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CURRENT AFFAIRS

NATIONAL NEWS

OPERATION KAVERI LAUNCHED TO EVACUATE INDIANS FROM SUDAN-

- India initiated Operation Kaveri to evacuate its citizens from the unrest-stricken Sudan. As per External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's tweet, the operation is currently in progress, and roughly 500 Indians have already arrived at Port Sudan.
- Operation Kaveri is the latest evacuation operation initiated by India to rescue its citizens and friendly nations' citizens from war zones.
- The Ministry of External Affairs had announced the standby status of two C-130s aircraft and INS Sumedha for the safe evacuation of stranded Indians in Sudan. Official data states that there are roughly 4,000 Indians in Sudan.
- The evacuation operation follows talks held by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with counterparts in Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- Sudan is currently experiencing a violent power struggle between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) across the country.
- This conflict arose due to a dispute over an internationally supported plan to establish a new civilian government, four years after the overthrow of authoritarian leader Omar al-Bashir and two years after a military coup. Both sides are accusing each other of obstructing the transition, resulting in widespread violence and instability.



RECENTLY, BYPOLLS WERE CONDUCTED FOR ONE LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCY IN PUNJAB AND FOUR ASSEMBLY SEATS IN UTTAR PRADESH, MEGHALAYA, AND ODISHA-

- Bypolls, also known as bye-elections or special elections, refer to elections held to fill vacant seats in the legislative bodies of India.
- It serves as a vital component within the broader electoral cycle and complements regular elections by addressing unforeseen vacancies.
- Bypolls are conducted when a seat in the legislature becomes vacant due to reasons such as the death, resignation, disqualification, or expulsion of a sitting member.
- Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 mandates the Election Commission to fill the casual vacancies in the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures through bye elections within six months from the date of occurrence of the vacancy, provided that the remainder of the term of a member in relation to a vacancy is one year or more.
- Hence, there is no need to hold bye elections if the remaining term of the Lok Sabha is less than one year from the date of occurrence of vacancies.

FOREIGN MINISTERS OF SCO MEMBER COUNTRIES MEET IN GOA -

- The foreign ministers of eight member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are meeting in Goa on May 4 and 5.

- This meeting will set the stage for the SCO Leaders' Summit to be held in July in New Delhi. India, the host country, attaches special importance to the SCO in promoting multilateral, political, security, economic, and people-to-people interactions in the region.
- India's theme for its Chairmanship of SCO in 2023 is 'SECURE-SCO'.
- Since becoming a full member of the SCO in 2017, India has been pushing the bloc to add 'English' as an official language of communication.
- The first such proposal was placed in 2020, necessitated by the inclusion of India and Pakistan as full members to a grouping that has had only Russian and Mandarin as the official and working languages of the bloc. The Russian language is widely used in the six Central Asian nations that founded the bloc.
- The foreign ministers and their delegations arrived in Goa on May 4. All the delegations are staying at the Taj Exotica in Benaulim, where the meetings are taking place. S Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, is hosting a dinner for the visiting dignitaries.



RECENTLY, THE SUPREME COURT (SC) HAS EXPRESSED ITS VIEWS ON EXTRA-JUDICIAL KILLINGS (EJK) IN INDIA, AFTER AN ENCOUNTER IN UTTAR PRADESH-

- Recently, the Supreme Court (SC) has expressed its views on Extra-Judicial Killings (EJK) in India, after an Encounter in Uttar Pradesh, stating that the right to life as a Fundamental Right enshrined in the Constitution and EJKs are a violation of this right.
- The SC also said that in recent years, there have been several cases of encounters and extra-judicial killings in India, which have raised concerns about the misuse of power by the police.
- Extra judicial killing refers to the killing of a person by the state or its agents, without any judicial or legal proceedings. This means that the person is killed without a trial, due process, or any legal justification.
- Extra judicial killing can take various forms, such as extrajudicial executions, summary executions, and enforced disappearances. These acts are illegal and violate human rights and the rule of law.
- They are often carried out by law enforcement agencies or security forces in the name of maintaining law and order or Combating Terrorism.
- The Constitution guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21, which is non-negotiable and applicable to everyone. It is the responsibility of the police to follow the Constitution and protect the Right to Life of every individual, regardless of innocence or guilt.

Rights of Police-

- The police can use force, including lethal force, in self-defense or to maintain peace and order.
- Every person has the right to self-defense under Section-96 of the Indian Penal Code.
- Section-46 of the Criminal Procedure Code allows the police to use force, including lethal force, to arrest someone accused of a serious crime.

Status of EJKs in India-

- While India has seen a 15% decline in encounter killing cases registered in the six years between 2016-'17 and 2021-'22 – till March 2022 – the cases shot up by 69.5% in the last two years. India has registered 813 cases of encounter killings in the last six years.
- In the six years since April 2016, Chhattisgarh recorded the most extrajudicial killing cases at 259, followed by Uttar Pradesh at 110 and Assam with 79.

ELECTION COMMISSION GRANTS NATIONAL PARTY STATUS TO AAM AADMI PARTY-

- In a significant development, the Election Commission has granted national party status to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP).
- 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.



RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE HAS LAUNCHED THE NATIONAL RABIES CONTROL PROGRAMME (NRCP) FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF RABIES -

Objectives of NRCP-

- Provision of rabies vaccine & rabies immunoglobulin through national free drug initiatives;
- Training on appropriate animal bite management, prevention and control of rabies, surveillance and intersectoral coordination;
- Strengthening surveillance of animal bites and rabies deaths reporting;
- Creating awareness about rabies prevention.



- Rabies is a vaccine-preventable, zoonotic, viral disease. It is caused by a Ribonucleic Acid (RNA) virus that is present in the saliva of a rabid animal (dog, cat, monkey, etc).
- It is invariably transmitted following a bite of an infected animal that leads to deposition of the saliva and the virus in the wound. Once clinical symptoms appear, rabies is virtually 100% fatal. The death invariably occurs in four days to two weeks due to cardio-respiratory failure.
- In up to 99% of cases, domestic dogs are responsible for rabies virus transmission to humans. The incubation period varies from 2–3 months but may vary from 1 week to 1 year, or rarely even more.
- Rabies can be prevented by vaccinating pets, staying away from wildlife, and seeking medical care after potential exposures before symptoms start.

- The first symptoms of rabies may be similar to flu and may last for a few days, which includes- Fever, Headache, Nausea, Vomiting, Anxiety, Confusion, Hyperactivity, Difficulty swallowing, Excessive salivation, Hallucinations, Insomnia.
- India is endemic for rabies, and accounts for 36% of the world's rabies deaths.
- It causes 18,000-20,000 deaths every year. About 30-60% of reported rabies cases and deaths in India occur in children under the age of 15 years as bites that occur in children often go unrecognized and unreported.
- In India, dogs are responsible for about 97% of human rabies, followed by cats (2%), jackals, mongooses and others (1%). The disease is endemic throughout the country.

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.

PM MITRA
A LANDMARK DECISION
TO EMPOWER TEXTILES
SECTOR

Approves 7 Mega Integrated Textile Region & Apparel (MITRA) Parks

It will leverage 5F Power: Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign

Enable Spinning, Weaving, Processing, Dyeing & Printing to garment manufacturing at one location

Reduces Logistics cost by locating entire value chain at one 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.



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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

US DEBT CEILING CRISIS-

- The United States Treasury Secretary has warned of the US defaulting on debt by June 1 if the House of Representatives and President's White House fail to reach an agreement to raise or suspend the debt ceiling.
- The debt ceiling is the maximum amount of money that the U.S. government is legally allowed to borrow to fund its expenses and obligations. It was established in 1917 during World War I.
- The purpose of the debt ceiling is to provide the government with flexibility in spending without requiring frequent approval from Congress for each expenditure. Under the U.S. Constitution, Congress has the authority to control government spending.
- As of now, the current debt limit is set at USD 31.4 trillion. This means that the government cannot exceed borrowing beyond this amount without congressional approval.
- The current stand-off involves the Republicans (Members of Opposition party), who have a majority in the House of Representative and Democrat-run government.
- The Republicans are refusing to raise the US debt ceiling unless the government agrees to include significant spending cuts and other priorities, arguing that the nation's debt is unsustainable. They want to attach conditions to programs like cash aid, food stamps, and Medicaid to ensure that government spending is limited.
- On the other hand, the President insists on approving the debt ceiling with no conditions, stating that defaulting on debt is non-negotiable. This has created a deadlock and a potential risk of default if an agreement is not reached before the deadline.
- The US government may not be able to meet its financial obligations, resulting in a default on its debt payments. This would be unprecedented and could have a catastrophic impact on the nation's economy.
- Under the Constitution's 14th Amendment, the President has the authority to raise the debt ceiling by their own without the support of Legislature.
- The Constitution's 14th Amendment states that the validity of the public debt "shall not be questioned." This would involve asserting that defaulting on the debt is unconstitutional and taking action to prevent it.



RUSSIA STAGES THE 78TH VICTORY DAY PARADE AT RED SQUARE, MOSCOW -

- Russia held the 78th Victory Day parade anniversary on May 9th, at Red Square in Moscow to celebrate the historic victory of the Soviet Union in 1945, when they defeated Nazi Germany in World War II, also known as the Great Patriotic War.
- This year's parade featured more than 10,000 individuals and 125 pieces of weaponry, which were all showcased by the Russian Defense Minister, Sergey Shoigu.
- The anniversary is particularly poignant this year as the country mourns the thousands of soldiers who have lost their lives in the 15-month war in Ukraine, which shows no signs of ending anytime soon.



- In the face of this tragedy, President Vladimir Putin delivered a speech on May 9th amidst tight security following a series of drone attacks, some of which targeted the Kremlin citadel itself, all of which Moscow has alleged to be the work of Kyiv.
- Victory Day is an important public holiday in Russia as it commemorates the tremendous sacrifices made by the Soviet Union during WWII, where approximately 27 million citizens perished.
- President Putin has consistently framed the war as a battle against "Nazi"-inspired nationalists, comparing the challenge the Soviet Union faced when Hitler invaded in 1941 to the contemporary issues that Russia faces today.
- All in all, the 78th Victory Day parade anniversary was a powerful symbol of Russian pride and patriotism.
- In conclusion, the Soviet Union was a significant player on the world stage for much of the 20th century, but its collapse in 1991 led to a new era in Russian history.
- Since then, Russia has faced its own set of challenges, but it has also undergone significant changes and has re-emerged as a powerful player in global politics. The legacy of the Soviet Union continues to influence Russian society and politics to this day.

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.

SCO SUMMIT: INDIA WILL HOST SUMMIT IN NEW DELHI ON JULY 3-4 -

- India will host the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in New Delhi On July 3–4, which will be Russian President Vladimir Putin's first visit to the country since the conflict in Ukraine.
- The agenda for the Summit, which is anticipated to centre on counter-terror, Afghan stability, inclusive connectivity efforts including Chabahar Port & INSTC, aside from India's extensive outreach to Eurasia, will be finalised at the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting next week in Goa on May 4-5.
- The member states include India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan. Iran may become a member this year. The SCO also has dialogue partners such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Turkey. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Egypt are also expected to become dialogue partners.

- Most foreign ministers of member states of SCO have confirmed their participation for the upcoming meetings, confirmation from the foreign ministers of China and Pakistan is still awaited.
- Almost all countries, except for Pakistan, have attended SCO in-person meetings held in India. In preparation for the Summit, several important meetings will take place ahead, including the National Security Advisors meeting on March 29th, the Defence Ministers meeting in Delhi from April 27th-28th, and the foreign ministers' meeting in Goa on May 4th-5th.
- Pakistan has only attended SCO meetings virtually so far. During the SCO Chief Justices meeting on March 10th, Pakistan was demoted. Pakistan attended the Power Ministers meet and another one on shared Buddhist heritage.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was founded over twenty years ago and comprises eight member countries, including Russia, India, China, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. This grouping covers over 60% of the Eurasian landmass, 30% of the global GDP, and 40% of the world population.

PM MODI TO VISIT JAPAN, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AND AUSTRALIA FOR G7 AND QUAD SUMMITS -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will go on a three-nation tour, starting on May 19th and concluding on May 24th, which includes the G-7 Summit in Japan and the Quad Leaders' Summit in Australia.
- From the 19th to the 21st of May, the Prime Minister will visit Hiroshima, Japan, for the G-7 Summit under the Japanese Presidency, accepting an invitation from the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.
- PM Modi will address subjects like peace, stability, and prosperity of a sustainable planet; food, fertiliser, and energy security; health; gender equality; climate change and environment; resilient infrastructure; and development cooperation.
- From Japan, the Prime Minister will travel to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, on May 22nd, where he will host the third Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC III Summit) jointly with Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea James Marape. It is noteworthy this visit to Papua New Guinea marks the first time an Indian Prime Minister has ever visited.
- In 2014, the launch of FIPIC included India and 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs): Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Samoa, Vanuatu, Niue, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Cook Islands, Palau, Nauru, and Solomon Islands, as stated in a Ministry of External Affairs release.
- From May 22 to 24, PM Modi will travel to Sydney to attend the Quad Leaders' Summit with US President Joe Biden, the Japanese Prime Minister, and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.



RAJNATH SINGH INITIATES CONSTRUCTION OF COAST GUARD ESTABLISHMENT IN MALDIVES -

- The Defence Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, and his Maldivian counterpart, Mariya Didi, initiated the construction of a harbour at Sifavaru for the coast guard of Maldives.
- This move is aimed at enhancing the country's maritime security capabilities, especially as China is increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean Region by sending more warships and undertaking projects in the region.
- The two countries had signed a pact for the development of this coast guard facility in 2021, and India had extended a \$50 million line of credit to the Maldives for defence projects.

- According to a joint communique issued on the last day of Singh's visit to the Maldives, the development of the coast guard Ekatha harbour and repair facility at Sifavaru is one of India's most significant grant-in-aid projects.
- The coast guard facility will stop the Maldives from sending its ships abroad for maintenance.
- The coast guard functions as the armed maritime unit of the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF), which has received patrol vessels and surveillance aircraft from India because the Maldives does not have a navy.
- India's maritime diplomacy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) focuses on capacity building, capability enhancement, and collaborative efforts, with a focus on cooperation and partnership rather than competition and power games.
- China's "debt-trap diplomacy" has led countries like Sri Lanka and Pakistan to hand over strategic territories to China due to mounting debts.
- In 1988, the Indian Air Force airlifted Indian Army troops to the Maldives to help stop a coup attempt by mercenaries.
- Rajnath Singh delivered a fast patrol vessel and a landing craft assault to the MNDF, describing the two indigenous vessels as a symbol of the shared commitment of the two countries towards peace and security in the IOR.
- The fast patrol vessel, known as MNDF Coast Guard ship Huravee, is capable of coastal and offshore surveillance at high speeds.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE UPDATES: RUSSIA ACCUSES UKRAINE OF FAILED DRONE ATTACK ON KREMLIN -

- The Kremlin announced on Tuesday, 2 April, that Ukraine had launched two drone attacks with the intent of assassinating Russian President Vladimir Putin. The attacks reportedly occurred overnight, and the Russian president was not in the Kremlin at the time.
- Although Putin was unharmed, Moscow considers the drone attacks an attempt on the president's life, according to a statement by Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. The drones were destroyed using electronic warfare measures, and no casualties or damage were reported.
- The Kremlin warned that it reserves the right to take retaliatory measures against Ukraine as it sees fit. Russia has opened a terrorism probe into the incident.
- Despite the alleged attack, Peskov stated that the incident would not interfere with the Victory Day parade, scheduled to take place on May 9 on Red Square.



ONE YEAR OF RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT -

- A year after start of Russia-Ukraine conflict, there are still signs of escalation everywhere. Calculations on both sides that this would be a short, swift war have proved wrong.
- The anniversary of war comes in the backdrop of Russia's withdrawal from New START treaty.
- The West has recently announced the supply of more advanced weapons to Ukraine, deepening its involvement in the conflict.
- In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin has already reinforced Russian positions along the 1,000-km long frontline in Ukraine.

