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# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## NATIONAL NEWS

### KATCHATHEEVU ISLAND -

- Recently, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister revived the debate over the Katchatheevu, a longstanding point of contention between India and Sri Lanka, particularly with regard to fishing rights and sovereignty over the uninhabited island.
- Katchatheevu is a 285-acre uninhabited speck in the Palk Strait, between India and Sri Lanka, an island located about 14 nautical miles off Rameshwaram, India.
- In 1974, Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi of India and Sirima R.D. Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka signed an agreement that recognized Katchatheevu as part of Sri Lanka's territory, resulting in a change of ownership.
- The agreement also allowed Indian fishermen to fish around the island, dry their nets on it, and permitted Indian pilgrims to visit the Catholic shrine located on the island.
- Fisherfolk from both India and Sri Lanka have historically used Katchatheevu for fishing. Though this feature was acknowledged in the 1974 agreement, the supplemental pact was signed in 1976.
- The 1976 agreement was aimed at defining maritime boundaries and exclusive economic zones for both countries, while also imposing restrictions on fishing vessels and fishermen from either nation, prohibiting fishing in each other's waters without explicit permission from either of the two countries.
- The transfer of Katchatheevu triggered opposition and debates in both Indian Houses of Parliament.
- Leaders of Tamil Nadu have periodically raised the demand for the island's retrieval. The demand evolved over the years, with suggestions of a "lease in perpetuity (a lease deed in which no specified time period)" for the island.



### CAUVERY WATER SHARING DISPUTE -

- The Cauvery water dispute has once again taken center stage, as Tamil Nadu appeals to the Supreme Court of India for intervention in ensuring the release of 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoir's water by Karnataka.
- Tamil Nadu also urged the Court to direct Karnataka to ensure the release of 36.76 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) stipulated for September 2023 as per the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT)'s final award of February 2007 that was modified by the SC in 2018.
- The issue arose from Karnataka's refusal to abide by previously agreed-upon water release quantities.
- Tamil Nadu advocates for the release of 10,000 cusecs of water for the stipulated 15-day duration. On the other hand, Karnataka has suggested a reduced water release of 8,000 cusecs for the same 15-day timeframe.



- Karnataka cites poor inflow due to reduced rainfall in Cauvery catchment, including origin point Kodagu. Karnataka highlights a 44% rainfall deficit in Kodagu from June to August. Karnataka rejects Tamil Nadu's distress-sharing formula demand.
- The genesis of the dispute is 150 years old and dates back to the two agreements of arbitration in 1892 and 1924 between the then Madras presidency and Mysore.

#### **How is the Cauvery Water Being Shared-**

A carefully crafted monthly schedule governs the distribution of water between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the two riparian states of the Cauvery basin.

In a "normal" water year, Karnataka is bound to release 177.25 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of water from June to May to Tamil Nadu.

This annual quota includes 123.14 TMC allocated during the monsoon months from June to September. The ongoing southwest monsoon season often triggers disputes when rainfall falls short of expectations.

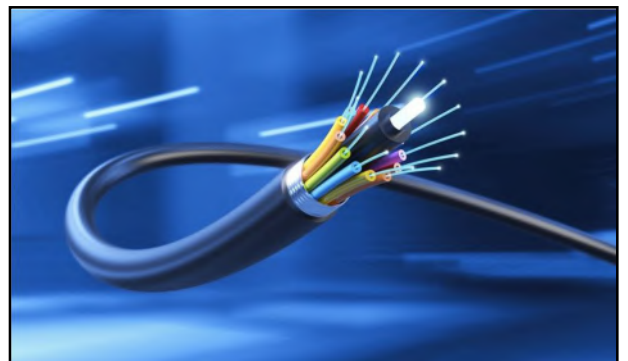
#### **GOI INTRODUCES AYUSH VISA CATEGORY FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS SEEKING MEDICAL TREATMENT IN INDIA -**

- Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) introduced a new Ayush (AY) visa for foreign nationals for treatment under Ayush systems/Indian systems of medicine like therapeutic care, wellness and Yoga.
- With this, a new chapter i.e. chapter 11A – Ayush Visa has been incorporated after Chapter 11 – Medical visa of the Visa Manual, which deals with treatment under the Indian systems of medicine and accordingly necessary amendments has been made in various chapters of the Visa Manual, 2019. AYUSH is an acronym for Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.
- The Ayush Visa aims to attract foreigners who wish to undergo Ayush therapy, wellness, and Yoga in India.
- The introduction of this visa aligns with Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi's announcement at the at Global Ayush Investment and Innovation Summit (GAIIS) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat in April 2022.
- This will boost Medical Value Travel in India, and also strengthen the vision of making Indian traditional medicine a global phenomenon.



#### **INDIA IMPOSES ANTI-DUMPING DUTY ON OPTICAL FIBRE IMPORTS FROM CHINA, KOREA AND INDONESIA -**

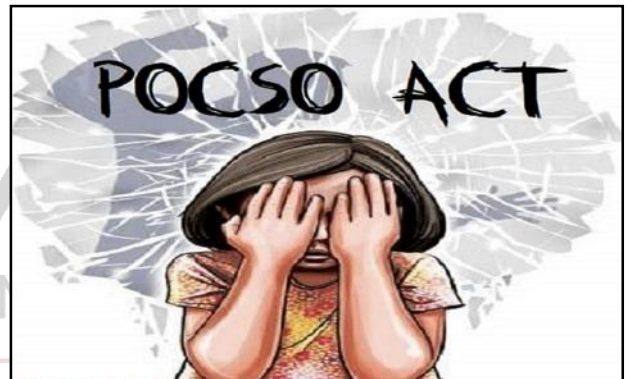
- Based on the recommendations of the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the revenue department has imposed an anti-dumping duty on Dispersion Unshifted Single-Mode Optical Fiber (SMOF) imports from China, South Korea and Indonesia.
- As reported by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), the domestic optical fiber industry has experienced detrimental consequences due to the surge of inexpensive and substandard imports from these nations.



- In response to these challenges, the Finance Ministry has introduced anti-dumping duties on specific optical fiber imports originating from these countries, aiming to address the adverse impacts on the domestic industry resulting from the influx of such dumped imports.
- Anti-dumping actions are implemented to uphold equitable trade practices and establish a balanced competitive environment for the domestic industry. Their purpose is not to hinder imports or unjustly inflate product costs.
- Nations initiate anti-dumping investigations to assess whether their local industries have been adversely affected by a sudden influx of imports priced below their production costs. In response, they impose duties in accordance with the global framework set by the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- Optical fibers are employed for the transmission of data through light pulses. These fibers are grouped together to create optical fiber cables, which facilitate the transfer of digital data signals as light over distances spanning hundreds of miles.
- This method achieves greater throughput rates compared to what can be attained using electrical communication cables.

### **POCSO ACT -**

- Recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has informed the Lok Sabha that the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is one of the crucial legislations enacted by the Government to protect children from Sexual Abuse.
- POCSO Act came into effect on 14th November 2012 which was enacted in consequence to India's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992.
- The aim of this special law is to address offences of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, which were either not specifically defined or in adequately penalised. The Act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years. The Act provides punishment as per the gravity of offence.
- The Act was further reviewed and amended in 2019 to Introduce more stringent punishment including the death penalty for Committing sexual crimes on children, with a view to deter the perpetrators & prevent such crimes against children. The Government of India has also notified the POCSO Rules, 2020.
- The Act recognizes that both girls and boys can be victims of sexual abuse and that such abuse is a crime regardless of the gender of the victim. This is in line with the principle that all children have the right to protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, and that laws should not discriminate based on gender.
- The storage of child pornography material has been made a new offence. Further, the offence of 'sexual assault' has been defined in explicit terms (with increased minimum punishment) unlike an abstract definition of 'outraging modesty of a woman' in the Indian Penal Code.
- Rule-9 of the POCSO Rules allows the Special Court to order interim compensation for the child's needs related to relief or rehabilitation after the FIR's registration. This compensation is adjusted against the final compensation, if any.

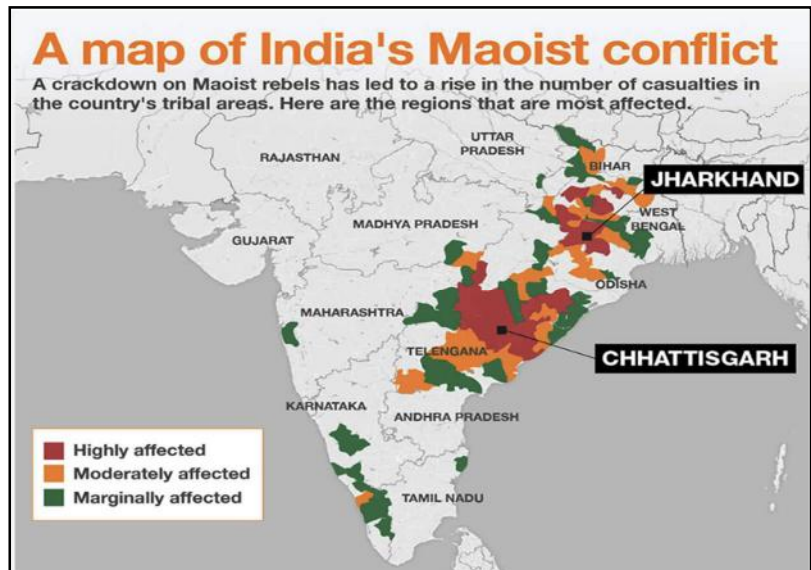


### **LEFT WING EXTREMISM IN INDIA -**

- In a recent announcement, the Ministry for Home Affairs revealed that starting from 2022, India is maintaining separate data for incidents involving Left Wing Extremists.
- LWE has been a significant security challenge in India for several decades, particularly in regions affected by civil unrest and armed conflicts.



