet, attack fleets, rocket projectors, tank strength, towed artillery, aircraft carriers, naval fleet strength, destroyers, submarines, coastal patrol craft, frigates, mine warfare craft, coastal patrol craft and tanker fleets.
- The finance factors include external debt, defence budget, reserves of foreign exchange and gold and purchasing power parity.
- The Global Firepower Index, 2022, puts the US at the top, Russia at the second spot, China at No. 3, and India at No. 4.

### AGNI-5 BALLISTIC MISSILE-

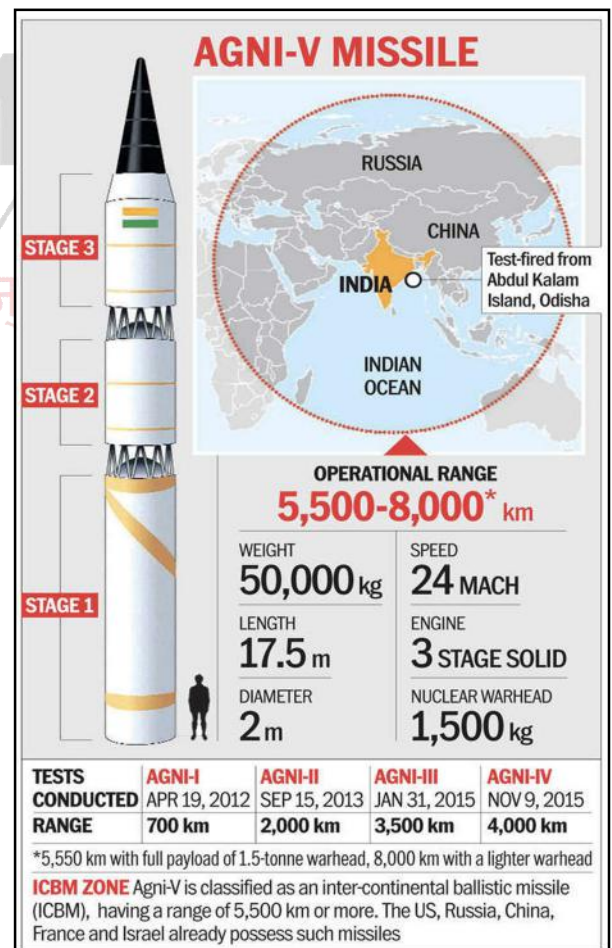
- Agni-5 is an ingeniously built advanced surface-to-surface ballistic missile developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). It is a fire-and-forget missile, which cannot be stopped without an interceptor missile.
- The missile has the capability of hitting targets beyond the range of 5000 km and is crucial for India's self-defense systems.
- The Agni missile class is the backbone of India's nuclear launch capability, as are Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and fighter aircraft.

### Other Ranges of Agni Missiles-

- A. Agni I: Range of 700-800 km.
  - B. Agni II: Range more than 2000 km.
  - C. Agni III: Range of more than 2,500 Km
  - D. Agni IV: Range is more than 3,500 km and can fire from a road mobile launcher.
  - E. Agni-V: The longest of the Agni series, an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 5,000 km.
- Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme IGMDP was the brainchild of renowned scientist Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.
  - It was intended to attain self-sufficiency in the field of missile technology.
  - The IGMDP formally got the approval of the Indian government in 1983.
  - It brought together the country's scientific community, academic institutions, R&D laboratories, industries and the three defence services in giving shape to the strategic, indigenous missile systems.

### The missiles developed under IGMDP are-

- 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





# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE-TECHNOLOGY -

- Recently, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its partners successfully demonstrated a precise landing experiment for a Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR), Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- An Indian Air Forces (IAF) Chinook helicopter was used to drop the RLV-TD from a 4.5 km altitude and ISRO executed the landing experiment of the RLV-TD as planned.
- According to ISRO, the series of experiments with the winged Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology Demonstration (RLV-TD) are part of efforts at “developing essential technologies for a fully reusable launch vehicle to enable low-cost access to space”.
- In the future, this vehicle will be scaled up to become the first stage of India’s reusable two-stage orbital (TSTO) launch vehicle.
- ISRO’s RLV-TD looks like an aircraft. It consists of a fuselage, a nose cap, double delta wings, and twin vertical tails.
- The RLV-TD will be used to develop technologies like hypersonic flight (HEX), autonomous landing (LEX), return flight experiment (REX), powered cruise flight, and Scramjet Propulsion Experiment (SPEX).
- With the costs acting as a major deterrent to space exploration, a reusable launch vehicle is considered a low-cost, reliable, and on-demand mode of accessing space. By using RLVs the cost of a launch can be reduced by nearly 80% of the present cost.



## ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCE, THE SAMUDRAYAAN MISSION IS EXPECTED TO BE REALISED BY YEAR 2026-

- The mission is aimed at sending three personnel to 6000-metre depth in a vehicle called ‘MATSYA 6000’ for the exploration of deep-sea resources like minerals.
- ‘MATSYA 6000’ vehicle is being designed and developed by National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai under Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It has an endurance of 12 hours under normal operation and 96 hours in case of emergency for human safety.
- It is India’s first unique manned ocean mission and is a part of the Rs 6000-crores Deep Ocean Mission.
- The manned submersible will allow scientific personnel to observe and understand





unexplored deep-sea areas by direct intervention.

- It will also boost the Central government's vision of 'New India' that highlights the Blue Economy as one of the ten core dimensions of growth. India has a unique maritime position, a 7517 km long coastline, which is home to nine coastal states and 1,382 islands.
- For India, with its three sides surrounded by the oceans and around 30% of the nation's population living in coastal areas and coastal regions play a major economic factor.
- Deep Ocean Mission- It was approved in June 2021 by the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It aims to explore the deep ocean for resources, develop deep-sea technologies for sustainable use of ocean resources, and support the Blue Economy Initiatives of the Indian Government.
- The cost of the Mission has been estimated at Rs. 4,077 crores over a five-year period and will be implemented in phases.



**NIMBUS**  
ACADEMY FOR IAS  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥

# ECONOMY AND FINANCE

**ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK'S LATEST MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT BRIEF, INDIA, WHICH SAW A RECORD-HIGH OF USD 111 BILLION IN REMITTANCES IN 2022 -**

- According to the World Bank's latest Migration and Development Brief, India, which saw a record-high of USD 111 billion in remittances in 2022, is expected to experience minimal growth of just 0.2% in remittance inflows in 2023.
- The main reasons for this are the slower growth in OECD economies, especially in the high-tech sector, and the lower demand for migrants in the GCC countries.
- Overall, remittance growth is projected to be slower globally, with Latin America and the Caribbean showing the highest growth while South Asia lags behind. Remittances are money transfers that migrants send to their families and friends in their home countries.
- Remittances can help reduce poverty, improve living standards, support education and health care, and stimulate economic activity.
- The top five recipient countries for remittances in 2022 were India, Mexico, China, the Philippines, and Pakistan.
- East Asia and the Pacific region may witness a decline in remittance growth due to tight monetary stances, limited fiscal buffers, and global uncertainty surrounding geopolitical events.
- Remittance inflows played a vital role in funding current account and fiscal shortfalls in countries like Tajikistan, Tonga, Lebanon, Samoa, and the Kyrgyz Republic.



**INDIA AND UAE TARGET \$100 BILLION NON-OIL TRADE BY 2030; SET UP COUNCILS TO FACILITATE FTA IMPLEMENTATION -**

- India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have set an ambitious target to increase their non-oil bilateral trade from the current USD 48 billion to USD 100 billion by 2030. The decision was reached during the first meeting of the Joint Committee of India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- Both countries aim to double their non-petroleum trade in the next seven years, emphasizing the need to enhance trade cooperation beyond the oil sector.
- The Joint Committee of India-UAE CEPA agreed to establish various committees, sub-committees, and technical councils to effectively implement the provisions of the trade agreement. These bodies will focus on key areas such as trade in goods, customs facilitation, rules of origin, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, trade remedies, investment facilitation, and economic cooperation.
- To promote trade in services, a new sub-committee will be formed to handle matters related to this sector. Both countries have also decided to exchange services trade data on a quarterly basis.



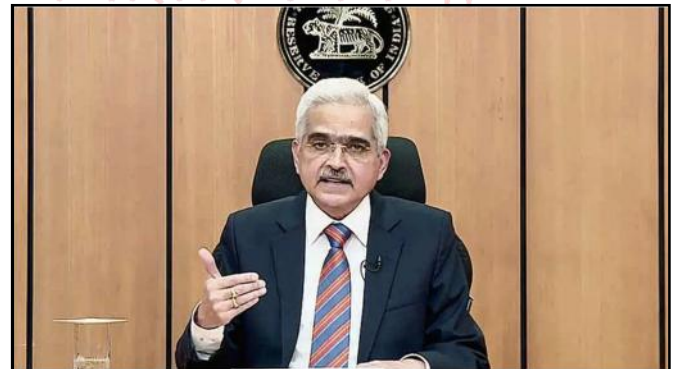
### INDIA'S INFLATION RATE DECLINES TO A 2-YEAR LOW IN MAY 2023 -

- The latest data from the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation reveals that India's retail inflation, as measured by the consumer price index (CPI), dropped to a more than two-year low of 4.25% in May 2023.
- This significant decline follows a peak of 7.79% in April 2022 and a low of 4.06% in January 2021. Additionally, the wholesale price inflation, measured by the wholesale price index (WPI), stood at -0.92% in April 2023, down from 1.34% in March 2023. These figures indicate a favorable trend in the country's inflation rate.
- India's retail inflation has been on a downward trajectory in recent months. In May 2023, the CPI decreased to 4.25% from 4.70% in April, 5.66% in March, 6.44% in February, and 6.52% in January.
- The wholesale price inflation, which measures the overall prices of goods before they reach the retail market, experienced a significant decline in April 2023. It dropped to -0.92% from 1.34% in March 2023. This negative inflation rate indicates a potential decrease in the cost of production and distribution of goods, which could have a positive impact on businesses and consumers alike.
- Both the CPI and WPI experienced relatively high inflation rates in 2022, with the CPI peaking at 7.79% in April and the WPI reaching 15.88% in May. These higher inflation rates may have posed challenges for businesses and consumers.
- The Reserve Bank of India has been closely monitoring inflation and its impact on the economy. In a recent monetary policy meeting held in June 2023, the RBI decided to maintain the benchmark repo rate at 6.50% and pause rate hikes. The central bank projects a moderate CPI inflation rate of 5.2% for the fiscal year 2023-24 and aims to align inflation with its target rate over the medium term.



### RBI MONETARY POLICY 2023, REPO RATE UNCHANGED, GDP GROWTH 6.5% -

- The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has announced its policy decision. The 2nd bi-monthly monetary policy meeting of FY24 was held from June 6 to 8 and its outcome will be announced on June 8.
- The next meeting of the MPC is scheduled during August 8-10, 2023. All members of the MPC – Dr. Shashanka Bhide, Dr. Ashima Goyal, Prof. Jayanth R. Varma, Dr. Rajiv Ranjan, Dr. Michael Debabrata Patra, and Shri Shaktikanta Das – unanimously voted to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 6.50 percent.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das said that the net Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) inflows stand at USD 8.4 billion during the current financial year upto June 6 as against net outflows in the proceeding two years where USD 14.1 billion in 2021-22 and 5.9 billion in 2022-23.
- The rupee remained stable since January this year and India's foreign exchange reserves stood at \$595.1 billion as on June 2.
- RBI projects consumer price index inflation for FY24 at 5.1%.
- Real GDP growth projections for the financial year 2023-24 is projected at 6.5 percent with Q1 projections being 8 percent, Q2 projections being 6.5 percent, Q3 projections being 6 percent and Q4 projections being 5.7 percent.





- The Sensx was trading 149.21 points, or 0.24%, higher at 63,292.17, while the Nifty gained 42.60 points, or 0.23%, to 18,769.00.

#### EUROZONE IN RECESSION AT START OF 2023 -

- The eurozone, consisting of 20 countries that use the euro as their currency, has encountered a challenging start to 2023. Figures from the EU's statistical agency, Eurostat, revealed that the region entered a technical recession, with a contraction of 0.1 percent for two consecutive quarters.
  - This revision by Eurostat follows a prior forecast that predicted slight growth but was adjusted downward after Germany, the economic powerhouse of the eurozone, announced its recessionary status. The European Central Bank's tightening monetary policy, inflationary pressures, and the impact of surging energy prices have all contributed to the recessionary conditions.
  - The eurozone faced challenges stemming from inflation and subsequent higher interest rates. The European Central Bank responded by increasing key rates by 3.75 percentage points since embarking on a monetary tightening campaign in July of the previous year.
- 1.2 Impact of Surging Energy Prices: The escalation of energy prices, triggered by Russia's conflict with Ukraine, exerted additional strain on the eurozone economies, leading to increased inflationary pressures and reduced consumer demand.



#### CENTRE APPROVES 3RD REVIVAL PACKAGE FOR BSNL WORTH RS 89,047 CRORES -

- Union Cabinet has approved the third revival package for BSNL with the total outlay of Rs. 89,047 crore. With this revival package the authorized capital of BSNL will increase from Rs. 1,50,000 crore to Rs. 2,10,000 crore.
- BSNL connects the most remote parts of India and powers many government-run facilities. If private companies flounder, BSNL is the only alternative for the government. Also BSNL plays a vital role in advancing the government's rural broadband agenda. Centre approves 3rd revival package for BSNL worth Rs 89,047 crores.
- The aim of this revival package is to help emerge BSNL as a stable telecom service provider focused on providing connectivity to remotest parts of India. The package will be utilised for enhancing BSNL's 4G and 5G services.
- Government had approved the first revival package for BSNL/MTNL in 2019 which amounted to Rs. 69,000 Crore and brought stability in BSNL/MTNL. Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited.
- In 2022, Government approved second revival package for BSNL/MTNL amounting to Rupees 1.64 Lakh Crore. It provided financial support for capex(capital expenditure), viability gap funding for rural landlines, financial support for de-stressing the balance sheet, merger of BBNL(Bharat Broadband Network Limited) with BSNL, etc.
- As a result of these two packages, BSNL has started earning operating profits since FY 2021-22. Total debt of BSNL has reduced from Rs. 32,944 Crore to Rs. 22,289 Crore.
- BSNL was established in 2000 and is one of the largest telecommunications service providers in India. It offers a wide range of services including landline, mobile, broadband and enterprise solutions.



**INDIA'S TRANSFORMATION: MORGAN STANLEY'S REPORT -**

- A recent report by Morgan Stanley (global financial services firm) highlights the significant changes that have taken place in India over the past decade.
- Morgan Stanley counters global opinions of India's underperformance. It emphasizes India's growth as the second-fastest-growing economy and top-performing stock market.



**Significant Growth Drivers-**

- Supply-Side Policy Reforms
- Bringing corporate tax at par with other countries
- Acceleration of infrastructure investment

**Formalization of the Economy-**

- Rising collection of Goods and Services Tax (GST).
  - Implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
  - Introduction of flexible inflation targeting.
  - Focus on foreign direct investment (FDI).
  - Government support for corporate profits.
  - Digitalizing Social Transfers.
  - Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act .
  - Multi-year high sentiment among multinational corporations (MNCs).
  - India's 401(k) Moment.
- India's 401(k) moment is the term used by Morgan Stanley to describe moment refers to the increase in household savings and investments in financial assets, inspired by the US 401(k) retirement savings plan.
  - Manufacturing and capital spending as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) have consistently risen. Export market share is projected to double to 4.5% by 2031 (from 2021 level).
  - Anticipated rise in manufacturing and capital spending in GDP. Expected broad-based gains in goods and services exports.
  - Per capita income is projected to increase and implications for discretionary consumption. It is expected to clock in at \$5,200 within the next decade.
  - Anticipated Key Risks- Global recession, Sharp rise in commodity prices and supply outages, Shortages in skilled labor supply.

**GERMAN ECONOMY ENTERS RECESSION -**

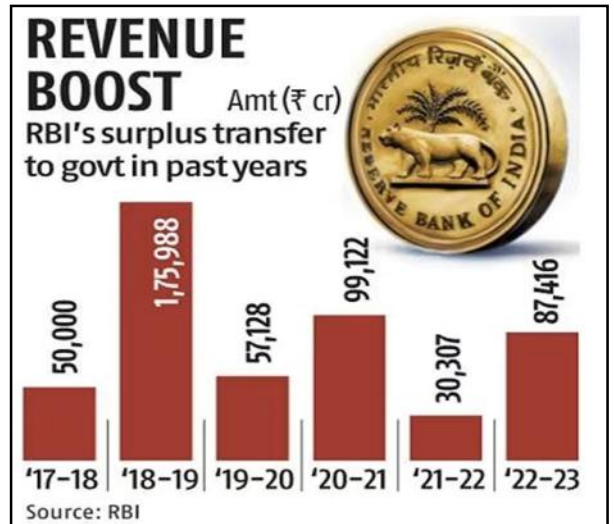
- The German economy has suffered an unforeseen setback, plunging the country into a formal recession, according to newly released data. The Federal Statistical Office's report reveals a 0.3% decline in Germany's gross domestic product (GDP) during the first quarter of 2023.
- This follows a 0.5% contraction in the previous quarter of 2022, marking two consecutive quarters of decline and meeting the technical definition of a recession.
- A recession is defined as a time when economic activity experiences a downturn. It is important to note that brief declines are not classified as



recessions. Instead, a recession is identified by two consecutive quarters of decline in a country's real (inflation-adjusted) GDP, which takes inflation into account.

**RBI APPROVES RS 87,416 CRORE SURPLUS TRANSFER TO GOVERNMENT FOR FY23, TRIPLE THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S AMOUNT -**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the transfer of Rs 87,416 crore surplus to the government for the financial year 2022-23. This amount is nearly three times higher than the previous year's transfer of Rs 30,307 crore.
- The surge in surplus is attributed to increased income from the sale of foreign exchange reserves. Despite facing challenges such as rising yields on US treasuries, the RBI's surplus transfer is expected to provide a significant boost to the government's revenue.
- The duration of this scheme is set for 6 years, providing a long-term framework to drive growth and development in the IT hardware industry.
- It is anticipated that the implementation of this scheme will result in an incremental production value of Rs. 3.35 Lakh crore, showcasing the potential for substantial growth and expansion within the sector.
- Economists have pointed out that the major driver behind the bumper surplus transfer is the gains from record gross foreign exchange sales in the fiscal year 2022-23.
- The RBI's sales of foreign exchange reserves, estimated to be around \$206 million until February 2023, significantly contributed to the increased surplus. However, the profits were partially offset by higher provisioning on mark-to-market losses on foreign securities. Additionally, the higher contingency buffer of 6 percent, compared to 5.5 percent in the past, also impacted the profit margin.
- The surplus transfer of Rs 87,416 crore from the RBI to the central government is expected to bring in additional revenue of around 0.2 percent of GDP. This infusion of funds could help partially offset possible revenue losses due to lower tax revenues and divestment.
- The surplus amount aligns with the expectations set by the Union Budget, which estimated a surplus of Rs 48,000 crore from the central bank, public sector banks, and financial institutions for the current year.



**INDIA REMAINS A BRIGHT SPOT, ECONOMY EXPECTED TO GROW 6.7% IN 2024: UNITED NATIONS -**

- According to the World Economic Situation and Prospects report released by the United Nations, India's economy is projected to grow by 6.7% in the calendar year 2024.
- The report highlights India's resilient domestic demand as a key factor driving this growth. However, it also cautions that higher interest rates and weaker external demand may continue to impact investment and exports in 2023.
- India, as the largest economy in South Asia, is expected to witness a growth rate of 5.8% in 2023, followed by a further increase to 6.7% in 2024. These estimates remain unchanged from the projections made earlier this year. The report





acknowledges that while India's growth prospects remain strong, other South Asian nations face more challenging circumstances.

- Hamid Rashid, Chief of the Global Economic Monitoring Branch at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, described India as a "bright spot" in the world economy.
- He highlighted that India's inflation has significantly decreased, reinforcing the positive outlook. The projection for India's economic growth remains unchanged since January, instilling confidence in the forecast for the year.
- While the report acknowledges India's strong position, it also emphasizes the risks associated with external factors. The tightening of external financing conditions could pose challenges, impacting India's exports. Should the situation deteriorate further, the report suggests that India may face additional obstacles. However, the overall assessment maintains a positive outlook for India's economic growth.