- Risks of a direct confrontation between Russia and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), both nuclear powers, are also on the rise as the war is extended.
- Russia wanted to install a Moscow friendly regime and to take the whole of Ukraine's east and south, stretching from Kharkiv in the northeast through the Donbas in the east (which comprises Luhansk and Donetsk) to Odesa, the Black Sea port city in the southwest, turning the country into a land-locked rump. Russia has failed to meet any of these objectives.
- Nevertheless, Russia has taken substantial portions of Ukrainian territories, including Mariupol. Russia's territorial gains in Ukraine peaked in March 2022, when it controlled some 22% of pre-2014 Ukraine.
- Ukraine recaptured some land in Kharkiv and Kherson. But still, Russia controls some 17% of Ukraine. Focused fighting has been going on in some flashpoints along the frontline including Bakhmut, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia.
- The U.S. is Ukraine's biggest aid provider — it has pledged military and financial assistance worth over USD 70 billion. The EU has pledged \$37 billion and among the EU countries, the U.K. and Germany top the list.

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.

ICC ISSUES ARREST WARRANT FOR VLADIMIR PUTIN -

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for war crimes for President Vladimir Putin and a second Russian official.
- This is the first time that the ICC has issued an arrest warrant against one of the five permanent members of the United Nation Security Council.
- ICC issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin for the alleged war crime of unlawfully deporting and transferring children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.

What is ICC-

- On 17 July, 1998 Rome Statute was adopted by 120 States in direction of creating a more just world.

- On 1 July, 2002 Rome Statute took effect upon ratification by 60 states, officially establishing the ICC. Since it has no retroactive jurisdiction, the ICC deals with crimes committed on or after this date.

The Rome Statute, grants the ICC jurisdiction over four main crimes

- A. The crime of Genocide
 - B. Crimes against Humanity
 - C. War crimes
 - D. Crime of Aggression
- Currently, 123 countries are party to the Rome Statute, India is not a party to Rome Statute along with US and China.
 - The ICC was established to prosecute the most heinous offenses only when a country's own legal machinery fails to act. Unlike the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which deals with countries and inter-state disputes, the ICC prosecutes individuals.
 - Unlike the International Court of Justice, the ICC is not part of the United Nations system, with the UN-ICC relationship being governed by a separate agreement.
 - The ICJ, which is among the UN's 6 principal organs, mainly hears disputes between nations. It was established in 1945 and is seated at The Hague (Netherlands).



IMPORTANT DATES AND EVENTS

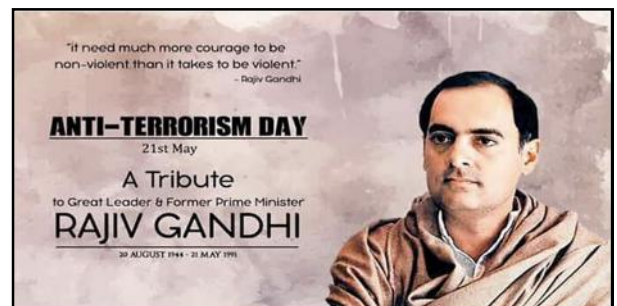
ON MAY 28TH 2023, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL INAUGURATE THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING, WHICH IS PART OF THE CENTRAL VISTA REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT -

- 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.



INDIA OBSERVES THE NATIONAL ANTI-TERRORISM DAY ON MAY 21 -

- India observes the National Anti-Terrorism Day on May 21 every year. The day is observed to commemorate the death of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated on this day in 1991.
- The day is also observed to spread awareness about the dangers of terrorism and to reaffirm India's commitment to combating terrorism.
- On National Anti-Terrorism Day, government offices and other public institutions hold special events to



commemorate the day. These events often include speeches by government officials, the laying of wreaths at the memorials of victims of terrorism, and the reading of the Anti-Terrorism Pledge.

- National Anti-Terrorism Day in India has its roots in a tragic event that took place on May 21, 1991. Rajiv Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India, was assassinated in Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu, during an election campaign rally. The assassination was carried out by a suicide bomber belonging to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Sri Lankan separatist group.
- In response to this heinous act of terrorism, the Government of India decided to observe May 21 as National Anti-Terrorism Day. The objective was to raise awareness about the destructive consequences of terrorism and promote unity and resilience in the face of this global menace.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES (ICOMOS) DECLARED APRIL 18TH AS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR MONUMENTS AND SITES, ALSO KNOWN AS WORLD HERITAGE DAY -

- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) declared April 18th as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, also known as World Heritage Day, in 1982.
- The theme for this year is "Heritage Changes," which focuses on the role of cultural heritage in climate action and its importance in protecting vulnerable communities.
- India is currently home to 40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, making it the country with the sixth-largest number of sites in the world.
- Out of these, 32 are cultural sites, 7 are natural sites, and one is a mixed-type site, the Khangchendzonga National Park.
- The cultural heritage sites in India include ancient temples, forts, palaces, mosques, and archaeological sites that reflect the rich history and diversity of the country.
- The natural heritage sites in India include national parks, wildlife reserves, and natural landscapes that showcase the country's unique biodiversity and ecological significance.
- The mixed-type site in India, the Khangchendzonga National Park, is known for its cultural significance as well as its biodiversity, as it is home to several rare and endangered species.
- In the six years since April 2016, Chhattisgarh recorded the most extrajudicial killing cases at 259, followed by Uttar Pradesh at 110 and Assam with 79.

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY 2023 OBSERVED ON 18TH MAY -

- International Museum Day, observed on Thursday, May 18, 2023, serves the purpose of increasing recognition for the vital role that museums play in fostering cultural exchange, enhancing diverse cultures, and fostering mutual understanding, cooperation, and peace among different communities.
- This day, as stated by the International Council of Museums, aims to raise awareness about the significance of museums as valuable platforms for promoting global harmony and development.
- The theme for the 2023 International Museum Day is "Museums, Sustainability, and Well-being." This theme emphasizes the crucial role that museums can assume in advancing the concepts of well-being and sustainability. Museums contribute to these goals by gathering, conserving, and showcasing artifacts that narrate the history of our planet and its diverse life forms.



MOTHER'S DAY 2023 -

- Mother's Day 2023 is a special day that honours and celebrates mothers worldwide. We will commemorate Mother's Day 2023 on May 14th May. The day holds a significant place in our hearts because it gives us a chance to express our gratitude, love, and appreciation for our mothers.

- Mother's Day is marked on varying dates across the globe. As per convention, in numerous nations like the United States, it is celebrated on the second Sunday of May. In the year 2023, people will celebrate Mother's Day 2023 on May 14.
- The origins of Mother's Day date back to ancient Greece, where the festival of Rhea, the mother of the gods, was celebrated in mid-March. Christian traditions later adopted the celebration as a way to honour Mary, the mother of Jesus, and renamed it Mothering Sunday. In the United States, Mother's Day was first celebrated in 1908 by Anna Jarvis, who wanted a day to commemorate her mother, who had died.
- Though it was originally celebrated on the second Sunday of May, International Mother's Day is now a universal celebration across all countries.

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



NATIONAL CIVIL SERVICES DAY 2023 CELEBRATES ON 21ST APRIL -

- In India, April 21 is celebrated as National Civil Service Day, to recognize and appreciate the vital role played by civil servants in the advancement and betterment of the nation.
- This day offers a chance to express gratitude towards the contributions made by civil servants to society. The prime minister of the country presents awards of excellence on this occasion, to encourage civil servants to continue their efforts towards serving the public effectively.
- Civil Services Day is an occasion for civil servants to rededicate themselves to the cause of citizens and renew their commitments and excellence in work. The theme of this year's Civil Service Day is very apt- Viksit Bharat (विकसित भारत) aimed at 'Empowering Citizens and Reaching the Last Mile'. The theme underscores the Government's resolve and firm commitment to achieving a more equitable and prosperous India for all its citizens by engaging in inclusive growth.
- The inaugural National Civil Service Day was celebrated on April 21, 2006, at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi. This particular date was chosen to honour the occasion in 1947 when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the

first home minister of independent India, addressed Administrative Services Officers' probationers. During his motivational speech, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel recognised civil servants as the "steel frame of India."

- National Civil Service Day serves as a platform to appreciate the exceptional services rendered by government workers in the country. On this day, the administration also acknowledges the accomplishments of experienced civil servants and presents medals to select individuals for their contributions towards the development of the nation.

JALLIANWALA BAGH MASSACRE 104TH ANNIVERSARY -

- On April 13, 1919, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place in Amritsar, Punjab, which is remembered as a tragic event and a symbol of the atrocities committed against the Indian people during the British colonial era.
- The massacre played a significant role in India's fight for independence, as it increased the nation's determination to achieve self-rule and break free from British subjugation.



- Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Day 2023 marks 104 years since the tragic incident that is seen as a turning point in Indian History. It was this that led to Gandhi's full commitment to the cause of Indian nationalism and independence from Britain.
- The British military officer, General Dyer, on April 13, 1919 entered the Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar) with his troops, where people had gathered to peacefully protest against the arrest of the two nationalist leaders, Satya Pal and Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew.
- Without so much as a warning to the people to disperse, he ordered his troops to fire at the unarmed crowd. The onslaught lasted ten minutes till their ammunition was exhausted, after which the British soldiers left. A total of 1,650 rounds were fired, and more than 500 people were killed and murdered. The exact number of casualties remains unknown.
- On the morning of Baisakhi, Colonel Reginald Dyer had announced the implementation of a curfew throughout Amritsar and a ban on all processions that even prohibited a group of 4 or more people to meet publicly. At about 12:40 PM, Dyer received confidential information about the meeting taking place at Jallianwala Bagh that may result in riots and protests.

Who take revenge of Jallianwala Bagh massacre

- After the tragedy, Sardar Udham Singh avenged his people by killing the British officer serving as Governor General of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer. He was Born on December 26, 1899, Udham Singh was a member of the Ghadar Party and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).
- The assassination of Michael O'Dwyer, the ex-lieutenant governor of Punjab, brought him widespread notoriety. Singh carried out the murder in retaliation for the 1919 slaughter at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar.
- The recognized martyr (born Sher Singh) was born to Tehal Singh, a manual laborer, and Narain Kaur, a housekeeper, in the vicinity of Pilbad, some 130 miles from British India's Lahore. His older brother Sadhu was two years older than him, making him the youngest. They lost both parents at an early age, both to separate mishaps.

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY 2023 OBSERVED ON 24 MARCH -

- World Tuberculosis Day is observed on March 24th every year to raise awareness about the global epidemic of tuberculosis (TB) and efforts to eliminate the disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) aims to end the TB epidemic by 2030.
- The organization works with governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners to increase access to TB prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, and to develop new tools and strategies for TB control.
- On World Tuberculosis Day, organizations and individuals around the world organize events and activities to raise awareness about TB, its causes, symptoms, and treatment, and to promote efforts to eliminate the disease. The day provides an opportunity for people to come together and take action to help end the TB epidemic.
- The theme for this year's World Tuberculosis Day is "Yes! We can end TB!" and it focuses on urging leaders from around the world to take action to stop the TB epidemic.
- World Tuberculosis Day has been observed annually on March 24th since 1982, commemorating the date when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of the tuberculosis (TB) bacterium in 1882. Koch's discovery paved the way for diagnosing and treating TB, which had been a major cause of illness and death in Europe at the time.
- In 1982, the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) and the World Health Organization (WHO) established World TB Day to raise public awareness about the global epidemic of TB and the efforts needed to control and eliminate the disease.



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SPORTS NEWS

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.



PT USHA BECOME FIRST WOMEN PRESIDENT OF INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION-

- PT Usha was elected to become the president of the Indian Olympics Association (IOA).
- The Minister of Law and Justice of India announced on Twitter to congratulate the legendary Indian athletes. PT Usha becomes the first woman president of the IOA.
- She also expressed her intentions to run for IOA on 26th November 2022. She was the only contender for the election of the top position in the sports organization.
- PT Usha is one of the most accomplished athletes in India. She has won 11 medals including four gold at the Asian Games between 1982 and 1994.
- She also won four gold medals at the Seoul Asian Games in 1986. She has participated in 200m, 400m hurdles, and 4x400 relays.
- PT Usha submitted her candidacy papers for the position of president on 27th November 2022.



AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

TATA SONS' CHAIRMAN RATAN TATA AWARDED AUSTRALIA'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN HONOUR -

- Ratan Tata, the Chairman Emeritus of Tata Sons, has been awarded the Order of Australia (AO), which is Australia's highest civilian honour.
- The announcement was made by Australia's High Commissioner to India, Barry O'Farrell. The award was given to Tata in recognition of his contributions towards strengthening the bilateral relations between India and Australia.
- Tata has been a strong supporter of the 2022 India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement, and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is said to have the largest workforce of any Indian company in Australia, with around 17,000 employees.
- Ratan Tata has received several awards throughout his career, including the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan, two of India's highest civilian honours.
- He has also been awarded the Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy, the Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award, the Harvard Business School Alumni Achievement Award, and the Honorary Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. In addition, he has received several honorary degrees from prestigious universities around the world.



100 EPISODES OF PM MODI'S MANN KI BAAT -

- Mann Ki Baat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popular radio programme, completed 100 episodes.
- At 100th episode PM framed the radio show as a national conversation that helps connect with the people — "a matter of faith, of worship", and a "thaal of prasad" at the feet of "Janata Janardan".
- Radio can also reach those people who do not own a mobile device and have Internet connection.
- Idea is to convey positivity and to spread optimism like during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Spreading awareness about government schemes and initiatives — Azaadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, Har Ghar Tiranga, digital payments, startups and unicorns etc.
- Almost every show includes little-known information about India's arts, craft, folk culture and heroes, etc. that inform and educate, and evoke and sustain listener interest.
- Radio Broadcasting began in June 1923 during the British Raj with programs by the Bombay Presidency Radio Club.
- Congress Radio, also known as Azad Radio, was an underground radio station that operated for about three months during the Quit India Movement of 1942.
- It was organized by Usha Mehta (1920–2000), then a 22-year student activist, with the help of amateur radio operators.
- All India Radio (AIR) was established in 1936 (named as Akashvani in 1956) is the national public radio broadcaster of India and is a division of Prasar Bharati. Its headquarter is in New Delhi. It is the sister service of Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan, an Indian television broadcaster.
- AIR's home service comprises 420 stations located across the country, reaching nearly 92% of the country's area and 99.19% of the total population.



DEFENCE NEWS

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.



RAJNATH SINGH INAUGURATES IAF HERITAGE CENTRE IN CHANDIGARH -

- India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh opened the country's first Indian Air Force Heritage Centre in Chandigarh on 8 May, under a memorandum of understanding between the Indian Air Force and the Union Territory of Chandigarh.
- The centre spreads over 17,000 square feet and celebrates the Indian Air Force's role in previous conflicts such as the 1965, 1971, and Kargil Wars, as well as the Balakot air strike, through murals and memorabilia.
- Last year, the Union Territory of Chandigarh and the Indian Air Force entered into a memorandum of understanding to establish the Centre.
- The inauguration event was attended by Chandigarh's administrator and governor Banwarilal Purohit, Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, and the city's MP Kirron Kher.



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.

INDIA'S DEFENCE EXPORTS TO REACH RS 40,000 CRORE BY 2026: RAJNATH SINGH -

- India is set to become a major exporter of defense equipment and materials, with exports projected to be worth Rs 35,000 to Rs 40,000 crore by 2026.
- The announcement was made by Union minister Rajnath Singh during a speech at Symbiosis International University, where he emphasized the importance of self-reliance and creating an ecosystem that fosters self-confidence.
- Since adopting the Indianization program, India's defense exports have increased from Rs 900 crore in 2014 to Rs 15,000 crore to Rs 16,000 crore today. Singh expressed his pride in the country's defense forces, which are now meeting 80% of their needs through indigenous procurement.



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.