- Left-wing extremism, also known as left-wing terrorism or radical left-wing movements, refers to political ideologies and groups that advocate for significant societal and political change through revolutionary means.
- LWE groups may target government institutions, law enforcement agencies, or private property to further their agenda.
- The LWE movement in India originated in a 1967 uprising in Naxalbari, West Bengal.
- Union Home Ministry has stated that violence related to LWE had come down by 76% in 2022 as compared to 2010.
- Also, there has been a decrease in the geographical spread of violence as only 46 districts reported LWE-related violence in 2021, compared to 96 districts in 2010.



#### RAJASTHAN MINIMUM GUARANTEED INCOME BILL, 2023 -

- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill, 2023, introduced by the Rajasthan government, aims to provide additional income support to people in the state. The Bill seeks to help citizens cope with inflation and improve their financial stability.
- The Bill has three broad categories: right to minimum guaranteed income, right to guaranteed employment, and right to guaranteed social security pension.
- The Bill guarantees a minimum income for every adult citizen for 125 days a year. Each adult citizen will receive minimum income through the Indira Gandhi Shabri Rozgar Guarantee Yojana in urban areas and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in rural areas.
- The state will add 25 days of employment to MGNREGA's 100 days for rural areas.
- The government will pay minimum wages weekly or fortnightly after the completion of work in urban and rural employment schemes. A designated officer will ensure job sites are within five kilometers of the registered job card address.
- If employment is not provided within 15 days of application, the applicant will receive a weekly unemployment allowance "and in any case not later than a fortnight."
- The Bill ensures that people falling under categories like old age, specially abled, widows, and single women receive a pension.
- The pension will see an annual increase of 15% in two installments, starting from the financial year 2024-2025.
- The Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill is unique as it legally guarantees both minimum income support and guaranteed employment and pensions, setting it apart from regular cash transfer schemes. It reflects Mahatma Gandhi's vision of comprehensive welfare measures.



**PULSES PRODUCTION INDIA -**

- Recently, the Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare provided valuable insights in a written reply in Rajya Sabha regarding the comprehensive strategies being employed to enhance pulses production in India.
- The National Food Security Mission (NFSM)-Pulses, aimed at increasing productivity and ensuring sustainable practices in the agriculture sector was highlighted.

**India's Pulses Production-**

India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world.

Pulses account for around 20% of the area under foodgrains and contribute around 7-10% of the total foodgrains production in the country.

Though pulses are grown in both Kharif and Rabi seasons, Rabi pulses contribute more than 60% of the total production.

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka are the top five pulses-producing states.



**INDIA'S UNORGANIZED SECTOR WORKERS -**

- Recently, the Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment has mentioned about various initiatives to address the India's Unorganized Sector Workers in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.
- As per the Economic Survey, 2021-22, total number of people working in the unorganized sector is around 43.99 crores during 2019-20.
- The government introduced the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' package with a fiscal stimulus of over Rs. 27 lakh crores to mitigate Covid-19's impact on workers and the economy.



- The 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)' incentivized job creation and restoration, benefiting 60.3 lakh beneficiaries.
- To address the challenges faced by unorganized workers who returned to their home states, the 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Rojgar Abhiyan' was initiated in 116 districts to offer employment and livelihood opportunities.
- The 'Atal Beemit Vyakti Kalyan Yojana (ABVKY)' scheme provided increased relief to insured persons who lost their jobs, offering financial support during the crisis.
- The 'Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)' scheme, 5 kg of food grain per person was provided free of cost.

### THE PLACES OF WORSHIP ACT, 1991 -

- The Supreme Court of India has adjourned the case regarding the validity of the Places of Worship Act of 1991, allowing the Centre until October 31, 2023, to clarify its stand on the matter.
- It was enacted to freeze the status of religious places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947, and prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and ensures the maintenance of their religious character.



- Major Provisions of the Act:
  - Prevents the conversion of a place of worship, whether in full or part, from one religious' denomination to another or within the same denomination.
  - Ensures that the religious identity of a place of worship remains the same as it was on August 15, 1947.
  - Declares that any ongoing legal proceedings concerning the conversion of a place of worship's religious character before August 15, 1947, will be terminated, and no new cases can be initiated.
- Exceptions to the Act:
  - The Act does not apply to ancient and historical monuments, archaeological sites, and remains covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
  - It also excludes cases that have already been settled or resolved and disputes that have been resolved by mutual agreement or conversions that occurred before the Act came into effect.
  - The Act does not extend to the specific place of worship known as Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, including any legal proceedings associated with it.

#### Exclusion of Ayodhya Dispute:

The Act is specifically criticized for excluding the land involved in the Ayodhya dispute.

Opponents question its consistency and raise concerns about the differential treatment of religious sites.



# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

## 15TH BRICS SUMMIT -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a three-day visit to Johannesburg in South Africa from 22nd to 24th August 2023.
- BRICS Establishment- 2009, Members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- First BRICS Summit: 2009, Russian Federation, Previous BRICS summit/14th BRICS Summit: 2022, China, 15th BRICS Summit: 2023, South Africa.
- 'BRICS' is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. (BRICS)
- Naming- The British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term "BRIC" in 2001 to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- Together, BRICS accounts for about 40% of the world's population and about 30% of the GDP (Gross Domestic Product), 16% of the global trade.



## PM MODI TO ATTEND BRICS SUMMIT IN S. AFRICA THIS MONTH -

- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has confirmed his attendance at the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 22 to 24, 2023.
- This comes after Russian President Vladimir Putin canceled his visit to the same event. The summit gains significance due to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine and discussions on expanding the membership of BRICS, a topic of interest to both Russia and China.
- The upcoming BRICS Summit in Johannesburg acquires special importance due to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Leaders from member countries will likely discuss regional and global implications during the summit.
- The telephonic conversation between Mr. Modi and Mr. Ramaphosa took place following the cancellation of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg.
- Close allies such as Saudi Arabia and UAE, among others, have expressed interest in joining the BRICS institution. Approximately 25 countries have applied for membership, and the decision on expansion will be a key topic at the Johannesburg summit.

## CHINA'S STAPLED VISAS -

- Recently, India withdrew its eight-athlete 'Wushu' martial arts athletes contingent from the Summer World University Games in Chengdu, China. The move came in response to China's issuance of stapled visas to three athletes from the Indian team, all of whom were from Arunachal Pradesh.
- The practice of issuing stapled visas started around 2005, and China has consistently issued such visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
- A stapled visa is an unstamped piece of paper attached to a passport with staples or a pin. Unlike regular visas that are affixed and stamped directly on the passport, stapled visas are detachable.



- The issuance of stapled visas is part of China's ongoing territorial disputes with India over Arunachal Pradesh. The stapled visas are considered valid by China, but India refuses to accept them as legitimate travel documents.
- China disputes India's sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh and challenges the legitimacy of the McMahon Line, the boundary between Tibet and British India, agreed upon in the Simla Convention of 1914.
- The disagreement over the Line of Actual Control (LAC) lies at the heart of Chinese claims on the disputed territory and leads to repeated transgressions into Indian territory.
- China claims approximately 90,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory, referring to it as "Zangnan" or "South Tibet" in Chinese maps. It issues lists of Chinese names for places in Arunachal Pradesh and periodically underlines its unilateral claim to Indian territory.

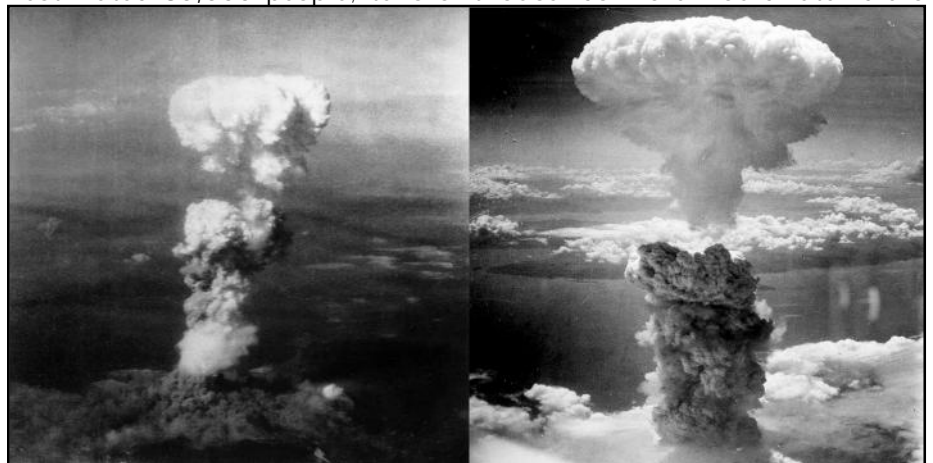
### **LARGE-SCALE WILDFIRES IN HAWAII -**

- Recently, Hawaii has been grappling with extensive wildfires that have wreaked havoc across the state.
- The situation has highlighted the significance of hazard mitigation plans and the identification of vulnerable areas, like Lahaina and West Maui communities, where frequent wildfire ignitions and a large number of at-risk buildings were identified in Maui County's plan last updated in 2020.
- Dry weather combined with strong winds from a passing hurricane played a significant role in fueling the blaze. These conditions, known as "Flash Droughts," involve rapid moisture evaporation from the atmosphere, creating ideal conditions for fire spread.
- Maui is home to one of the six active Volcanoes of Hawaii. Most of Maui was experiencing severe drought, so the dry land, with dry non-native grasses and vegetation, was ready fuel for fires. These fed the fires and helped them spread.