### **RBI'S DECISION TO PAUSE INTEREST RATE HIKES -**

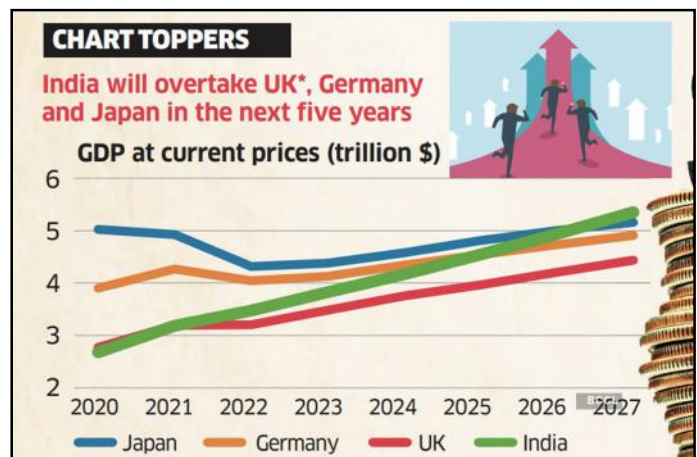
- Recently, The RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to pause interest rate hikes and assess the impact of previous hikes.
- Since May 2021, RBI had been consistently raising interest rates to reduce inflation, which was far above its target level of 4%.
- Inflation targeting in India is a monetary policy framework that was adopted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in 2016. Under this framework, the RBI sets a target for the inflation rate and uses monetary policy instruments to achieve it.
- Currently, RBI's primary objective is to achieve the 4% inflation target. RBI has a comfort zone of +/- 2% within which inflation must remain. This means that the RBI aims to keep the inflation rate between 2% and 6%.
- The last two readings of inflation (January and February 2023) were 6.5% and 6.4%, respectively.

### **Reasons to Pause Interest Rate Hikes-**

- RBI's strategy of hiking interest rates to control inflation has limitations. According to the RBI, under the current circumstances, monetary measures alone may not be sufficient to control inflation.
- Fiscal policy (government's taxes and spending) may be more effective in bringing down current inflation.

### **INDIA WILL BE THIRD LARGEST ECONOMY BY 2027-28: PIYUSH GOYAL -**

- In a recent address to the Indian diaspora community in France, Union Minister Piyush Goyal announced that India is set to become the third-largest economy in the world by 2027.
- Currently the fifth-largest economy, India has been experiencing an average annual growth rate of around 7% over the last decade, driven by factors such as a growing middle class and a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship.
- Goyal cited the country's export performance, which reached USD 750 billion in the 75th year of independence, as evidence of India's upward trajectory.
- He also highlighted India's role as a global pharmacy, food bowl and trusted partner, with the world looking to Prime Minister Modi's leadership to tackle current global challenges.
- With an ambitious target to become a 30-35 trillion-dollar economy by 2047, when India celebrates 100 years of independence, the country faces significant challenges such as infrastructure deficits and



income inequality, but also boasts a vibrant startup ecosystem and a focus on sustainable development.

### **FOREIGN TRADE POLICY 2023 -**

- Recently, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Textiles launched the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023 which comes into effect from April 1, 2023.
- FTP 2023 is a policy document which is based on continuity of time-tested schemes facilitating exports as well as a document which is nimble and responsive to the requirements of trade.
- The policy is based on the principles of trust and partnership with exporters and aims at process re-engineering and automation to facilitate ease of doing business for exporters.



### **The Key Approach is based on Four Pillars:**

*Incentive to Remission,*

Export promotion through collaboration - Exporters, States, Districts, Indian Missions,

Ease of doing business, reduction in transaction cost and e-initiatives, and

Emerging Areas – E-Commerce Developing Districts as Export Hubs and streamlining Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies (SCOMET) policy.

- The government aims to increase India's overall exports to USD 2 trillion by 2030, with equal contributions from the merchandise and services sectors.
- The government also intends to encourage the use of the Indian currency in cross-border trade, aided by a new payment settlement framework introduced by the RBI in July 2022.
- This could be particularly advantageous in the case of countries with which India enjoys a trade surplus.

### **INDIA'S OVERALL EXPORTS CROSS ALL TIME HIGH OF 750 BILLION US DOLLARS -**

- During the ASSOCHAM Annual Session 2023, Mr. Piyush Goyal, who serves as the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Textiles, declared that India's merchandise and services exports are expected to surpass US\$ 760 billion in the present fiscal year, which will end on March 31, 2023.
- Despite the global economic downturn, rising inflation, and high-interest rates, Mr. Goyal highlighted India's successful performance. He also stated that exports increased from US\$ 500 billion in 2020-21 to US\$ 676 billion in 2021-22.
- Furthermore, the minister noted that the industry has responded positively to the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the UAE and Australia. He emphasized that while India's FTAs were negotiated quickly, the quality of the agreements was not sacrificed and was done after extensive stakeholder consultation.

### **INDIA TO CONTRIBUTE 15% OF GLOBAL GROWTH IN 2023: IMF -**

- According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India will alone contribute 15% of the global growth in 2023 and continues to remain a relative "bright spot" in the world economy.
- India remains a bright spot at a time when the IMF is projecting 2023 to be difficult with global growth slowing down from 3.4% in 2022 to 2.9% in 2023.
- For FY 2023/24 (April 2023 to March 2024) India's growth rate is projected at 6.1% a bit slow like the rest of the world economy, but way above the global average. And in that way, India is providing about 15% of global growth in 2023.

- According to the IMF, India has turned digitalisation into a driver of overcoming the pandemic and creating job opportunities, while the country's fiscal policy has been responsive to economic conditions.
- The capital spending has increased, which would amount to 3.3% of gross domestic product, and will be the biggest such jump after an increase of more than 37% between 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- India does have a young population. 15 million people are added to the labour force every year. Strong investment climate that generates jobs is a great advantage for India. Women can be a fabulous driver for India's growth.



### INDIA'S DIGITAL PAYMENTS MARKET WILL MORE THAN TRIPLE TO \$10 TRILLION BY 2026 -

- In a country witnessing rapid growth, it comes as no surprise that India also has one of the fastest-growing fintech landscapes in the world, driven primarily by the advancement in the digital payments segment.
- Boston Consulting Group (BCG), in collaboration with PhonePe, India's leading digital payments company, today unveiled a report titled, "Digital payments in India: A US\$10 trillion opportunity".
- India's digital payments landscape has witnessed phenomenal growth over the past five years. As per the report, India's digital payments market is at an inflection point and is expected to increase more than threefold from the current US\$3 trillion to US\$10 trillion by 2026.
- As a result of this unprecedented growth, digital payments (non-cash) will constitute 2 out of 3 payment transactions by 2026.





## REPORTS & INDICES

### **INDIA EMERGED AS THE WORLD'S 2ND LARGEST PRODUCER OF CRUDE STEEL-**

- Union Minister of Steel and Civil Aviation, Sh. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia has stated that India has moved from 4th largest producer of crude steel to the second largest producer of crude steel from 2014-15 to 2022-23 standing just behind China which is the largest exporter of crude steel in the world. India has reported a hike of 42% in Crude steel production from 88.98 MT (Metric ton) in 2014-15 to 126.26 MT in 2022-23.
- India stands as a net exporter of steel witnessing an export of 6.72 MT of finished steel against the import of 6.02 MT in the year 2022-23.
- In the financial year 2022-23 alone, total finished Steel Production was 122.28 MT which is a increase of 49 % as compared to 81.86 MT in financial year 2014-15.
- In the past 9 years (2014-15 to 2022-23), Steel CPSEs viz. SAIL, NMDC, MOIL, KIOCL, MSTC, and MECON, used ₹90,273.88 crores of their own resources for CAPEX (Capital expenditure) and paid a dividend to the Government of India to the tune of ₹21,204.18 crores.
- The National Steel Policy formulated by the Government of India in 2017 to promote the growth and development of the steel industry in the country has set the targets of achieving the total crude steel capacity of 300 MTPA (Million Tonnes Per Annum) and total crude steel demand/production of 255 MTPA by 2030-31. By 2030-31, it is also envisaged to enhance the operational capacity of crude steel production of SAIL from existing 19.51 MTPA to around 35.65 MTPA tentatively.
- Under the PLI (Productive linked Incentive) scheme, the Government has approved Rs. 6322 crores to give a new impetus to the Steel sector. Shri Scindia said that the PLI scheme is expected to generate an investment of about Rs. 30,000 Crores and additional capacity creation of about 25 Million Tonnes of specialty steel in the next 5 years.



### **INVESTIGATION INTO THE RECENT TRAGIC TRAIN ACCIDENT IN ODISHA IS BEING CONDUCTED BY THE COMMISSION OF RAILWAY SAFETY FOR THE SOUTH-EASTERN CIRCLE -**

- CRS is a government body that acts as the railway safety authority in the country.
- It deals with matters related to safety of rail travel and operations, among some other statutory functions – inspectorial, investigatory, and advisory – as laid down in the Railways Act, 1989. It is Headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- It is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) instead of the Ministry of Railways.
- The reason behind this is to keep the CRS insulated from the influence of the country's railway establishment and prevent conflicts of interest.

#### **History of CRS-**

##### **Indian Railway Board Act, 1905-**

- As per the Indian Railway Board Act, 1905, and a notification by the then Department of Commerce and Industry, the Railway Board was entrusted with powers and functions of the government under various sections of the Railway Act and was also authorised to



make rules for railway operations in India.

- This effectively made the Railway Board the safety controlling authority for railways in India.

**Government of India Act of 1935-**

- Section 181(3) of the Government of India Act of 1935 stated that there should be a separate authority responsible for ensuring the safety of both passengers and railway personnel.
- This authority would investigate accidents and determine their causes. In 1939, a panel headed by the then chief inspecting officer of the British Railways, A.H.L. Mount, noted that the Railway Board was appreciative of the separation argument and "would welcome the change".
- In May 1941, the Railway Inspectorate was separated from the Railway Board and placed under the control of the Department of Posts and Air at that time.
- Later in 1961, the Inspectorate was renamed as CRS (Commissioner of Railway Safety), and it has been under the authority of the central ministry responsible for civil aviation in India ever since.

**DR. MANDAVIYA UNVEILS 5TH STATE FOOD SAFETY INDEX ON WORLD FOOD SAFETY DAY -**

- Kerala has been announced as the top-performing state in the fifth State Food Safety Index by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, according to an official statement. Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya Unveiled the fifth State Food Safety Index. The ranking analyses six different aspects of food safety to assess the performance of Indian states and union territories.
- Goa came out on top among smaller states, while Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, and Chandigarh ranked first, second, and third, respectively, among the union territories.
- Kerala's Chief Minister and Health Minister both lauded the achievement, which was credited to a range of initiatives, including awareness programmes, school projects, and village-level schemes.
- Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mansukh Mandaviya, who announced the index on World Food Safety Day, said that over the next three years, FSSAI would train 2.5 million food business operators to ensure that food quality standards are met across the country, while also establishing 100 Food Streets meeting quality benchmarks for safety, hygiene, and nutrition.



**INDIA CLIMBS 6 SPOTS TO 38TH IN WORLD BANK'S LOGISTICS PERFORMANCE INDEX 2023 -**

- According to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India's rank in the 7th edition of the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index 2023 has improved by 6 positions, and it now stands at 38th among 139 countries. The ministry further stated that India has shown significant progress in 4 out of 6 LPI indicators.
- The government also mentioned that the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, launched in October 2021, is responsible for this update.

**Logistics Jump**  
India jumped six places on the World Bank Logistics Index

Soft and hard infra helps improve performance :: Technology also a factor :: Better dwell times than some advanced countries

	Rank	Rank	2018	2023
Singapore	1	LPI Rank	44	▲ 38
Finland	2	Customs	40	▼ 47
Germany	3	Infrastructure	52	▲ 47
Canada	7	International shipments	44	▲ 22
France	13	Logistics quality and competence	42	▲ 38
United States	17	Tracking and tracing	38	▼ 41
China	19	Timeliness	52	▲ 35
United Kingdom	19	2023 rank is grouped rank out of 139 countries, 2018 rank considered 160 countries		
Malaysia	26			
Thailand	34			
India	38			
Saudi Arabia	38			

Source: World Bank | LPI 2023



- The plan aims to address the evolving requirements of logistics due to factors such as e-commerce, urbanization, energy preferences, and the need to establish sturdy supply chains.
- Additionally, the Ministry stated that India's ranking was improved due to the implementation of the National Logistics Policy (NLP), which provides guidance for States or UTs in developing logistics policies.
- The Ministry stated that the Logistics Data Bank project by NICDC, which involves the use of RFID tags on containers and has been implemented in the Western region of India since 2016, and expanded to a Pan India level in 2020, has resulted in significant improvements in cross-border trade facilitation.
- Additionally, the project fosters competition among ports by offering data on performance benchmarking, congestion, dwell time, speed, and transit time analysis, according to the Ministry. The Ministry also recognized that initiatives such as Sagarmala and Bharatmala have been instrumental in enhancing India's logistics efficiency.

### WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2023 -

- On the World Press Freedom Day (WPDF) (3rd May), the World Press Freedom Index 2023 was published by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).
- India ranked 161st among the 180 countries with a score of 36.62. In 2022, India's rank was 150.
- The day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993, following the recommendation of UNESCO's General Conference in 1991.
- The day also marks the 1991 Windhoek Declaration (adopted by UNESCO).
- To raise public awareness of the value of press freedom, the importance of protecting journalists' rights, and the importance of encouraging independent, free media.
- Theme for 2023- 'Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of Expression as a Driver for All Other Human Rights'.

### What are the Key Highlights of the World Press Freedom Index 2023-

- Norway, Ireland and Denmark occupied the top three positions.
- Vietnam, China and North Korea were at the bottom on the list.

### India's Neighbours-

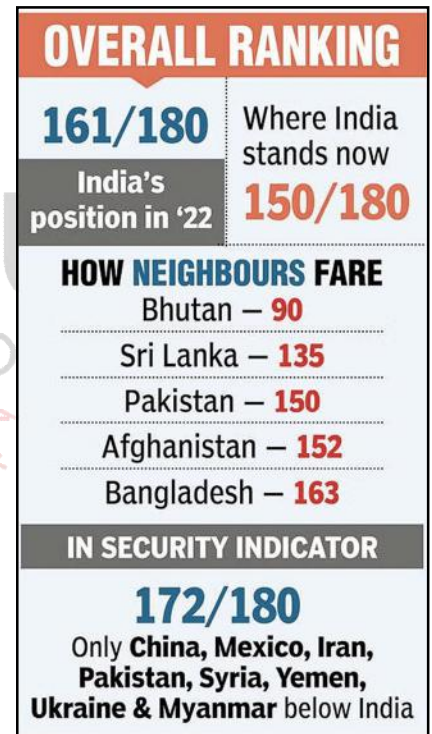
- Sri Lanka also made significant improvement on the index, ranking 135th this year as against 146th in 2022.
- Pakistan is ranked at 150th position.
- The situation has gone from 'problematic' to 'very bad' in three other countries: Tajikistan (down 1 at 153rd), India (down 11 at 161st) and Turkey (down 16 at 165th).

### India's Performance Analysis-

- India's position has been consistently falling in the index since 2016 when it was ranked 133.
- The reasons behind the fall in ranking is the increased violence against journalists and a politically partisan media.
- The other phenomenon that dangerously restricts the free flow of information is the acquisition of media outlets by oligarchs who maintain close ties with political leaders.
- The organisation asserts that many journalists in India are forced to censor themselves due to extreme pressure.

### What is the World Press Freedom Index-

- It has been published every year since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders or Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF).





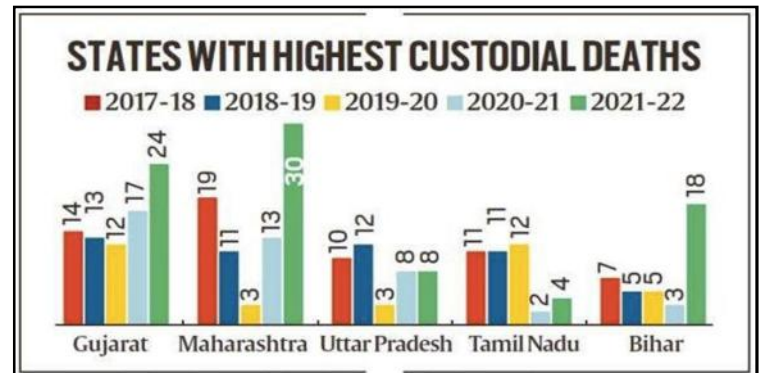
- RSF is an independent NGO based in Paris that has consultative status with the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the International Organisation of the Francophonie (OIF).

**ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (MHA) IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF CUSTODIAL DEATHS HAVE BEEN REPORTED IN GUJARAT AT 80 -**

- Custodial death is a death that occurs while a person is in the custody of law enforcement officials or in a correctional facility. It can occur due to various causes such as use of excessive force, neglect, or abuse by the authorities.
- According to the Law commission of India, the crime by a public servant against the arrested or the detained person who is in custody amounts to custodial violence.

**Custodial Death in India-**

- A. A total of 146 cases of death in police custody were reported during 2017-2018,
- B. 136 in 2018-2019,
- C. 112 in 2019-2020,
- D. 100 in 2020-2021,
- E. 175 in 2021-2022.
- In the last five years, the highest number of custodial deaths (80) has been reported in Gujarat, followed by Maharashtra (76), Uttar Pradesh (41), Tamil Nadu (40) and Bihar (38).



**Possible Reasons for Custodial Deaths-**

- Absence of Strong Legislation
- Institutional Challenges
- Excessive Force:
- Lengthy Judicial Processes:
- Not Adhering to International Standard:
- Medical neglect or lack of medical attention, and even suicide.
- Poor training or lack of accountability among law enforcement officials.
- Inadequate or substandard conditions in detention centers.
- Underlying health conditions or pre-existing medical conditions that are not adequately addressed or treated while in custody.

**Provisions Available Regarding Custody-**

- Article 21 states that "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law".
- Article 22 provides "Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases".
- Police and public order are State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- The Central Government issues advisories from time to time and also has enacted the Protection of Human Rights Act (PHR), 1993.
- Section 41 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) was amended in 2009 to include safeguards so that arrests and detentions for interrogation have reasonable grounds and documented procedures, arrests are made transparent to family, friends and public, and there is protection through legal representation.

# ENVIRONMENT

## **MIYAWAKI PLANTATION METHOD -**

- Prime Minister of India in his recent episode of 'Mann ki Baat', discussed the concept of Miyawaki plantation. He shed light on the Japanese technique of establishing dense urban forests in limited spaces.
- He also mentioned the inspiring story of Raafi Ramnath, a teacher from Kerala, who utilized the Miyawaki method to convert a barren piece of land into a miniature forest named Vidyavanam.
- It was named after Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, this method involves planting two to four different types of indigenous trees within every square metre.
- The methodology was developed in the 1970s, with the basic objective to densify green cover within a small parcel of land.
- In this method, the trees become self-sustaining and they grow to their full length within three years.
- The dense green cover of indigenous trees plays a key role in absorbing the dust particles of the area where the garden has been set up. The plants also help in regulating surface temperature.
- Some of the common indigenous plants that are used for these forests include Anjan, Amala, Bel, Arjun and Gunj.
- These forests encourage new biodiversity and an ecosystem which in turn increases the fertility of the soil.



## **Miyawaki Forest Method in Mumbai-**

- Over the years, the cost-effective Miyawaki Plantation Method has become the go-to solution to restore the green cover in a space-starved city like Mumbai.
- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has been implementing the Miyawaki forest approach in various vacant land areas of Mumbai to combat climate change, reduce pollution levels, and enhance the city's green cover.
- 64 Miyawaki forests have been planted in Mumbai so far.

## **AS CYCLONE BIPORJOY APPROACHES KUTCH, GUJARAT, THERE ARE CONCERNS ABOUT THE IMPACT ON THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARDS (GIB) IN NALIYA REGION AND THE ASIATIC LIONS IN THE GIR FOREST-**

- The Gir forest is home to nearly 700 Asiatic lions, which are found only in this region and are a vital species for conservation.
- Conservationists have raised concerns about the vulnerability of having the entire lion population concentrated in one area. Epidemics and natural disasters like the 2018 outbreak of Babesiosis and Cyclone Tauktae in 2019 pose significant risks to the survival of the lions.
- In 2013, the Supreme Court issued a directive for the transfer of Asiatic lions from Gujarat's Gir forest to Madhya Pradesh's KNP (Kuno



National Park). The Gujarat government's plea to prevent the translocation of lions was rejected by the court, despite their assertion that these animals were a source of pride for the state.