1	United States	PwrIndx: 0.0712
2	Russia	PwrIndx: 0.0714
3	China	PwrIndx: 0.0722
4	India	PwrIndx: 0.1025
5	United Kingdom	PwrIndx: 0.1435
6	South Korea	PwrIndx: 0.1505
7	Pakistan	PwrIndx: 0.1694
8	Japan	PwrIndx: 0.1711
9	France	PwrIndx: 0.1848
10	Italy	PwrIndx: 0.1973

- 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-

- Agni I: Range of 700-800 km.
 - Agni II: Range more than 2000 km.
 - Agni III: Range of more than 2,500 Km
 - Agni IV: Range is more than 3,500 km and can fire from a road mobile launcher.
 - 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

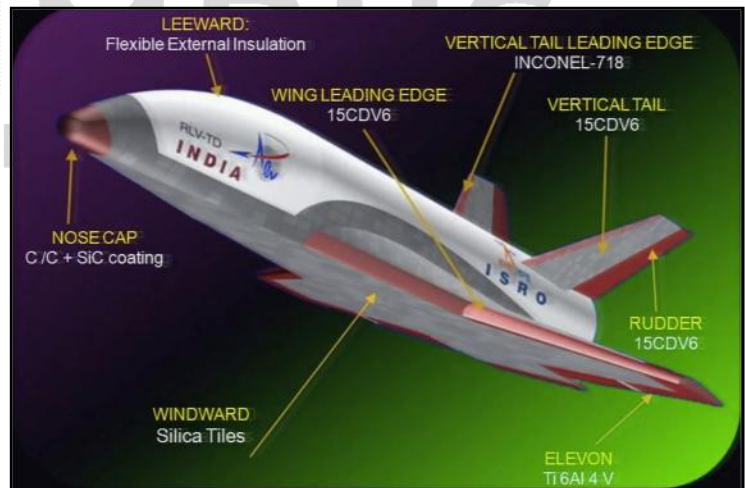
SCIENCE 20 ENGAGEMENT GROUP MEETING UNDER INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY BEGINS -

- Science 20, during the opening session of the Thematic Conference on Universal Holistic Health in Bangaram Island, Lakshadweep, India emphasized the significance of respecting and acknowledging cultural diversity in promoting universal holistic health.
- Co-chair of Science 20 and President of Indian National Science Academy, Prof. Ashutosh Kumar Sharma, underscored the importance of incorporating traditional healing practices into modern healthcare systems in upholding cultural identity and values, aside from health and well-being.
- The two-day event, which had 48 delegates from G-20 countries, takes place as part of India's G20 Presidency.



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.



ECONOMY AND FINANCE

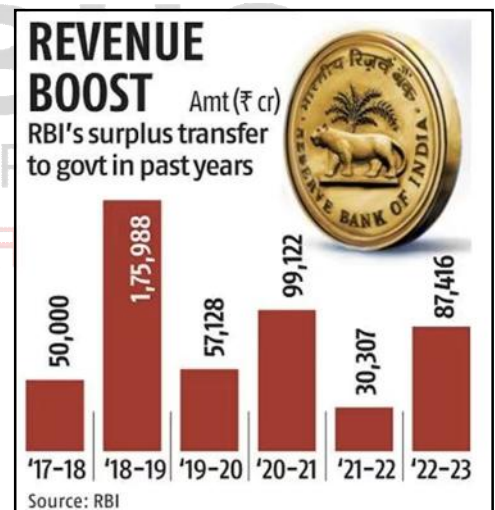
GERMAN ECONOMY ENTERS RECESSION -

- 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.



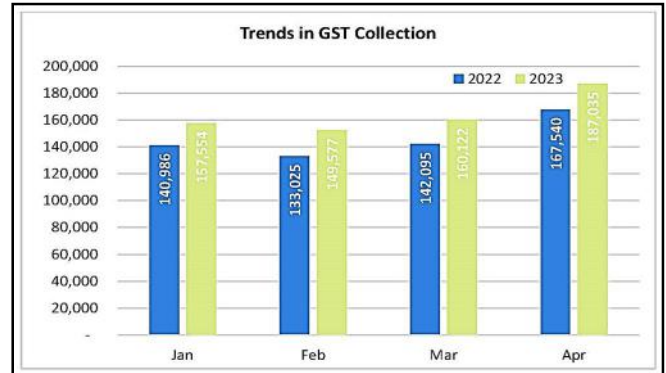
RBI APPROVES RS 87,416 CRORE SURPLUS TRANSFER TO GOVERNMENT FOR FY23, TRIPLE THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S AMOUNT -

- 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'S GST REVENUES HIT RECORD HIGH IN APRIL AT ₹ 1.87 LAKH CRORE -

- The gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection increased 12% in April 2023 to Rs 1.87 lakh crore.
- It is the highest monthly mop-up since the inception of the indirect tax regime in July 2017.
- The government has collected CGST of Rs 38,440 crore, SGST of Rs 47,412 crore, and IGST of Rs 89,158 crore (including Rs 34,972 crore collected on import of goods) and cess is Rs 12,025 crore.
- The highest GST collection was recorded in April 2022 at Rs 1.68 lakh crore.



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.

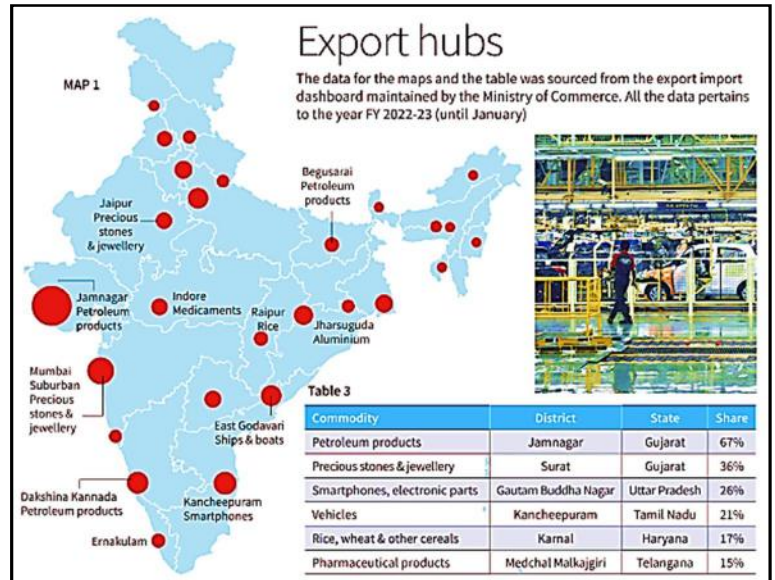
TOP EXPORTING DISTRICT IN INDIA -

- Jamnagar in Gujarat is the top exporting district in India. It formed about 24% of India's exports in value terms in FY23 (till January).
- Surat in Gujarat and Mumbai Suburban in Maharashtra feature second and third by a distance, forming only about 4.5% of the country's exports in the period.
- The other districts in the top 10 are Dakshina Kannada (Karnataka), Devbhumi Dwarka, Bharuch and Kachchh (Gujarat), Mumbai (Maharashtra), Kancheepuram (Tamil Nadu) and Gautam Buddha Nagar (Uttar Pradesh).
- The merchandise trade deficit, which is the gap between exports and imports, increased by over 39% in 2022-23 to record USD 266.78 billion, as compared to USD 191 billion in 2021-22.

- Merchandise imports increased by 16.51% in 2022-23, while merchandise exports rose by 6.03%. Overall trade deficit, however, stood at USD 122 billion in 2022-23, as compared to USD 83.53 billion in the 2022, gaining support from trade surplus in services.

India's Major Export Arenas-

- A. Engineering Goods:** They registered a 50% growth in exports, at USD 101 bn in FY22.
- B. Agriculture Products:** Agricultural exports were buoyed by the government's push to meet global demand for food amid the pandemic. India exports rice worth USD 9.65 bn, the highest among agricultural commodities.
- C. Textile and Apparels:** India's textile and apparel exports (including handicrafts) stood at USD 44.4 billion in FY22, a 41% increase on a YoY basis. Government's scheme like Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (MITRA) Park are giving a strong boost to this sector.



- D. Pharmaceuticals and Drugs:** India is the third-largest producer of medicines by volume and the biggest supplier of generic drugs. India supplies over 50% of Africa's requirement for generics, around 40% of generic demand in the US and 25% of all medicine in the UK.

INDIA SET TO GROW BY 5.9% THIS FISCAL: IMF -

- The annual World Economic Outlook of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has lowered India's economic growth projection for the current fiscal (2023-24) to 5.9% from 6.1% earlier.
- Yet India will continue to be the fastest-growing economy in the world.
- It has also lowered the forecast for 2024-25 to 6.3% from the 6.8% it had predicted in January 2023.
- IMF growth forecast is lower than projections by the RBI, which predicted a 6.4% in the current fiscal.

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 -

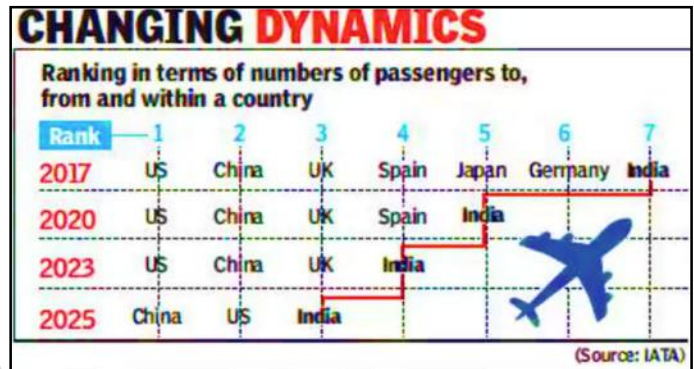
- During the ASSOCHAM Annual Session 2023, Mr. Piyush Goyal, who serves as the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, and Textiles, declared that

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 AIMS TO BECOME TOP GLOBAL AVIATION MARKET BY 2030 -

- India is poised to become the world's leading aviation market, surpassing the United States and China by the end of the decade.
- India's Civil Aviation is among the fastest-growing aviation markets globally and will be a major growth engine to make India a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024.
- India is currently the world's 3rd-largest civil aviation market.
- Over the past 6 years, India's domestic passenger traffic has grown at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 14.5% and international passenger traffic at around 6.5%.
- India's domestic passenger traffic is projected to rise to 16 crores in the 2023-24 fiscal year and to 35 crores by 2029-30.



Challenges-

- High Operating Costs- One of the major challenges for the Indian aviation sector is the high operating costs. This is due to a number of factors such as high fuel prices, airport charges, and taxes.
- For airlines, the increase in jet fuel prices represents a major challenge as this cost typically accounts for 20% to 25% of total operational costs.
- Infrastructure Constraints- The Indian aviation sector also faces infrastructure constraints such as limited airport capacity, lack of modernized air traffic control systems, and inadequate ground handling facilities.
- Regulatory Framework- The Indian aviation sector also faces challenges related to the regulatory framework.

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.

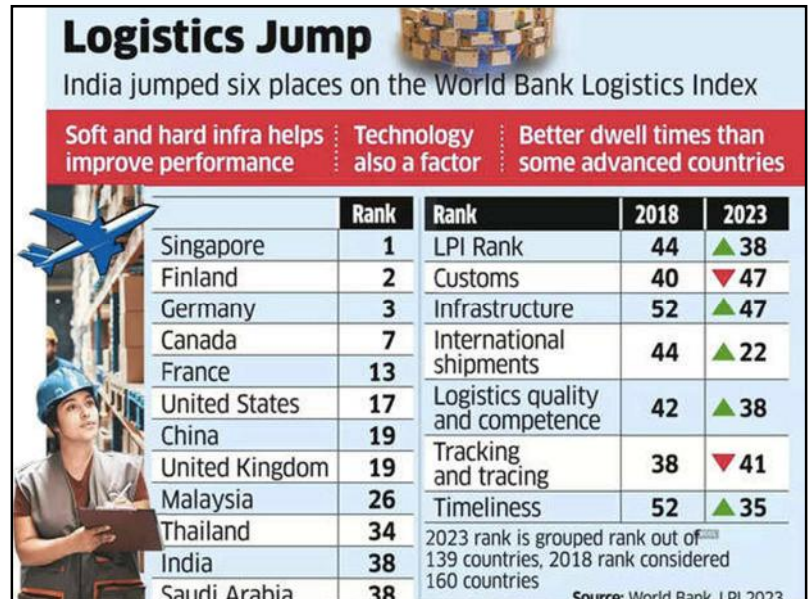


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REPORTS & INDICES

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.
- 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.



RECENTLY, THE CENTRAL ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY (CEA) (MINISTRY OF POWER) RELEASED A NEW PUBLICATION TITLED REPORT ON OPTIMAL GENERATION MIX 2030 VERSION 2.0 -

- This is an updated version of the report published in 2020 titled Report on Optimal Generation Capacity Mix for 2029-30.
- The report highlights the changes expected in India's energy mix, with a decline in coal's share and a rise in renewable energy (RE) sources.
- Earlier, the CEA released the latest draft of the National Electricity Plan (NEP) 2022-27.
- Coal's share in the power mix is projected to decline from 73% in 2022-23 to 55% in 2030.
- Although the share of coal in power generation is set to reduce, in absolute terms, coal power capacity and generation will increase between 2023 and 2030.
- Coal capacity is projected to rise by 19%, and generation is expected to increase by 13% during this period.
- Solar energy is expected to play a significant role in the power mix, lifting the overall load. Projections indicate a quadrupling of solar capacity from 109 GW to 392 GW by 2030.
- Solar generation is expected to increase from 173 BU to 761 BU in the same period.
- Projections for large hydropower and wind energy remain modest in the future power mix. Large hydro generation is expected to increase from 8% to 9% by 2030.

- Wind generation, on the other hand, is projected to decrease to 9% in the updated version (from 12% in the previous report).
- Renewable sources, including small hydro, pumped hydro, solar, wind, and biomass, are expected to account for 31% of the power mix in 2030, compared to the current 12%. The report estimates the likely retirement of 2,121.5 MW of coal plants by 2030, with 304 MW set to be retired during 2022-23.

WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX 2023 -

- On the World Press Freedom Day (WPFDD) (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).

INDEX 2023		INDEX 2022	
161 / 180		150 / 180	
Score : 36.62		Score : 41	
POLITICAL INDICATOR	169 33.65	POLITICAL INDICATOR	145 40.76
ECONOMIC INDICATOR	155 34.15	ECONOMIC INDICATOR	149 30.36
LEGISLATIVE INDICATOR	144 42.92	LEGISLATIVE INDICATOR	120 57.02
SOCIAL INDICATOR	143 45.27	SOCIAL INDICATOR	127 56.25
SECURITY INDICATOR	172 27.12	SECURITY INDICATOR	163 20.61

THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA HAS RELEASED THE FIGURES OF THE 5TH CYCLE OF INDIA'S TIGER CENSUS 2022, REVEALING 6.7% IN THE INCREASE IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS -

- The Prime Minister of India has released the figures of the 5th cycle of India's Tiger Census 2022, revealing 6.7% in the increase in the past four years.
- The tiger census covered forested habitats in 20 states of India. Camera traps were set up at 32,588 locations and generated 47,081,881 photographs.
- The PM has released the Census while inaugurating the International Big Cat Alliance (IBC) in Karnataka's Mysuru, organised to mark 50 years of Project Tiger.
- IBCA is launched for conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma harbouring our planet.
- Its members include 97 countries that are home to these big cats and other interested parties.



Highlights of the Census-

- Population has grown by 200 from 2018 to 2022. The current tiger population in India is 3,167, up from 2,967 in 2018.
- The growth rate slowed to 6.7% in the four years from 2018 to 2022, from around 33% during 2014-2018.
- There has been a significant increase in the tiger population in the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains, while tiger occupancy in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana showed a decline.
- Tiger occupancy in the Western Ghats declined, the latest analysis showed. Significant declines were observed in the Wayanad landscape and in the Biligiriranga Hills.

THE INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD) IS PLANNING TO INTRODUCE A 'HEAT INDEX' WARNING SYSTEM IN DELHI AND OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY -

- The IMD has conducted a study on the impact of meteorological factors on heatwaves and the "heat wave hazard zonation" of the country.
- According to "Hot Weather Analysis over India," IMD revealed that the mechanism by which heat impacts humans is complex; it is a result of the interactions between temperature, radiation, wind, and humidity.
- There is strong experimental evidence that physiologic stress from high temperatures is greater if humidity is higher.
- Heat Index will calculate the temperature along with the humidity levels to provide a more accurate measure of what the temperature actually feels like.
- In the US, the heat index is color-coded to provide warnings based on the impact of the heat index.
- The IMD is planning to introduce a similar color-coded warning system in India.