### **BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI -**

- On August 6, 1945, during World War II (1939-45), an American B-29 bomber dropped the world's first deployed atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima.
- The explosion immediately killed an estimated 80,000 people; tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure.
- Three days later on August 9, a second B-29 dropped another A-bomb on Nagasaki, killing an estimated 40,000 people. Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced his country's unconditional surrender in World War II in a radio address on August 15, citing the devastating power of "a new and most cruel bomb."
- Even before the outbreak of war in 1939, a group of American



scientists—many of them refugees from fascist regimes in Europe—became concerned with nuclear weapons research being conducted in Nazi Germany.

- In 1940, the U.S. government began funding its own atomic weapons development program, which came under the joint responsibility of the Office of Scientific Research and Development and the War Department after the U.S. entry into World War II.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was tasked with spearheading the construction of the vast facilities necessary for the top-secret program, codenamed “The Manhattan Project” (for the engineering corps’ Manhattan district).
- Over the next several years, the program’s scientists worked on producing the key materials for nuclear fission—uranium-235 and plutonium (Pu-239). They sent them to Los Alamos, New Mexico, where a team led by J. Robert Oppenheimer worked to turn these materials into a workable atomic bomb.

**RECENTLY, PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI PROPOSED TO MAKE THE AFRICAN UNION A PERMANENT MEMBER OF THE G-20 -**

- The proposal has received overwhelming response from the grouping as informed by India’s G-20 Sherpa Amitabh Kant has said.

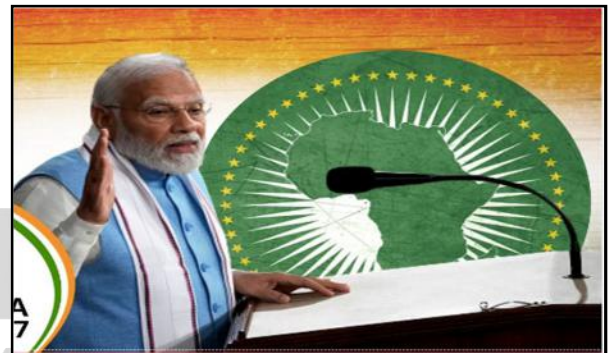
**African Union-**

Establishment- 2002.

HQ- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The African Union (AU) was officially launched in Durban, South Africa as a successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU, 1963-1999).

The African Union (AU) is an influential organization consisting of 55 member states that make up the countries of the African continent. (African Union)



**India-African Union relations-**

- After India gained independence, it became a leading voice in support of African decolonization at the United Nations.
- ITEC- In 1964, India launched the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program to provide technical assistance through human resource development to other developing countries. India’s economic engagement with Africa began intensifying in the early 2000s.
- India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)- India-AU partnership became more with the first India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in 2008.
- The Summit adopted the Delhi Declaration and the Africa-India Framework for Cooperation, which constituted the blueprint for cooperation between India and Africa in the 21st century.

**RECENTLY, INDIA VOTED IN FAVOUR OF A DRAFT RESOLUTION TABLED IN THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UNHRC) CONDEMNING “PUBLIC AND PREMEDITATED” ACTS OF DESECRATION OF THE HOLY QURAN -**

- UN Human Rights Council adopted the draft resolution ‘Countering religious hatred constituting incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence’, with 28 members voting in favour, seven abstentions and 12 nations voting against.
- The resolution was strongly opposed by the United States and the European Union, who say it conflicts with their view on human rights and freedom of expression.





### About UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC)-

It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system. It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

It was establishment in 2006. The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. It replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights, its HQ is in Geneva, Switzerland.

### Membership -

- **Current members:** 47 Member States. These are elected by the majority of members of the General Assembly of the United Nations through direct and secret ballots.
- The Council's Membership is based on equitable geographical distribution. Seats are distributed as follows:
- **African States:** 13 seats
- **Asia-Pacific States:** 13 seats
- **Latin American and Caribbean States:** 8 seats
- **Western European and other States:** 7 seats
- **Eastern European States:** 6 seats
- The term of each seat is three years.
- No member may occupy a seat for more than two consecutive terms.

### META LAUNCHES "THREADS" TWITTER KILLER APP -

- Meta, the owner of Instagram, has introduced a new social media platform called Threads. With Twitter facing instability under its billionaire owner Elon Musk, Meta aims to capitalize on the situation.
- Threads is now accessible in more than 100 countries through the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Like Twitter, users can share brief text messages that can be liked, reposted, and responded to. However, Threads does not include direct messaging features. Users can create posts on Threads with up to 500 characters, as well as share links, photos, and videos up to five minutes in length.
- Threads has been integrated with Instagram, with a strong focus on privacy features. Users have the choice to show or conceal a badge on their Instagram profile, and they can customize privacy settings separately for each app.



### INDIA-U.S. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP -

- The Indian Prime Minister embarked on a significant visit to the United States of America. The visit aimed to strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries and focused on addressing common challenges, taking a stand on global issues, collaborating in critical emerging technologies, promoting sustainable development, and transitioning towards clean energy.

### What are the Areas of Corporation Highlighted During the Visit?

Strengthening Semiconductor Supply Chains- Micron Technology, with support from the India Semiconductor Mission, will invest in a new semiconductor assembly and test facility in





India.Advanced Telecommunications  
NASA-ISRO Collaboration in Space  
Quantum, Advanced Computing, and Artificial Intelligence  
Fibre Optics Investments  
Technology to promote emerging technologies

Defense Partnership: A groundbreaking proposal has been welcomed to co-produce GE's F414 combat aircraft engines in India, allowing for greater transfer of US jet engine technology.

**India and US have four foundational defence agreements**

1. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA).
  2. General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).
  3. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).
  4. Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA).
- Fighting Terror and Drugs
  - Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific
  - Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System
  - Initiatives on Healthcare
  - Strengthening India-U.S. Trade and Investment Partnership

**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.



# SPORTS NEWS

## INDIA'S FIRST-EVER GOLD MEDAL AT THE WORLD ARCHERY CHAMPIONSHIP -

- Recently, the Prime Minister extended congratulations to the Indian women's compound team comprising Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Parneet Kaur, and Aditi Gopichand Swami, for securing India's inaugural Gold medal at the World Archery Championship in Berlin.
- Aditi Gopichand Swami became the youngest-ever senior world champion and the first Indian to win an individual compound gold medal at the World Archery Championships at the age of 17.
- World Archery is the international federation for the Olympic and Paralympic sport of archery. The organization was founded in 1931 and is responsible for regulating and promoting archery around the world.
- World Archery is based in the Olympic capital of Lausanne, Switzerland.



## SPAIN CLINCHES WOMEN FIFA WORLD CUP 2023 -

- The Women FIFA World Cup 2023 jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand, featuring 32 teams concluded recently.
- The final match was held on 20 August 2023 where Spain defeated England 1-0 to lift their first-ever World Cup trophy. With this win, Spain also became only the second nation to clinch both the men's and the women's World Cups after Germany.
- The competition has seen four past champions: USA, Germany, Japan and Norway.



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

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



# AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

## PM MODI CONFERRED WITH FRANCE'S HIGHEST AWARD GRAND CROSS OF THE LEGION OF HONOUR -

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has become the first Indian Prime Minister to have been conferred with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, France's highest civilian and military honour, by French President Emmanuel Macron.
- Mr. Modi received the honour at the Elysee Palace here on, July 13, 2023, and joined the ranks of other prominent world leaders such as the former president of South Africa Nelson Mandela, King Charles – the then Prince of Wales, former Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary General of the United Nations, among others.
- The Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour given by France is another in a series of top international awards and honours bestowed by various countries on Prime Minister Modi. Earlier, the French President and First Lady Brigitte Macron hosted a private dinner for Mr. Modi at the Elysee Palace.
- Established in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte, The Legion of Honour is divided into five classes (lower to higher). The colour of the ribbon is red and the badge is a five-armed Maltese asterisk hung on an oak and laurel wreath. Although the membership to the award is restricted to French nationals, foreign nationals who serve France or uphold its ideals may also be given a distinction of the Legion.
- Over 79,000 members are there so far and France decorate around 300 foreign nationals with this honour each year.