- Asiatic lions were once distributed to the state of West Bengal in the east and Rewa in Madhya Pradesh, in central India. At present Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary is the only abode of the Asiatic lion.
- There are only four remaining Great Indian Bustard females in the grasslands of Naliya, Gujarat. As birds, they have better mobility and may be able to sense danger and fly away from the cyclone's path.
- However, the impact on their habitat due to flooding caused by heavy rainfall remains a concern.
- Efforts are being made to ensure the safety of wildlife during the cyclone. The authorities have cancelled leaves, deployed rescue teams, and equipped hospitals to provide medical assistance to injured animals.

**IN 2023, THE MONSOON ARRIVED OVER THE KERALA COAST ON JUNE 8, WHICH IS A DELAY COMPARED TO ITS NORMAL ONSET DATE OF JUNE 1 -**

- The differential heating and cooling of land and water creates a low pressure on the landmass of India while the seas around experience comparatively high pressure.
- The Tibetan plateau gets intensely heated during summer, which results in strong vertical air currents and the formation of low pressure over the plateau at about 9 km above sea level.
- The movement of the westerly jet stream to the north of the Himalayas and the presence of the tropical easterly jet stream over the Indian peninsula during summer.
- La Nina is the cooling phase, and El Nino is the warming phase. La Nina generally impacts positively on Indian Monsoon.



**CYCLONE BIPARJOY: IMD ISSUES ALERT FOR FISHERMEN-**

- Recent observations show that it has started moving in a northeasterly direction at a speed of 7 kilometers per hour. It is anticipated that the cyclone will reach its maximum intensity with winds reaching around 185 kilometers per hour.
- As a precautionary measure, warnings have been issued to people residing in coastal areas. The authorities have captured a three-dimensional image of the cyclone's location, and personnel are actively engaged in monitoring and managing the situation.
- Cyclone Biparjoy is a low-pressure area that is currently forming over the Southeast Arabian Sea. It is expected to intensify into a depression in the next 48 hours and may reach cyclonic storm intensity in the subsequent 72 hours. The track of the cyclone is not yet clear, but it is likely to move towards the West Coast of India. Cyclone Biparjoy is the first cyclone to form in the Arabian Sea this season. The monsoon season in India typically begins in June and lasts until September.
- The cyclone is expected to bring heavy rains and strong winds to the West Coast of India. The heaviest rains are expected to fall in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. The strong winds could cause power outages and damage to property. People in the affected areas are advised to take precautions and stay safe.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has given a notice to all ports in Gujarat, directing them to raise the distant warning (DW II) signal as a deep depression in the Arabian Sea has developed into a cyclonic storm named "Biparjoy." As per the IMD, the storm has changed its course towards the north and presents potential dangers to the coastal areas.



- The name Biparjoy was given to the cyclone by Bangladesh. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) names tropical cyclones in alphabetical order according to the names submitted by member countries. Bangladesh submitted the name Biparjoy, which means "Disaster" in Bengali.

### **DIRECT-SEEDING METHOD-**

- Farmers in leading rice-growing states are adopting the direct-seeding method as a solution to delayed rains and labor shortages.
- Direct Seeded Rice (DSR), also known as the 'broadcasting seed technique,' is a water-saving method of sowing paddy.
- In this method, seeds are directly drilled into the fields, eliminating the need for nursery preparation and transplantation.
- With the use of drum seeders, only two labourers are required to sow seeds on one acre, compared to 25-30 labourers needed in traditional methods.
- By eliminating the need for nursery cultivation, farmers save approximately 30 days in the crop cycle. This allows them to start the rabi season early and avoid untimely rains during the harvesting phase.
- The direct-seeding method reduces water requirements by around 15% as water logging occurs only after a month. This is especially beneficial in areas where rainfall is delayed.
- According to the results from research trials and farmers' field survey, after this technique the yield is one to two quintals per acre higher than puddled transplanted rice.
- Weed growth becomes a challenge as seeds are sown directly into the fields.
- The direct-seeding method has gained traction in various regions, including Punjab, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.



### **SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS LAWS ALLOWING JALLIKATTU-**

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has upheld amendments made by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, to allow the traditional bull-taming sports of Jallikattu, Kambala (Karnataka) and bullock-cart racing.
- The case involves a challenge to the Tamil Nadu amendment allowing jallikattu, based on the argument that it goes against the central law prohibiting cruelty to animals.
- The SC held that the state amendments (Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017 and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017) did not violate the Constitution and the Supreme Court's 2014 ruling banning Jallikattu.
- The court said the Amendment Act "substantially reduced pain and cruelty" to the participating animals.
- The judgment holds that the 2017 Amendment Act and Rules on Jallikattu are in time with Entry 17 (prevention of cruelty to animals) of the Concurrent List, Article 51A(g) (compassion to loving creatures) of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court banned Jallikattu through a judgment in May 2014 in the Animal Welfare Board of India vs A. Nagaraja case on the grounds of cruelty to animals.



- The court said the Act was also not “relatable” to Article 48 of the Constitution which deals with the duty of the State to “organise agriculture and animal husbandry”.
- It also stated that any violation of the law in the name of cultural tradition would be punishable.
- The court decided that determining Jallikattu’s cultural heritage status is best left to the State’s legislative assembly and not a court of law.

#### **BAN ON DIESEL FOUR-WHEELERS-**

- India is set to ban the use of diesel-powered four-wheelers in cities with over 10 lakh population by 2027, according to a report commissioned by the oil ministry. It recommended a gradual elimination of motorcycles, scooters, and three-wheelers that are powered by internal combustion engines by the year 2035.
- To prepare for the phasing out of internal combustion engine two/three-wheel vehicles by 2035, EVs need to be promoted.
- During transitional period, there should be policies supporting the use of ethanol-blended fuel with a gradually increasing blend ratio. Four-wheelers, including passenger cars and taxis, must be substituted with electric and partially to ethanol-blended petrol with almost 50% share in each category.
- To boost electric vehicle use in India, a “targeted extension” of incentives must be given under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles scheme (FAME) to beyond March 31.
- Natural gas usage must be boosted in industries and automobiles since it is a greener alternative than liquid fuels like diesel. India aims to raise the share of natural gas in its energy mix to 15% by 2030 from 6.7% now.
- By 2040, there is an anticipated peak in petrol and diesel demand in India, followed by a reduction due to the increasing use of electric vehicles. Additionally, LPG demand is predicted to decrease after 2030 as electrification of cooking is expected to increase, leading to complete electrification by 2070.



# GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

## **CEILING ON STOCKS OF WHEAT AND PULSES -**

- Recently, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution has imposed limits on Stock of Wheat that can be held by traders, wholesalers, retailers, big chain retailers and processors to manage the overall food security and to prevent hoarding and unscrupulous speculation.
- The Ministry has also imposed stock limits on Tur and Urad by invoking the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 due to same reasons.

### **Concerns over Wheat Production:**

- Unseasonal rains, hailstorms, and higher temperatures in Feb 2023 raised concerns about the overall wheat output.
- Lower production leads to higher prices, which may surpass the government's purchase prices and affect supply stability.
- There are indications of a potential 20% decrease in wheat procurement compared to initial estimate.
- Approximately 5.23 lakh hectares of wheat crop were estimated to be damaged in MP, Rajasthan and UP due to hailstorms.
- The permissible stock limits are set at 3,000 metric tonnes for traders/wholesalers, 10 metric tonnes at each outlet for retailers, and 3,000 metric tonnes at all depots (combined) for big chain retailers.
- Processors are allowed to stock up to 75% of their annual installed capacity. Entities are required to declare their stock positions regularly on the Department of Food and Public Distribution's portal.
- In case of stocks being held higher than the limit, the time limit is 30 days from the day of issuing notification to bring the same under the prescribed limits.



### **What does the Government Seek from these Orders-**

- Stabilize Prices
- Ensure Affordability
- Prevent Supply Shortages and Maintain Food Security

## **HAR GHAR JAL PROGRAMME -**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) released a report highlighting benefits of the 'Har Ghar Jal' programme in India.
- The Har Ghar Jal Programme was launched in 2019 under the Jal Jeevan Mission and is implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The program aims to provide every rural household with a fully functional tap water connection by 2024. A fully functional tap water connection is defined as a household getting at least 55 litres of per capita per day of potable water all through the year.

**The program's components are aligned with the following Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators -**

**Indicator 6.1.1:-** proportion of the population using safely managed drinking water services.

**Indicator 3.9.2:-** mortality related to unsafe water, sanitation, and hygiene.





- The 'Har Ghar Jal' report focuses on diarrheal diseases as they contribute significantly to the overall disease burden related to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) issues.
- Currently about 12.3 crore rural households, or 62%, have piped water connections up from 3.2 crore or about 16.6% from 2019 when the scheme was launched.
- The report estimates that ensuring safely managed drinking water for all households in the country could avert nearly 400,000 deaths caused by diarrheal diseases.
- Additionally, this would avoid 14 million DALYs (Disability Adjusted Life Years) from diarrhoea and save around \$101 billion.
- It has saved the time and efforts of women of 66.6 million hours every day that would otherwise have been spent collecting water.

### **PM SVANIDHI SCHEME CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF 3 YEARS -**

- The Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri, recently praised the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme on its momentous completion of three years.
  - The scheme, launched in June 2020, aimed to empower street vendors by restoring self-employment, self-sustenance, and self-confidence. Over the years, PM SVANidhi has emerged as one of the most beneficial and rapidly growing micro-credit schemes in India, fostering financial inclusion, digital literacy, and offering dignity and stability to street vendors.
  - PM SVANidhi Scheme: Empowering Street Vendors with Affordable Micro-Credit
- 
- The Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme is a special micro-credit facility aimed at providing affordable loans to street vendors in India.
  - Launched with the objective of empowering street vendors and promoting their self-sufficiency, the scheme offers loans of up to ₹10,000 to over 50 lakh street vendors who had operational businesses on or before March 24th.

### **INDIA APPROVES WORLD'S LARGEST FOOD STORAGE SCHEME IN COOPERATIVE SECTOR, INVESTING RS 1 LAKH CRORE -**

- The Indian government has recently approved a groundbreaking scheme worth Rs 1 lakh crore aimed at significantly expanding the foodgrain storage capacity in the cooperative sector.
  - With the current grain storage capacity at approximately 1,450 lakh tonnes, this initiative seeks to add 700 lakh tonnes of storage over the next five years, eventually reaching a total capacity of 2,150 lakh tonnes. Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur has hailed this scheme as the "world's largest foodgrain storage programme" in the cooperative sector.
  - One of the primary goals of this scheme is to address the challenges associated with inadequate storage facilities, which often lead to spoilage and distress sales of food grains by farmers. By constructing godowns with a capacity of 2,000 tonnes in every
-

block across the country, the government aims to reduce damage to food grains caused by the lack of proper storage infrastructure.

- India is one of the world's largest foodgrain producers, with an annual production of about 3,100 lakh tonnes. However, the existing storage infrastructure can only accommodate approximately 47 percent of the total produce.
- This leads to post-harvest losses and hampers the efforts to maintain an optimal buffer stock. The new scheme aims to bridge this production and storage gap by significantly increasing storage capacity and reducing wastage.

#### **INDIA BEGINS "OPERATION KARUNA" TO ASSIST MYANMAR -**

- India has taken an initiative to aid those affected by Cyclone Mocha in Myanmar by launching "Operation Karuna." On May 18th, three ships, namely Indian Naval Ships Shivalik, Kamorta, and Savitri, arrived in Yangon with emergency relief material such as food supplies, tents, essential medicines, water pumps, portable generators, clothes, and hygiene items.
- India has always been at the forefront in supporting its neighbors during such disasters, highlighting its commitment to ensuring security and growth for all in the region.
- Cyclone Mocha, which recently hit Myanmar, has been classified as an extremely severe cyclonic storm by the IMD and a 'Super Cyclone' by the global weather website Zoom Earth.
- The storm emerged in the Bay of Bengal and has been recorded as the strongest all-season cyclone to form in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal since 1982, with a wind speed of 277 kmph. The name of the Cyclone 'Mocha' has been suggested by Yemen.



#### **RECENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS LAUNCHED THE FIFTH ROUND OF THE REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY SCHEME – UDAN (UDAN 5.0) -**

##### **UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) Scheme-**

- The scheme was launched by the Ministry of Civil Aviation for regional airport development and regional connectivity enhancement.
- It is a part of the National Civil Aviation Policy 2016. The scheme is applicable for a period of 10 years.

##### **Objectives:**

- Improve the air connectivity to remote and regional areas of India.
- Development of remote areas and enhancing trade and commerce and tourism expansion.
- Enable common people to access air travel with affordable rates.
- Employment creation in the aviation sector.

##### **Key Features-**

- Under the scheme, airlines have to cap airfares for 50% of the total seats at Rs. 2,500 per hour.
- This would be achieved through a financial stimulus in the form of concessions from Central and State governments and airport operators, Government grant



provided to the airlines to bridge the gap between the cost of operations and expected revenue.

**Previous Phases of the Scheme-**

- Phase 1 was launched in 2017, with the objective of connecting underserved and unserved airports in the country.
- Phase 2 was launched in 2018, with the aim of expanding air connectivity to more remote and inaccessible parts of the country.
- Phase 3 was launched in November 2018, with the focus on enhancing air connectivity to hilly and remote regions of the country.
- Phase 4 of the UDAN scheme was launched in December 2019, with a focus on connecting islands.

**Key Features of UDAN 5.0-**

- It focuses on Category-2 (20-80 seats) and Category-3 (>80 seats) aircrafts.
- There is no restriction on the distance between the origin and the destination of the flight.
- The same route would not be awarded to a single airline more than once, whether in different networks or in the same network.
- This has been done to prevent exploitation of the monopoly on a route.
- Airlines would be required to commence operations within 4 months of the award of the route; earlier this deadline was 6 months.



**NIMBUS**  
ACADEMY FOR IAS  
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥



# APPOINTMENTS/PERSON IN NEWS

## **JANARDAN PRASAD APPOINTED NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA -**

- Janardan Prasad has been appointed as the new Director General of the Geological Survey of India (GSI). Prasad has taken charge of the 174-year-old institution, succeeding Dr S Raju who has been the Director General since 2020.
- The Geological Survey of India (GSI), an attached office to the Ministry of Mines, has its headquarters in the city, with six regional offices in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong, and Kolkata.
- Janardan Prasad had previously worked as a geologist in GSI, Gandhinagar in 1988 after earning an MSc in Geology from Patna University. Prasad has also worked in Shillong, Patna, Faridabad, Ranchi, and Hyderabad in various capacities.
- Furthermore, Janardan Prasad was part of the Justice MB Shah Commission, which investigated illegal mining of iron and manganese in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha.



## **DENNIS FRANCIS ELECTED 78TH UNGA PRESIDENT -**

- The 193 UN Member States, elected a veteran diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, Dennis Francis as the President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly.
- Francis, who has had a nearly 40-year-career, will take the helm of the UN's main policy-making body, starting in September. He was elected by acclamation during a ceremony in the iconic General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York. The General Assembly consists of all 193 UN Member States, all of which have an equal vote.
- Its duties include appointing the Secretary-General, on the recommendation of the Security Council, and approving the Organisation's annual budget. Francis said he would prioritise encouraging and facilitating meaningful dialogue.
- The current General Assembly President, Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary, noted that his successor would bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the post. With 100 days remaining in his administration, Kőrösi said he will continue to promote the use of science for a sustainability transformation, namely in preparations for the SDG Summit during the High-Level Week of the General Assembly in September.



## **RECENTLY, INDIAN AMERICAN BUSINESS EXECUTIVE AJAY BANGA WAS NOMINATED BY US PRESIDENT TO HEAD THE WORLD BANK -**

- If confirmed by the World Bank Board of directors, he will be the first Indian-American to head either of the two top international financial institutions: the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- World Bank was created in 1944, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the IMF. The IBRD later became the World Bank.

- The World Bank is one of the United Nations' specialized agencies. It has 189 member countries.
- Major Reports- Ease of Doing Business (Stopped publishing), Human Capital Index, World Development Report.
- Shareholding of WB- The United States is the largest single shareholder, with 16.41% of the votes, followed by Japan (7.87%), Germany (4.49%), the United Kingdom (4.31%), and France (4.31%). The rest of the shares are divided among the other member countries.

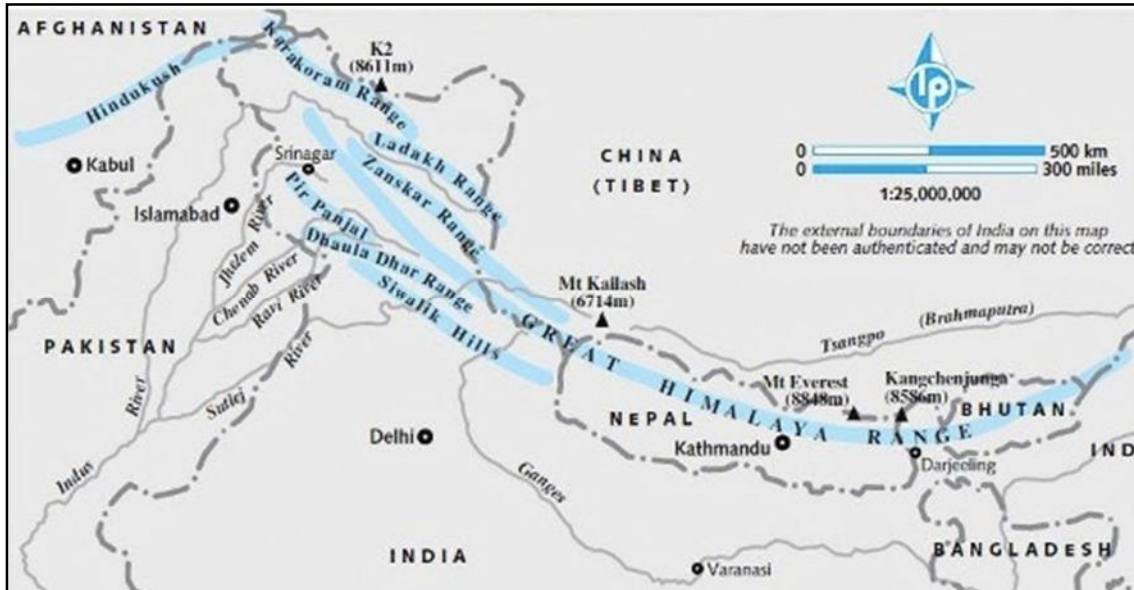


#### **RAJEEV RAGHUVANSHI APPOINTED AS NEW DRUG CONTROLLER GENERAL OF INDIA -**

- Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi has been appointed as the new Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi is a former Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission secretary-cum-scientific director.
- The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has recommended to the government his name as the successor to Dr. V G Somani, whose extended tenure will end in mid-February.
- The recommendation was later approved by the Health Ministry, followed by approval of the Appointments Committee of Cabinet led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The DCGI heads the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) which is responsible for ensuring quality drug supply across the country. It also has the authority to give approval to new drugs and regulate clinical trials.
- He has more than 25 publications in peer-reviewed journals and has co-authored six chapters in books.