Heatwave-

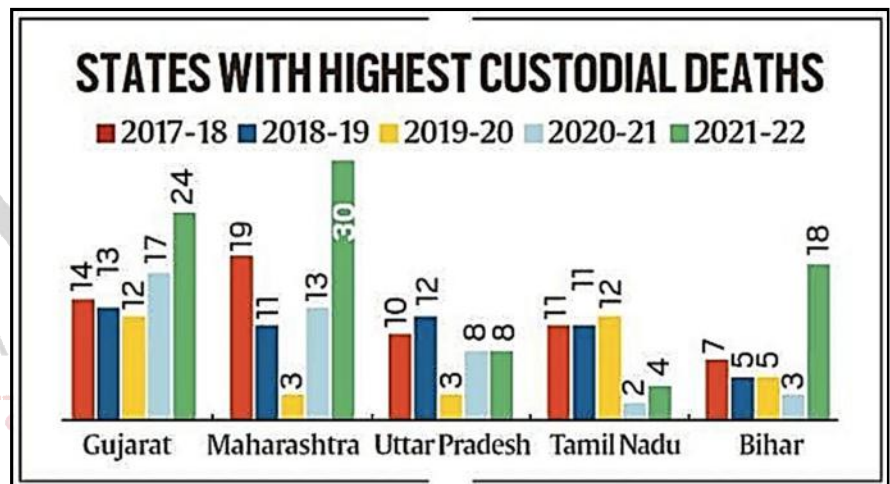
- A heatwave is a period of abnormally high temperatures, a common phenomenon in India during the months of May-June and in some rare cases even extends till July.
- The Heatwave is considered when the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C for Plains and at least 30°C for Hilly regions.
- In 2016, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) issued comprehensive guidelines to prepare national level key strategies for mitigating the impact of heatwaves.

LIST OF 10 HAPPIEST COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD FOR 2023 -

- The World Happiness Report 2023 has been released. According to the World Happiness Index for 2023, Finland is the happiest country in the world for the sixth year in a row.
- Researchers looked at six important variables to determine where people are happy in the world: social support, money, health, independence, charity, and lack of corruption.
- The survey discovered that, despite a number of converging crises, overall life satisfaction is on par with levels prior to the epidemic.
- India has been ranked 125th out of 146 countries, which is an improvement of nine positions from its 2022 ranking.
- However, India's ranking is lower than even war-torn countries like Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, India's neighboring countries such as Nepal, China, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka have a higher ranking than India.

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.



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ENVIRONMENT

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 agriculture 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.

INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD) PREDICTED A BORDERLINE-LEVEL NORMAL SUMMER MONSOON RAINFALL THIS YEAR -

- IMD is an agency of the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It is the principal agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology.
- IMD releases the long range forecast in two stages in April and June.

Predictions by IMD

- The rainfall during the June-September period is likely to be 96% of the long-term average Period.
- The El Nino is the key factor responsible for the relatively less rainfall this year.
- Since 2019, India has been under the influence of the converse 'La Nina' and therefore is getting substantial monsoon rains.
- The El Nino event, triggered by warm water in the equatorial Pacific, can affect weather patterns worldwide and in India, El Nino linked to drier conditions and reduced rainfall.

Categories of Rainfall-

- **Large Excess:** ≥60% of long period average (LPA).
- **Excess:** 20% to 59% of long period average (LPA).
- **Normal:** -19% to +19% of long period average (LPA).
- **Deficient:** -59% to -20% of long period average (LPA).
- **Large Deficient:** -99% to -60% of long period average (LPA).

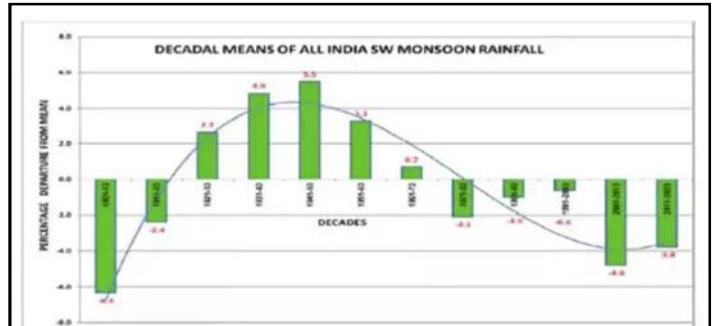


Fig. 1 Decadal Variability of all India SW Monsoon rainfall during 1901-2020

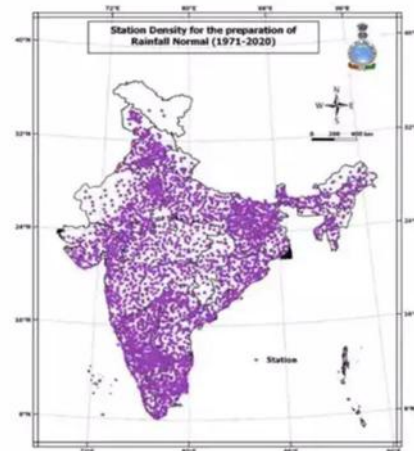


Fig. 2. Distribution of 4132 rain gauge stations used for computation of rainfall normal 1971-2020

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION LAUNCHED UDAN 5.1 FOR HELICOPTER ROUTES -

- 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.



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.

UNION CABINET APPROVES RS 17,000 CRORE PLI 2.0 SCHEME FOR IT HARDWARE -

- In a significant development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for the IT hardware segment, with a substantial budget allocation of Rs 17,000 crore.
- This PLI Scheme 2.0 for IT Hardware aims to leverage the achievements of the PLI scheme implemented for mobile phones, which played a pivotal role in establishing India as the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer.
- Notably, the exports of mobile phones have also surpassed a significant milestone of \$11 billion (equivalent to around Rs 90 thousand crores) this year.
- The PLI Scheme 2.0 for IT hardware encompasses a wide range of products including laptops, tablets, all-in-one PCs, servers, and ultra-small form factor devices.



- The scheme has a budgetary allocation of Rs. 17,000 crores, signifying a significant financial commitment toward promoting the IT hardware sector.
- 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.

RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING & WATERWAYS HAS LAUNCHED 'HARIT SAGAR' GREEN PORT GUIDELINES 2023 TO ACHIEVE THE ZERO CARBON EMISSION GOAL -

- Harit Sagar is a Sanskrit term that means "green ocean". It reflects the vision of making India's ports more environmentally friendly and sustainable.
- They also cover aspects of the National Green Hydrogen Mission pertaining to ports, development of green hydrogen facility, LNG bunkering, and Offshore Wind Energy among others.

Objectives-

- To promote the adoption of best practices and technologies for green port development and operations, such as renewable energy, water conservation, biodiversity protection, and climate resilience.
- To minimize waste through Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose and Recycle to attain zero waste discharge from port operations.
- To establish a rating system for assessing and benchmarking the environmental performance of ports based on various indicators and parameters.
- To incentivize and recognize the ports that achieve high standards of environmental excellence and sustainability.



Challenges and Barriers for Implementing-

- Lack of awareness and capacity among port stakeholders.
- Lack of coordination and collaboration among different agencies and sectors.
- Inadequate data and information on environmental aspects of ports.
- Weak enforcement and monitoring mechanisms for environmental compliance.

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-

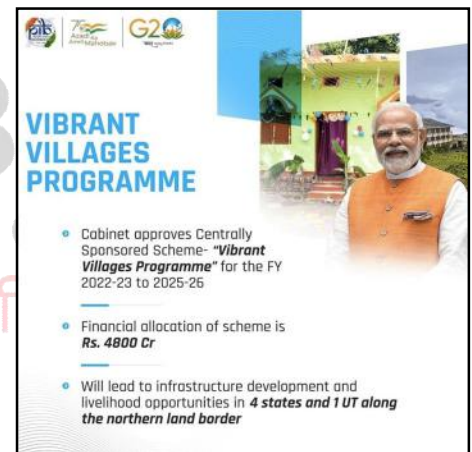
- Phase 1 was launched in 2017, with the objective of connecting underserved and unserved airports in the country.
- Phase 2 was launched in 2018, with the aim of expanding air connectivity to more remote and inaccessible parts of the country.
- Phase 3 was launched in November 2018, with the focus on 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.

VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME -

- Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved raising of seven new ITBP (Indo-Tibetan Border Police) battalions and allocated Rs 4,800 crore under the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) to bolster the social and security framework along the China border.
- The Cabinet has also cleared a 4.1-km Shinku-La tunnel on the Manali-Darcha-Padum-Nimmu axis to allow all-weather connectivity to Ladakh.
- The decision to raise additional battalions was taken keeping an eye on the need for effective monitoring in the border areas and the battalion.
- The government's decision to approve a financial package for border villages and upgrade security comes at a time when issues with China are still to be resolved along the LAC in Ladakh.
- PLA troops are still squatting in the Depsang Plains and Demchok. China is also upgrading its infrastructure along the LAC.



Vibrant Villages Programme-

- It is a Centrally sponsored scheme, announced in the Union Budget 2022-23 (to 2025-26) for development of villages on the northern border, thus improving the quality of life of people living in identified border villages.
- It will cover the border areas of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh. It will cover 2,963 villages with 663 of them to be covered in the first phase.
- Vibrant Village Action Plans will be created by the district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats. There will not be overlap with Border Area Development Programme.
- The scheme aids to identify and develop the economic drivers based on local, natural, human and other resources of the border villages on the northern border.

APPOINTMENTS/PERSON IN NEWS

FORMER PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER PARKASH SINGH BADAL PASSES AWAY AT 95 -

- Parkash Singh Badal, a former Chief Minister of Punjab and leader of the Akali Dal, has passed away at the age of 95 in Mohali.
- He started his political career as a village sarpanch and went on to contest assembly elections for the first time in 1957 as a member of the Congress party. He became the youngest Chief Minister of Punjab at the age of 43.
- Badal was born in Abul Khurana, a village in Punjab near the Rajasthan border, and received his education at Lahore's Forman Christian College.
- The Bharatiya Janata Party-led central government, declared two days of national mourning following the demise of former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal patron Parkash Singh Badal.
- The government of Punjab has announced a public holiday on 27th April, in honour of the former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal. In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Badal the Nelson Mandela of India.
- **Parkash Singh Badal served as the Chief Minister of Punjab for the following five terms:**
 - A. 1970-1971
 - B. 1977-1980
 - C. 1997-2002
 - D. 2007-2012
 - E. 2012-2017
- Throughout his political career that spanned over seven decades, Parkash Singh Badal lost only two elections – one in 1967 and another in the 2022 Punjab assembly election.
- He was arrested during Operation Bluestar in June 1984, when the Indian Army entered the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar to flush out militants. Badal's party ended its alliance with the BJP in 2020 due to the farmers' agitation against new agricultural laws introduced by the Centre.
- In protest against the treatment of protesting farmers by the Central government, Badal returned the Padma Vibhushan award, the second-highest civilian honour in the country, that he had received from the government in 2015.
- As a leader of the Akali Dal, Parkash Singh Badal strongly opposed the proposal for the Sutlej Yamuna Link (SYL) canal, which was intended to share river water with the neighboring state of Haryana. During his tenure, the Punjab state assembly passed the contentious Punjab Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal (Transfer of Proprietary Rights) Bill in 2016, which was led by Badal.



DING LIREN BECOMES CHINA'S FIRST WORLD CHESS CHAMPION -

- Ding Liren has become 17th world chess champion – the first from China – defeating Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi in a tie-breaker.
- Ding defeated Nepo in the last of the four Rapid tiebreaks. Ding takes over as winner of the World Chess Championship from Norway's Magnus Carlsen, who chose not to defend his title after a 10-year reign. He and Nepomniachtchi had finished on seven points each after the 14 first-stage games played in the Kazakh capital, Astana.
- Each had won three, with the other eight ending in draws. For the tie-



break stage of the match, also in Astana, the contenders had only 25 minutes to make their moves, plus an additional 10 seconds for each move played.

- The 30-year-old won the rapid chess playoff by 2.5 points to 1.5, capitalizing on his opponent's mistakes, following the pair's 7-7 tie across 14 longer "classical" games.

GOVT SHUFFLES CABINET: KIREN RIJIJU EXITED AS UNION LAW MINISTER -

- Kiren Rijiju has exited as Union Law Minister and will now take up the portfolio of Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Arjun Ram Meghwal has been assigned the independent charge as Minister of State in the Ministry of Law and Justice in addition to his existing portfolios.
- Rijiju took over as the Law and Justice Minister on July 8, 2021. Prior to this, he served as the Minister of State (Independent Charge) of Youth Affairs and Sports from May 2019 to July 2021. Union Minister Jitendra Singh was holding charge of the Ministry of Earth Sciences.



Kiren Rijiju is an Indian politician from Arunachal Pradesh who has served in various ministerial positions in the Government of India. Rijiju's past portfolios include:

- A. Minister of State for Home Affairs (2014-2019)
- B. Minister of State for Minority Affairs (2019-2021)
- C. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Youth Affairs and Sports (2019-2021)
- D. Cabinet Minister of Law and Justice (2021-2023)

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 -

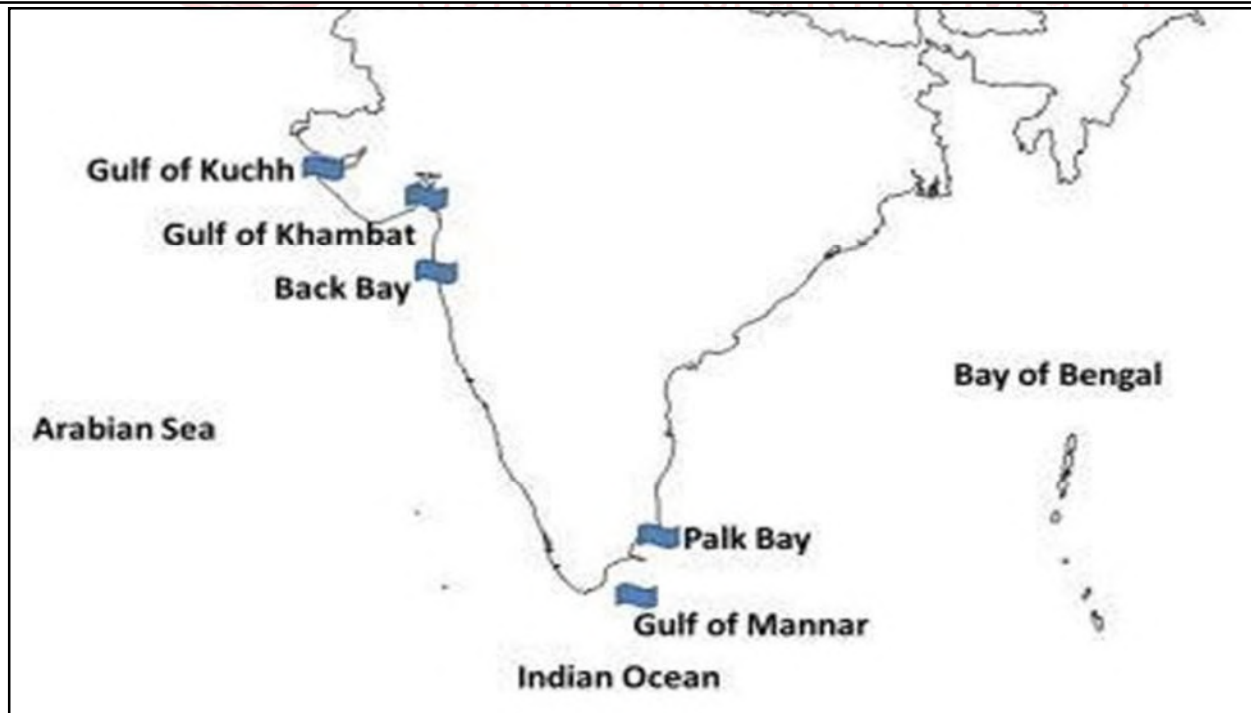
- Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi has been appointed as the new Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi is a former Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission secretary-cum-scientific director.

- 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.