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

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



## DEFENCE NEWS

### IAF TO HOLD MULTI-NATIONAL EXERCISE 'TARANG SHAKTI' NEXT YEAR -

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) is gearing up to host a colossal multilateral military exercise, 'Tarang Shakti', which was originally slated for October but has been rescheduled to the middle of 2024. The decision to push the exercise to next year comes as several participating air forces expressed their inability to join the wargame if held in the current year.
- 'Tarang Shakti' is set to draw the involvement of some prominent air forces, including those of France, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, and Japan.
- These nations will contribute their aerial assets such as fighter jets, military transport aircraft, and mid-air refuelers to the exercise.
- Additionally, six other countries have been invited to participate as observers, further emphasizing the exercise's significance on the global stage.
- The upcoming exercise is anticipated to serve as an impressive showcase of international teamwork and military capabilities, with the involvement of around 12 air forces.
- The main goal of 'Tarang Shakti' is to reinforce military coordination and amplify the seamless interaction between the participating countries.
- Remarkably, this exercise is on track to become India's most extensive aerial drill to date, highlighting the nation's escalating role in the sphere of global military collaboration.
- In April, the Indian Air Force dispatched four Rafale jets, two C-17 aircraft, and two IL-78 mid-air refuelers to participate in a nearly three-week-long multinational air exercise at France's Mont-de-Marsan military base.



### THE 8TH INDIA-AUSTRALIA DEFENCE POLICY TALKS (DPT) WAS HELD AT CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA -

- Both India and Australia reviewed the bilateral defence cooperation and explored new initiatives to further strengthen bilateral defence engagements. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fully implement the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership based on mutual trust and understanding, common interests and shared values.
- Australia and India for the first time established diplomatic relations in the pre-Independence period, when the Consulate General of India was first opened as a Trade Office in Sydney in 1941.
- In 2014, Australia signed a Uranium supply deal with India, the first of its kind with a country that is a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in recognition of India's "impeccable" non-proliferation record.
- In 2020, Prime ministers of both the countries elevated bilateral relationship from Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive strategic Partnership during India-Australia Leaders' Virtual Summit.





- The First India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue took place in September 2021 in New Delhi. The Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) was signed during the Virtual Summit in June 2020 to enhance defence cooperation.
- Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement (ECTA)- is the first free trade agreement signed by India with a developed country in a decade which entered into force in December 2022.

#### **Joint military exercises**

- A. Naval Exercise Kakadu/ Ausindex (Navy)/ Ex AUSTRALIA HIND (Army)
- B. Malabar: Australia will host the "Malabar" exercises in August 2023, with participation from India, Japan, and the US.
- C. Exercise Pitch Black 22.

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

- During a meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Vietnamese General Phan Van Gang, it was revealed that the Vietnam People's Navy will soon receive the INS Kirpan, a warship from the Khukri class commissioned in 1991.
- The announcement was made by Rajnath Singh, indicating the intent to transfer the vessel to Vietnam to bolster its naval capabilities.
- A meeting was held in New delhi to review progress on various bilateral defence cooperation initiatives. It was decided that Khukri class warship INS Kirpan which is scheduled to be decommissioned will be gifted to Vietnam in order to enhance its forces.
- Vietnamese defence minister visited DRDO Headquarters and discussed ways to enhance defence industrial capabilities by joint cooperation of both the countries in defence research.
- India and Vietnam have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership since 2016, and further defence partnerships are a key pillar to enhance the capabilities of their armed forces.



#### **INDIA'S JET ENGINE DEAL WITH THE U.S. -**

- A landmark agreement to facilitate the transfer of at least 11 critical jet engine technologies is likely to be announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ongoing official State Visit to the United States.
- India and the U.S. have almost finalised details and the White House is set to sign off on the deal.
- GE & HAL – The deal will allow American manufacturing company General Electric (GE) Aerospace to share critical technology with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Tejas Mk-II – The deal will felicitate for the joint production of GE-F414 jet engines that will power indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk-II.
- India has designed and built a fighter jet but hasn't achieved much success in producing engines to power these aircraft.
- HF-24 Marut – The quest began in the 1960s with the country's first indigenous fighter, HF-24 Marut. The aircraft was envisioned as a supersonic jet, but failed to achieve its potential for want of a suitable engine and was eventually phased out.



- Kaveri programme – A few decades later, India sanctioned the Kaveri programme to develop an indigenous military gas turbine engine for the ambitious LCA project. With Kaveri still a work in progress, India shortlisted American GE-F404 engines for LCA Tejas Mark-1 as an interim measure.
- F414 engines – In 2010, the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) selected the more powerful variant, F414 engines, to power Tejas Mark-2. The deal, however, did not materialise due to U.S. domestic legislation and regulatory hindrances and remained on the back burner for over a decade.

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

- Recently, India's Ministry of Defence has granted approval for the procurement of 31 MQ-9B armed drones from the United States. The deal, worth a little over \$3 billion, is expected to be announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington.
- The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the MQ-9 "Reaper" which was used to launch a modified version of the Hellfire missile that eliminated al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul.
- The MQ-9B has two variants SkyGuardian and its sibling SeaGuardian. The Indian Navy has been operating the MQ-9B Sea Guardian since 2020.
- The drone can operate at over 40,000 feet, giving the Indian military surveillance capacity in the high-altitude Himalayan border areas. The Predator also has the maximum endurance of 40 hours, making it useful for long-hour surveillance.
- MQ-9B drones are equipped with advanced features such as automatic take-off and landing, detect and avoid system, anti-spoofing GPS, and encrypted communication links.
- India needs MQ-9B armed drones to enhance its surveillance and strike capabilities across its land and maritime borders, especially in the context of the ongoing standoff with China in Ladakh and the rising tensions with Pakistan.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to counter the growing presence of Chinese submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean Region, and to protect its vital sea lanes of communication and trade.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to support its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir and other regions.
- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will also create opportunities for India's defence industry, as it will involve technology transfer and joint production under the Make in India initiative.
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#### **SIPRI YEARBOOK 2023 -**

- Recently, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2023 revealed that China could potentially have as many Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) as U.S. or Russia by the end of the decade.

- Russia has the highest number of stored nuclear arsenals followed by US and China while the US has deployed the highest number of nuclear arsenals followed by Russia and France.
- The nine nuclear-armed states, including the United States, Russia, and China, continue to modernize and expand their nuclear arsenals, deploying new nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable weapon systems in 2022. Other nuclear-armed countries are UK, France, India, Pakistan, the North Korea and Israel
- As of January 2023, the total global inventory of warheads is estimated at 12,512, with approximately 9,576 warheads held in military stockpiles for potential use.

### World nuclear forces, January 2023

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

- India's nuclear arsenal also expanded, increasing from 160 warheads in 2022 to 164 warheads in 2023 and that of Pakistan from 165 to 170 in the same period.
- India's nuclear deterrent, while primarily focused on Pakistan, is placing growing emphasis on longer-range weapons capable of reaching targets across China.
- India is in the process of upgrading its ballistic missiles, with the development of a submarine-launched intermediate-range ballistic missile and the imminent induction of a new generation ballistic missile called 'Agni Prime.'
- China's nuclear arsenal grew from 350 warheads in January 2022 to 410 warheads in January 2023, according to the SIPRI.

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

## INDIA'S CHANDRAYAAN-3 AND RUSSIA'S LUNA 25 MISSION -

- The race for lunar exploration has taken an intriguing turn as Russia's Luna 25 mission, launched aboard its Soyuz rocket on August 10, 2023, seeks to soft-land close to the lunar South Pole, just days before India's Chandrayaan-3.
- Russia's space agency, Roscosmos asserts that Luna 25's landing would not impact Chandrayaan-3, as their landing regions are distinct. Despite being launched almost a month later than Chandrayaan-3, Luna 25 is set to reach the moon earlier due to its more direct trajectory.
- Payload and Fuel Storage- Luna 25's lift-off mass of 1,750 kg is significantly lighter than Chandrayaan-3's 3,900 kg, facilitating a quicker journey.
- **Circuitous Route for Chandrayaan-3-** Chandrayaan-3 took a longer route to compensate for its lower fuel reserve, involving maneuvers to gain velocity and slingshotting towards the moon. This elongated its journey to the lunar orbit by 22 days.



## Differences between Luna 25 and Chandrayaan 3-

Luna 25 marks Russia's return to lunar exploration after 47 years, aiming to reclaim its reputation in space exploration. Chandrayaan-3 is India's third lunar mission and second attempt at achieving a soft landing on the moon's surface.

**Payload Difference-** Luna 25 is lighter and lacks a rover, focusing on studying soil composition, dust particles, and detecting surface water. Chandrayaan-3 carries a rover capable of moving 500 meters, aims to study lunar soil, and has instruments to detect water-ice in shadowed craters near the lunar South Pole.

**Lifespan-** Luna 25 is designed for a year-long mission, equipped with heating mechanisms and a non-solar power source. In contrast, Chandrayaan-3 is built for a single lunar day due to lack of heating during lunar nights.