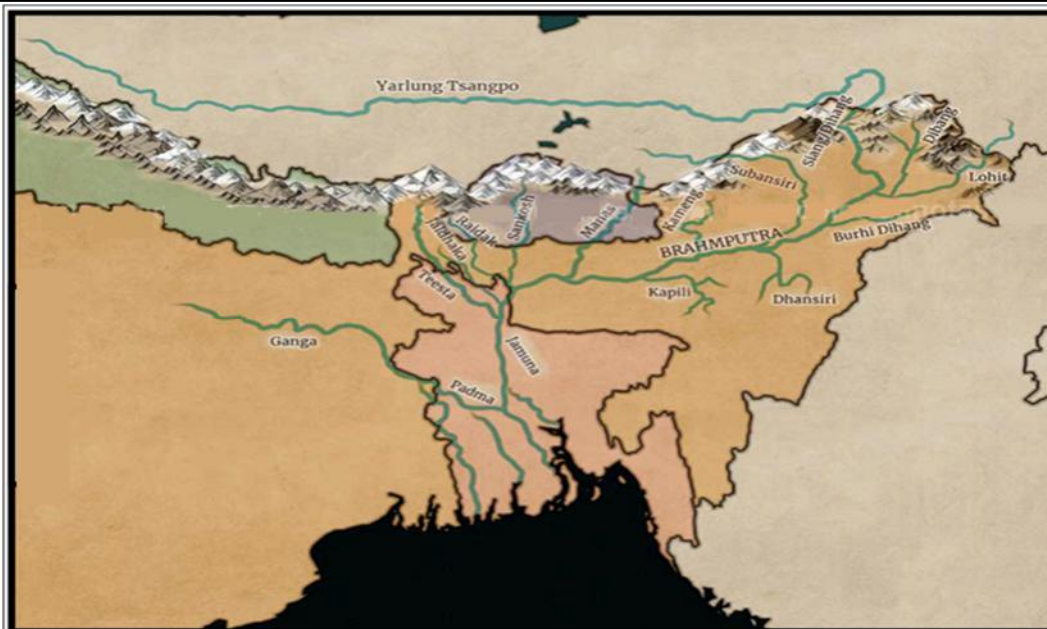
# IMPORTANT MAPS & ARTICLES



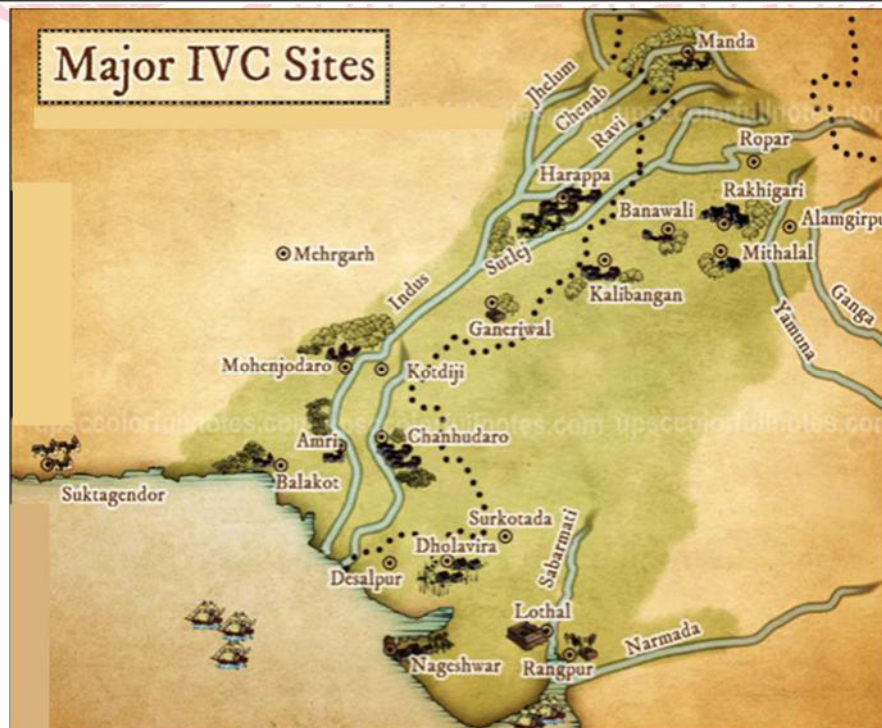
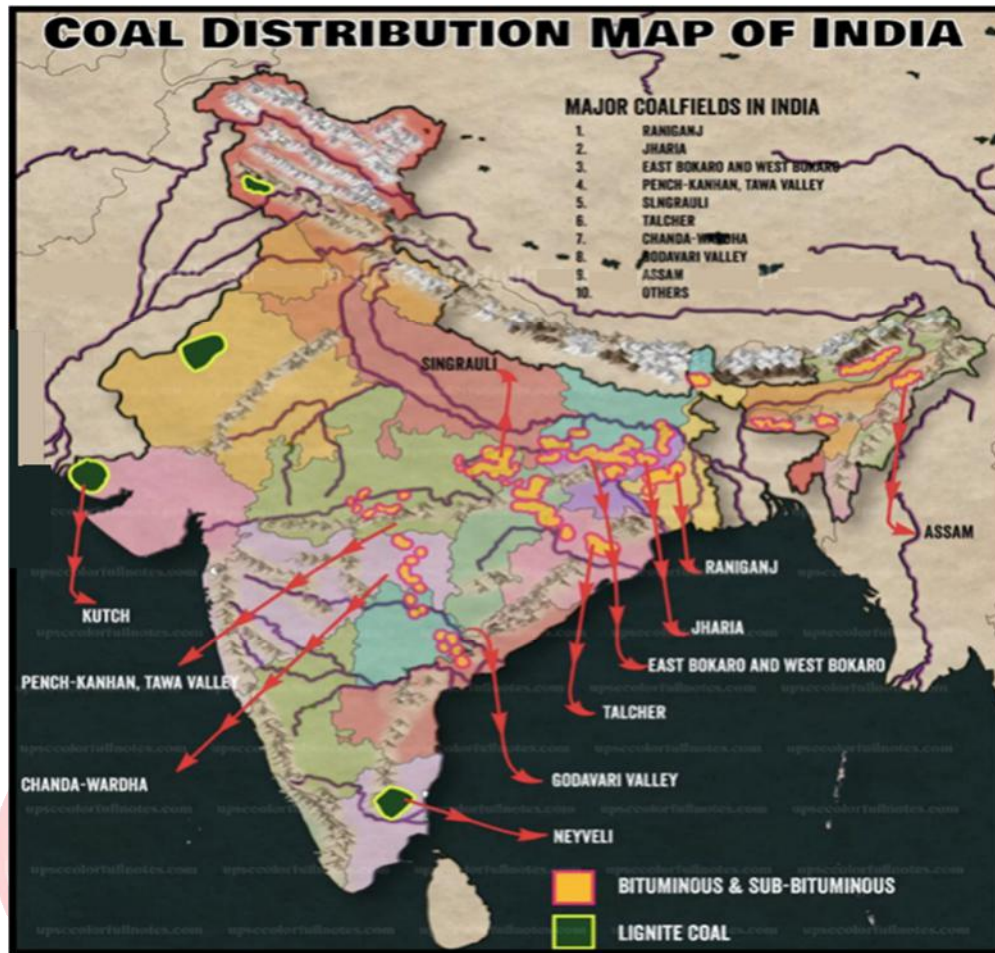


# 75 RAMSAR WETLANDS SITES 2022















**MEMBER COUNTRIES**

# FATF

## FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

**The 39 Members of the FATF**

**The FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe.**

• Argentina	• France	• Japan	• Russian Federation
• Australia	• Germany	• Republic of Korea	• Saudi Arabia
• Austria	• Greece	• Luxembourg	• Singapore
• Belgium	• Gulf Co-operation Council	• Malaysia	• South Africa
• Brazil	• Hong Kong	• Mexico	• Spain
• Canada	• Iceland	• Netherlands	• Sweden
• China	• India	• New Zealand	• Switzerland
• Denmark	• Ireland	• Norway	• Turkey
• European Commission	• Israel	• Portugal	• United Kingdom
• Finland	• Italy		• United States

## ELECTRIC VEHICLES: THE ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

There can be no denying that the era of electric vehicles (EVs) is well and truly upon us. With zero tailpipe emissions, EVs are a direct cure for air pollution and will also help reduce oil imports.

There has been a significant rise in the production and sales of electric vehicles in recent years. Many major automobile manufacturers have invested heavily in EV technology, launching a wide range of electric models to cater to the growing demand. This increased availability and diversity of electric vehicles contribute to the notion that the era of EVs is indeed underway.

Advancements in battery technology and infrastructure have played a crucial role in accelerating the adoption of EVs. The development of more efficient and affordable batteries has extended the driving range of electric vehicles, reducing range anxiety for consumers. Additionally, the expansion of charging infrastructure, including public charging stations and home charging solutions, has improved the convenience and accessibility of EVs for drivers.

Furthermore, governments and policymakers around the world have shown a strong commitment to promoting electric vehicles as a means to address climate change and reduce emissions.

### Why are EVs crucial?

- **Environmental Benefits:** EVs have the potential to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change.
  - Unlike fossil fuel engine vehicles, EVs produce zero tailpipe emissions.
  - EVs help reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other pollutants that contribute to air pollution, smog, and global warming.
  - Electric vehicles help reduce harmful pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- This has a direct positive impact on public health, as cleaner air reduces the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.
- **Energy Diversity and Security:** EVs contribute to energy diversity by reducing dependence on oil imports.
  - As the electricity grid can be powered by a mix of energy sources, including renewables like solar and wind, EVs offer the opportunity to shift transportation towards cleaner and more sustainable energy options.
  - This reduces vulnerability to fluctuations in oil prices and enhances energy security by reducing reliance on fossil fuel imports.
- **Technological Advancements and Job Creation:** The development and adoption of EVs have spurred technological advancements in battery technology, electric drivetrains, and charging infrastructure.
  - These advancements not only benefit the automotive sector but also have broader applications, such as energy storage for renewable energy sources and grid stability.
  - Electric mobility creates jobs and innovation in battery manufacturing, renewable energy, and charging infrastructure.
- **Long-Term Cost Savings:** Electric vehicles have lower operating costs, as electricity is generally cheaper than gasoline or diesel.
  - Moreover, EVs have fewer moving parts and require less maintenance, resulting in reduced servicing and repair expenses over time.
- **Decongesting Cities:** Electric vehicles can help decongesting cities by promoting shared mobility and compact design.
  - Shared mobility refers to the use of vehicles as a service rather than as a personal asset. This can reduce the number of vehicles on the road and the need for parking space.



- Compact design refers to the use of smaller and lighter vehicles that can fit more easily in urban spaces. This can also reduce congestion and emissions.
- Innovative and futuristic smart EVs for shorter intra-city distances, day- trips, and the like would not need a bigger battery. That means less time to recharge and lower cost.

#### **What are the challenges for EVs?**

- **High Initial Cost:** The upfront cost of purchasing an electric vehicle is relatively higher compared to conventional vehicles. The high initial cost makes it less affordable for many potential buyers, limiting the demand for EVs.
- This cost difference is primarily due to the expensive battery technology used in EVs.
- **Limited Charging Infrastructure:** In India, the charging infrastructure is still in the early stages of development and is concentrated in major cities.
- The lack of a robust and widespread charging network makes it inconvenient for EV owners, especially for those living in apartments or without dedicated parking spaces.
- **Range Anxiety:** Range anxiety refers to the fear or concern of running out of battery charge while driving. Limited driving range is a significant challenge for EV adoption.
- Although EV ranges have been improving, there is still a perception that EVs may not offer sufficient range for long-distance travel, particularly in a country with vast distances like India.
- The batteries in EVs degrade over time, which can lead to a decrease in range.
- **Battery Technology and Supply Chain:** The production of lithium-ion batteries, which are a key component of EVs, requires specific minerals and rare earth elements.
- India currently relies heavily on imports for battery manufacturing, leading to supply chain challenges.
- The charging time of EVs is longer than the refuelling time of conventional vehicles, which affects their convenience and usability.
- **Limited Model Options:** Currently, the availability of electric vehicle models in India is relatively limited compared to conventional vehicles. The market needs more options in various segments, including affordable EVs, to cater to diverse consumer preferences and requirements.

#### **What are some government initiatives to promote EV adoption?**

- The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme II, which provides incentives for EV manufacturers and buyers. These incentives include subsidies, tax rebates, preferential financing, and exemptions from road tax and registration fees.
- The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP), which sets out the target to achieve 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles year on year from 2020 onwards by providing fiscal incentives.
- The National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Battery Storage, which seeks to create a comprehensive ecosystem for the adoption of EVs and support the establishment of giga-scale battery manufacturing plants in India.
- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which provides incentives for the manufacturing of electric vehicles and components.
- The Vehicle Scrappage Policy, which provides incentives for the scrapping of old vehicles and the purchase of new electric vehicles.
- The Go Electric campaign aims to create awareness on the benefits of EVs and EV charging infrastructure.
- India is among a handful of countries that support the global EV30@30 campaign, which aims for at least 30% new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030.
- The Ministry of Power, in its revised guidelines on charging infrastructure (MoP Guidelines), has prescribed that at least one charging station should be present in a grid of 3 km and at every 25 kms on both sides of the highways.

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has also amended the Model Building Bye-laws, 2016 (MBBL) to mandate setting aside 20% of the parking space for EV charging facilities in residential and commercial buildings.

#### **What should be the Way Forward for India to adopt EVs?**

- Reduce the initial cost of owning an EV by providing subsidies, tax incentives, and financing schemes for both consumers and manufacturers.
- Increase the choice of EVs by encouraging innovation, competition, and collaboration among Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs), start-ups, and other stakeholders.
- Encourage domestic manufacturing of EVs and related components through incentives and supportive policies.
- Raise the awareness among the public by launching campaigns, portals, and platforms to educate them about the benefits and incentives of EVs.
- Improve the electricity distribution and supply by investing in renewable energy sources, smart grids, and energy storage systems.
- Reduce the charging time of EVs by developing fast-charging and battery-swapping technologies and standards.
- Expand the EV charging infrastructure by creating a network of public and private charging stations across the country with adequate quality and accessibility.
- Enhance the service centre and repair options for EVs by training and certifying technicians, mechanics, and dealers for EV maintenance and servicing.
- Encourage government institutions, including public transport authorities, to adopt EVs in their fleets. This would create a significant demand for EVs, stimulate the market, and demonstrate the viability of electric mobility.
- Developing a domestic battery manufacturing ecosystem and reducing reliance on imports is crucial to address this challenge.
  - Recent, lithium discovery in Rajasthan could be crucial for this.

#### **Conclusion**

India has set a very ambitious target to achieve net zero by 2070 at UNFCCC COP26. To achieve this goal, EVs have a crucial role to play. While EVs themselves produce zero tailpipe emissions, the overall environmental impact of electric vehicles depends on the source of the electricity used to charge them. If the electricity is generated from renewable sources like solar or wind, the environmental benefits are maximized.

## **INDIA AND CRISES HIT PAKISTAN**

The recent arrest of former Pakistani Prime Minister led to massive protests across the country. For the first time, violent mobs, including the supporter of former PM, attacked army and paramilitary installations across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Punjab, Balochistan and major cities of Pakistan. The army was not targeted even in the wake of 1971 liberation of Bangladesh, military coups or even post the assassination of popular leaders such as Benazir Bhutto.

The instability in Afghanistan has further added fuel to the fire and the instability in Pakistan could in turn further destabilise Afghanistan. The growing instability in the Pakistan could spill over in no time and can affect the stability of the region.

#### **What is the Current Situation in Pakistan?**

- **Political Rollercoaster:**
  - Pakistan is facing a political crisis since April 2022, when the former prime minister Imran Khan was ousted from his position in a vote of no confidence. He refused to accept the result and launched a series

of protests and rallies, demanding an early election. He also faced many legal charges, including terrorism, corruption and contempt of court.

- The current Pakistani government has accused him of destabilizing the country and undermining democracy.
- They've accused Imran Khan of becoming opportunistic and destructive by tapping into the anti-army sentiment among the public.
- The turmoil in Pakistan's political discourse could result into a Pakistan Spring (Like Arab Spring). There are many similarities between the situations in Pakistan and those in the Arab Spring countries. Some of the similarities include political instability, economic grievances, corruption, youth bulge, civil society activism and media freedom.
- **Rise of Taliban:**
  - Since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, the Pakistani army has been under siege and the Taliban supported Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is expanding its footprint across Balochistan and Punjab.
  - The emboldened TTP and Baloch groups mounted several attacks against the armed forces.
  - The Pakistani army is practically fighting a two-front war (internally with TTP & externally with Taliban) and keeping a tight watch on the Iran border.
  - The Pakistani army used to be seen as a strong and capable force that could play a smart game of proxy wars has been exposed to be invincible by Taliban.
  - The Taliban is now a major threat to Pakistan, and the army is struggling to contain it. This has led to a loss of confidence in the army, and its aura of invincibility has faded.
- **Army under Seize:**
  - Street mobilisations after the ouster of Imran Khan have made the army vulnerable. The army today is politically much weaker which may provide a fostering ground for non-state actors like TTP.
  - The army's diminished stature became visible, when protesters could access even General Headquarters with some persuasion. Violent mobs targeted the Corp Commander's house in Lahore, the Pakistan Military Academy, the air force base, and army patrols in cities.
- **Economic Crisis:**
  - The inflation rate in Pakistan is currently over 30%, which is the highest it has been in years. This is making it difficult for people to afford basic necessities, such as food and fuel. The Pakistani rupee has lost over 30% of its value against the US dollar in the past year.
  - Recently, a video circulated over social media showed that Pakistanis in some regions are stockpiling LPG in plastic bags as dealers are curtailing supplies due to a lack of cooking gas cylinders. Moving bombs': Pakistan's LNG crisis sparks dangerous 'bag gas' trade.
  - The country's public debt has grown to a staggering USD 250 billion, and the government has failed to secure a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) due to its inability to implement the required reforms.
  - The country is facing a severe shortage of foreign exchange reserves, which have fallen to a 9-year low of less than USD 3 billion meaning that the country does not have enough foreign currency to import essential goods and services.
  - The recent climate disasters have added the fuel to the fire, making their economy more vulnerable.
- **Resentment against China:**
  - The two provinces (KPK and Balochistan) crucial for CPEC, have become battle grounds for security forces. The army's steadfast backing of CPEC has brought it to the centre of rising public resentment against Chinese investments.



- The sentiment is so perceptible that following his recent visit to Pakistan, the Chinese foreign minister stressed that some forces had fabricated the rumour that China created a “debt trap” in Pakistan.

#### **What are the Threats to India?**

- **Escalation of Cross-Border Tensions:** Pakistan's political crisis may lead to a rise in cross-border tensions, particularly along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir. Pakistan may resort to provoking India by supporting militant groups or violating the ceasefire agreement to divert attention from its domestic problems or to rally public support behind the government or the military.
- **Refugee Crisis:** The economic crisis in Pakistan could lead to a refugee crisis, with millions of Pakistanis fleeing the country. This could put a strain on India's resources and could also lead to an increase in crime and social unrest.
- **Compromised Regional Security:** The current crisis in Pakistan could lead to regional instability, as Pakistan becomes more dependent on its neighbours for support. This could lead to increased tensions between Pakistan and its neighbours, including India.
- **Nuclear Proliferation:** Any political or economic instability in Pakistan that weakens its control over its nuclear arsenal could potentially lead to concerns about the security and safety of those weapons. This could raise tensions and pose a threat to regional stability.

#### **What are the Opportunities for India?**

- **Counterterrorism Cooperation:**
  - Pakistan's political and economic situation can provide an opportunity for India to engage with the international community in addressing the issue of cross-border terrorism.
  - By highlighting Pakistan's support for terrorism, India can strengthen its case for global cooperation in combating terrorism and isolating state-sponsored terror networks.
- **Regional Power Projection:**
  - India can demonstrate its ability to maintain stability and handle regional challenges effectively, contrasting with the internal strife faced by Pakistan.
  - Strengthening regional alliances and partnerships, particularly with countries in South Asia and the Middle East, could enhance India's position as a responsible regional power.
- **Strengthening Regional Connectivity:**
  - India can capitalize on Pakistan's current challenges by promoting regional connectivity initiatives, such as the Chabahar port in Iran or the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
  - These projects can bolster India's access to Central Asia, Afghanistan, and beyond, enabling trade diversification and enhancing India's regional influence.
- **Economic Cooperation with Other Countries:**
  - India can position itself as a stable and attractive investment destination in the region.
  - With Pakistan facing economic challenges, India can leverage its economic growth and stability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and foster closer economic ties with other nations.
  - This can lead to increased trade partnerships and collaborations, further enhancing India's economic standing.

#### **What can India do in such a situation?**

- “Victims of terrorism do not sit together with perpetrators of terrorism to discuss terrorism”. But India can give a chance to desperate Pakistan of formal talks of it agrees to stop terrorism, resolve Kashmir issue. Pakistan needs the talks desperately.
- India can use its diplomatic leverage to isolate Pakistan internationally and expose its alleged support for terrorism and human rights violations.