NIMBUS
ACADEMY FOR IAS
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥

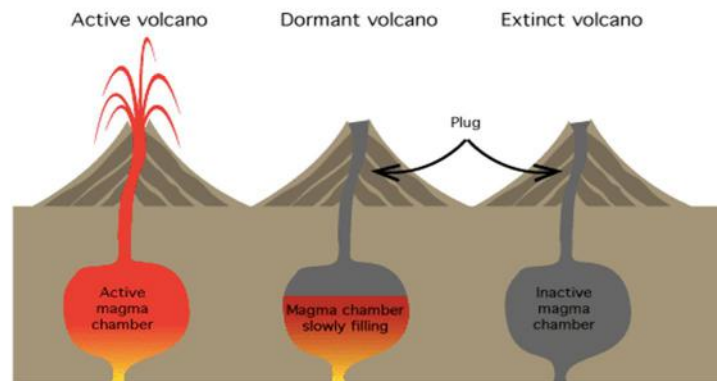
IMPORTANT MAPS & ARTICLES





List of all Volcanoes in India

Barren Island	Andaman Islands	Active since 2017	Stratovolcano, Active
Narcondam	Andaman Islands	1681	Stratovolcano, Semi-Dormant
Deccan Plateau	Central India	25 Ma BP (million years before present)	Unknown
Baratang Island	Andaman Islands	Active since 2003	Stratovolcano, Active
Dhinodhar Hills	Gujarat	500 Ma BP (million years before present)	Fully Extinct
Dhosi Hill	Haryana	750 Ma BP (million years before present)	Extinct
Tosham Hills	Haryana	732 Ma BP (million years before present)	Fully Extinct
Loktak Lake	Manipur	100 Ma BP (million years before present)	Unknown





SAME SEX MARRIAGE: STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY

Recently, the Supreme Court of India began hearing a series of petitions seeking solemnisation of same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides a civil form of marriage for couples who cannot marry under their personal law.

In the proceedings the center advised the Supreme Court to defer the case to Parliament on the matter, stating that the law cannot be revised to permit same-sex marriage again.

In this context, there is a need to look into the matter of Same-sex marriage and its related issues.

What are Arguments Against the Same Sex Marriage?

- **Religious Definitions of Marriage:** Marriage has traditionally been between a man and a woman in many religions. The Special Marriage Act, 1954 was created to overcome the limitations of religious personal laws, not to create a new institution of marriage.
- **'Legitimate' Interest of State:** The state has a legitimate interest in regulating marriage and personal relationships, as seen in laws regarding age of consent, prohibited degrees of marriage, and divorce. The right to marry is not absolute and subject to state laws. Just like a parent cannot claim absolute control over their child's education, individuals cannot claim absolute control over their personal relationships.
 - The state can claim legitimate interest to regulate, when to marry, how many times to marry, whom to marry, how to separate, and law on bestiality or incest.
- **The Right to Privacy:** In 2017, the Supreme Court recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right and stated that sexual orientation is a crucial part of one's identity that must be protected without discrimination.
 - However, privacy exists but it cannot be extended to marriage, which has a necessary public element. Consenting sexual relationships between adults are private, but marriage has a public aspect that cannot be ignored.
- **Legislation by Parliament:** Only Parliament has the authority to decide on same-sex marriage as it is a matter of democratic right and court should not legislate on the issue. There could be potential unintended consequences in law and the complexity of dealing with the various permutations and combinations of genders falling under the LGBTQIA+ community (which has 72 categories).
- **Interpreting the Law:** The Special Marriage Act (SMA) cannot be interpreted to include same-sex marriage because the Act's entire architecture would need to be examined, not just a few words. For example, the Act provides specific rights to a wife, and it's unclear who would have these rights in a same-sex marriage. Additionally, allowing one party in a same-sex marriage to have a specific right could create a problem for heterosexual marriages.
 - Law provides specific rights to a wife like "the law says that the wife acquires the domicile of the husband upon marriage. So, who will be the wife in a same-sex marriage?"
 - Issue of divorce, under the SMA, a wife may seek divorce on the ground that her husband has been guilty of rape, sodomy, or bestiality.
- **Issues with Adoption of Childrens:** When queer couples adopt children, it can lead to societal stigma, discrimination, and negative impacts on the child's emotional and psychological well-being, especially in Indian society where acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community is not universal.
- **Gendered terms:** Argument that gendered terms like 'mother' and 'father', 'husband' and 'wife' would be problematic in same-sex marriages.

What are Arguments in Favour of Same Sex Marriage?

- **Threat to Human Race:** Opposing same-sex marriage by saying it will end the human race is unreasonable because adoption is a solution for queer couples who want to raise children.
- **Elitist Concept:** The demand for marriage equality comes from less economically privileged people who need legal protection. Claiming that it's a matter for urban elites is deceptive. E.g. The story of Leela and

Urmila, two policewomen who were suspended and locked up for getting married in 1987, shows the discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ people in society.

- **Extend Special Marriage Act to Queer Indians:** The Special Marriage Act should be extended to include queer Indians by using gender-neutral language like "spouse" instead of "husband" or "wife". This would grant them the right to marry without asking for special rights.
- The Special Marriage Act allowed for a Bengali Hindu and an Anglo-Indian Roman Catholic to marry in 2006, and they hope this legislation will be extended to queer Indians.
- **Cohabitation as a Fundamental Right:** The Chief Justice of India (CJI) acknowledged that cohabitation is a fundamental right, and it is the government's obligation to legally recognize the social impact of such relationships.
- The justices suggested that recognition is needed for such relationships to receive certain benefits, but not necessarily as marriage. The CJI emphasized the importance of providing a sense of security and social welfare for people in such relationships.
- The court suggested labels like "contract" or "partnership" instead of "marriage". The government said there is no fundamental right to seek recognition of same-sex relationships as marriage.
- The Supreme Court of India discussed the recognition of cohabitation as a fundamental right for same-sex couples, which would entitle them to benefits without being equated to marriage.
- **Assimilation of same-sex couples:** The CJI has emphasized the need to assimilate same-sex couples into society rather than ostracizing them. The decriminalization of Section 377 of the IPC has recognized the existence of same-sex relationships.
- Government should address the practical issues faced by same-sex couples, such as joint bank accounts and entitlement to pension and gratuity.
- **Indian Culture and Value System:** In culturally rich India, where social norms and obligations wield significant influence, the acceptance of same-sex relationships still poses a challenge, even after legal recognition.
- It goes against the traditional values and beliefs of the Indian society. However, the recognition of same-sex marriage adds to the diversity of relationships that exist in society.
- **Human Dignity:** In Navtej Singh Johar vs. Union of India, the Supreme Court granted same-sex couples the freedom to lead a dignified private life.
- **Biological gender is not 'absolute':** The Supreme Court of India says that biological gender is not absolute, and that gender is more complex than just one's genitals. There is no absolute concept of a man or a woman.
- **'Bouquet of rights' being denied:** The LGBTQIA+ community is being denied important legal benefits like tax benefits, medical rights, inheritance, and adoption by not being allowed to marry. Marriage is not just about dignity, but also a collection of rights.

What could be the Way Forward?

- **Raise awareness:** The purpose of awareness campaigns is to promote equality and acceptance of all sexual orientations and expand public opinion about the LGBTQIA+ community.
- **Legal reforms:** Amends in the special marriage Act to allow same-sex couples to legally marry and enjoy the same rights and benefits as opposite-sex couples. Meanwhile bring the contract like agreement so the homosexual people can enjoy similar rights like heterosexuals.
- **Dialogue and engagement:** Engaging in a dialogue with religious leaders and communities can help bridge the gap between traditional beliefs and modern attitudes towards same-sex relationships.
- **Legal challenges:** The Indian LGBTQIA+ community can challenge the constitutionality of the current laws that prevent same-sex marriage in court. Such legal challenges can help establish a legal precedent that will pave the way for the legalization of same-sex marriage.

- The legalization of same-sex marriage requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the LGBTQIA+ community, the government, civil society, and religious leaders. By working together, we can create a more inclusive society where everyone has the right to love and marry whomever they choose, regardless of their gender.

INDIA AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION (SCO)

The visit of Chinese and Russian defence ministers to attend a ministerial meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Delhi is attracting attention. India, as the chair of the organisation, has several bilateral issues to discuss with fellow SCO members such as de-escalation of border confrontation with China and supply of Russian spares and arms to India amidst the war in Ukraine. Many countries are queuing up to join the SCO, which is inclusive and highlights the rise of non-Western security institutions. However, despite growing interest in the SCO from regional states, internal contradictions within the organisation are casting a shadow over its strategic coherence.



Who are the Members?

- **Membership:**
 - The SCO has eight members, including China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Iran is set to join the SCO.
- **Observers:**
 - Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia are observers who would like to follow Tehran.
- **Dialogue Partners:**
 - The list of current and incipient dialogue partners includes Azerbaijan, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.

What are the Conflicts Among Member Countries of SCO?

- **Conflicts Exist Between:**
 - **India and China over Border Issues:**
 - After the 18th round of India- China Corps Commander Level Meeting still there is no breakthrough in easing tensions.
 - **India and Pakistan over Terrorism:**
 - State sponsored terrorism is cause of tension between India and Pakistan.
 - Frequent cease fire violations on India Pakistan border is another cause of concern.
 - **Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan over Border Issues:**
 - The escalation of conflict between the two countries, as witnessed on September and then again in November 2022, has been a troubling development for the region.

- The conflict has the potential to cause a negative impact on the stability of Central Asia and its neighbouring regions.
- There are several conflicts between Taliban-led Afghanistan and Pakistan which makes the border area of the two countries unstable.
- The SCO's main objective is to promote peace in Eurasia, but its ability to cope with intra-state and inter-state conflicts among member states is under scrutiny.

What are the Challenges?

▪ **China's Rise:**

- China's rise is increasing the prospects for China's emergence as the dominant force in inner Asia.
- This has led to external pressures from other regional powers, such as the United States, which has sought to contain China's rise and limit its influence in the region.

▪ **Limited institutional mechanisms:**

- While the SCO has a number of bodies, such as the Council of Heads of State, the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and the Council of National Coordinators, these bodies lack the formal decision-making and enforcement powers that are necessary for effective governance.
- SCO lacks a formal mechanism for resolving disputes between member states.

▪ **Divergent Interests and Disagreements:**

- The SCO includes member states with different political systems, economic models, and strategic priorities such as CPEC, border infrastructure projects etc., which can lead to internal conflicts and disagreements on issues such as economic cooperation and security.

▪ **Limited geographical scope:**

- The SCO's geographical focus is limited to Eurasia and neighboring regions, which restricts its ability to engage with global issues and challenges.

▪ **Western skepticism and criticism:**

- The SCO faces criticism from Western countries for its lack of democratic credentials, its support for authoritarian regimes, and its internal conflicts and border disputes among members.

What is the Importance of SCO for India?

▪ **Economic Cooperation:**

- The SCO provides a platform for India to enhance economic cooperation with Central Asian countries, which have vast reserves of natural resources.
- India is seeking to increase its trade and investment ties with the SCO countries to diversify its economic partnerships.

▪ **Energy Security:**

- Central Asia has vast reserves of oil and gas, and India is looking to tap into these resources to enhance its energy security.
- The SCO provides a forum for India to engage with the energy-rich countries of Central Asia and explore opportunities for cooperation in the energy sector.
- The Samarkand Declaration, signed at the 22nd Summit, centralizes connectivity which is a priority for India, as well as energy and food security.

▪ **Cultural Cooperation:**

- The total Cultural Heritage of the SCO member states, observers and partners include 207 UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- SCO member countries have decided to designate one city (from SCO member countries) as tourism and cultural capital every year under a rotating initiative.
- "Kashi" (Varanasi) has been designated as the first cultural capital of the SCO under this initiative.

▪ **Counterterrorism:**

- The SCO has a strong focus on counterterrorism cooperation.

- India, which has been a victim of terrorism, can benefit from the collective efforts of the organization to combat terrorism in the region.

What is the Significance of the SCO?

- **Economic Cooperation:**

- The eight member countries of SCO represent around 42% of the world population and 25% of the global GDP. There is an immense tourism potential in the region which can be promoted by increasing awareness about SCO countries.

- **Connectivity:**

- The SCO is promoting connectivity among its member states through infrastructure projects, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

- **Security Cooperation:**

- The main threats which are the focus of the SCO include terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) to promote cooperation among member states in the fight against terrorism, separatism, and extremism.
- RATS provides a platform for sharing intelligence, conducting joint exercises and operations, and coordinating actions to prevent and combat terrorism in the region.

Conclusion

- The SCO is an attractive forum for regional states, but its internal contradictions are a cause for concern. Preventing conflict between member states is a higher priority for the SCO, but its record here is not impressive. While China's growing regional influence may come at Russia's expense, Russia and China have drawn closer than ever before and have little reason to quarrel over Central Asia. Russia's muscle and China's money provide a sensible basis for their strategic division of labour in Central Asia to keep the Western powers out of the region.

INDIA CHINA TRADE TIES

Despite the ongoing trade war between China and the US and the COVID-19 pandemic, China's role in global merchandise trade has not been affected. China is India's biggest source of imports, and its share in total Indian imports is more than double. India's dependence on China for non-oil imports can be as high as 25% or more.

India's trade relations with China are significant as China has been India's largest source of imports for the past 15 years. Despite India's efforts to reduce its dependency on China through import substitution and free trade agreements (FTAs) with Asian countries, China's share in India's imports has increased over the years. Due to increasing trade deficit with China India needs to look closely its trade relations with China.

How is India-China Trade Relations?

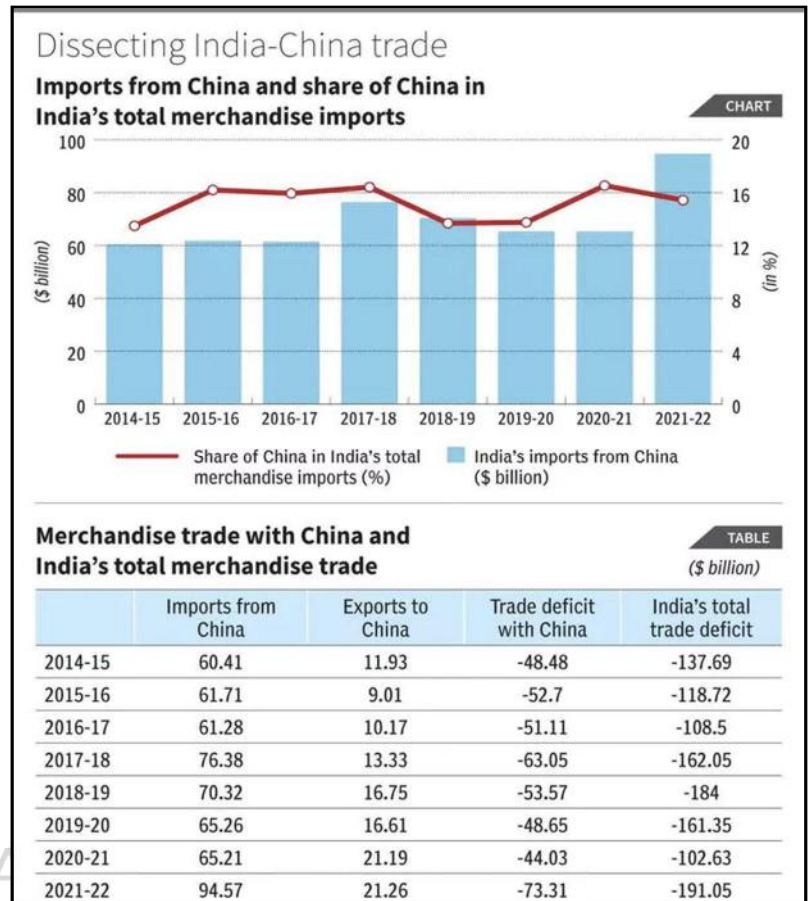
- **Import from China:**

- The slowdown in China and supply disruptions have not reduced China's share in India's total imports, and in absolute terms, India's imports from China in 2021-22 are significantly higher than its pre-Covid level of imports.
- In 2020-21 and 2021-22, China's share in India's imports reached a record high of 16.53% and 15.43%, respectively, while the UAE was the second-largest source of imports for India with an import share of 6.7% and 7.31% in 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively.
- China's dominance in total non-oil merchandise imports is even more pronounced as India's dependence on China for non-oil imports can be as high as 25% or more.

- **Items of Import:**

- India primarily imports electrical and electronic goods, organic chemicals including pharmaceuticals, and plastic items from China.