## Status of India Russia Space Collaboration-

India's first satellite, Aryabhata, was launched by the Soviet Union in 1975. Only one Indian citizen has ever flown to space- Rakesh Sharma flew to the Salyut 7 space station on a Soyuz rocket in 1984 as part of the USSR's Interkosmos program.

In 2004, the two countries signed a protocol to boost cooperation in space. This included the development of the GLONASS navigation system and the launching of Russian GLONASS satellites by Indian rockets.

Chandrayaan-2 was initially supposed to be a collaboration between India and Russia. However, Russia withdrew from designing the lander-rover for Chandrayaan-2, leading India to develop it independently.

Also, four astronauts who will be part of India's first crewed space mission: Gaganyaan have been trained in Russian facilities.

## THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN SIGNIFICANT STEPS TO STRENGTHEN THE MECHANISM FOR DEALING WITH CYBERCRIMES IN A COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED MANNER -

- Cybercrime is defined as a crime where a computer is the object of the crime or is used as a tool to commit an offense.
- Cybercrimes fall under State subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India.
- It involves illegal or unauthorized activities that exploit technology to commit various forms of crimes.



- Cybercrime covers a wide range of offenses and can affect individuals, organizations, and even governments.

#### Types-

Distributed Denial-of-Service (DDoS) Attacks- These are used to make an online service unavailable and take the network down by overwhelming the site with traffic from a variety of sources.

Botnets- Botnets are networks from compromised computers that are controlled externally by remote hackers. The remote hackers then send spam or attack other computers through these botnets.

Identity Theft- This cybercrime occurs when a criminal gains access to a user's personal information or confidential information and then tries to tarnish reputation or seek a ransom.

Cyberstalking- This kind of cybercrime involves online harassment where the user is subjected to a plethora of online messages and emails. Typically, cyberstalks use social media, websites, and search engines to intimidate a user and instill fear.

Phishing- It is a type of social engineering attack often used to steal user data, including login credentials and credit card numbers. It occurs when an attacker, masquerading as a trusted entity, dupes a victim into opening an email, instant message, or text message.

#### Government Initiatives to Cope with Cyber Crimes in India-

- Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)- This center coordinates efforts to tackle all types of cyber-crimes across the country.
- National Cyber Forensic Laboratory- It provides early-stage cyber forensic assistance to Investigating Officers of all State/UT Police through both online and offline modes.
- CyTrain Portal- A Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) platform for capacity building of police officers, judicial officers, and prosecutors through online courses on critical aspects of cyber-crime investigation, forensics, and prosecution.
- National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal- A platform where the public can report incidents of cyber-crimes, with a special focus on crimes against women and children.
- Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System- It is a system for immediate reporting of financial frauds and assistance in lodging online cyber complaints through a toll-free helpline.
- Cybercrime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme
- Joint Cyber Coordination Teams

#### FUKUSHIMA WATER ISSUE -

- Japan's plan to release over 1 million tons of water, which is claimed to be treated but potentially radioactive, from the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea, has sparked strong opposition and anxiety among neighboring countries, particularly South Korea.
- The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power plant suffered a meltdown in 2011 after a massive earthquake and tsunami, releasing large amounts of radioactive materials into the environment.
- No deaths were initially attributed to the incident, although around 18,000 people lost their lives as a result of the earthquake and tsunami.
- Since then, Japan has been storing the cooling water for nuclear fuel and rain and groundwater seeping through the damaged reactor buildings in large tanks



on site.

- The water is treated using a filtering system called Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS), which removes most of the radioactive elements except for tritium, a hydrogen isotope that is difficult to separate.
- Japan says it has no space to keep storing the water, and thus releasing it into the sea.
- The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is assisting Japan to release the water, Tritium is radioactive and has a half-life of about 12.5 years.

**What are the Other Major Nuclear Disasters of the World-**

- A. Chernobyl Disaster (1986)-** One of the most well-known and severe nuclear disasters, the Chernobyl disaster took place in Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine.
- B. Three Mile Island Accident (1979)-** This accident occurred in the United States at the Three Mile Island Nuclear Generating Station in Pennsylvania.
- C. Kyshtym Disaster (1957)-** It took place at the Mayak Production Association in the Soviet Union (now Russia).

**INDIA JOINS NASA'S ARTEMIS ACCORDS FOR COLLABORATIVE LUNAR EXPLORATION -**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed the Artemis Accords during his state visit to the United States, marking India's commitment to global space cooperation and lunar exploration. The accords, initiated by NASA and the US Department of State, provide a framework for collaboration in civil space exploration and use, with a focus on returning humans to the Moon and expanding space exploration to Mars and beyond.
- Grounded in the United Nations Outer Space Treaty of 1967, the Artemis Accords serve as a non-binding multilateral arrangement between the US government and other world governments participating in the Artemis program. This US-led initiative aims to land humans on the Moon by 2025 and foster future space exploration endeavors.
- As of June 22, 2023, 26 countries and one territory have signed the accords, with representation from Europe, Asia, North America, Oceania, Africa, and South America. By signing the accords, countries demonstrate their commitment to key principles and guidelines for lunar missions.



**The Artemis Accords outline several fundamental principles that participating countries are expected to uphold. These principles include:**

- Peaceful Exploration of Space:** Countries pledge to conduct their space activities in a peaceful manner and avoid any harmful interference or conflict.
- Transparency and Interoperability:** Participants agree to promote transparency by openly sharing scientific data, emergency assistance, and orbital debris tracking information. They also commit to enhancing interoperability among space systems to facilitate safe and efficient cooperation.
- Sustainable Utilization of Space Resources:** Signatory nations commit to the responsible and sustainable use of space resources, including lunar regolith and water ice, while adhering to international law and relevant domestic regulations.
- Preservation of Historic Sites and Artifacts:** Countries agree to protect and preserve historic lunar sites and artifacts, recognizing their scientific, cultural, and historical value.

**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

## PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVE SCHEME -

- Recently, a debate has emerged over the effectiveness of India's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI), an Electronics Manufacturing scheme, suggesting it generates import-dependent assembly jobs rather than fostering Self-Sufficiency in manufacturing and economic growth.
- The PLI scheme was conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability, accompanied by higher import substitution and employment generation.

**Launched in March 2020, the scheme initially targeted three industries-**

Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing  
Electrical Component Manufacturing and  
Medical Devices.

- Later, it was extended to 14 sectors. In the PLI scheme, Domestic and Foreign companies receive financial rewards for manufacturing in India, based on a percentage of their revenue over up to five years.
- The 14 sectors are mobile manufacturing, manufacturing of medical devices, automobiles and auto components, pharmaceuticals, drugs, specialty steel, telecom & networking products, electronic products, white goods (ACs and LEDs), food products, textile products, solar PV modules, advanced chemistry cell (ACC) battery, and drones and drone components.
- The incentives given, are calculated on the basis of incremental sales.
- In some sectors such as advanced chemistry cell batteries, textile products and the drone industry, the incentive to be given will be calculated on the basis of sales, performance and local value addition done over the period of five years.
- In FY 2017-18, mobile phone imports were USD 3.6 billion, while exports were a mere USD 334 million, resulting in a -USD 3.3 billion trade deficit. By FY 2022-23, imports reduced to USD 1.6 billion, while exports surged to nearly USD 11 billion, yielding a positive net exports of USD 9.8 billion.



## INDIA'S FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES-

- India's foreign exchange reserves have increased by USD 708 million to USD 602.16 billion for the week ended 11th August 2023, according to the latest data from the Reserve Bank of India.
- Foreign exchange reserves are assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities.
- India's Forex Reserve include- Foreign Currency Assets, Gold reserves, Special Drawing Rights, and Reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
- FCAs are assets that are valued based on a currency other than the country's own currency.
- The country's forex reserves reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion in October 2021.





**INDIA'S FOREX RESERVES BREACH \$600 BILLION-MARK, HOVER AROUND 15-MONTH HIGH -**

- India's foreign exchange reserves have recorded their most substantial weekly surge in four months, witnessing a remarkable increase of \$12.74 billion, reaching an impressive total of \$609.02 billion, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). This surge comes after a previous uptick of \$1.23 billion in the preceding week ending on July 7.
- The Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI highlighted that Foreign Currency Assets (FCAs) played a pivotal role in the surge, surging by \$11.19 billion to an impressive total of \$540.17 billion.
- FCAs, expressed in dollar terms, take into account the appreciation or depreciation of non-US units such as the euro, pound, and yen, held within the foreign exchange reserves.
- Moreover, the nation's gold reserves also rose significantly by \$1.14 billion, reaching \$45.20 billion.
- Alongside the growth in FCAs and gold reserves, India's Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) experienced an increase of \$250 million, reaching a total of \$18.500 billion.
- Furthermore, the country's Reserve Position in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) also moved up by \$158 million, now standing at \$5.18 billion.