- The crises in Pakistan have shown that the country is unable to effectively govern itself. India can use this to its advantage by pressuring Pakistan to change its behaviour on issues such as terrorism and nuclear proliferation.
- Amidst such a crisis, India must prioritize its border security and enhance its military preparedness to contain insurgencies, cross-border aggression, or provocation from Pakistan.
- India could strengthen its economic and strategic ties with Iran, and other Central Asian countries to counter Pakistan's influence in the region.

**Conclusion:**

Dealing with Pakistan's establishment that has supported anti-India terrorist groups is unpleasant. Nonetheless, permitting Pakistan to come under the influence of extremist Islamists would present an even graver situation. India must make efforts to stabilize the conditions in Pakistan, as the repercussions such as border tensions and insurgencies will directly impact India.

## **GDP RECOVERY INADEQUATE**

India's latest GDP estimates have exceeded even the most optimistic projections, leading to upward revisions of economic growth estimates for the ongoing financial year. India's GDP estimates indicate a recovery from the depths experienced during the pandemic.

However, the recovery is not adequate with challenges persisting in rural demand, manufacturing performance, household expenditure, informal sector's growth, investment patterns, depressed household expenditure, and economic loss pose challenges to the country's growth prospects. Resolving these contradictions is crucial for achieving sustainable and balanced economic growth.

**Why is GDP Recovery Challenging?**

- **Subdued Rural Demand despite Agricultural Growth:**
  - **Rural markets lagging:**
    - Despite robust growth in the agricultural sector, rural demand remains subdued, with volume growth in rural markets remaining sluggish.
  - **Per capita earnings weighed down:**
    - Increased engagement of workers in the farm sector results in lower per capita earnings.
  - **Poor performance of the non-farm sector:**
    - The non-farm sector, which contributes significantly to rural household incomes, is possibly faring poorly.
    - Work demanded by households under MGNREGA, though fallen below as observed during the Covid years, remains well above the pre-pandemic levels.
    - In 2022-23, 8.76 crore individuals worked under the programme, as compared to 7.88 crore in 2019-20, and 7.77 crore in 2018-19.
- **Industrial Sector Slowdown and Manufacturing Performance:**
  - **Industrial Sector Slowdown:**
    - The industrial sector, especially manufacturing, has significantly slowed down.
    - Manufacturing sector growth for the full year was a mere 1.3%, despite a turnaround in the fourth quarter.
- **Rise in Informal Sector Employment within Non-Farm Sector:**
  - **Informal Sector Employment:**
    - The share of workers engaged in proprietary and partnership enterprises (informal sector firms) within the non-agricultural sector has increased from 68.2% (2017-18) to 71.8% (2021-22).
    - The rise in informal sector employment contradicts government efforts to formalize the economy and boost employment opportunities.

- **Investment Activity and Current Account Dynamics:**
  - **Healthy Investment Growth:**
    - Investment activity experienced healthy trend, with the investment-to-GDP ratio reaching 29.2% (2022-23).
  - **Household Sector Driving Growth:**
    - Two-thirds of the increase in the investment ratio was driven by the household sector, followed by the public sector and private sector firms.
  - **Possibility of Current Account Surplus:**
    - The recent GDP data suggests the potential for a current account surplus or a minimal deficit, indicating weak investment demand relative to savings.
- **Depressed Household Expenditure and Impact of Inflation:**
  - **High-end Spending vs. Overall Household Expenditure:**
    - Spending on high-end goods and services has grown, while overall household expenditure remains depressed due to subdued spending by lower and middle-income households.
  - **Low Income Growth:**
    - Limited opportunities for productive employment and low-income growth contribute to suppressed household expenditure.
  - **Inflation's Erosion of Purchasing Power:**
    - Steady inflation erodes the purchasing power of households, constraining consumption.
- **Economic Loss and the Uneven Recovery:**
  - **Real Growth Shortfall:**
    - Compared to the pre-pandemic trend growth, the Indian economy's real growth remains lower than current levels, signifying an economic loss.

#### What are Key Drivers of Economic Growth?

- **Investment:**
  - Investment in physical infrastructure, machinery, technology, and human capital is a key driver of economic growth.
  - It leads to increased production capacity, efficiency, and innovation, resulting in higher productivity and output.
- **Technology and Innovation:**
  - Technological advancements and innovation drive economic growth by improving productivity, creating new industries and markets, and enhancing competitiveness.
  - Investments in research and development (R&D) and technology adoption contribute to economic expansion.
- **Human Capital Development:**
  - Education, training, and skill development are essential drivers of economic growth.
  - A well-educated and skilled workforce is more productive, adaptable to new technologies, and capable of driving innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Trade and Globalization:**
  - International trade and globalization play a significant role in economic growth.
  - By expanding markets, facilitating specialization, and promoting access to resources and capital, trade can enhance productivity, drive economic efficiency, and create employment opportunities.
- **Infrastructure Development:**
  - Adequate infrastructure, including transportation, communication, energy, and sanitation, is crucial for economic growth.



- Well-developed infrastructure reduces transaction costs, facilitates the movement of goods and services, and attracts investments.
- **Institutional Framework:**
- A strong and efficient institutional framework is vital for economic growth. It includes the rule of law, property rights protection, transparent governance, efficient legal systems, and a business-friendly environment that fosters entrepreneurship and investment.
- **Macroeconomic Stability:**
- Maintaining macroeconomic stability through sound fiscal and monetary policies, low inflation rates, and exchange rate stability is critical for fostering an environment conducive to investment, trade, and economic growth.
- **Entrepreneurship and Innovation:**
- Entrepreneurial activities and innovation drive economic growth by creating new businesses, products, and services, generating employment, and fostering competition and market dynamism.

#### **What are the Possible Solutions?**

- **Boosting Rural Demand:**
- Enhance the non-farm sector in rural areas through targeted policies and initiatives to stimulate growth and employment opportunities.
- Improve infrastructure and connectivity in rural regions to attract investments and promote economic activities.
- Increase access to credit and financial services for rural households and entrepreneurs to encourage entrepreneurship and small business development.
- Implement measures to bridge the income gap between the farm and non-farm sectors, ensuring equitable distribution of economic benefits.
- **Reviving the Manufacturing Sector:**
- Implement sector-specific policies to incentivize manufacturing, such as tax incentives, simplified regulations, and ease of doing business reforms.
- Encourage innovation, research and development, and technology adoption in the manufacturing sector to enhance productivity and competitiveness.
- Strengthen skill development programs to address the skill gap in the labor force and align it with the requirements of the manufacturing industry.
- Facilitate public-private partnerships and collaboration to attract investments and promote industrial growth.
- **Formalization of the Informal Sector:**
- Introduce policies and programs to promote the formalization of informal sector enterprises, such as providing access to finance, simplifying registration procedures, and offering incentives for compliance.
- Enhance the social security net for workers in the informal sector to improve their income security and overall well-being.
- Foster an enabling environment for informal enterprises to transition to the formal sector by providing business development support, training, and access to markets.
- **Addressing Income Inequality and Boosting Household Expenditure:**
- Implement progressive taxation policies to redistribute income and reduce wealth disparities.
- Enhance social welfare programs and safety nets to provide support to low-income households and vulnerable groups.
- Increase investment in education and skill development to empower individuals and improve their employability.

- Combat inflationary pressures through effective monetary and fiscal policies to protect the purchasing power of households.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
- Establish robust mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of implemented policies and interventions.
- Regularly assess the impact of policy measures on key economic indicators and make necessary adjustments to ensure desired outcomes.
- Encourage research and data-driven decision-making to inform policy formulation and implementation.

## MEGA FOOD STORAGE PLAN: CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

The Union Cabinet has approved a Rs 1 lakh crore plan for “World’s Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector” by the convergence of various schemes. The latest decision of creating additional decentralised grain storage at the block level is a positive step towards strengthening the agriculture sector.

The new initiative tries to address two of the most important objectives of farm laws -strengthening/expanding the market infrastructure and ensuring remunerative prices to farmers.

It is disturbing to see grains, amounting to thousands of tonnes, getting wet in the market yards. Market yards fail to provide basic protection to the produce inside the yard. These issues also adversely affect the grains that are just harvested (farm level) and also the crops that are about to be harvested resulting in huge losses for farmers. Reducing post-harvest losses should be a key objective of the new storage infrastructure.

### What is this Mega Food Storage Plan?

- It’ll increase foodgrain storage capacity by 70 million tonnes in the cooperative sector.
- This will be world’s largest grain storage plan in the cooperative sector.
- The plan will let cooperatives set up decentralised storage facilities across the country, in a move to reduce the burden on Food Corporation of India (FCI), cut wastage of farm produce and help farmers plan their sales better.
- The plan will converge existing schemes of the ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution, and ministry of food processing industries, and to utilize the funds available under the schemes for this purpose.

### What are the Major Highlights of the Storage Plan?

- **Convergence of schemes:** The plan aims to converge eight ongoing schemes of three ministries to address the shortage of agricultural storage infrastructure in India.
- **Inter-Ministerial Committee:** An Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) will be formed to oversee the implementation of the grain storage plan.
- The committee will be chaired by the Minister of Cooperation and will include the Ministers of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Food Processing Industries, along with relevant secretaries.
- **Strengthening cooperatives:** The Ministry of Cooperation has developed the grain storage plan to leverage the strength of cooperatives and transform them into successful business enterprises. This aligns with the vision of “Sahakar-se-Samridhi” (Cooperation for Prosperity).
- **Agri-infrastructure at PACS level:** The plan focuses on establishing agri-infrastructure, including warehouses, custom hiring centers, and processing units, at the level of Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS).
- This decentralized approach aims to enhance the economic viability of PACS and contribute to the growth of the Indian agricultural sector.

- **Pilot project:** The Ministry of Cooperation will implement a pilot project in at least 10 selected districts to test and refine the grain storage plan's implementation strategies and assess its outcomes.

#### **How will the Plan benefit?**

- Reducing post-harvest losses by creating decentralized storage capacity at the local level, which will prevent spoilage and wastage of food grains.
- Preventing distress sale by providing farmers with various options, such as selling their produce to state agencies or FCI, storing their produce in godowns, or processing their produce in common units.
- Enhancing income by enabling PACS to diversify their business activities, such as serving as fair price shops, setting up custom hiring centers, etc.
- Improving food security by increasing the availability and accessibility of food grains for consumers, especially the poor and vulnerable sections.
- Reducing transportation costs by minimizing the movement of food grains from procurement centers to warehouses and from warehouses to fair price shops.

#### **What are Post Harvest losses?**

- Post-harvest losses are the measurable quantitative and qualitative losses in a given product that occur between harvest and the moment of human consumption.
- These losses can affect various aspects of the product, such as its quantity, quality, nutritional value, edibility, and marketability.

#### **What do the Stats say about Post Harvest Crop losses?**

- **The average post-harvest losses range between:**
  - 10-16% for major cereal crops
  - 26% in the case of wheat
  - 34% in the case of fruits and vegetables.
- The economic value of these losses was INR 926.51 billion (USD 15.19 billion) in 2014.

#### **What are the Reasons behind Post Harvest losses?**

- **Infrastructure Deficiency:** Suboptimal storage capacity and absence of cold chain infrastructure lead to microbial growth and quality degradation. Scarcity of modern processing units results in enzymatic browning and reduced shelf life.
- **Handling and Packaging Errors:** Abrasive handling and unsuitable packaging lead to physical injury and exposure to biotic and abiotic stressors. Also, Inadequate transportation infrastructure causes transit delays and mechanical damage.
- **Market Disconnection:** Restricted market access and price fluctuations increase post-harvest losses.
- **Pest and Disease Outbreaks:** Insufficient pest and disease management practices cause crop spoilage and contamination.
- **Financial Constraints:** Insufficient resources and limited access to credit hinder investment in improved facilities and technologies.

#### **How to reduce Post Harvest Losses?**

- Assessing maturity and harvesting the crop at the appropriate stage, using proper tools and techniques.
- Checking water quality and temperature and avoiding contamination or damage during washing and cleaning.
- Improve market access for farmers by establishing efficient supply chains, connecting them with suitable buyers, and promoting fair pricing mechanisms to minimize delays in selling produce.
- Using proper storage methods such as hermetic or air-tight containers, which can prevent insects, rodents, mould, and moisture from spoiling the crop.
- Implement and enforce quality standards and certifications for harvested produce to ensure adherence to proper handling, storage, and processing practices.



- Upgrade transportation infrastructure, including road networks and logistics, and promote the use of refrigerated vehicles to minimize delays and damage during transit.

#### What are the Challenges associated with the Plan?

- **Conflict with FPOs:** The main objective of promoting Farmer Producer Organisation (FPOs) is to address the well-recognised limitations of co-operative societies and it is aimed to cover all the blocks of the country. FPOs are also involved in post-harvest handling of the produce that may come in conflict with the agriculture co-operatives.
- **Agri Co-operatives aren't so efficient:** Agriculture co-ops are inefficient but have been given financial responsibilities and storage infrastructure implementation. This decision is unclear, especially since FPOs have better governance as businesses.
  - The problems associated with agriculture co-operatives include elite capture, bureaucratic/political interference, poor marketing.
  - As a result, small and marginal farmers lose on gaining access to competitive markets and getting remunerative prices.
- **Infrastructure managing and maintaining:** It is easy to create infrastructure but managing and maintaining it is a bigger challenge. India has an unenviable record of maintaining its infrastructure, be it FCI storage, drinking water systems, irrigation systems, etc. Capital maintenance expenditure (Capex) is rarely incorporated into annual budgets.
  - Moreover, India has the storage capacity for only one-eighth of its annual perishable produce.
- **Food Quality Management:** Maintaining food quality is crucial for nutrition security. Often the PDS distributes poor quality grains due to low quality storage infrastructure with primitive technologies (FCI godowns) and long spans of storage.

#### What could be the Possible Solutions?

- **Implement through PPP or FPOs:** The food storage initiative would have served better if implemented under private-public-people (PPP) initiative in the lines of FPOs. Even bringing it under the umbrella of FPO would have been a better option.
- **Modernize the Existing storage:** Modernising the existing storage infrastructure should be a priority. The move should be to go beyond grains and create storage infrastructure for perishable commodities (fruits, vegetables, milk, meat, fish, etc.).
- **Don't ignore the Horticulture Crops:** Because of the increasing production of horticultural crops, there is need for creating adequate storage facilities. While doubling farm incomes is linked to cultivation of high value crops (horticultural), providing sufficient storage infrastructure for curbing distress sale and wastage is a necessary condition.
  - The value of food losses (agriculture, horticulture, milk, meat and fish) is above ₹1,40,000 crore a per year.
- **Focus on Processing for Perishables:** In the case of perishables, processing can increase the longevity of the food and may reduce its nutrition value. Again, modern technologies are required for ensuring high quality processing.

## NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING FOR NEW INDIA

In a significant milestone during the 75th year of Independence, Prime minister of India unveiled new Parliament building. Designed and constructed by Indians, this architectural marvel encapsulates the culture, pride, and spirit of the entire nation and looks forward to fulfilling the longstanding need of Indian democracy to have more spacious parliament as the number of seats and MPs will increase in the coming time.

The new parliament building, developed as a part of Central Vista Redevelopment project, takes care of infrastructural hurdles in parliamentary functioning.

Prime minister inaugurated the parliament and placed 'Sengol', the symbol of power transfer to India from the British.

### **What was the Need for the New Parliament Building?**

#### ▪ **Need of More Space:**

- The existing Parliament building, erected in 1927, was never designed to accommodate a bicameral legislature for a fully-fledged democracy, according to the government data.
- With the number of Lok Sabha seats fixed at 545 since the 1971 Census-based delimitation, the building's seating arrangements have become cramped and cumbersome.
- During joint sessions, the limited seating capacity exacerbates the problem. Moreover, the lack of space for movement poses a significant security risk. It is likely to increase substantially after 2026 as the freeze on total number of seats is only till 2026.

#### ▪ **Outgrowing the Heritage:**

- The existing Parliament House, commissioned in 1927, is a century-old Heritage Grade-I building. With a substantial increase in parliamentary activities and users over the years, the building's age and limited infrastructure no longer meet the current requirements in terms of space, amenities, and technology.
- Heritage Grade-I comprises buildings and precincts of national or historic importance, embodying excellence in architectural style, design, technology and material usage and/or aesthetics.
- They may be associated with a great historic event, personality, movement or institution. They have been and are the prime landmarks of the region. All natural sites shall fall within Grade-I.

#### ▪ **Infrastructure Distress:**

- Ad hoc constructions and modifications have strained the building's infrastructure. The addition of essential services like water supply, air conditioning, and CCTV cameras has led to seepage issues, impacting the building's aesthetics.
- Moreover, outdated communication structures and inadequate fire safety measures raise concerns about the safety of occupants.

#### ▪ **Concerns of Structural Safety:**

- Old parliament was built when Delhi was in Seismic Zone-II, the current Parliament building now falls within Seismic Zone-IV.
- This shift raises significant structural safety concerns, necessitating the construction of a new building that meets modern seismic standards.

#### ▪ **Inadequate Office Spaces:**

- Over time, the conversion of inner service corridors into offices has resulted in poor-quality workspaces.
- Sub-partitions further reduce the already limited space, adversely affecting the productivity and well-being of employees.

### **What are the Significant Features of the New Parliament Building?**

#### ▪ **Optimum Space Utilization:**

- The new Parliament building, standing alongside the existing one, encompasses a built-up area of approximately 65,000 sq m. Its triangular shape ensures efficient utilization of space, accommodating the evolving needs of a growing nation.

#### ▪ **Enhanced Seating Capacity:**

- The new building includes a larger Lok Sabha Hall with a capacity of up to 888 seats and a larger Rajya Sabha hall with up to 384 seats.
- Joint sessions of Parliament can now accommodate up to 1,272 seats, facilitating inclusive and robust democratic proceedings.

▪ **State-of-the-Art Facilities:**

- A state-of-the-art Constitutional Hall serves as the heart of Indian democracy, placing citizens at the center of governance.
- The building also offers ultra-modern office spaces equipped with cutting-edge communication technology, promoting efficiency and security.

▪ **Commitment to Sustainability:**

- The new Sansad Bhavan stands as a "Platinum-rated Green Building," reflecting India's dedication to environmental sustainability.

▪ **Cultural Integration:**

- The new Parliament building seamlessly integrates the vibrance and diversity of modern India, incorporating regional arts, crafts, and cultural elements.

▪ **Inclusivity for All:**

- Recognizing the importance of accessibility, the new Parliament building prioritizes divyang (differently-abled) individuals.
- It ensures that people with disabilities can move freely within the premises, fostering inclusivity and equal participation.

▪ **Galleries and Exhibitions:**

- The public entrances lead to three galleries - the Sangeet Gallery which exhibits dance, song, and musical traditions of India; the Sthapthya Gallery depicts the architectural heritage of the country, and the Shilp Gallery showcases distinct handicraft traditions of different states.

▪ **Enhanced Facilities and Access:**

- The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha chambers boast a digitised voting system, well-engineered acoustics, and state-of-the-art audiovisual systems to ensure effective legislative proceedings.
- The Ministers' chambers can be accessed through corridors running parallel to the triangular boundary of the building.

▪ **Symbolic Design:**

- The Lok Sabha hall's interior, inspired by India's national bird, the peacock, and the Rajya Sabha hall, representing the lotus, India's national flower, embody the rich symbolism of the nation.
- Installation of Sengol, the symbol of power transfer, is symbolic tribute to power transfer to India.

**What is its Overarching Central Vista Redevelopment Project?**

- The Central Vista Redevelopment Project is a project that aims to revamp the Central Vista, India's central administrative area located near Raisina Hill, New Delhi.
- The area was originally designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker during British colonial rule and was retained by Government of India after independence. The redevelopment of the project is being overseen by Ar. Bimal Patel.
- Central Vista of New Delhi houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate, National Archives among others.
- In December 1911, King George V made an announcement in Delhi Durbar (a grand assembly) to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi.
- The redevelopment project includes:
  - Constructing a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one.
  - Constructing Common Central Secretariat.
  - Revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath (Kartavya Path) — from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.
- North and South Block to be repurposed as museums.