- These items account for more than 70% of India's imports from China.
- **India's Exports to China:**
 - According to data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India's exports to China have been growing steadily in recent years.
 - In the financial year 2020-21, India's exports to China were worth \$21.2 billion, up from \$16.7 billion in 2019-20.
 - **Items of Export:**
 - The major items that India exports to China include organic chemicals, cotton yarn, copper, and ores.
 - However, India's exports to China are still much lower than its imports from China, resulting in a large trade deficit.
- **Bilateral Trade Deficit:**
 - India's bilateral trade deficit with China is large and growing. In 2021-22, India's trade deficit with China was around \$73.3 billion, and it is expected to cross \$100 billion in FY23.
 - India's trade deficit with China accounts for 38-40% of India's total merchandise trade deficit in the post-Covid era.



What are the Reasons for Intriguing Trade Relations?

- **China's Domestic Consumption Policy:**
 - India's increasing trade imbalance with China is intriguing for some special policy reasons.
 - China's GDP growth rate has slowed down since the Covid crisis, and the country has shifted its policies more towards domestic consumption.
 - However, this policy shift has not affected Chinese exports to India.
- **India's Withdrawal from RCEP:**
 - India has signed FTAs with several East and Southeast Asian nations, which should have taken some market share away from China, but this has not happened.
 - India withdrew from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which puts India at a disadvantage compared to other FTA partners of China.

What Does Heavy Import Reliance on China Imply?

- From the perspective of the government, the political and security challenges are deepened when the state is dependent on importing products and services from an unfriendly country.
- India imports most of the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) it uses in its pharmaceutical industry from China. The cost of Chinese APIs is cheaper than the Indian ones even on the Indian market.
- The depth of the problem was revealed during the Covid-19 pandemic when due to travel restrictions, exports of Chinese APIs to India were temporarily restricted and consequently India had to cut its exports of APIs too.

- Approximately 24% of coal energy generated in India may be coming from plants that are using critical equipment imported from China. This, therefore, may not necessarily be considered a strategic dependence, but is certainly a form of a security challenge.
- While there are demands to limit or even block such imports from China, this would simply mean forcing private Indian power companies to suffer higher costs.

What are Factors Responsible for the Trade Imbalance between India and China?

- **China's manufacturing dominance:**

- China has become a manufacturing hub for the world, with a vast industrial base that enables it to produce goods at a lower cost than India.
- This has led to China exporting a wide range of products to India, from electronic goods to textiles.

- **India's dependence on Chinese goods:**

- India is heavily dependent on Chinese goods, as it imports a significant amount of raw materials and finished products from China.
- This includes items such as machinery, electronics, and chemicals.

- **Non-tariff barriers:**

- There are several non-tariff barriers to trade between India and China, including complex regulatory requirements, intellectual property rights violations, and lack of transparency in business dealings.
- These barriers can make it difficult for Indian businesses to access the Chinese market and compete with Chinese firms.

- **Infrastructure and Logistics:**

- India's inadequate infrastructure and logistics facilities result in higher transaction costs for exporters, making Indian goods less competitive in the Chinese market.

- **Currency exchange rates:**

- The exchange rate between the Indian rupee and the Chinese yuan also plays a role in the trade imbalance.
- The Indian rupee has been weaker than the Chinese yuan, which makes Indian exports more expensive for Chinese buyers and Chinese imports cheaper for Indian buyers.
- This further exacerbates the trade imbalance between the two countries.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Diversify Imports:**

- India needs to reduce its dependence on Chinese imports by diversifying its imports from other countries such as Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Indonesia.

- **Boost Exports:**

- India can focus on increasing its exports to China.
- India should focus on exporting high-value products like engineering goods, electronics, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals.
- These products have a higher profit margin and will help to increase India's foreign exchange earnings.

- **Develop Domestic Industries:**

- India needs to develop its domestic industries to reduce its reliance on imports. The government can provide incentives to domestic companies to manufacture goods that are currently imported.
- This will not only help reduce the trade imbalance but also create employment opportunities in India.

- **Review FTAs:**

- India needs to review its free trade agreements with other countries to ensure that they are not hurting domestic industries.
- India should also consider signing an FTA with China to increase exports and reduce the trade deficit.

VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR

There have been violent communal clashes in Manipur due to the Manipur High Court (HC) directing the State to pursue a 10-year-old recommendation to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the non-tribal Meitei community.

- The violence escalated after the All-Tribal Student Union Manipur (ATSUM) organized a "tribal solidarity rally" against the alleged move to include the Meiteis on the ST list.

What is Manipur's ethnic composition?

- The State is like a football stadium with the Imphal Valley representing the playfield at the centre and the surrounding hills the galleries. The valley, which comprises about 10% of Manipur's landmass, is dominated by the non-tribal Meitei who account for more than 64% of the population of the State and yields 40 of the State's 60 MLAs.
- The hills comprising 90% of the geographical area are inhabited by more than 35% recognised tribes but send only 20 MLAs to the Assembly.
- While a majority of the Meiteis are Hindus followed by Muslims, the 33 recognised tribes, broadly classified into 'Any Naga tribes' and 'Any Kuki tribes' are largely Christians.

What is the Meitei argument to support demand of ST status?

- The Scheduled Tribe Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM) began demanding ST status for the Meiteis in 2012.
- The Meiteis were recognised as a tribe before the merger of the State with the Union of India in 1949. The ST status is needed to "preserve" the community and "save the ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language" of the Meiteis.
- In 1972, the union territory of Manipur became 19th state of India.
- The Meiteis need constitutional safeguards against outsiders, stating that the community has been kept away from the hills while the tribal people can buy land in the "shrinking" Imphal Valley (Apprehension of Meities that creation of Greater Nagalim would lead to shrinking of Manipur's geographical area).
- The Meitein/Meitei have been gradually marginalised in their ancestral land.
- Their population was 59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951 and has now been reduced to 44% as per 2011 Census data.
- The Naga and Kuki movements fuelled Meitei nationalism. Concerns over demographic change and shrinking of traditional Meitei areas started to surface in the 1970s.
- During the period 2006-12 came the demand for an Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Manipur, to bar outsiders. The free movement of the Kuki-Zomi across Manipur's porous border with Myanmar fanned fears of demographic change.
- The growth rate of Manipur's population had jumped from 12.8% in the 1941-51 period to 35.04% during 1951-61 and to 37.56% in 1961-71 after the permit system was abolished.
- In Manipur, the government is the largest employer and the reservation for STs in jobs amounts to an unfair advantage.
- Infrastructure development (like railways that would open Manipur further) has made insecurities worse.

Why are tribal groups against ST status for Meiteis?

- The Meiteis have a demographic and political advantage and are also more academically advanced.
- ST status to the Meiteis would lead to loss of job opportunities and allow them to acquire land in the hills and push the tribals out.
- The language of the Meitei people is included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and many of them have access to benefits associated with the SC, OBC or EWS status.
- Kukis and Nagas point out that tribal areas are 90% of state's geographical area, but the bulk of its budget and development work is focused on the Meitei-dominated Imphal valley.

The Process of Inclusion in the ST List

- State governments starts recommendation for inclusion of the tribes in the list of ST.
- After the recommendation of the state govt, Tribal Affairs Ministry reviews and sends them to the Registrar General of India, Under the Home Ministry for approval.
- After approval, it is sent to the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and then sent to the Cabinet for a final decision.
- Once the cabinet finalizes it, then it introduces a bill in the parliament to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950, and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.
- After the amendment bill is passed by both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, the President's office takes the final decision under Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution.

What led to the recent Unrest?

- While the forest eviction and demand for ST status for Meiteis have been the most prominent recent triggers, the divide between the Meiteis and tribals on several issues has widened over the past decade.
- Issues in Delimitation Process: In 2020, as the Centre began the first delimitation process in the state since 1973, the Meitei community alleged that the Census figures used in the exercise did not accurately reflect the population break-up.
 - Tribal groups (Kuki and Nagas) on the other hand said they had grown to 40% of the state's population and were underrepresented in the Assembly.
- **Intrusion of Migrants from Neighbour Area:** The February 2021 coup in Myanmar has led to a refugee crisis in India's Northeast. Meitei leaders have alleged that there has been a sudden mushrooming of villages in Churachandpur district.
- **The Drugs Problem:** Some tribal groups with vested interests are trying to scuttle govt's crusade against drugs.
 - The anti-drug drive was started by destroying poppy fields. "Illegal settlers" related to the Kuki-Zomi of Manipur, growing drugs on cleared lands.
- **Recent Unrest:** The first violent protest erupted over the eviction of the residents of a Kuki village.
 - 38 villages in the Churachandpur-Khoumum Protected Forest area (in Churachandpur and Noney districts) are "illegal settlements" and its residents are "encroachers (encroaching reserved and protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries for poppy plantation and drugs business)".
 - Kuki groups have claimed that the survey and eviction is a violation of Article 371C, as kukis are residents of Hill Area.
 - Article 371C provides for the creation of a committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly consisting of the members elected from the Hill Areas of the state and Governor shall have responsibility for proper functioning of that committee.
 - At the State level there is Hill Area Committee constituted under the Manipur Legislative Assembly (Hill Areas Committee) order, 1972. The Hill areas Committee comprises of all MLAs elected from the hill areas of the State as its members.
 - The state government withdrew from the suspension of operations agreements with two Kuki extremist groups accused of inciting the protesters.

Geography of Manipur and History of Violence in Manipur

- There are 16 districts in Manipur, but the state is commonly thought of as divided into 'valley' and 'hill' districts. Today's valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Bishnupur, and Kakching were part of the erstwhile kingdom of Kangleipak, ruled by the Ningthouja dynasty.
- The Manipur valley is encircled by skirts of low hills (hill areas comprise the bulk of Manipur's geographical area), live 15 Naga tribes and the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi group, which includes the Kuki, Thadou, Hmar, Paite, Vaiphei and Zou peoples.

- The Kangleipak kingdom, then a British protectorate, was repeatedly raided by Naga tribes who came down from the northern hills. The British political agent in Manipur brought the Kuki-Zomi from the Kuki-Chin hills of Burma to protect the valley from plunder by acting as a buffer between the Meiteis and the Nagas.
- The Kukis, like the Nagas, were fierce headhunting warriors — and the Maharaja gave them land along the ridges, where they could act as a shield for the Imphal valley below.
- Kuki-Meitei divide: The hill communities (Naga & Kuki) and the Meiteis have had ethnic tensions since the kingdom era. The Naga movement for independence in the 1950s triggered insurgencies among the Meiteis and Kuki-Zomi. The Kuki-Zomi groups militarised in the 1990s to demand a state within India called 'Kukiland'(a state within India). This alienated them from the Meiteis, whom they had earlier defended.
- In 1993, Hindu Meiteis clashed with Pangals (Muslims), and also there was horrific violence between the tribal Nagas and Kukis, which saw more than a hundred Kukis massacred in a single day by Nagas, and thousands driven from their homes.
- District of Churachandpur: Kuki-Zomi-dominated Churachandpur (a Myanmar bordered District) has mostly Christian population. It is the country's poorest district (as per the Panchayati Raj Ministry in 2006) and it remains abjectly poor.
- In 2015, as the Meiteis of the valley protested demanding ILP in Imphal city, equally intense protests were seen in Churachandpur countering the demand and protesting the introduction of laws.

Way Forward

- **Need to evaluate the criteria for ST status (to Meities) in line with recommendations given by several Committees, like:**
 - The Lokur Committee (1965) recommended 5 criteria for identification, namely, primitive traits, distinct culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness.
 - Bhuria Commission (2002-2004) focused on a wide range of issues from the 5th Schedule to tribal land and forests, health and education, the working of Panchayats and the status of tribal women.
 - A High-Level Committee (HLC) in 2013, under chairmanship of Prof. Virginius Xaxa was constituted to study the 5 critical issues related to tribal communities: (1) livelihood and employment, (2) education, (3) health, (4) involuntary displacement and migration, (5) and legal and constitutional matters.
- Bring more surveillance along the border areas to prevent the incursion of the migrants from Myanmar. Strengthening economic and diplomatic ties with neighboring countries can help enhance regional stability and security.
- Need to maintain the identity of the people along the border areas to identify the local residence. Signing Peace settlement agreements with the local insurgent group to maintain the peace in the region.
- The repeal of AFSPA, the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, is necessary to improve the human rights situation in the region. The government should ensure that the legal system is fair and transparent to prevent the misuse of power by security forces.
- The government should foster the participation of the people of the region in the decision-making process to instill a sense of ownership and belonging.

UNSEASONAL RAIN AND IMPACTS

Unseasonal rains in India have once again highlighted the vulnerabilities of our agricultural sector. While rain is generally seen as a blessing, unseasonal rains can be a curse for farmers already reeling under the impact of low crop prices, rising input costs, and changing weather patterns.

Unseasonal rains can have a cascading effect on the overall inflationary trend. The impact of unseasonal rain is not just limited to the agricultural sector but also extends to other sectors of the economy.

What are the Causes of Unseasonal Rains?

- **Climate Change:**

- Climate change can result in unpredictable weather patterns, including unseasonal rain.
- Global warming, weak western disturbances and strong subtropical jet stream are the causes of recent unseasonal rains.
- **El Nino:**
- El Nino is a weather phenomenon that occurs when warm water from the western Pacific Ocean flows eastward.
- This can result in drought conditions in some regions and unseasonal rain in others.
- **La Nina:**
- La Nina is a weather phenomenon that occurs when cool water from the eastern Pacific Ocean flows westward.
- This can result in excess rainfall in some regions, including unseasonal rain.
- **Atmospheric Instability:**
- Atmospheric instability can also result in unseasonal rain. When there is a sudden change in atmospheric pressure, it can result in precipitation, even during non-monsoon seasons.
- **Human Activities:**
- Human activities such as deforestation, urbanization, and pollution can also contribute to unseasonal rain.
- Deforestation can disrupt the water cycle, while urbanization and pollution can affect the microclimate, resulting in unseasonal rain.

What is the Impact of Unseasonal Rains?

- **Agricultural Sector:**
- Unseasonal rains can lead to crop loss and impact post-harvest crops, leading to a rise in prices of perishable commodities such as vegetables and fruits.
- Farmers already reeling under the impact of low crop prices, rising input costs, and changing weather patterns are adversely affected.
- **Construction Sector:**
- Disruption caused by unseasonal rains can lead to a rise in prices of key raw materials such as cement and steel.
- **Consumption Patterns:**
- The rise in prices of essential commodities can lead to a fall in the overall demand for non-essential goods and services.
- **Social Impact:**
- Unseasonal rain can have a social impact, especially on the vulnerable sections of society such as small farmers, daily wage laborers, and migrant workers.
- **Political Impact:**
- Unseasonal rain has a significant political impact as well, especially in the context of the upcoming state and national elections.
- The ruling political party often faces criticism from the opposition for not doing enough to address the concerns of farmers.
- Political blame game happens, with each party trying to score points over the other.

What are Government Measures to Protect Farmers?

- The government has launched several initiatives such as the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana(PMFBY), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY), and Soil Health Card Scheme(SHC) to address the concerns of farmers.
- **PMFBY:** It is a crop insurance scheme launched by the Government of India in 2016 to provide financial support to farmers in case of crop failure or damage due to natural calamities, pests, or diseases. Under this scheme, farmers have to pay a nominal premium, and the remaining amount is paid by the

government. The premium rates are fixed based on the type of crop, location, and the level of coverage chosen by the farmer. The scheme covers all food and oilseed crops and commercial and horticultural crops.

◦ **PMKSY:**

- It is a flagship scheme of the Government of India that aims to provide water to every field and improve water use efficiency in the country.
- The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana aims to boost irrigation infrastructure and promote water-use efficiency.
- **The scheme has four components:**
- **Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme:** This component aims to provide financial assistance to states for completing their incomplete irrigation projects
- **Har Khet Ko Pani:** This component aims to provide water to every field by ensuring water conservation and efficient use through micro-irrigation, water harvesting, and other such techniques.
- **Per Drop More Crop:** This component aims to enhance water use efficiency by promoting micro-irrigation techniques like drip and sprinkler irrigation.
- **Watershed Development:** This component aims to conserve rainwater by promoting watershed development activities like afforestation, horticulture, and pasture development.
- **SHC Scheme:**
- Under the Soil Health Card scheme, soil samples are collected from farmers' fields and analyzed in laboratories to assess the soil's nutrient status.
- Based on the analysis, a soil health card is generated for each farmer, which provides information about the soil's nutrient status, as well as recommendations for the application of fertilizers and other soil amendments

What is the Multi-Pronged Approach to Address the Issue?