**INDIA NEEDS AVERAGE ANNUAL 7.6% GDP GROWTH TO BECOME DEVELOPED BY 2047: RBI -**

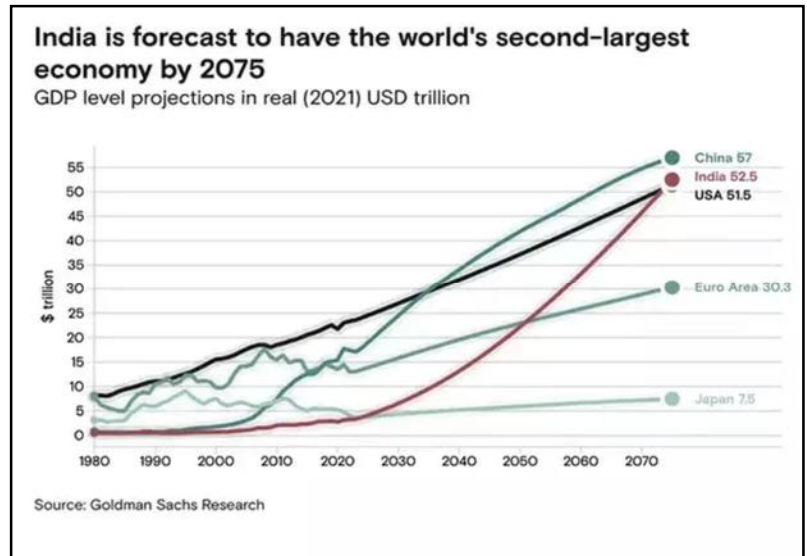
- The Reserve Bank of India, in its monthly bulletin, has outlined the significant growth targets India must achieve over the next 25 years to become a developed economy with high per capita income.
- Currently estimated at \$2,500, India's per capita income needs to surpass \$21,664 by 2047, as per World Bank standards, to be classified as a high-income country. To achieve this ambitious goal, the country must maintain a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.6% in real GDP during 2023-24 to 2047-48.
- For India to become a high-income country by 2047-48, its per capita GDP in nominal terms would require a CAGR of 10.6% (9.1%). Notably, India's historical best over a consecutive 25-year period was a CAGR of 8.1% during 1993-94 to 2017-18. Thus, to achieve the targeted 9.1% growth, India must surpass its previous record of economic growth.
- The report suggests that India's industrial sector should increase its share from the current 25.6% to 35% by 2047-48, with manufacturing occupying 25% of total value added. This would necessitate the industrial sector to grow at a nominal CAGR of 13.4%.
- India's comparative advantage in services exports can be leveraged to sustain growth. If the country manages to sustain the growth in exports of goods and services (nominal) at 13.3%, as observed during the high growth phase of 1993-2017, their share in GDP is expected to increase from 22.8% in 2022-23 to 30.5% by 2047-48.



**INDIA TO SURPASS US AND BECOME WORLD'S 2ND LARGEST ECONOMY BY 2075: GOLDMAN SACHS REPORT -**

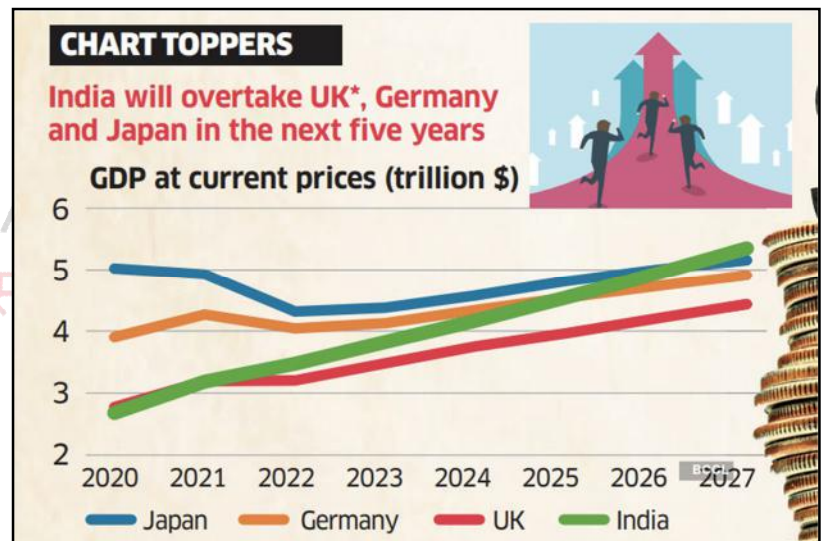
- Goldman Sachs analysts project India to become the world's second-largest economy by 2075. The report suggests India will surpass the US in terms of GDP, reaching \$52.5 trillion by 2075.
- China is expected to overtake the US to become the largest economy by the 2030s.
- India's burgeoning population and progress in innovation and technology are driving its economic forecast. Higher capital investment and rising worker productivity contribute to India's economic growth.
- Goldman Sachs Research's India economist emphasizes the need to boost the participation of India's labor force.

- India aims to set up manufacturing capacity, continue growing services, and invest in infrastructure. The government's focus on infrastructure creation, including roads and railways, supports this goal.
- India's progress in technology and innovation, particularly in the IT industry, drives economic growth. Revenue in India's technology industry is expected to increase by \$245 billion by the end of 2023.
- Low participation of women in formal employment remains a challenge to India's economic progress. India's economy is driven by domestic demand, with up to 60% of its growth attributed to domestic consumption and investments.



**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.



# REPORTS & INDICES

## WHO REPORT ON TOBACCO CONTROL -

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) recently released a comprehensive report on tobacco control measures.
- The report evaluates the progress made globally since the introduction of the MPOWER measures - a set of strategies developed by WHO to combat tobacco use and its detrimental effects on health.
- Worldwide, there has been a decline in smoking prevalence from 22.8% in 2007 to 17% in 2021, resulting in 300 million fewer smokers today.
- The WHO's MPOWER measures have played a vital role in tobacco control over the past 15 years, protecting 5.6 billion people (71% of the global population) with at least one measure.
- The number of countries implementing at least one MPOWER measure has risen from 44 in 2008 to 151 in 2022, and four countries - Brazil, Turkiye, Netherlands, and Mauritius - have successfully implemented all measures.
- At least 44 countries still do not implement any MPOWER measure, and 53 countries do not have a complete ban on smoking in healthcare facilities. Additionally, only half of the countries enforce smoke-free workplaces and restaurants.
- WHO emphasizes the dangers of e-cigarettes, noting that the tobacco industry's aggressive promotion of e-cigarettes as a safer alternative undermines progress. E-cigarettes pose risks to both users and those around them, especially in indoor environments.
- Of the estimated 8.7 million tobacco-related deaths annually, 1.3 million are non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke. Second-hand smoke is linked to almost 400,000 deaths due to heart disease. Moreover, second-hand smoke adversely affects children, leading to severe asthma, respiratory tract infections, and sudden infant death syndrome.
- Around 51,000 deaths in children and adolescents under 20 years are attributed to exposure to second-hand smoke.



## Status of Tobacco Consumption in India-

Nearly 267 million adults (15 years and above) in India (29% of all adults) are users of tobacco, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey India, 2016-17.

It is one of the major causes of death and disease in India and accounts for nearly 1.35 million deaths every year. India is also the second largest consumer and producer of tobacco.

## INDIA'S TIGER POPULATION REACHES 3,925 WITH 6.1% ANNUAL GROWTH RATE, HOLDS 75% OF GLOBAL WILD TIGER POPULATION -

- In 1973, the Government of India launched Project Tiger, a comprehensive conservation project aimed at protecting the nation's tiger population and preserving biodiversity. Over the past fifty years, Project Tiger has achieved remarkable success, with India currently harboring almost 75% of the world's wild tiger population. On Global Tiger Day, 29th July 2023, Minister of State for Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Ashwini Kumar, released a comprehensive report revealing India's tiger population estimate of 3,925, with an annual growth rate of 6.1%.

## Project Tiger's Success and Evolution-

Project Tiger was initiated in 1973, initially covering nine tiger reserves spanning 18,278 km<sup>2</sup>. It has now expanded to 53 reserves spread across 75,796 km<sup>2</sup>, effectively covering 2.3% of India's total land area.



The first phase of tiger conservation focused on enacting the Wildlife Protection Act and establishing protected areas, while the second phase in 2005 adopted a landscape-level approach, community involvement, strict law enforcement, and scientific monitoring.



#### **The Growth of India's Tiger Population-**

- In 2022, during the celebration of 50 years of Project Tiger, the Hon'ble Prime Minister declared the minimum tiger population estimate of 3,167 from the camera-trapped area.
- Further analysis of data by the Wildlife Institute of India, considering both camera-trapped and non-camera-trapped tiger presence areas, resulted in an estimated tiger population of 3,925 with an annual growth rate of 6.1% per annum.
- Notably, Central India and the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains saw significant increases in tiger population, particularly in Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra. However, certain regions, like the Western Ghats, experienced localized declines, requiring targeted conservation efforts.