**What is the Historical Significance of Sengol?**

- **Chola Period:**



- The Sengol is derived from the Tamil word "Semmai" which means "Righteousness".
- It was made of gold and was carried by emperors during ceremonial occasions to represent their authority in Chola empire And was handed over from one king to another as a mark of succession and legitimacy.
- The Cholas ruled over parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Sri Lanka from the 9th to 13th century CE.
- The ceremony was usually performed by a high priest or a guru who blessed the new king and conferred him with the Sengol.
- **Before Independence:**
- Before Independence there was a question that, 'What is the ceremony that should be followed to symbolise transfer of power from British?'
- C. Rajagopalachari suggested Chola ritual of handing over 'Sengol' as suitable ceremony for power transfer as it would reflect India's ancient civilisation and culture, as well as its unity in diversity.
- The Sengol was presented to PM Nehru by Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam (a 500-year-old Saivaite monastery) on August 14, 1947.
- A golden sceptre was crafted by Vummidi Bangaru Chetty, a famous jeweller in Madras (now Chennai).
- The Nandi, with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of "Nyaya", is hand-carved at the top.
- **Post Independence:**
- After receiving the Sengol sceptre in 1947, Nehru kept it at his residence in Delhi for some time before donating it to Anand Bhavan Museum in Allahabad (Prayagraj).
- It remained at Anand Bhavan Museum for over seven decades.
- In 2021-22, when the Central Vista redevelopment project was underway, the government decided to revive this historical event and install the Sengol sceptre in the new Parliament building.
- It has been placed near the Speaker's seat in the new Parliament building, accompanied by a plaque that will explain its history and meaning.
- The installation of Sengol in the new Parliament building is not just a symbolic gesture but also a meaningful message.
- It signifies that India's democracy is rooted in its ancient traditions and values and that it is inclusive and respectful of its diversity and plurality.

#### **How did the Old Parliament Building Come into Being?**

- The old parliament building's construction began in 1921 and was completed in 1927 and was designed by the architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker.
- The building was originally called the Council House and housed the Imperial Legislative Council, the legislature of British India.
- The parliament building's circular shape was inspired by the Colosseum, the Roman historical monument.
- A few Indian elements, such as jaalis and chhatris, were added to the design.

#### **Conclusion**

India's new Parliament building is a state-of-the-art facility that showcases India's rich cultural heritage while providing modern amenities for effective legislative proceedings. The government plans to use both the buildings in conjunction for smooth functioning of parliamentary affairs.

It not only reflects India's cultural diversity but also paves the way for an inclusive and efficient democratic process. As the nation embarks on this new chapter, the new Parliament building becomes a beacon of hope and unity, inspiring generations to come.

## OIL PRICES AND INDIA

The world's largest grouping of crude oil producers, commonly known as OPEC+, agreed to extend ongoing production cuts into 2024 as it seeks to keep oil prices from falling amid concerns about a global economic slowdown. OPEC major and leading producer Saudi Arabia also voluntarily vowed to reduce output by an extra 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in July 2023.

The more than 20-nation OPEC+ bloc, which has been striving to curtail supply in order to support prices in the face of flagging demand, had in a surprise move in April announced additional output cuts amounting to 1.66 million bpd. For India, which imports more than 80% of its crude oil requirements, the combined Saudi-OPEC+ announcements of supply curtailment are a cause for some concern given the potential they have to push up global oil prices. Still, with India having sharply increased its purchase of crude from Russia, the price India pays for an imported barrel of oil has been steadily declining.

### What is OPEC+?

- OPEC+ is a group of 23 oil-exporting countries which meets regularly to decide how much crude oil to sell on the world market.
- At the core of this group are the 13 members of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), which are mainly Middle Eastern and African nations.
- OPEC was formed in 1960 as a cartel, which aimed to fix the worldwide supply of oil and its price.
- In 2016, when oil prices were low, OPEC joined forces with 10 other oil producers to create OPEC+.
- One of the members of the expanded group is Russia (world's third-biggest oil producer), which also produces more than 10 million barrels a day.
- Together, OPEC+ countries produce about 40% of all the world's crude oil.
- OPEC nations produce about 30% of the world's crude oil.
- Saudi Arabia is the biggest single oil supplier within the group, producing more than 10 million barrels a day.
- OPEC+ tailors supply and demand to balance the market. It keeps prices high by lowering supplies when the demand for oil slumps. The organisation can also lower prices by putting more oil into the market.

### Why is OPEC+ Reducing Production?

- **Concerns about Weak Global Demand:**
  - China's economic recovery after Covid-19 lockdowns is losing momentum, which has raised concerns. As the world's second-largest oil consumer, this could impact global oil demand and prices.
  - Interference with market dynamics (Western price cap on Russian oil)
  - Fears of another banking crisis in recent months have led investors to sell out of riskier assets such as commodities with oil prices.
  - Slow growth and lower demand in developed nations and fear of a global recession could lead to lower oil prices.
  - US debt ceiling negotiations have affected oil. Investors fear that this could negatively impact oil demand and result in lower prices, causing uncertainty in the market.
- **Punishing Speculators:**
  - The planned cuts will also punish oil short sellers betting on oil price declines.
  - Saudi energy minister warned traders against heavy betting on oil market. Some investors interpreted this as a signal for possible output cuts.
- **US Output Rising:**
  - US crude oil production is set to rise by 5.1% in 2023 and 1.3% in 2024 due to growth in shale oil production and technology advancement. This could significantly impact global oil supply and prices.
- **Tensions with US:**

- The US is considering passing NOPEC (No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels Act), which would allow seizure of OPEC's assets on US territory if market collusion is proven. The goal is to prevent price manipulation and promote fair competition, but it has faced criticism for potential retaliation by the OPEC.
- OPEC+ has criticised the International Energy Agency's advocacy for oil stocks releases last year of being politically motivated as the US is the biggest financial donor to IAE.
- The IEA had argued these were necessary to bring down prices, but the IEA's predictions of price strength never materialised.
- Moreover, the United States, which released most stocks, said it would buy back some oil in 2023, but later ruled that out.
- **Maintaining the Value of its Main Export:**
- OPEC observers also say the group needs nominal oil prices to be higher to maintain the value of their main export in the face of inflation and currency devaluation.
- Money printing by the West in recent years has lowered the value of the US dollar, the currency in which oil is traded.

#### **What would be the effect of this reduced production in India?**

India is the third-largest oil consumer and imports more than 80% of its total crude oil requirement. India imports roughly 70% of its crude from the OPEC members. On a decadal comparison, the imports have reduced drastically from 87% to 70% in 2021-22. However, OPEC still accounts for the majority of India's oil imports. The reduced production by OPEC+ will have a negative impact on India. Some of the possible effects are:

- **Higher Imported Inflation:** The production cut would raise crude oil prices, increasing India's import bill and worsening the current account deficit by around 0.4% of GDP. This will also affect the retail prices of petrol and diesel, which are already at record highs across the country. Increased prices of petrol and diesel would further lead to rise in the price of domestic commodities as well.
- **Lower Economic Growth:** Higher oil prices will increase the cost of production and transportation for various sectors, affecting their profitability and competitiveness. This will also reduce the disposable income of consumers, affecting their demand for goods and services. Higher inflation and lower growth will also pose a challenge for monetary policy.
- **Higher Fiscal Deficit:** Higher oil prices will increase the subsidy burden for the government, which has to bear the difference between the market price and the controlled price of kerosene and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This will widen the fiscal deficit and limit the scope for public spending on infrastructure and social welfare.
- **Higher External Vulnerability:** Higher oil prices will increase India's dependence on foreign exchange reserves and external borrowing to finance its oil imports. This will expose India to currency fluctuations and global financial shocks. Higher oil prices will also affect India's trade balance and terms of trade with other countries.

#### **What should India do?**

- **Diversify Energy Sources:** India can focus on diversifying its energy mix by promoting and investing in alternative and renewable energy sources. This includes expanding the use of solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear power. By reducing its reliance on fossil fuels, India can decrease its dependence on OPEC for oil imports.
- **Promote Domestic Oil and Gas Production:** India possesses substantial untapped oil and gas reserves. The government can incentivize domestic and foreign oil companies to engage in exploration and production activities, both onshore and offshore.



- Implementing favourable policies, such as tax incentives and streamlined regulatory processes, can encourage increased investment and boost domestic production.
- **Enhance Energy Efficiency:** India can prioritize energy efficiency measures across various sectors, including transportation, industrial processes, and buildings. This involves adopting energy-efficient technologies, optimizing industrial processes, and implementing stricter energy conservation measures.
- **Strengthen International Partnerships:** India can foster strategic alliances with oil-producing countries outside of OPEC to secure alternative sources of oil. Strengthening ties with countries like Russia, the United States, Canada, and others can provide opportunities for diversifying import sources and negotiating favourable supply agreements.
- **Develop Strategic Oil Reserves:** Maintaining an adequate strategic petroleum reserve can act as a buffer during supply disruptions or price fluctuations. India should continue to build and expand its strategic oil reserves to ensure a stable supply of oil during emergencies and reduce vulnerability to OPEC's decisions.
- **Support research and development:** Investing in research and development (R&D) for advanced energy technologies can lead to breakthroughs in energy storage, electric vehicles, and other alternative fuels. This can help India accelerate its transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources, reducing dependence on OPEC in the long run.
- **Encourage Public Transportation and Electric Vehicles:** Promoting the use of public transportation systems and electric vehicles (EVs) can significantly reduce India's oil consumption. Expanding the charging infrastructure and offering incentives for EV adoption can help accelerate the shift towards sustainable transportation options.
- **Engage in energy diplomacy:** India can actively engage in energy diplomacy and participate in international forums to advocate for fair and stable oil markets. Collaborative efforts with other oil-importing nations can help influence OPEC's decision-making and create a more balanced and transparent global energy market.

## RISE IN CHILD LABOUR

The Covid-19 pandemic brought the world to its knees and exposed multiple fault-lines in the healthcare, education, economic, and job-related sectors. India has not been immune to this devastation. As per the official statistics around 5,31,843 deaths have been reported from India to the WHO.

But it is among the marginalised sections of society, especially women and children, that the effect of the pandemic has been deep and long lasting. Households that were surviving in poor economic conditions were pushed to the brink of poverty. These conditions have exacerbated the social inequities and have exposed women and children to abuse, violence and lack of security.

A 2022 report by UNICEF and International Labour Organization (ILO) said that as Covid has put children at risk of child labour globally, the number of child labour cases were expected to rise by 8.9 million by the end of 2022. As per the US Department of Labour, disruption in supply chains has thrust people into unemployment leading to an increase in poverty.

### What does the Data say about Child Labour in India?

- According to the last available Census 2011, there were 10.1 million child labourers in India.
- As per the National Crime Records Bureau Report 2022, in 2021, around 982 cases were registered under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, with the highest number of cases registered in Telangana, followed by Assam.
- Aide et Action's study in India on the impact of COVID-19 on migrant children revealed a two-fold increase in the number of children who accompanied their working parents to the brick-making industry after the first wave COVID-19 pandemic.

- According to a study by Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), there has been a significant increase in the proportion of working children from 28.2% to 79.6% out of the 818 children who were surveyed, mainly because of the COVID-19 pandemic and closure of schools.
- According to a new report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, the number of children in child labour has risen to 160 million worldwide with millions more at risk due to the impacts of COVID-19.
- India's biggest child labour employers are – Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

#### **What are the Prominent Causes of Child Labour in India?**

- **Poverty:** Many families are unable to afford the basic needs of life and send their children to work instead of school. Poverty also forces some children to work as bonded labourers or migrate to other places in search of work.
- **Social norms:** Some communities and families have a tradition of making their children work in certain occupations, such as agriculture, carpet weaving, or domestic service. Some also believe that education is not important or suitable for girls.
- **Lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents:** Due to the high unemployment rate and low wages, many adults and young people are unable to find decent and dignified work. This leads them to engage in informal and hazardous work or push their children into labour.
- **Poor School Infrastructure:** Many schools in India lack adequate facilities, teachers, and quality education. Some schools also charge fees or other expenses that are unaffordable for poor families. These factors discourage parents from sending their children to school and make them drop out.
- **Emergencies:** Natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics can disrupt the normal functioning of society and increase the vulnerability of children. Some children may lose their parents, homes, or access to basic services. They may be forced to work for survival or be exploited by traffickers and other perpetrators.

#### **How has the Covid Pandemic aggravated the issue of Child Labour?**

- **Fall in Living Standards:** The pandemic has caused economic insecurity, unemployment, poverty and hunger for many families, forcing children to work for survival.
- **Loss of Guardianship:** The pandemic claimed many lives, leaving numerous children without parents. As a consequence, some of these children were compelled to engage in child labor.
- **Deteriorating Employment Opportunities:** The disruption in supply chains, trade and foreign investment has reduced the demand for labour and income opportunities for adults, making children more vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Rise in Informality:** The pandemic has increased the share of informal workers who lack social protection, decent working conditions and access to health care. Children are often employed in informal sectors such as agriculture, domestic work, street vending, mining and construction.
- **Migration:** Economic hardships and disruptions caused by the pandemic may have resulted in increased migration, both internal and cross-border. Migrant children, particularly those who are unaccompanied or separated from their families, have been more susceptible to exploitation and forced labor.
- **Temporary School Closures:** The pandemic has disrupted the education of millions of children, especially those who lack access to online learning or face barriers such as lack of electricity, devices or internet. School closures increased the risk of dropouts, early marriages, teenage pregnancies and child labour.

#### **What is the Socio-Economic Impact of Child Labour?**

- **Reduced Human Capital Accumulation:** Child labor diminishes children's ability to accumulate skills and knowledge, affecting their future productivity and income.

- **Perpetuation of Poverty and Child Labour:** Child labor lowers wages for unskilled work, contributing to the cycle of poverty and continued child labor.
- **Impaired Technological Progress and Economic Growth:** Child labor hampers technological advancements and innovation, slowing down long-term economic growth and development.
- **Deprivation of Rights and Opportunities:** Child labor deprives children of their rights to education, health, protection, and participation, limiting their future opportunities and social mobility.
- **Undermined Social Development and Cohesion:** Child labor weakens social development and cohesion within a country, impacting stability and democracy.
- **Negative Health Impacts:** Child labor exposes children to hazards, physical injuries, diseases, abuse, and exploitation, adversely affecting their physical and mental well-being, mortality rates, and life expectancy.

#### **What Initiatives have been taken by the Government to Curb Child Labour?**

- **Right to Education Act (2009):** It added Article 21A to the Constitution which recognizes education as a fundamental right of every child and provides for free and compulsory education to all children aged 6 to 14 years.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986):** Bans the employment of children below 14 years and adolescents below 18 years in hazardous occupations and processes..
- **The Factories Act (1948):** Prohibits the employment of children below 14 years of age in any hazardous environment and restricts the working hours and conditions of adolescents (14 to 18 years) who are allowed to work only in non-hazardous processes.
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987):** Aims to eradicate child labour by prohibiting and regulating it, providing welfare and development programmes for children and their families, and ensuring the education and rehabilitation of working children.
- **National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme:** It seeks to provide non-formal education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend and health care to the rescued children and then mainstream them into formal schooling system.
- **Pencil Portal:** The platform aims at engaging the Central Government, State Government, District, civil society and the public in eradicating child labour to achieve the target of a child labour free society. It was launched by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- **Ratifying conventions of the International Labour Organization:** India has also ratified two core conventions of the International Labour Organization on child labour in 2017.
- **The Minimum Age Convention (1973) - No. 138:** This convention requires States party to set a minimum age under which no one shall be admitted to employment or work in any occupation. The minimum age should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, not less than 15 years. However, developing countries may initially specify a minimum age of 14 years.
- **The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (1999) - No. 182:** This convention calls for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, forced labour and trafficking; the use of children in armed conflict; the use of a child for prostitution, pornography and in illicit activities (such as drug trafficking); and hazardous work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

#### **What more should be done to Address the issue?**

- **Strengthening the Legal Framework and its Enforcement:** The government should enact and amend laws that prohibit and regulate child labour, in line with the international standards and conventions.
- It should also ensure that the laws are effectively implemented and enforced, by allocating adequate resources, capacity, coordination, data, accountability and political will.
- The penalties for violating the child labour laws should be severe and consistent.



- **Providing Social Protection and Economic Support:** The government should provide comprehensive social protection and economic support to poor and vulnerable families, to prevent them from resorting to child labour as a coping mechanism.
  - This could include regular cash transfers, subsidies, pensions, health insurance, food security, etc.
  - The government should also facilitate access to credit, savings, microfinance and other livelihood opportunities for poor households.
- **Ensuring Universal and Quality Education:** The government should ensure that all children have access to free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years, as per the Right to Education Act 2009 and Article 21A of the Constitution.
  - It should also improve the quality, relevance, safety and inclusiveness of education, by providing adequate infrastructure, teachers, curriculum, materials, scholarships, etc.
  - It should also follow up with children who drop out or do not enrol in school, and provide them with bridge education, vocational training or alternative learning opportunities.
- **Raising Awareness and Mobilizing Action:** The government should collaborate with civil society organizations, media, corporations and citizens to raise awareness about the harmful effects of child labour and the importance of child rights.
  - It should also mobilize action and support for the initiatives against child labour, by creating platforms, campaigns, networks, coalitions, etc.
  - The role of Panchayats can also be explored for raising awareness.
- **Responding to Emergencies and Crises:** The government should prepare for and respond to emergencies and crises that may increase the risk of child labour, such as conflicts, disasters, pandemics or economic shocks.
  - It should provide humanitarian assistance and protection to affected children and families, such as food, water, shelter, health care, psychosocial support, etc.
  - It should also ensure the continuity of education and social protection services during and after the crises.

## CYCLONE BIPARJOY

Cyclone Biparjoy was a very severe cyclonic storm that hit Gujarat and parts of Rajasthan. It caused significant damage to infrastructure, injuries and cattle deaths, but only two human fatalities.

India escaped the worst of the cyclone's fury due to early warnings from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and timely evacuation of people from coastal areas. India's disaster management system has improved over the years; however, the challenges remain for the future.

### What is a Cyclone?

### What are the General Mitigation and Preparedness Measures Against Cyclone?

- **Mapping Hazards:**
  - The mapping of cyclone hazards displays the outcomes of evaluating cyclone risks on a map, indicating the frequency/probability of different intensities or durations.
- **Regulating Land Use:**
  - Implementation of policies to control land use and enforce building codes.
  - Vulnerable areas should be kept for parks, grazing grounds or flood diversion instead of human settlements.
- **Engineered Structures:**
  - Some examples of general good construction practice include:
    - Constructing buildings on stilts or on earthen mounds.
    - Buildings should be wind and water resistant.

- Buildings storing food supplies should be protected against the winds and water.
- **Cyclone Shelters:**
- People who live in places that often face cyclones need cyclone shelters to protect them.
- Building cyclone shelters is expensive, so they usually depend on the government or outside donors for help.
- The best locations for cyclone shelters can be found using a system that maps the geography of the area.
- **Flood Management:**
- Cyclonic storms can cause flooding in different ways. The sea water can rise and cover the coastal lands. The rain can be too heavy and fast for the land to absorb.
- Building barriers along the rivers and the coasts can prevent the water from reaching the lands that are prone to flooding.
- The water flow can be controlled by creating places to store water, small dams to slow down water, and other ways to drain water.
- **Plantation of Mangroves:**
- Mangroves protect the coastal area from storm surge and wind accompanied with cyclones.
- Communities should participate in the mangrove plantation which could be organized by the local authorities, NGOs or the community itself.
- Mangroves also help in erosion-control and coastal conservation.
- **Public Awareness Generation:**
- Numerous lives can be saved by effectively disseminating information through public education. Research has consistently shown that a lack of public awareness and education contributes significantly to the damage incurred on lives and livelihoods.
- **Early Warning System:**
- Enhancing Early Warning Systems to Facilitate Rapid and Efficient Response
- Fostering Awareness and Accessibility of Cyclone Early Warning Signals
- Promoting Information Dissemination Channels for Cyclone Early Warnings
- **Community Participation:**
- Since the local people are the persons best aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their area, location, culture and customs, some mitigation measures should be developed by the community themselves.
- These community mitigation activities can be achieved with the support from government and other civil society organizations.

#### **What are the Government Initiatives for Cyclone Preparedness?**

- **National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project:**
- India initiated this project to undertake structural and non-structural measures to mitigate the cyclone's effects.
- The aim of the project is to protect the vulnerable local communities from the impact of cyclones and other hydro-meteorological calamities.
- After the formation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the management of the Project was transferred to NDMA in September, 2006.
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Project:**
- ICZM aims to improve the livelihood of coastal communities and conserve the coastal ecosystem.
- The ICZM plan involves identification of infrastructure requirements and livelihood improvement means in coastal districts.
- Conservation of mangroves is among the components.
- The national component of the project includes mapping of the country's coastline and demarcation of the hazard line.