▪ **Short-term Measures:**

- Centre and States can provide compensation for crop loss, supply seeds and fertilizers at subsidized rates.
- Minimum Support Price could be increased.

▪ **Long-term Measures:**

- Structural reforms in the agricultural sector can make it more resilient to changing weather patterns.
- Promote crop diversification, encourage the use of modern technologies and farming practices, and strengthen the supply chain infrastructure to reduce wastage and post-harvest losses.

▪ **Mitigating Climate Change:**

- India needs to take a proactive approach towards mitigating its impact. This requires a coordinated effort between the Centre and States, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

Conclusion

- The impact of unseasonal rain is not just limited to the agricultural sector but also extends to other sectors of the economy. A multi-pronged approach involving both short- and long-term measures is needed to address the issue. Mitigating climate change is crucial to ensure the resilience of the agricultural sector. The government has launched several initiatives to address the concerns of farmers, but greater coordination between the central and state governments is needed.

ONDC AND ITS POTENTIAL

The government's efforts to use technology to make e-commerce more competitive are beginning to show up in food delivery services. Customers are reporting noticeable price differences in orders placed on online apps using the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), which creates a network of interconnected e-marketplaces that makes it easier for small store-owners to tap demand online.

It could be a game-changer on the lines of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), the infrastructure on which digital transactions are growing in this country exponentially.

What is ONDC?

▪ About:

- It was launched in late 2021 under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) by the Ministry of Commerce as part of the Digital India push.
- ONDC works as a network of interconnected e-marketplaces through which sellers, including brands, can list and sell their products directly to customers bypassing any middlemen or intermediaries.
- Along with food delivery, ONDC also offers delivery services for groceries, home decor, cleaning essentials, and other products.



▪ Objectives:

- Democratisation and decentralization of e-Commerce
- Inclusivity and access for sellers, especially small and medium enterprises as well as local businesses
- Increased choices and independency for consumers
- Making goods and services cheaper

- **Working Mechanism:** ONDC functions on the basis of an open network where it will not be a single platform similar to Amazon or Flipkart but rather in the form of a gateway where buyers and sellers across different platforms will be able to connect.

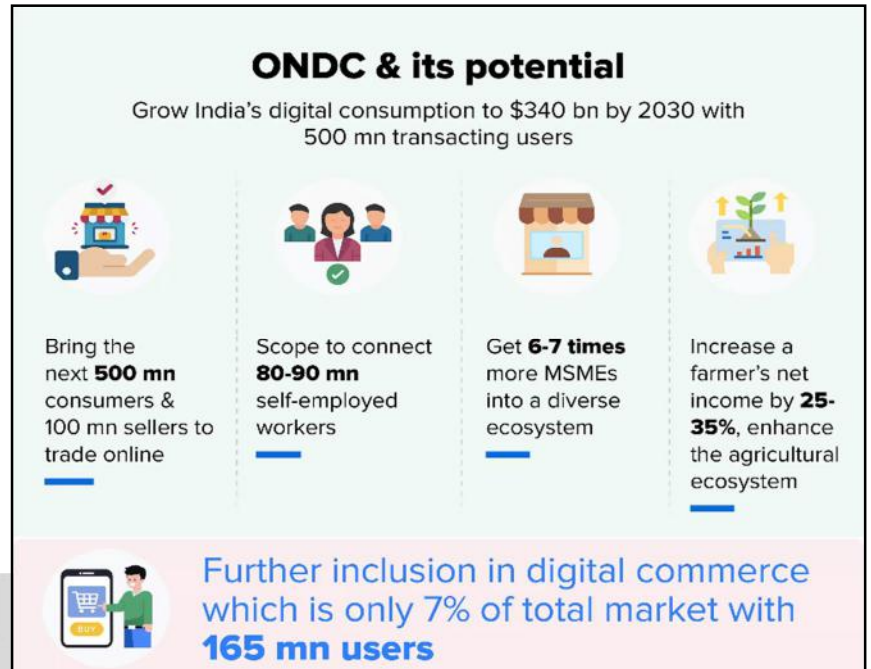
What are the Potential Advantages of ONDC?

- **Increased Transparency:** ONDC can provide greater transparency by making government data more accessible to the public. This can help increase trust and accountability.
- **Increased Customer Choice:** ONDC has the potential to dilute market concentration by increased consumer choice and lower entry barriers.
- **Innovation:** ONDC can spur innovation by providing entrepreneurs and researchers with access to government data. This can lead to the development of new products and services that benefit society.
- **Cost Savings:** ONDC can save money by reducing duplication of effort and enabling more efficient use of resources.
- Platform fees for food delivery using ONDC are being reported at a fifth of those charged by the market leaders. This is a considerable reduction in the cost of intermediation.
- **Protecting the Consumers' Interest:** By breaking the hegemony of existing e-commerce, ONDC can bring huge benefits to consumers.
- **Level Playing Field:** ONDC is keen to level the playing field for e-commerce operators and widen the digital market access for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and small traders in the country.
- **Neutral and Regulated Platform:** ONDC aims at fostering open networks developed on open-sourced methodology, using open specifications and network protocols, and independent of any specific platform.

What are the challenges ahead?

- **Complexity:** ONDC is a complex mechanism as compared to other systems like UPI. People found UPI's convenience appealing, which made them adopt it. The same may not be true for ONDC.
- People have already become accustomed to the user interface of existing companies.

- Increase in Disputes: In ONDC, only the buying and selling process happens online, while the delivery and use of the product happens offline. This can lead to more disputes as ONDC is not an intermediary platform.
- **Lack of a Robust Grievance Addressal Mechanism:** The lack of clarity on responsibility for customer service and handling complaints may deter people from joining the platform.
- **Not an Easy-Peasy Task:** The existing e-Commerce companies have deepened up ties with the consumers through their lucrative and interoperable services. Like Amazon provides its streaming platform along with its prime membership.
 - So, it'll not be easy for the ONDC to attract the customers.
- **Goods & Services may not be Really Cheaper:** Since ONDC is a facilitator of trade among buyers and sellers, it may not be able to provide offers the products like existing players. For Example, Amazon has tied up ICICI bank to provide 5% cashback on goods purchases through Amazon ICICI Credit Card.



What should be the Way Forward?

- A better digital space for e-commerce must be built by the government in order to compete with the dominant e-commerce platforms.
- Along with this, it's important to create a proper digital education policy that takes into account various languages and user-friendly interface for the benefit of the consumers as well as sellers.
- A massive, well-funded adoption campaign will be needed to bring over small sellers like kirana stores to the platform.
- The demand and supply sides should be able to access a secured single window to resolve issues such as information asymmetry, opaque pricing, quality concerns, and buyer-seller disputes.
- Proper Grievance Redressal Mechanism: There should be a secured single window to navigate both the demand and supply-side problems like information asymmetry, opaque pricing, quality and product concerns and buyer-seller conflict.

DECARBONISING STEEL SECTOR

Steel is one of the core pillars of today's society and one of the most important engineering and construction materials. However, the steel industry is among the three biggest producers of carbon dioxide. Consequently, steel players across the globe are increasingly facing a decarbonisation challenge to reduce its carbon footprint from both environmental and economic perspectives.

India is currently the world's 2nd largest steel producer after China. Various analyses show potential for a multi-fold increase in steel consumption by 2050. Production of steel in India is set to increase significantly over the next few decades, to meet the increasing domestic and international demand.

Decarbonisation of the steel sector has a big role to play in emission of low-carbon India as an essential ingredient for the country's green future.

What is the Current Scenario of India's Steel Sector?

Production Scenario:

- Steel is a key sector for the Indian economy (responsible for 2% of the country's GDP in FY 21-22).
- India is the world's 2nd largest producer of crude steel and 2nd largest consumer of finished steel.
- The National Steel Policy 2017 has set a target to reach 300 million tonnes (MT) of annual production by 2030 from the existing level of 120 MT.
- As the economy grows, India's crude steel production is expected to increase to about 435 million tonnes (mt) by 2050.
- Emission Scenario: Direct emissions (excluding emissions from purchased electricity use) from iron and steel production stood at approximately 270 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (MTCO₂e) in 2018, comprising approximately 9% of total national greenhouse gas emissions.
- Steel contributes almost 1/3rd of direct industrial CO₂ emissions, or 10% of India's total energy infrastructure CO₂ emissions and about 11% of the country's total emissions.

What is the Significance of Decarbonising Steel Sector?

- In the accelerated transition, forex savings of approximately \$500 billion would accrue by 2050 from reduced spending on coking coal alone.
- A greener steel industry can enable India to be a global green steel manufacturing hub.
- Decarbonisation of steel making will also lead to decarbonisation of allied industries such as cars, infrastructure and buildings.
- Decarbonising the steel sector is also important from the perspective of the emerging regulatory landscape internationally; due to the EU's upcoming Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Indian steel exports to the EU could fall by as much as 58% without any additional effort to decarbonize steel sectors.

What are the Initiatives to Decarbonise India's Steel Sector?

- The National Green Hydrogen Mission identifies a significant role for green hydrogen in decarbonising the steel sector to meet India's climate goals.
- The Ministry of Steel seeks to reduce CO₂ in the steel industry through promotion of Green Steel (manufacturing steel without using fossil fuels).
- This can be done by using low-carbon energy sources such as hydrogen, coal gasification, or electricity instead of the traditional carbon-intensive manufacturing route of coal-fired plants.
- Steel Scrap Recycling Policy, 2019 enhances the availability of domestically generated scrap to reduce the consumption of coal in steel making.
- India also joined the UK to co-lead the Industrial Deep Decarbonisation Initiative under the banner of the Clean Energy Ministerial. It is expected to stimulate global demand for low-carbon industrial materials, including steel.
- National Solar Mission launched by MNRE in January 2010 promotes the use of solar energy and also helps reduce the emission of steel industry.
- Recently government launched Kalyani Group's first green steel brand 'Kalyani FerRESTA'.

What are the Challenges to Decarbonising the Steel Sector?

Challenges in Hydrogen replacing Conventional Ways:

- **There are two basic steel production routes:** - Blast Furnace (BF) route, where coke is the primary fuel, and Direct Reduced Iron (DRI) route, where the fuel can be coal or natural gas.
- India presently produces around 90% of crude steel through the BF and coal based DRI routes. While hydrogen has the potential to fully replace coal or gas in the DRI process, it is seen to have a limited role in being able to substitute coke in the BF route.

- Hydrogen-based steel-making remains uncompetitive for hydrogen prices above \$1/kg, especially in absence of a carbon cost for emissions.
- **Challenges in Scaling up Net-Zero Technologies:**
- **Cost:** Global estimates suggest that the investment for setting up DRI steel plants with upstream green hydrogen generation could reach Rs 3.2 Lakhs/tonne.
- Additionally, the cost of green hydrogen at Rs 300-400/kg is higher than the cost of grey hydrogen at Rs 160-220/kg.
- Similarly, Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) plants also have a high capital cost.
- **Supporting Infra:** There is an inadequate support network for the storage, production, and transportation of hydrogen.
- For CCS, there is a lack of data on the availability of potential geological storage sites and their capacities.
- Limited use cases also pose a challenge in scaling up CCS technology.

What Steps can be Taken to Decarbonise the Steel Sector?

- **Introducing CO₂ Pricing and Rapid Development of Hydrogen:**
- Introduction and calibration of CO₂ pricing in the next few years will encourage investments in low carbon technologies and accelerate adoption of hydrogen-based steel-making.
- It will also accelerate investment in other green technologies in the steel value chain such as green hydrogen and renewables-based electricity.
- A carbon price of \$50 per tonne of emissions can make green steel competitive by 2030, even at a hydrogen price of \$2/kg, and can catalyse the shift from coal-based to hydrogen-based steel-making.
- **Policies for Material Efficiency:**
- Scrap-based steel-making has the lowest carbon emissions of all current commercial steel-making technologies, but is dependent on price and availability of quality scrap to be economic and to achieve scale.
- India relies on scrap imports, which will become a challenge in the future as quality scrap demand increases globally for steel-making.
- To scale up domestic scrap-based steel-making, policies incentivising scrap collection and recycling would need to be implemented, to set up dismantling, collection and processing centres.
- **Encourage Green Steel Consumption in End-Use:**
- The government is encouraging the use of green steel, it shall set up targets for embodied carbon in public and private construction, and in automotive uses.
- This will support creation of a domestic green steel market for domestic steel-makers, who can initially tap export markets where green steel commands a premium.
- International regulations, such as the CBAM, can provide further impetus to the private sector to accelerate the transition to green steel.
- **Investing in Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS):**
- CCUS is currently an expensive but an important lever for reducing emissions.
- To make it a viable decarbonisation solution for the steel industry, more R&D efforts are required to reduce capture costs, besides creating hubs in steel producing centres like in Odisha and Jharkhand.

IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

1. In which Indian state is the "Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park" located ?
a) Gujarat
b) Andhra Pradesh
c) Madhya Pradesh
d) Maharashtra
2. Fishing Cat is the state animal of which Indian state?
a) Tamil Nadu
b) Meghalaya
c) Telangana
d) West Bengal
3. What is the current inflation rate in India as of April 2023?
a) 4.5%
b) 5.5%
c) 5.66%
d) 7.5%
4. The third in-person Quad Summit will be held in Australia. The Quad is a strategic grouping of four countries in the ___ region.
a) European
b) African
c) Indo-Pacific
d) South American
5. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the National Games in October 2023. Where will the inauguration ceremony of the National Games be held ?
a) Nehru Stadium, Chennai
b) Sardar Patel Stadium, Ahmedabad
c) Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi
d) Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Fatorda
6. After a 64-year wait, members of the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation personally presented the 1959 Ramon Magsaysay Award to the Dalai Lama at his residence. What is the Ramon Magsaysay Award?
a) A Nobel Prize for Peace
b) A Pulitzer Prize for Journalism
c) An Academy Award for Film
d) A prestigious award for public service in Asia
7. What are TeLEOS-2 and Lumelite-4 ?
a) Two Indian satellites
b) Two Singaporean satellites
c) Two Russian satellites
d) Two American satellites
8. Which Union Ministry launched the 'IndiaHandmade Portal' ?
a) Ministry of Textiles
b) Ministry of MSME
c) Ministry of External Affairs
d) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
9. Which country launched the ChatGPT rival 'GigaChat- AI chatbot' ?
a) USA
b) India
c) Russia
d) Israel
10. Where did Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chair the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Meeting ?
a) Pune
b) Jaipur
c) New Delhi
d) Indore
11. Consider the following Statements:
1. The Railway Budget was merged with the Union Budget in 2017.
2. The recommendation of the Acworth Committee separated the railway budget from the general budget in 1924.
Select the correct Statement(s) using the code given below.
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
12. Which of the following statements regarding the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) is/are correct ?
1. The FCRA regulates foreign donations to ensure that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
2. Registered associations can receive foreign contributions for social, educational, religious, economic, and cultural purposes.
3. Filing of annual returns is mandatory for NGOs registered under the FCRA.
Choose the correct answer using the code given below :
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
13. Which among the following Indian State does not transact its business through the Reserve Bank of India ?
a) Sikkim
b) Jammu and Kashmir
c) Arunachal Pradesh
d) Mizoram
14. Which among the following subjects is not an aim of the monetary policy of the Reserve Bank of India ?
a) Giving impetus to economic development
b) Direct credit with objective criteria