#### **IN THE LATEST HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2023, INDIAN PASSPORT HAS CLIMBED SEVEN PLACES TO SECURE THE 80TH RANK, UP FROM 87TH IN 2022, GIVING ITS HOLDERS VISA FREE ACCESS TO 57 COUNTRIES -**

- The Henley Passport Index is a ranking system that evaluates all the world's passports based on the number of travel destinations their holders can access without the need for a prior visa.
- This index encompasses 199 different passports and covers 227 travel destinations. It is compiled and published by Henley & Partners, a global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
- Top Position: Singapore now holds the most powerful passport in the world, granting its citizens visa-free access to an impressive 192 travel destinations out of 227 worldwide.
- Japan previously held the top spot on the Henley Passport Index for five years. Runners-up: Germany, Italy, and Spain share the second position on the index.
- Japan, along with Austria, Finland, France, Luxembourg, South Korea, and Sweden, shares the third spot.
- Henley & Partners also introduced the Henley Openness Index, which measures the number of nations a country allows visa-free access to. In this ranking, India was placed 94th out of 97 countries, offering visa-free access to only four nations.
- Most Open Countries: The top 20 'most open' countries predominantly comprise small island nations and African states, with the exception of Cambodia.
- 12 countries offer exceptional openness, providing visa-free or visa-on-arrival entry to all 198 passports in the world (excluding their own). These countries are Burundi, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Micronesia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Samoa, Seychelles, Timor-Leste, and Tuvalu.
- Least Open Countries: Afghanistan, North Korea, Papua New Guinea, and Turkmenistan were ranked at the bottom of the Henley Openness Index, as they do not permit visa-free access for any passport holders.



**TAMIL NADU TOPPED NITI AAYOG'S EXPORT PREPAREDNESS INDEX 2022 -**

- Tamil Nadu topped the third edition of the NITI Aayog's Export Preparedness Index 2022 with an overall score of 80.89, piping Maharashtra (78.20) and Karnataka (76.36).
- The third edition of the NITI Aayog's Preparedness Index 2022 has released on 17th July 2023.
- According to the Export Preparedness Index 2022, Tamil Nadu topped the ranking with an overall score of 80.89 while Maharashtra with a score of 78.20 was second and Karnataka was third with a score of 76.36.
- Gujarat scored fourth position with a score of 73.22 followed by Andhra Pradesh, Odissa, West Bengal and Kerala in the ranking of coastal areas.
- Among hilly/Himalayan states Uttarakhand topped the ranking with a score of 59.13 followed by Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram in that order.
- In the category of Union Territories/small states, Goa topped the ranking with a score of 51.58 followed by Jammu-Kashmir, Delhi, Andaman and Nicobar and Ladakh.
- According to the report, out of the 680 districts engaged in exports, the top 100 districts contribute about 87% of the total exports from India.
- Among export districts, Jamnagar in Gujarat topped the chart which was followed by Surat, Mumbai Suburban, Mumbai, Pune, Bharuch, Kanchipuram, Ahmedabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar and Bengaluru Urban.
- Gujarat has 8 districts, the highest number of districts in the top 25 export districts in the country.
- To promote exports, 647 districts have formed a District Export Promotion Committee, while 557 have formulated a District Export Action Plan.



# ENVIRONMENT

## WORLD WATER WEEK AND JAL JEEVAN MISSION -

- World Water Week, taking place from 20th to 24th August, 2023 is the yearly global water forum organized by Stockholm International Water Institute. This year's theme, "Seeds of Change: Innovative Solutions for a Water-Wise World," spotlights innovation in addressing current water challenges.
- In line, Jal Jeevan Mission, launched in 2019, is envisioned to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India.



## Past Rural Water Supply Efforts and Challenges -

**Initial Efforts (1950s-1960s)-** The priority of supplying basic water to rural areas was established during India's first five-year plan (1951-56). However, focus was limited to easily accessible villages.

**National Rural Drinking Water Supply Programme (1969)-** United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)'s technical support led to the digging of borewells and piped water connections, but coverage remained uneven.

**Changing Approaches (1970s-1980s)-** Different initiatives like Accelerated Rural Water Supply Scheme (ARWS) and Minimum Needs Programme were introduced but faced challenges in implementation and coverage.

**Evolution of Mission Approach (1986-1996)-** ARWS transformed into National Drinking Water Mission and later Rajiv Gandhi National Drinking Water Mission (1991).

Panchayati Raj Institutions were assigned responsibility for water supply.

Initiated in 2017, the Har Ghar Jal program was introduced by the government to provide piped water supply to every household for safe drinking water.

## Status of the Jal Jeevan Mission-

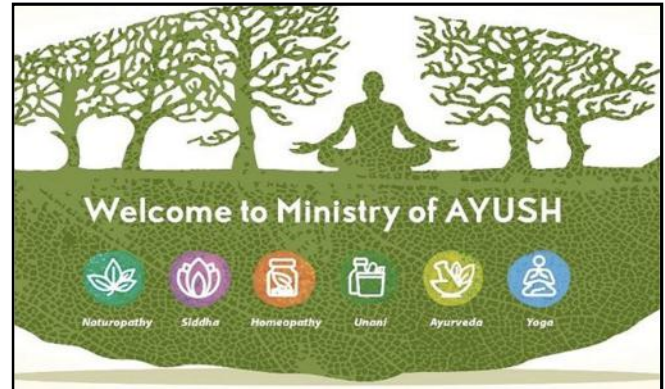
- **Jal Jeevan Mission (Rural)-** The goal of this mission is to provide 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024. It comes under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- Government of India also launched Jal Jeevan Mission (Urban) that complements JJM(R) and has been designed to provide universal coverage of water supply through functional taps in all 4,378 statutory towns of India. As of January 3, 2023, the count of rural households having access to tapped water connections had risen to 108.7 million, equivalent to 56.14%.
- As reported by the program's dashboard, so far, the Har Ghar Jal status, which involves the provision of tap water supply to all rural households, has been attained by 9 states and Union Territories: Haryana, Goa, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Daman and Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli, Telangana, Gujarat, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh.

## AYUSH SECTOR'S GROWTH -

- The Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH) sector is witnessing a remarkable growth trajectory. This growth is poised to continue, with projections indicating a leap to 24 billion USD by the end of 2023.
- Amidst this promising landscape, the Ayush sector is set to take centre stage at the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Traditional Medicine Summit.



- The AYUSH sector represents India's traditional healthcare systems. Indian systems of medicine are diverse, accessible, and affordable, with broad public acceptance, making them vital healthcare providers. Their economic value is growing, offering crucial services to a significant population.



**Diverse Disciplines Under AYUSH-**

**Ayurveda:** Ancient system emphasizing holistic well-being.

**Yoga:** Union of body, mind, and spirit through physical postures and meditation.

**Naturopathy:** Natural healing using elements like water, air, and diet.

**Unani:** Balance restoration through herbal medicines and humoral theory.

**Siddha:** Traditional Tamil medicine with roots in five elements and humors.

**Homeopathy:** Highly diluted remedies stimulating self-healing responses.

- Production of AYUSH medicines and supplements has seen exponential growth. Revenue surged from 3 billion USD (2014) to 18 billion USD (2020). Anticipated growth to 24 billion USD in 2023 showcases its financial impact.
- AYUSH-based health and wellness centres garner significant response. 7,000 operational centers; 8.42 crore patients availed services (2022).

**RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (MOEFCC) REVERSED ITS DECISION TO ESTABLISH INTEGRATED REGIONAL OFFICES BY MERGING KEY ENVIRONMENTAL BODIES -**

- The initial plan, announced during the Covid-19 lockdown, aimed to bring together the Forest Survey of India (FSI), the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) under a unified structure.
- This move was intended to streamline operations and create a single point of authority for these organizations.



**Criticisms-**

It would undermine the independence and authority of these bodies, which have different mandates and roles in environmental governance.

It would create administrative confusion and chaos, as these bodies have different reporting structures and jurisdictions.

It would compromise the quality and credibility of their work, as they would be subject to political interference and pressure from the MoEFCC.

It would dilute the focus and expertise of these bodies, which have specialised functions and skills in their respective domains.

**PROJECT CHEETAH AND RADIO COLLAR INFECTIONS -**

- Recently, the use of radio collars in the cheetah reintroduction project in Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary, Madhya Pradesh, India, has resulted in unexpected setbacks, with cheetahs experiencing neck wounds and septicaemia, an infection of the blood by bacteria.
- This situation has raised concerns among experts familiar with collaring practices in India and Africa.

- Radio collars are used to track and monitor animals in the wild. They consist of a collar with a small radio transmitter. Collars provide data on animal behavior, migration, and population dynamics.
- They can be combined with GPS or accelerometers for additional information. Collars are designed to be lightweight and comfortable for animals. Potential risks and challenges, such as injuries or infections, must be managed.
- Two cheetahs in Kuno died due to suspected septicaemia caused by festering neck wounds from radio collars. Additional cheetahs, including Oban, Elton, and Freddie, have exhibited similar injuries.
- These setbacks have raised concerns about the use of radio collars in the cheetah reintroduction project. Carrying something on the body for an extended period can have downsides, as seen in studies on watch wearers and pet dogs.
- Staphylococcus aureus bacteria presence was higher on watch wearers' wrists, which can lead to sepsis or death. Dogs wearing collars can develop acute moist dermatitis or hot spots, aggravated by ticks or fleas.
- The Cheetah Reintroduction Project in India formally commenced on September 17, 2022, with the objective of restoring the population of cheetahs, which were declared extinct in the country in 1952. The project involves the translocation of cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- 20 radio-collared cheetahs were translocated from South Africa (12 cheetahs) and Namibia (8 cheetahs) to Kuno National Park. In March 2023, India announced the birth of 4 cubs to one of the eight cheetahs that were relocated from Namibia.
- 8 cheetahs have died in Kuno National Park due to natural causes. Preliminary analysis by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) indicates that the deaths were natural and not related to other factors like radio collars.