▪ **Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ):**

- The coastal areas of seas, bays, creeks, rivers, and backwaters which get influenced by tides up to 500 m from the high tide line (HTL) and the land between the low tide line (LTL) and the high tide line was declared as coastal regulation zone (CRZ) in 1991.
- The coastal regulation zones have been declared by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change under the Environment Protection Act 1986.

▪ **Color Coding of Cyclones:**

- It is a weather warning that is issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to alert people ahead of natural hazards.
- The four colors used by IMD are Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red.

**What are the Challenges Associated with Cyclone Preparedness?**

▪ **Limited Lead Time:**

- Despite advancements in weather forecasting, cyclones' precise impact can only be determined within a relatively short time frame of 36-60 hours.
- This limited lead time poses challenges for effective preparedness and evacuation efforts.

▪ **Vulnerable Coastal Infrastructure:**

- Coastal regions are prone to cyclone damage due to their geographical vulnerability.
- Inadequate infrastructure, including buildings, roads, and bridges, may not withstand the strong winds, storm surges, and heavy rainfall associated with cyclones.
- Upgrading and reinforcing coastal infrastructure is a significant challenge.

▪ **Lack of Effective Communication Networks:**

- Efficient communication is crucial for disseminating early warnings, coordinating evacuation efforts, and providing real-time updates during cyclones.
- However, coastal areas may face challenges such as weak signal strength, power outages, and damaged communication networks, hindering effective communication during critical times.

▪ **Evacuation Challenges:**

- Evacuating coastal communities in a short period can be challenging due to various factors; some individuals may be reluctant to leave their homes, especially if they have experienced false alarms or have concerns about their belongings.
- Additionally, issues related to transportation, logistics, and capacity limitations in shelters can impede timely and smooth evacuations.

▪ **Different Livelihood Patterns:**

- Coastal communities often depend on fishing and other marine-related activities for their livelihoods.
- Cyclone warnings may disrupt their economic activities, leading to resistance or delays in evacuations.
- Balancing the need for evacuation with the economic realities of coastal communities is a complex challenge.

▪ **Inadequate Funding and Resources:**

- Adequate financial resources, trained personnel, and necessary equipment are essential for effective cyclone preparedness.
- Ensuring sufficient funding, allocation of resources, and coordination among multiple agencies and stakeholders can be challenging, especially in regions with limited financial capabilities.

**What Measures can be Taken to Enhance Cyclone Preparedness?**

▪ **Strengthening Forecasting and Early Warning:**

- Developing and enhancing the scientific and technological capabilities for monitoring, predicting and communicating the cyclone hazards and risks.



- Using advanced tools such as satellites, radars, numerical models, etc. to improve the accuracy, timeliness and reliability of cyclone forecasts and warnings.
- Strengthening the coordination and collaboration among different agencies and platforms involved in the early warning system.
- Increasing the public awareness and understanding of the cyclone warnings and their implications.
- **Enhancing Comprehensive Preparedness and Readiness:**
- Developing and implementing comprehensive and participatory disaster management plans at national, state, district and local levels. Identifying and mapping the vulnerable areas, populations and assets.
- Establishing and maintaining adequate transport, communication and power networks. Stocking up on essential supplies and equipment.
- Preparing and updating emergency kits and evacuation plans.
- Conducting regular drills, trainings and mock exercises to test and improve the preparedness and readiness of various actors.
- **Reducing Exposure and Vulnerability:**
- Implementing structural and non-structural measures to prevent or mitigate the cyclone impacts.
- Building or retrofitting sturdy and resilient houses, buildings, infrastructure and facilities.
- Restoring and conserving natural ecosystems such as mangroves, wetlands, coral reefs, etc. that provide protection from cyclones.
- Enforcing coastal regulation zone norms and land use planning to regulate the development activities in the coastal areas.
- Promoting livelihood diversification and social protection schemes to reduce the dependence on cyclone-prone sectors.
- **Fostering Cooperation and Partnership:**
- Engaging and involving various stakeholders such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, private sector, media, academia, civil society, etc. in the cyclone preparedness and management process.
- Participating in regional and international initiatives for cyclone risk reduction such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), etc.

## **RAILWAY ACCIDENTS IN INDIA: CAUSES AND SAFETY MEASURES**

The Indian Railways is one of the largest railway networks in the world, with millions of people relying on it for transportation every day. Statistics show that over the last two decades, the number of derailments which constitute the majority of accidents has drastically declined from around 350 per year around the turn of the millennium, to 22 in 2021-22.

However, accidents like the one that occurred at Bahanaga Bazar railway station at Balasore highlight the need for better safety measures and infrastructure. The loss of so many lives is a tragic reminder of the importance of ensuring that the railways are safe for everyone who uses them.

In response to this incident, there have been calls for accountability from those in charge of the Railways, as well as a need to address the systemic issues that may have contributed to the accident. Experts are offering suggestions on how to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future, such as improving signalling systems and investing in better technology.

Furthermore, there have been comparisons made with Railway systems abroad, highlighting the need for India to improve its infrastructure and safety measures to match those of other countries. Overall, this

incident has brought attention to the importance of ensuring that the Indian Railways are safe and reliable for everyone who uses them.

### **What are the Primary Reasons behind Railway Accidents?**

- **Infrastructure Defects:** The railway infrastructure, which includes tracks, bridges, overhead wires, and rolling stock, is often defective due to poor maintenance, ageing, vandalism, sabotage, or natural disasters.
  - Much of the infrastructure was built in the 19th and 20th centuries and has not been upgraded to meet the growing demand and modern standards.
  - The railway system also suffers from a lack of funds, corruption, and inefficiency, which hamper its development and maintenance.
  - Moreover, many routes are operating at over 100% capacity, which increases the risk of accidents due to congestion and overloading.
- **Human Errors:** The railway staff, who are responsible for operating, maintaining, and managing the trains and tracks, are prone to human errors due to fatigue, negligence, corruption, or disregard for safety rules and procedures.
  - Human errors can result in wrong signalling, miscommunication, over speeding, or overlooking defects or hazards.
  - The railway staff also lack adequate training and communication skills, which affect their performance and coordination.
- **Signalling Failures:** The signalling system, which controls the movement and direction of trains on the tracks, can fail due to technical glitches, power outages, or human errors.
  - Signalling failures can lead to trains running on the wrong track, colliding with other trains or stationary objects, or overshooting stations.
  - For example, the recent train accident in Odisha was reportedly caused by a change in electronic interlocking that was not communicated properly to the drivers.
- **Unmanned level crossings (UMLCs):** UMLCs are places where railway tracks crossroads without any barriers or signals to regulate traffic.
  - UMLCs pose a high risk of accidents as vehicles or pedestrians may not notice the approaching train or may try to cross the track when the train is near.
  - In 2018-19, UMLCs accounted for 16% of all train accidents in India.
  - The railways have eliminated all the unmanned level crossings (UMLCs) on broad gauge routes, but there are still many manned level crossings (MLCs) that pose a risk of accidents.

### **What has Railways Done to Reduce Accidents so far?**

- **Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK):** A safety fund for critical assets. It was established in 2017-18 with a corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore over a period of five years for critical safety related works such as track renewals, signalling projects, bridge rehabilitation, etc.
- **Technological Upgradation:** Improved design and features of coaches and wagons. This includes introducing Modified Centre Buffer Couplers, Bogie Mounted Air Brake System (BMBS), improved suspension design and provision of Automatic fire & smoke detection system in coaches. It also includes installing KAVACH - an indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP).
- **LHB Design Coaches:** Lighter and safer coaches for Mail/Express trains. These coaches are based on German technology and have better anti-climbing features, fire retardant materials, higher speed potential and longer service life than conventional ICF design coaches.
- **GPS based Fog Pass Device:** A device to help loco pilots navigate in foggy conditions. It is a GPS enabled hand-held device that displays the exact distance of the approaching landmarks such as signals, level

crossing gates, etc. It also alerts the loco pilot with a loud buzzer when the train approaches a signal or a level crossing gate.

- **Modern Track Structure:** Stronger and more durable tracks and bridges. This includes using Prestressed Concrete Sleeper (PSC), higher Ultimate Tensile Strength (UTS) rails, fan shaped layout turnout on PSC sleepers, Steel Channel Sleepers on girder bridges, etc.
- **Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD):** A technique to detect and remove faulty rails. It is a non-destructive testing method that uses high frequency sound waves to inspect the rails for cracks, defects or flaws that may cause derailments or accidents. The defective rails are then removed and replaced with new ones.
- **Mechanization of Track Maintenance:** A system to automate and optimize track maintenance. This includes using machines such as track tamping machines, ballast regulating machines, dynamic track stabilizers, etc to carry out track maintenance activities such as tamping, dressing, stabilizing, etc. This reduces human errors and improves track quality and safety.
- **Interlocking System:** A system to control points and signals centrally. It is a system that uses electrical or electronic devices to operate the points and signals from a central location. It eliminates the need for manual operation of points and signals by staff on the ground. It also reduces the chances of human failure and enhances safety.
- **Elimination of Unmanned Level Crossings (UMLCs):** UMLCs are being eliminated progressively by closing, merging, manning, or providing subways/road under bridges/road over bridges.

#### **What have the Various Committees recommended to ensure Railways Safety?**

- **Kakodkar Committee (2012):**
  - Creating a statutory Railway Safety Authority
  - Setting up a non-lapsable Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) of Rs. 1 lakh crores over 5 years for safety works
  - Adopting advanced technologies for track maintenance and inspection
  - Improving human resource development and management
  - Ensuring independent accident investigation
- **Bibek Debroy Committee (2014):**
  - Separating railway budget from general budget
  - Outsourcing non-core activities
  - Creating a Railway Infrastructure Authority of India
- **Vinod Rai Committee (2015)**
  - Establishing an independent Railway Safety Authority with statutory
  - Setting up a Railway Accident Investigation Board to conduct independent and impartial inquiries.
  - Creating a separate Railway Infrastructure Company to own and maintain railway assets
  - Introducing a performance-linked incentive scheme for railway employees

#### **What should be Done More to Enhance Safety in India?**

- **Invest More in Safety-Related Works:** Allocate more funds for track renewal, bridge repair, signalling upgrade, coach refurbishment, etc.
- **Train Employees to Minimize Human Errors:** Provide regular and comprehensive training to the railway staff on the latest technologies, equipment, systems, safety rules and procedures.
- **Eliminate Level Crossings:** Construct Road overbridges (ROBs) or road underbridges (RUBs) to replace the unmanned and manned level crossings.
- **Adopt advanced technologies:** Install anti-collision devices (ACDs) such as Kavach/ Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), Automatic Train Control (ATC), etc.
  - The railways are in the process of installing these technologies on some sections of tracks, but they need to be expanded to cover the entire network.



- **Introduce Performance-Linked Incentives:** Reward the railway staff based on their performance and compliance with the safety rules and procedures.
- **Outsource Non-Core Work:** Transfer the non-core activities such as maintaining hospitals, colleges etc to private or public sector entities, which can improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- **Create A Statutory Railway Safety Authority:** Set up a railway safety authority as a statutory body with powers to frame safety standards, conduct safety audits and inspections, enforce accountability and penalties for lapses, and investigate accidents.
- **Conduct Regular Safety Audits and Inspections:** Monitor, evaluate and audit the safety performance of the railway staff, infrastructure and equipment, and enforce strict accountability and penalties for lapses.
- **Enhance Coordination and Communication:** Improve the communication and coordination among the railway board, zonal railways, divisions, production units, research organisations, etc., which are involved in railway operations.
- **Establish a Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS):** It was developed by a British University; a similar mechanism should be implemented that encourages lower-level staff to report deviations in real-time while maintaining confidentiality.
  - This system should be supported by the necessary communication and information technology infrastructure, making it accessible and user-friendly for all staff members.
  - Simultaneously, transform the management mindset from a fault-finding and punishment-oriented approach to one that emphasizes shared commitment to safety, focusing on correction rather than punishment and actively listening to the voices of staff at all levels.
  - In matters of railway safety, there has to be an attitudinal change — from the conventional approach of fault-finding and punishment to one of shared commitment to ensure complete safety at all levels.
- **Rethink Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS) Scheme:** Conduct a thorough evaluation of the IRMS scheme and its impact on loyalty, ownership, and safety management. Consider revising or modifying the scheme to preserve a sense of specialization and loyalty towards specific disciplines or departments, promoting a stronger commitment to safety.

#### **What are Some of the Best Global Practices?**

- **United Kingdom:** The UK has one of the lowest rates of train accidents in Europe. The UK has implemented various safety measures, such as:
  - The Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS), which automatically stops trains that pass signals at danger or exceed speed limits.
  - The European Train Control System (ETCS), which provides continuous communication between trains and signalling centres.
  - The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB), which conducts independent and impartial investigations of railway accidents and incidents.
- **Japan:** Japan is known for its high-speed trains, such as the Shinkansen or Bullet trains, which operate at speeds of up to 320 km/h. Japan has achieved a remarkable record of safety, with zero passenger fatalities since the Shinkansen started operating in 1964. Japan has adopted various safety measures, such as:
  - The Automatic Train Control (ATC) system, which monitors and controls the speed and braking of trains.
  - The Comprehensive Automatic Train Inspection System (CATIS), which detects defects and faults in trains using sensors and cameras.
  - The Earthquake Early Warning System (EWS), which alerts trains to stop or slow down in case of seismic activity.

**IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>1. Where is the Kozhikode International Airport located?<br/>a) Maharashtra<br/>b) Assam<br/>c) Kerala<br/>d) Goa</p> <p>2. Sattriya is one of the Indian classical dance form originating from which state?<br/>a) Odisha<br/>b) Assam<br/>c) Karnataka<br/>d) Manipur</p> <p>3. How much worth of arms has India supplied to the Myanmar Junta ?<br/>a) 415 crore<br/>b) 418 crore<br/>c) 420 crore<br/>d) 422 crore</p> <p>4. How many crores surplus transfer has the RBI approved to the Government for FY23 ?<br/>a) 87,353<br/>b) 87,238<br/>c) 87,416<br/>d) 87,310</p> <p>5. Annu Rani, an Indian athlete, is associated with which sport?<br/>a) Tennis<br/>b) Badminton<br/>c) Cricket<br/>d) Javelin Throw</p> <p>6. Recently, which state's law allowing Jallikattu was upheld by the Supreme Court of India?<br/>a) West Bengal<br/>b) Tamil Nadu<br/>c) Jammu &amp; Kashmir<br/>d) Uttar Pradesh</p> <p>7. Which institution organises the 'Operation Dhvast' ?<br/>a) Coast Guard<br/>b) National Investigation Agency<br/>c) Indian Navy</p> | <p>d) Reserve Bank of India</p> <p>8. Kapileshwar temple, which is set to be included in the ASI's protected monuments list, is located in which state ?<br/>a) Uttarakhand<br/>b) Odisha<br/>c) Andhra Pradesh<br/>d) Kerala</p> <p>9. Public sector banks (PSBs) in India have achieved a significant milestone in the financial year ended March 2023, with their cumulative profit crossing the Rs 1 lakh crore-mark. Which public sector bank reported the highest net profit growth in percentage terms in FY23 ?<br/>a) State Bank of India (SBI)<br/>b) Bank of Maharashtra (BoM)<br/>c) UCO Bank<br/>d) Bank of Baroda</p> <p>10. The newly inaugurated coastal outposts of the Border Security Force (BSF) are located at ___ coast.<br/>a) Digha<br/>b) Alibaug<br/>c) Jakhau<br/>d) Visakhapatnam</p> <p>11. Consider the following pairs:<br/>1. Jallikattu — Traditional bull-taming sport in Tamil Nadu<br/>2. Kambala — Buffalo racing sport in Karnataka<br/>3. Reklā Race — Bullock cart racing sport in Tamil Nadu<br/>Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched ?<br/>a) 1 and 2 only<br/>b) 2 and 3 only<br/>c) 1, 2, and 3 only<br/>d) None of the above</p> <p>12. With reference to the water on the planet Earth, consider the following statements:</p> | <p>1. The amount of water in the rivers and lakes is more than the amount of groundwater.<br/>2. The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.<br/>Which of the above statements is/are correct ?<br/>a) 1 Only<br/>b) 2 Only<br/>c) Both 1 and 2<br/>d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>13. Which sector of the Indian economy is often considered a key driver of GDP growth ?<br/>a) Manufacturing<br/>b) Agriculture<br/>c) Services<br/>d) Mining</p> <p>14. Which of the following is not a function of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) ?<br/>a) Issuing and managing the currency<br/>b) Conducting monetary policy<br/>c) Regulating and supervising banks and financial institutions<br/>d) Managing the fiscal policy of the government</p> <p>15. Which among the following countries is not a member of the Group of Seven (G7) nations ?<br/>a) China<br/>b) United States<br/>c) Italy<br/>d) Japan</p> <p>16. Where is the headquarters of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation situated ?<br/>a) New Delhi<br/>b) Mumbai<br/>c) Bangluru<br/>d) Gurugram</p> <p>17. What does the term "Sengol" mean, which will be placed in the new parliament building?</p> |
|--|---|---|

- a) Integrity  
b) Righteousness  
c) Hard work  
d) Victory of Truth
18. 'City of Dead' is a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in which country?  
a) Egypt  
b) USA  
c) Greece  
d) Turkey
19. Which institution released the 'World Health Statistics 2023'?  
a) UNICEF  
b) UNESCO  
c) WHO  
d) UNEP
20. Vladivostok Port, which was seen in the news, is located in which country ?  
a) Ukraine  
b) Russia  
c) Japan  
d) Brazil
21. Which country is the host of the G-7 Summit in 2023 ?  
a) USA  
b) Japan  
c) South Africa  
d) Brazil
22. Which company is responsible for the construction of the new Parliament building ?  
a) Tata Projects Limited  
b) HCP Design Planning and Management Private Limited  
c) British architects Sir Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker  
d) Imperial Legislative Council
23. What is the seating capacity of the Lok Sabha in the new Parliament House ?  
a) 552 seats  
b) 888 seats  
c) 1,272 seats  
d) 348 seats
24. Which two states have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to enhance the tourism landscape (as of May 2023) ?  
a) Goa and Kerala  
b) Goa and Uttarakhand  
c) Uttarakhand and Maharashtra  
d) Uttarakhand and Karnataka
25. Consider the following statements:  
1. Renewable electricity sources are always more efficient than fossil-based sources like gas and coal.  
2. Renewable power plants, such as wind farms and solar plants, have shorter lifespans compared to traditional power plants.  
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
26. Consider the following statements about El Niño:  
1. It leads to increased precipitation in the southern and western parts of the United States, Peru, Uruguay, Argentina, parts of Southeast Asia, and some regions of east central Africa.  
2. El Niño brings cooler temperatures to much of Asia, the American Pacific Northwest, and Australia.  
Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
27. The budget deficit means  
a) the excess of total expenditure, including loans, net of lending over revenue receipts  
b) difference between revenue receipts and revenue expenditure  
c) difference between all receipts and all the expenditure  
d) fiscal deficit less interest payments
28. Which type of unemployment is mostly seen in the Primary sector ?  
a) Structural unemployment  
b) Disguised unemployment  
c) Cyclical unemployment  
d) Frictional unemployment
29. Chhattisgarh capital city Raipur is situated along the banks of which river ?  
a) Arpa  
b) Indravati  
c) Maniyari  
d) Mahanadi
30. Which of the following is the state animal of Gujarat ?  
a) Barasingha  
b) Blackbuck  
c) Asiatic lion  
d) One-horned rhinoceros
31. Which brand has retained the title of India's most valuable brand according to the Brand Finance report 2023 ?  
a) Taj Group  
b) Mahindra Group  
c) Raymond  
d) Tata Group
32. What is the name of the portal launched for monitoring the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Justice Ministry ?  
a) Nyaya Vikas Portal  
b) Info Vikas Portal  
c) CSS Monitor Portal  
d) Bharat Scheme Portal
33. Which state launched a state-wide 15-day mega registration drive for MSMEs ?  
a) Bihar