- c) To control pressure of inflation
d) To ensure social justice
15. **The headquarters of the "International Energy Agency (IEA)" is located in _____.**
a) Washington, D.C., United States
b) Geneva, Switzerland
c) Rome, Italy
d) Paris, France
16. **"Jat-Jatin" is a famous dance form of which Indian state ?**
a) Haryana
b) Punjab
c) Jammu & Kashmir
d) Bihar
17. **Which state has launched the 'One Panchayat, One Playground' initiative ?**
a) Karnataka
b) Kerala
c) Tamil Nadu
d) Maharashtra
18. **Which state has topped the list in the first-ever waterbody census conducted in India ?**
a) West Bengal
b) Maharashtra
c) Uttar Pradesh
d) Karnataka
19. **What is the Khongjom Day in Manipur ?**
a) A celebration of the statehood day of Manipur
b) A tribute to the martyrs of the Anglo-Manipur War of 1891
c) A festival to celebrate the harvest season
d) A cultural festival showcasing the traditional arts and crafts of Manipur
20. **What is the Locked Shields cyber-defense exercise ?**
a) An international cyber-attack simulation exercise
b) A physical security training program for military personnel
c) A military exercise for nuclear security
d) A cybersecurity conference held annually
21. **What is the name of the Bill passed by the Tamil Nadu assembly allowing 12-hour work days ?**
a) Tamil Nadu Work Hours Extension Bill
b) Tamil Nadu Labour Rights Bill
c) Tamil Nadu Industrial Growth Bill
d) Tamil Nadu Employment and Wages Bill
22. **Which country has become the biggest oil supplier to India ?**
a) Saudi Arabia
b) United States
c) Iraq
d) Russia
23. **What is the name of the village in Uttarakhand that has been recognized as the "first Indian village ?"**
a) Ganga
b) Kedarnath
c) Rishikesh
d) Mana
24. **What is Operation Kaveri ?**
a) An initiative to promote tourism in the Kaveri river basin
b) A rescue mission to evacuate Indians from Sudan
c) A military operation to control the RSF in Sudan
d) A disaster relief effort in the aftermath of a cyclone in Tamil Nadu
25. **Consider the following statements regarding the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.**
1. It is a Eurasian political, economic, and security organization that is headquartered in Beijing, China.
2. The Samarkand declaration was adopted by the council of heads of government of the SCO.
3. Recently Iraq became the 9th member of SCO.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
26. **Steel slag can be a material for which of the following ?**
1. Construction of base road.
2. Improvement of agriculture soil.
3. Production of cement.
Choose the correct option:
a) 1 and 2 Only
b) 1, 2 and 3
c) 2 and 3 Only
d) 1 and 3 Only
27. **In the second nationalization of commercial banks, _____ banks were nationalized.**
a) 4
b) 5
c) 6
d) 8
28. **If all the banks in an economy are nationalized and converted into a monopoly bank, the total deposits _____**
a) will decrease
b) will increase
c) will neither increase nor decrease
d) None of the above
29. **The headquarters of the "Stockholm International Peace Research Institute" (SIPRI) is located at _____.**
a) Kenya
b) Sweden
c) Brussels
d) Switzerland
30. **Where is the headquarters of the "Amnesty International" located?**

- a) London, United Kingdom
b) Vienna, Austria
c) Copenhagen, Denmark
d) Nairobi, Kenya
31. Which government body is responsible for administering the GST in India ?
a) Reserve Bank of India
b) Securities and Exchange Board of India
c) Goods and Services Tax Council
d) Ministry of Finance
32. India and Russia have agreed to explore the possibility of accepting each other's payment cards, ____ (India) and ____ (Russia), for hassle-free payments between the two countries.
a) Visa and Mastercard
b) Discover and Diners Club
c) RuPay and Discover
d) RuPay and Mir
33. Which is India's only tri-services command ?
a) Andaman and Nicobar Command
b) Eastern Naval Command
c) Western Naval Command
d) Southern Naval Command
34. Indian Army Inducts First Women Officers into Regiment of Artillery. Who are the first women officers inducted into the Regiment of Artillery ?
a) Lt Mehak Saini, Lt Sakshi Dubey, Lt Aditi Yadav, Lt Pious Mudgil, and Lt Akanksha
b) Lt Sakshi Dubey, Lt Aditi Yadav, and Lt Pious Mudgil
c) Lt Mehak Saini, Lt Aditi Yadav, and Lt Akanksha
d) Lt Sakshi Dubey, Lt Pious Mudgil, and Lt Akanksha
35. Which state has topped the list of states with the highest market borrowings for the third year in a row according to RBI data ?
a) Maharashtra
b) Tamil Nadu
c) Punjab
d) Kerala
36. Labour Day, also known as International Workers' Day, is celebrated on May 1st in many countries around the world. In which year did the International Labour Organization (ILO) come into existence ?
a) 1919
b) 1929
c) 1939
d) 1949
37. 'Washington Declaration' is a bilateral agreement that was signed between the US and which country ?
a) Canada
b) UK
c) South Korea
d) Australia
38. Nagorno-Karabakh is a region which is disputed between which 2 countries ?
a) Armenia and Azerbaijan
b) Russia and Ukraine
c) USA and Mexico
d) Nepal and China
39. Consider the following Statements regarding the "National Disaster Management Authority":
1. It is a statutory body with a mandate to lay down policies for disaster management.
2. It is headed by the Home Minister of India.
3. It is responsible for framing policies, laying down guidelines and best-practices for disaster management.
Select the correct Statement(s) using the code given below.
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
40. Consider the following Statements regarding the "National Education Policy 2020".
1. It is the 3rd national education policy which is drafted by a committee headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan.
2. 5+3+3+4 Curricular framework will be followed in school education.
3. Adult Education Curriculum Framework will be developed by a new and well-supported constituent body of the NCERT.
Select the correct Statement(s) using the code given below.
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1 and 3 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
41. What is known as the open market operation of the RBI ?
a) Buying and selling of stocks
b) Auctioning of foreign exchange
c) Trading in securities
d) Transactions in gold
42. In a business, raw materials, components, work in progress and finished goods are jointly regarded as:
a) capital stock
b) inventory
c) investment
d) net worth
43. When is the "Siachen Day" observed ?
a) June 21
b) April 13
c) May 5
d) August 29
44. The "International Day of Human Space Flight" is observed annually on April 12 to mark the anniversary of first human space flight by____.
a) Rakesh Sharma

- b) Neil Armstrong
c) Yuri Gagarin
d) Valentina Tereshkova
45. The 35th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between the Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy was conducted from 03 - 10 May 2023. Which ships participated in the 35th Indo-Thai CORPAT ?
a) INS Vikrant and HTMS Thonburi.
b) INS Kesari and HTMS Saiburi.
c) INS Chennai and HTMS Naresuan.
d) INS Kochi and HTMS Pattani.
46. What are the major ports required to do as per the 'Harit Sagar Guidelines - 2023' ?
a) Generate more renewable energy
b) Reduce carbon emissions
c) Implement environmental-friendly practices
d) All of the above
47. The Reserve Bank of India increased its gold reserves by ___% in the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2023.
a) 3%
b) 4%
c) 4.5%
d) 5%
48. Which region has the largest number of deaths for maternal, newborn, and stillbirths ?
a) Sub-Saharan Africa
b) Central Asia
c) Southern Europe
d) South America
49. Which country has returned to Arab League after 11 years?
a) Israel
b) Iran
c) Syria
- d) UAE
50. Meiteis are the largest ethnic group of which state/UT ?
a) Assam
b) Manipur
c) West Bengal
d) Madhya Pradesh
51. The Central Government has informed the Supreme Court that it will form a panel on same-sex couples headed by ?
a) Union Home Minister
b) Cabinet Secretary
c) NITI Aayog CEO
d) Union Women and Child Development Minister
52. How long can India's current foreign exchange reserves cover its external payments ?
a) 2 months
b) 4 months
c) 6 months
d) 7.1 months
53. Consider the following statements with respect to the National Investigation Agency.
1. It is the primary anti-terror investigation task force of India.
2. It is a statutory body established in 2008.
3. The agency is empowered to deal with the investigation of terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
a) 1 only
b) 1 and 2 only
c) 2 only
d) 1, 2 and 3
54. Consider the following statements United Nations:
1. The United Nations (UN) is an international organization founded after the end of World War II.
2. It replaced the failed League of Nations.
3. Currently, it has 191 member states.
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
a) 1 and 2 Only
b) 1, 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3 Only
d) 2 and 3 Only
55. M. J. Pherwani Committee is related to
a) Establishment of a new stock exchange
b) Improvement of transaction methods of public sector bonds and mutual funds
c) Tax on agriculture income of farmers
d) Agriculture holding tax
56. Who has been declared as the wealthiest Chief Minister in India by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) ?
a) Arvind Kejriwal
b) Mamata Banerjee
c) Jagan Mohan Reddy
d) Nitish Kumar
57. Where is the headquarter of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) situated ?
a) Paris
b) Dubai
c) London
d) Washington D.C
58. What is the full form of IFFCO?
a) International Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited
b) Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited
c) Indian Farmers Food Cooperative Limited
d) International Farmers Food Cooperative Limited
59. Which state government has introduced a Rs 5 cow cess per liquor bottle ?
a) Uttar Pradesh
b) Haryana

- c) Madhya Pradesh
d) Gujarat
60. Which airport has been recognized as the most punctual airport in the world?
a) Delhi Airport
b) Kochi Airport
c) Guwahati Airport
d) Hyderabad Airport
61. Which city will witness the inauguration of the International Museum Expo 2023 by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ?
a) Mumbai
b) New Delhi
c) Hyderabad
d) Chennai
62. Which state has declared all its villages as 100% ODF plus under Swachh Bharat Mission Rural Phase II ?
a) Nagaland
b) Tamil Nadu
c) West Bengal
d) Telangana
63. Which state has become the first in India to enforce the 'right to walk' ?
a) Sikkim
b) Mizoram
c) Kerala
d) Punjab
64. Which country has released an annual report on religious freedom and called on India to condemn 'persistent' religious violence ?
a) France
b) United States of America
c) Germany
d) Canada
65. Indian National Congress has won a clear majority in Karnataka Assembly Elections 2023. How many assembly seats are there in Karnataka ?
a) 220
b) 222
- c) 224
d) 225
66. Which institution successfully conducted the trail run of blood bag delivery under 'iDrone Initiative' ?
a) IMA
b) ICMR
c) NITI Aayog
d) AIIMS
67. Consider the following statements:
1. Currently, the USA is the largest producer of steel in the world.
2. In Green Steel production hydrogen is used as the reducing agent.
3. Much of Indian iron ore is suitable for making green steel.
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
a) 2 Only
b) 1, 2 and 3
c) 1 and 3 Only
d) 2 and 3 Only
68. Consider the following statements:
1. In 1952, the Asiatic Cheetah was officially declared extinct from India.
2. Asiatic Cheetah is considered vulnerable under the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) red list of threatened Species.
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
69. What is the full form of EMI ?
a) Easy Money Investment
b) Equal Monthly Installment
c) Efficient Money Investment
d) Efficient Monthly Installment
70. Which among the following committee suggested to establish "Insurance Regulatory Authority in India" ?
a) Dandekar Committee
b) Malohtra Committee
c) Rangrajan Committee
d) Dutt committee
71. Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport is located in which city ?
a) Hyderabad
b) Varanasi
c) Indore
d) Chandigarh
72. The headquarter of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is based in which city ?
a) Pune
b) New Delhi
c) Hyderabad
d) Kolkata
73. UTSAH Portal, launched to promote quality education in India, was launched by which agency ?
a) CBSE
b) UGC
c) CSIR
d) HPSC
74. Who has been appointed as the new chairman of UPSC ?
a) Radha Tiwari
b) Anuradha Singh
c) Manoj Soni
d) Dev Patil
75. Who has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Twitter ?
a) Nancy Pavell
b) Linda Yaccarino
c) Neha Bisht
d) Daniel Yaccarino
76. In which district of Himachal Pradesh will a state-of-the-art ethanol plant be set up ?
a) Shimla
b) Solan
c) Kufri
d) Una

77. Which is the first Indian city to adopt the localization of the UN-mandated SDGs ?
a) Chennai
b) Pune
c) Bhopal
d) Kochi
78. Which cyclone has hit Myanmar and is one of the strongest storms to hit the region this century ?
a) Cyclone Mocha
b) Cyclone Myan
c) Cyclone Mira
d) Cyclone Moto
79. Which city is the host of the 5th Edition of Global Ayurveda Festival ?
a) Chennai
b) Thiruvananthapuram
c) Pune
d) Mysuru
80. The World Health Organisation announced the end of the 10-month long global health emergency for which disease ?
a) Covid-19
b) MPox
c) Polio
d) Swine Flu
81. Arrange the following events in chronological order of their occurrence:
1. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.
2. Non-Proliferation Treaty.
3. Operation Smiling Buddha.
4. Operation Shakti.
Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct ?
a) 1,2,3,4
b) 1,3,2,4
c) 2,3,4,1
d) 2,3,1,4
82. Consider the following:
1. Naseem-Al-Bahr: This is a bilateral naval exercise between India and Oman.

2. Desert Eagle: This is a bilateral military exercise between India and Oman.
3. Al-Nagah: It is a joint military exercise conducted between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
4. Eastern Bridge: It is a joint military exercise conducted between India and Kuwait.
Which of the above is/are matched correctly ?
a) 1, 2, 3 and 4
b) 1, 2 and 4 Only
c) 1 and 3 Only
d) 1 and 4 Only
83. Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI) scheme mainly targets the improvement in production of which of the following in Eastern States ?
a) Rice
b) Wheat
c) Horticulture
d) Both Rice and Wheat
84. Which organization calculates GDP in India ?
a) CSO
b) NSSO
c) Department of Economic Affairs
d) ISO
85. Where is the Kozhikode International Airport located?
a) Maharashtra
b) Assam
c) Kerala
d) Goa
86. Sattriya is one of the Indian classical dance form originating from which state ?
a) Odisha
b) Assam
c) Karnataka
d) Manipur
87. How much worth of arms has India supplied to the Myanmar Junta ?
a) 415 crore

- b) 418 crore
c) 420 crore
d) 422 crore
88. How many crores surplus transfer has the RBI approved to the Government for FY23 ?
a) 87,353
b) 87,238
c) 87,416
d) 87,310
89. Annu Rani, an Indian athlete, is associated with which sport?
a) Tennis
b) Badminton
c) Cricket
d) Javelin Throw
90. Recently, which state's law allowing Jallikattu was upheld by the Supreme Court of India?
a) West Bengal
b) Tamil Nadu
c) Jammu & Kashmir
d) Uttar Pradesh
91. Which institution organises the 'Operation Dhvast' ?
a) Coast Guard
b) National Investigation Agency
c) Indian Navy
d) Reserve Bank of India
92. Kapileshwar temple, which is set to be included in the ASI's protected monuments list, is located in which state ?
a) Uttarakhand
b) Odisha
c) Andhra Pradesh
d) Kerala
93. 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 ?

- a) State Bank of India (SBI)
b) Bank of Maharashtra (BoM)
c) UCO Bank
d) Bank of Baroda
- 94. The newly inaugurated coastal outposts of the Border Security Force (BSF) are located at ___ coast.**
a) Digha
b) Alibaug
c) Jakhau
d) Visakhapatnam
- 95. Consider the following pairs:**
1. Jallikattu — Traditional bull-taming sport in Tamil Nadu
2. Kambala — Buffalo racing sport in Karnataka
3. Reklā Race — Bullock cart racing sport in Tamil Nadu
- Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched ?
a) 1 and 2 only
b) 2 and 3 only
c) 1, 2, and 3 only
d) None of the above
- 96. With reference to the water on the planet Earth, consider the following statements:**
1. The amount of water in the rivers and lakes is more than the amount of groundwater.
2. The amount of water in polar ice caps and glaciers is more than the amount of groundwater.
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
a) 1 Only
b) 2 Only
- c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 97. Which sector of the Indian economy is often considered a key driver of GDP growth ?**
a) Manufacturing
b) Agriculture
c) Services
d) Mining
- 98. Which of the following is not a function of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) ?**
a) Issuing and managing the currency
b) Conducting monetary policy
c) Regulating and supervising banks and financial institutions
d) Managing the fiscal policy of the government

ANSWER KEY

1-d	2-d	3-c	4-c	5-d	6-d	7-b	8-a	9-c	10-c	11-c	12-d	13-a	14-d	15-d
16-d	17-b	18-a	19-b	20-a	21-a	22-d	23-d	24-b	25-a	26-b	27-c	28-c	29-b	30-a
31-c	32-d	33-a	34-a	35-b	36-a	37-c	38-a	39-c	40-d	41-c	42-b	43-b	44-c	45-b
46-d	47-c	48-a	49-c	50-b	51-b	52-d	53-d	54-a	55-a	56-c	57-a	58-b	59-b	60-d
61-b	62-d	63-d	64-b	65-c	66-b	67-a	68-a	69-b	70-b	71-b	72-b	73-b	74-c	75-b
76-d	77-c	78-a	79-b	80-b	81-d	82-d	83-a	84-a	85-c	86-b	87-d	88-c	89-d	90-b
91-b	92-b	93-b	94-c	95-c	96-b	97-c	98-d							