- b) Uttar Pradesh  
c) Assam  
d) Gujarat
34. Which country signed a deal to export hydropower to Bangladesh through Indian territory ?  
a) Sri Lanka  
b) Afghanistan  
c) Nepal  
d) Laos
35. Which neighbouring country recorded an annual inflation rate of 37.97% in May 2023 ?  
a) Pakistan  
b) Afghanistan  
c) Nepal  
d) Myanmar
36. Which of the following is a component of the PM KUSUM Scheme ?  
a) Installation of solar streetlights  
b) Distribution of biogas plants to farmers  
c) Setting up of small solar power plants  
d) Promotion of wind energy projects
37. The destruction of the Nova Kakhovka Dam is a significant blow to Ukraine, affecting the region's stability, energy supply, and agriculture. Where is the Nova Kakhovka Dam located ?  
a) Crimea  
b) Zaporizhzhia  
c) Kherson  
d) Dnipro River
38. Who became the first Indian to receive Suriname's highest civilian award, the Grand Order of the Chain of the Yellow Star ?  
a) Prime Minister Narendra Modi  
b) President Ram Nath Kovind  
c) President Droupadi Murmu
- d) Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar
39. Consider the following pairs:  
1. Agni- Surface-to-surface missiles.  
2. Trishul- Ballistic missiles  
3. Prithvi- Surface-to-air missiles.  
4. Nag- Anti-tank guided missile  
How many of the above pairs are not correctly matched ?  
a) Only one pair  
b) Only two pairs  
c) Only three pairs  
d) All four pairs
40. Which of the following countries are part of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) ?  
1. Azerbaijan  
2. Saudi Arabia  
3. Russia  
4. UAE  
5. Qatar  
Select the correct answer using the code given below :  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) Only three  
d) Only four
41. Which among the following is a major raw material of paper manufacturing in India ?  
a) Wheat husk  
b) Bamboo  
c) Soft wood  
d) hard wood
42. Which regulatory body in India is responsible for enforcing Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) ?  
a) Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)  
b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)  
c) Ministry of Finance  
d) Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)
43. What is the name of the currency of Myanmar ?  
a) Won
- b) Burmese kyat  
c) Peso  
d) Rufiya
44. Ratanmahal Sloth Bear Wildlife Sanctuary is situated in which state ?  
a) Delhi  
b) Arunachal Pradesh  
c) Gujarat  
d) Haryana
45. As per the 5th State Food Safety Index, which state secured the top ranking among the larger states ?  
a) Punjab  
b) Kerala  
c) West Bengal  
d) Rajasthan
46. Which cyclonic storm developed over the east-central and Arabian Sea ?  
a) Waferjoy  
b) Biporjoy  
c) Cyclejoy  
d) Centrejoy
47. On which date is World Food Safety Day celebrated ?  
a) June 03  
b) June 07  
c) June 05  
d) June 09
48. The \_\_\_\_\_ have recently unveiled a groundbreaking strategic pact known as the "Atlantic Declaration." This agreement reaffirms their longstanding "special relationship" and outlines a joint effort to tackle challenges posed by Russia, China, and economic instability.  
a) United States and China  
b) United Kingdom and Russia  
c) United States and United Kingdom  
d) China and Russia
49. As the world enters an El Niño phase countries are bracing

- themselves for extreme weather events. What is El Niño ?
- a) A climate pattern characterized by cooler waters in the eastern Pacific
- b) A climate pattern characterized by warmer waters in the eastern Pacific
- c) A climate pattern characterized by stronger trade winds
- d) A climate pattern characterized by increased rainfall in the Atlantic Ocean
50. What is the name of the new-generation ballistic missile successfully flight-tested by India ?
- a) Agni Alpha
- b) Agni Prime
- c) Agni Ultra
- d) Agni Delta
51. Which ministry does the Commission of Railway Safety (CRS) come under ?
- a) Ministry of Railways
- b) Ministry of Transport
- c) Ministry of Civil Aviation
- d) Ministry of Infrastructure
52. According to the RBI's Annual Report 2022-23, Which country was the largest contributor to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India in FY23 ?
- a) Singapore
- b) Mauritius
- c) United States
- d) China
53. Consider the following statements, with reference to Har Ghar Jal Program:
- The program aims to provide piped water supply to every household in India by 2024.
  - Gujarat has become the first 'Har Ghar Jal' certified state in the country.
  - This program is a crucial step towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5, which aims to ensure access to water and sanitation for all.
- How many statements given above are correct ?
- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None
54. Consider the following pairs :
- Chabahar Port- Iran
  - Gwadar Port- Afghanistan
  - Port Sultan- Bahrain
- How many pairs given above are correctly matched ?
- a) Only one pair
- b) Only two pairs
- c) All three pairs
- d) None of the above
55. According to the RBI's Annual Report 2022-23, what was the projected real GDP growth for FY24 ?
- a) 9.1%
- b) 6.7%
- c) 6.5%
- d) 7.0%
56. How many consecutive quarters of GDP contraction define a technical recession ?
- a) One quarter
- b) Two quarters
- c) Three quarters
- d) Four quarters
57. Grey Revolution is for \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- a) Petroleum Production
- b) Fertilizer Production
- c) Fish Production
- d) Flower Cultivation
58. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is based in which country ?
- a) Beijing, China
- b) Kathmandu, Nepal
- c) Dhaka, Bangladesh
- d) Kabul, Afghanistan
59. Which country has launched the 'Shenzhou-16' Mission ?
- a) Japan
- b) China
- c) South Korea
- d) Israel
60. Sabang port, which was seen in the news, is located in which country ?
- a) India
- b) Myanmar
- c) Indonesia
- d) Sri Lanka
61. Which city emerged as the top destination for foreign direct investment (FDI) from India in 2022 ?
- a) New York
- b) London
- c) Dubai
- d) Singapore
62. The triple-train crash involving Coromandel Express and two other trains has resulted in a significant loss of life and injuries. Where did the triple train crash take place ?
- a) Kolkata, West Bengal
- b) Bhubaneswar, Odisha
- c) Balasore, Odisha
- d) Howrah, West Bengal
63. What is the purpose of the RBI's '100 Days 100 Pays' campaign ?
- a) To promote digital banking services
- b) To reduce the quantum of unclaimed deposits
- c) To encourage savings among individuals
- d) To increase the interest rates on fixed deposits
64. Which ministry is the nodal department for implementing the GOBARdhan scheme ?
- a) Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
- b) Ministry of Jal Shakti

- c) Ministry of New and Renewable Energy  
d) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
65. **India's higher-than-expected GDP growth in Q4 FY23, along with the upward revision of the FY23 growth forecast to 7.2 percent, highlights the resilience and promising trajectory of the Indian economy amidst global challenges. Which sectors contributed to the higher-than-expected GDP growth in Q4 FY23 ?**  
a) Manufacturing and services  
b) Construction and agriculture  
c) Manufacturing and construction  
d) Services and agriculture
66. **The Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri, recently praised the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme on its momentous completion of three years. Who is the technical partner for the implementation of the PM SVANidhi Scheme ?**  
a) Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs  
b) Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)  
c) Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises  
d) Reserve Bank of India
67. **Mangaluru, Chandikhol and Padur region often seen in news is related to which of the following ?**  
a) Lithium deposit sites  
b) Gold reserve sites  
c) Largest Monazite reserves  
d) Strategic petroleum reserves
68. **Consider the following:**  
1. World Development Report  
2. Global Financial Stability Report  
3. Ease of Doing Business  
4. World Social Protection Report  
5. Remittance Report  
Which of the above reports are released by World Bank ?  
a) 1 and 3 only  
b) 2, 3 and 5 only  
c) 1, 3 and 5 only  
d) All of the above
69. **Which bank currently holds the highest value of unclaimed deposits ?**  
a) State Bank of India (SBI)  
b) Punjab National Bank  
c) Canara Bank  
d) Bank of Baroda
70. **Which is the largest bamboo producing state in India ?**  
a) Arunachal Pradesh  
b) Madhya Pradesh  
c) Assam  
d) None of the above
71. **Who is the chairperson of Competition Commission of India ?**  
a) Ravneet Kaur  
b) Alok Verma  
c) Ashok Kumar Gupta  
d) Shashi Rana
72. **Who is the Director of ISRO ?**  
a) A.S. Kiran Kumar  
b) Kailasavadivoo Sivan  
c) Satish Dhawan  
d) S Somnath
73. **Which country has approved 'Debt Ceiling Deal' to raise the government's borrowing limit ?**  
a) India  
b) Sri Lanka  
c) USA  
d) Afghanistan
74. **Which institution notified 'Indian Standards Related to AYUSH Herbs and Products' ?**  
a) FSSAI  
b) BIS  
c) AYUSH Ministry  
d) FAO
75. **Which country signed MoU with India for development of Phukot Karnali Hydro Electric Project ?**  
a) Bangladesh  
b) Sri Lanka  
c) Nepal  
d) Myanmar
76. **How does India incorporate Green GDP into its economic planning ?**  
a) By implementing strict regulations on environmental pollution.  
b) By prioritizing social development over economic growth.  
c) By promoting renewable energy deployment and clean technologies.  
d) By disregarding environmental factors in its economic assessments.
77. **Which scheme launched by PM Modi focuses on the conservation of existing Ramsar sites in India ?**  
a) Amrit Dharohar Yojana  
b) MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes)  
c) Mission Green Hydrogen  
d) Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)
78. **Under the MISHTI scheme, how many states and union territories will witness the development of mangrove cover?**  
a) 5 states and 1 union territory  
b) 7 states and 2 union territories  
c) 9 states and 3 union territories  
d) 11 states and 2 union territories



79. Who has been appointed as the head of the commission of inquiry to probe the Manipur violence ?  
a) Ajai Lamba  
b) Himanshu Shekhar Das  
c) Aloka Prabhakar  
d) Gauhati High Court Chief Justice
80. The Maharashtra government has recently announced the renaming of Ahmednagar district to Ahilyadevi Nagar in honor of the 18th-century warrior-queen Ahilyadevi Holkar. Which community in Maharashtra is considered the second-largest caste cluster ?  
a) Maratha-Kunbi  
b) Dhargar  
c) Malis  
d) Vanjaris
81. Recently, the Anti-Submarine torpedo 'VARUNASTRA' was successfully tested. Consider the following statement in the context of 'VARUNASTRA':  
1. It is equipped with sophisticated navigational systems that minimize drift, allowing it to maintain an accurate course while underwater.  
2. It is developed under the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and is manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd (BDL).  
Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
82. Consider the following statements about National Institutional Ranking Framework:  
1. It was launched by Ministry of Science and Technology in the year 2015.  
2. It ranks Universities, Colleges and Engineering Institutions but not Law Universities.  
Which of the above statements are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
83. Which among the following represents a fall in the prices?  
1. Stagflation  
2. Disinflation  
3. Deflation  
Select the correct option from the codes given below :  
a) Only 1 & 2  
b) Only 2 & 3  
c) Only 3  
d) Only 2
84. Which is the top honey-producing state in India ?  
a) Gujarat  
b) Punjab  
c) UP  
d) Rajasthan
85. Where is the headquarter of International Golf Federation (IGF) situated ?  
a) Budapest  
b) Monaco  
c) Lausanne  
d) London
86. In which field is the "Abel Prize" awarded ?  
a) Theatre  
b) Music  
c) Cooking  
d) Mathematics
87. 'SAGAR SAMRIDHI' is an initiative of which Union Ministry ?  
a) Ministry of Defence  
b) Ministry of Jal Shakti  
c) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterway  
d) Ministry of External Affairs
88. Which Indian armed force is set to procure the 'Tactical LAN Radio' through Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) ?  
a) Indian Air Force  
b) Indian Navy  
c) Indian Army  
d) Indian Coast Guard
89. Which state government has been permitted to continue mining work in Guala river ?  
a) Assam  
b) Uttarakhand  
c) Jharkhand  
d) West Bengal
90. What is the total outlay of the third revival package for BSNL ?  
a) 89,047 Crore Rupees  
b) 90,457 Crore Rupees  
c) 56,789 Crore Rupees  
d) 50,670 Crore Rupees
91. Which state has been ranked 1st for Overall Environmental Performance ?  
a) Telangana  
b) Bihar  
c) Assam  
d) Madhya Pradesh
92. Which edition of the Indo-Maldives joint military exercise "Ex Ekuverin" is currently taking place ?  
a) 8th edition  
b) 10th edition  
c) 12th edition  
d) 14th edition
93. What is India's general government debt as a percentage of GDP for the fiscal year 2022-23, according to Moody's ?  
a) 56%  
b) 81.8%  
c) 8.4%  
d) 26%
94. How many aircraft carriers were involved in the twin CBG

- operation carried out by the Indian Navy ?  
a) One  
b) Two  
c) Three  
d) Four
95. Recently Tropical cyclone 'Biparjoy' has intensified further and has been categorized as very severe cyclone by the Indian Meteorological Department. Consider the following statement in the context of Tropical Cyclones:  
1. Tropical cyclones are circular storms driven by low-pressure cores and the Coriolis force.  
2. Tropical cyclones are fueled by the transfer of water vapor and heat from warm ocean surfaces to the air.  
3. Biparjoy' name was suggested by Bangladesh and the word means 'miracle' in Bengali.  
How many statement(s) given above is/are correct ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) All three  
d) None
96. Consider the following statements with reference to Minimum Support Price (MSP):  
**Statement I:** The Government of India started announcing the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) in 1966-67 for rice which was expanded to cover many more crops in the coming years in the wake of the Green Revolution.  
**Statement II:** It is a minimum price at which the government will purchase farmers' crops—whatever may be the market price for the crops.  
Which one of the following is correct in respect to the above statements?  
a) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and
- Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I.  
b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I.  
c) Statement I is correct but Statement II is incorrect.  
d) Statement I is incorrect but Statement II is correct.
97. What percentage of the world's real-time payments did India account for in 2022?  
a) 46%  
b) 29%  
c) 17%  
d) 16%
98. Which law empowers the Indian government to declare banknotes as ceasing to be legal tender during demonetization ?  
a) Indian Constitution  
b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934  
c) Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1881  
d) Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881
99. What is the currency of Venezuela ?  
a) Manat  
b) Bolivar  
c) Som  
d) Peso
100. The World Happiness Report is released by ?  
a) World Bank  
b) United Nations  
c) World Economic Forum  
d) International Monetary Fund
101. Which city hosted the 'G-20 development ministers' meeting' in India ?  
a) Panjim  
b) Varanasi  
c) Pune  
d) Chennai
102. India held a meeting of the Joint Committee of Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with which country ?  
a) Australia  
b) UAE  
c) France  
d) Indonesia
103. Mayon Volcano, which recently made news, belongs to which country ?  
a) Indonesia  
b) Philippines  
c) Russia  
d) Java
104. Which state's government launched the 'CM Learn and Earn scheme' ?  
a) Uttar Pradesh  
b) Arunachal Pradesh  
c) Madhya Pradesh  
d) Himachal Pradesh
105. Which player has won the French Open 2023 ?  
a) Novak Djokovic  
b) Casper Ruud  
c) Roger Federer  
d) Rafael Nadal
106. World Blood Donor Day is observed annually on June 14. The slogan or theme of the World Blood Donor Day 2023 is "Give blood, give plasma, share life, share often." Which country is the host for World Blood Donor Day 2023 ?  
a) Algeria  
b) Nigeria  
c) India  
d) United States
107. Which annual report provides findings on global nuclear arsenals and arms control ?  
a) SIPRI Yearbook  
b) UNICEF Annual Report  
c) World Health Organization Report

- d) International Monetary Fund Report
108. The first-quarter GDP in New Zealand fell by 0.1 percent, indicating a decline in economic growth during that period. Which natural disasters affected New Zealand's economy in the first quarter of 2023 ?
- Earthquakes
  - Cyclone Gabrielle and Auckland flash floods
  - Drought
  - Volcanic eruptions
109. Consider the following statements regarding the Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) method:
- Under this method, pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled into the field by powered machine.
  - There is nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method.
  - It requires lesser water than transplanting method of paddy cultivation.
- How many statements given above are correct ?
- Only one
  - Only two
  - All three
  - None
110. With reference to Uniform Civil Code, consider the following statements:
- It aims to replace the existing personal laws that govern matters such as marriage only.
  - According to the Indian constitution the state shall endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
  - It aims to ensure that all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation, are subject to the same civil laws.
- How many of the above statements are correct ?
- Only one
  - Only two
  - All three
  - None
111. According to the RBI Remittance Survey, the country with the highest share in inward remittances to India in 2020-21 was \_\_\_\_.
- United States
  - United Arab Emirates
  - United Kingdom
  - Singapore
112. What was SBI's net profit for the full financial year 2022-23?
- Rs 5,232.45 crore
  - Rs 31,675.98 crore
  - Rs 50,232.45 crore
  - Rs 740 crore
113. Baku is the capital of which country ?
- Belize
  - Brunei
  - Azerbaijan
  - Cyprus
114. Jaitak Fort is located in which state of India ?
- West Bengal
  - Himachal Pradesh
  - Rajasthan
  - Kerala
115. Which state/UT recently withdraw its general consent for the CBI investigations ?
- Andhra Pradesh
  - Karnataka
  - Tamil Nadu
  - Goa
116. Which state has topped in the adoption of wind energy ?
- Assam
  - Odisha
  - Rajasthan
  - Gujarat
117. In which two countries will the Asia Cup 2023 be scheduled in the stadiums ?
- India and Pakistan
  - Kenya and Pakistan
  - Sri Lanka and Pakistan
  - New Zealand and Pakistan
118. With which country did India's Defence Ministry approve the 'Predator Drone' deal ?
- United Kingdom
  - Ukraine
  - Uganda
  - United States of America
119. In which city will Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar confer the 4th National Water Awards ?
- Varanasi
  - Bikaner
  - Jaipur
  - New Delhi
120. Which Village Panchayat received the Best Village Panchayat award at the National Water Awards ?
- Jagannadhapuram Village Panchayat (Telangana)
  - Raghunathpur Village Panchayat (West Bengal)
  - Chandanpur Village Panchayat (Odisha)
  - Kottur Village Panchayat (Kerala)
121. Who will be conferred with the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021 ?
- ISRO
  - Ramakrishna Mission
  - Gita Press
  - Grameen Bank of Bangladesh
122. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the United States from June 21 to June 24 is one of the most important diplomatic visits of 2023, highlighting the significance of India's geopolitical role. During his



visit, PM Modi will address a joint session of the US Congress for the \_\_\_ time.

- a) First
- b) Second
- c) Third
- d) Fourth

**123. Consider the following statements:**

Statement-I: Miyawaki forests are multi-layered and maintenance-free, creating self-sustainable ecosystems.

Statement-II: The Miyawaki method involves improving soil quality, using mulch to prevent dryness, erosion, and weed growth, and planting native trees in close proximity.

Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?

- a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and

Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I

- b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

**124. Consider the following statements regarding the Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) method:**

1. Under this method, pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled into the field by powered machine.
2. There is nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method.
3. It requires lesser water than transplanting method of paddy cultivation.

How many statements given above are correct ?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

**125. According to the RBI Remittance Survey, the country with the highest share in inward remittances to India in 2020-21 was \_\_\_\_.**

- a) United States
- b) United Arab Emirates
- c) United Kingdom
- d) Singapore

**126. What was SBI's net profit for the full financial year 2022-23 ?**

- a) Rs 5,232.45 crore
- b) Rs 31,675.98 crore
- c) Rs 50,232.45 crore
- d) Rs 740 crore

**ANSWER KEY**

1-c	2-b	3-d	4-c	5-d	6-b	7-b	8-b	9-b	10-c	11-c	12-b	13-c	14-d	15-a
16-a	17-b	18-a	19-c	20-b	21-b	22-a	23-b	24-b	25-b	26-a	27-c	28-b	29-d	30-c
31-d	32-a	33-b	34-c	35-a	36-c	37-d	38-c	39-c	40-b	41-b	42-b	43-b	44-c	45-b
46-b	47-b	48-c	49-b	50-b	51-c	52-a	53-d	54-a	55-c	56-b	57-b	58-b	59-b	60-c
61-c	62-c	63-b	64-b	65-c	66-b	67-d	68-c	69-a	70-c	71-a	72-d	73-c	74-b	75-c
76-c	77-a	78-d	79-a	80-b	81-a	82-d	83-c	84-c	85-c	86-d	87-c	88-c	89-b	90-a
91-a	92-c	93-b	94-b	95-b	96-d	97-a	98-b	99-b	100-b	101-b	102-b	103-b	104-c	105-a
106-a	107-a	108-b	109-b	110-b	111-a	112-c	113-c	114-b	115-c	116-c	117-c	118-d	118-a	120-a
121-c	122-b	123-b	124-b	125-a	126-c									