#### **MIYAWAKI PLANTATION METHOD -**

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





- Some of the common indigenous plants that are used for these forests include Anjan, Amala, Bel, Arjun and Gunj.
- These forests encourage new biodiversity and an ecosystem which in turn increases the fertility of the soil.

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

Over the years, the cost-effective Miyawaki Plantation Method has become the go-to solution to restore the green cover in a space-starved city like Mumbai.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has been implementing the Miyawaki forest approach in various vacant land areas of Mumbai to combat climate change, reduce pollution levels, and enhance the city's green cover.

64 Miyawaki forests have been planted in Mumbai so far.

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

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





# GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

## **THE MINES AND MINERALS (DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2023 -**

- The Rajya Sabha has passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 for making amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957.
- The MMDR Act, 1957 was amended in 2015 to introduce auction-based mineral concession allocation for transparency, create District Mineral Foundation (DMF) for the welfare of affected communities, establish National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET) to promote exploration, and impose stricter penalties for illegal mining.
- The Act was further amended in 2016 and 2020 to address specific emergent issues and was last amended in 2021 to bring further reforms in the sector, such as, removing the distinction between captive and merchant mines, etc.
- However, the mineral sector required more reforms particularly for increasing exploration and mining of Critical Minerals that are essential for economic development and national security in the country.
- The lack of availability of the critical minerals or concentration of their extraction or processing in a few geographical locations may lead to supply chain vulnerabilities and even disruption of supplies.
- Critical minerals have gained significance in view of India's commitment towards energy transition and achieving Net-Zero emission by 2070.



### **Scenario of the Mining Sector in India-**

Mining industry plays a crucial role in the country's economy, serving as the backbone for manufacturing and infrastructure sectors.

According to the Ministry of Mines, the total value of mineral production (excluding atomic and fuel minerals) during 2021-22 amounted to Rs 2,11,857 crore.

India ranks 4th globally in terms of iron ore production and is the world's 2nd largest coal producer as of 2021.

Combined Aluminium production (primary and secondary) in India stood at 4.1 MT per annum in FY21 becoming the 2nd largest in the world.

In 2023, the mineral's demand is likely to increase by 3%, driven by expanded electrification and overall economic growth in India.

India holds a fair advantage in production and conversion costs in steel and alumina. Its strategic location enables export opportunities to develop as well as fast-developing Asian markets.

### **JAN VISHWAS (AMENDMENT OF PROVISIONS) BILL, 2023 -**

- Recently, the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 was passed in Lok Sabha during the monsoon session and aims at giving a boost to Ease of Living and Ease of Doing Business.

#### **What is the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023-**

- A. The Bill proposes to amend 183 provisions in 42 Central Acts administered by 19 Ministries/Departments, covering various domains such as environment, agriculture, media, industry, trade, information technology, copyright, motor vehicles, cinematography, food safety, etc.
- B. The main objective of the Bill is to decriminalize minor offences that do not involve any harm to the public interest or national security and replace them with civil penalties or administrative actions.

C. The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 22nd December 2022 and referred to the Joint Committee of Parliament.

**Need-**

Rationalize criminal provisions to reduce undue pressure on the justice system.

Address technical and procedural defaults without imposing severe penalties.

Establish a balanced approach between the severity of offence and prescribed punishment.

Boost the growth of businesses by eliminating barriers and promoting a conducive legal environment.

- The Bill seeks to remove imprisonment clauses and/or fines in some provisions and convert them into penalties in some others. The penalties will be determined by adjudicating officers appointed by the respective Ministries/Departments.
- The Bill also introduces compounding of offences in some provisions, which means that the offenders can settle their cases by paying a certain amount without going through a court trial. The Bill provides for a periodic revision of fines and penalties every three years, with an increase of 10% of the minimum amount for various offences in the specified Acts.

**What are the Key Laws Covered in the Bill-**

- The Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000.
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- The Copyright Act, 1957.
- The Patents Act, 1970.
- The Railways Act, 1989.
- The Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.



**INDIA BANS NON-BASMATI WHITE RICE EXPORTS TO STABILIZE DOMESTIC MARKET -**

- The Indian government has imposed an immediate ban on the export of non-basmati white rice, except for certain ongoing shipments.
- This variety of rice had accounted for 25% of the total rice exports from the country.
- This step was taken in response to the 11.5% increase in domestic rice prices in 2022 and a subsequent 35% surge in exports of this rice variety during 2022-23.
- The Ministry attributed this surge in exports to various factors, including high international prices driven by geopolitical scenarios, El Nino influences, and extreme climatic conditions in other rice-producing countries.
- The ban aims to stabilize the domestic market and ensure adequate availability of non-basmati white rice for Indian consumers, while export policies for basmati rice and non-basmati parboiled rice remain unchanged.



**CABINET APPROVES RS 1.39 LAKH CR FOR CONNECTING 6.4 LAKH VILLAGES WITH BROADBAND -**

- The Union Cabinet has approved the final phase of the last-mile optical fiber-based broadband connectivity plan, covering 6.4 lakh villages across India under the BharatNet project. This initiative is supported by a budget of Rs 1.39 lakh crore.

- Through this enhancement, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) seeks to accelerate the endeavor of linking all 6.4 lakh villages within the upcoming two and a half years. The ongoing progress has seen nearly 1.94 lakh villages already integrated into the BharatNet project.
- Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL), a subsidiary of the state-controlled BSNL, will collaborate with village-level entrepreneurs (VLEs) to offer the final leg of connectivity.
- BBNL will provide customer premise equipment and additional fibre required for connecting homes while local entrepreneurs have been tasked with maintaining the network.
- Beyond its financial implications, this initiative bears the potential to generate a substantial employment opportunity, envisaging a staggering 250,000 jobs. This visionary project crystallized its form subsequent to a meticulously executed pilot program across four districts, achieving an impressive expansion to encompass 60,000 villages across the nation within a mere year.
- BharatNet, recognized as Bharat Broadband Network Limited (BBNL) is a public sector undertaking established under the Department of Telecommunications, a division under the Ministry of Communications within the Indian Government.
- The primary aim of BharatNet is to establish, oversee, and manage the National Optical Fibre Network, thereby delivering broadband connectivity to all 250,000 gram panchayats across the nation.
- Encompassing around 625,000 villages, BBNL's initiative bolsters the fundamental structure of India's countrywide broadband internet, aligning with the mission of achieving Digital India.



#### **VIBRANT VILLAGES PROGRAMME -**

- Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs provided valuable insights into the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) during a written reply in the Rajya Sabha.
- VVP is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme approved on 15th February 2023 and officially launched on 10th April 2023. focusing on the comprehensive development of select villages in 46 blocks across 19 districts abutting the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and UT of Ladakh.
- The program aims to create livelihood opportunities through tourism promotion, cultural heritage preservation, skill development, entrepreneurship, and development of cooperative societies, including agriculture and cultivation of medicinal plants/herbs.
- Interventions under the program include road connectivity, housing, village infrastructure, renewable energy, television & telecom connectivity, and more, with the objective of providing sufficient incentives for people to stay in the selected villages.
- Additionally, under the Border Area Development Programme (BADP), essential infrastructure projects have been approved in census villages/towns, semi-urban, and urban areas located within 0-10 km distance from the first habitation at the International Boundary (IB) in 16 states and 2 UTs abutting land





borders.

- Specific villages in Kinnaur and Lahul & Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh, as well as Chamoli, Uttarkashi, and Rudraprayag districts, have been selected for the VVP.

### **WHY PM DEVINE SCHEME IN NEWS -**

- Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) scheme was announced as a new Central Sector Scheme. This scheme was 100% funded by Central Government in the Union Budget of 2022-23 with initial list of seven projects and an initial allocation of Rs.1500 crore.
- PM-DevINE scheme got approval by the Cabinet on 12th October 2022 with an overall outlay of Rs.6,600 crore for the 4 years period from 2022-23 to 2025-26 (remaining years of the 15th Finance Commission period).



### **Objectives of PM-DevINE Scheme-**

- To fund infrastructure convergently, in the spirit of PM GatiShakti.
- To support social development projects based on felt needs of the NER.
- To enable livelihood activities for youth and women.
- To fill the development gaps in various sectors.

### **PM-KUSUM -**

- The Union Minister of New Renewable Energy furnished the current status of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM KUSUM) scheme through a written response in Lok Sabha.
- The PM-KUSUM is a flagship scheme initiated by the Indian government in 2019 with the primary objective of transforming the agricultural sector by promoting the adoption of solar energy solutions.
- Through various components and financial support, PM-KUSUM envisions achieving a significant solar power capacity addition of 30.8 GW by March 31, 2026.



### **Objectives of PM-KUSUM-**

- De-dieselisation of the Farm Sector-** The scheme aims to reduce the dependence on diesel for irrigation by encouraging the use of solar-powered pumps and other renewable energy sources. It also seeks to increase farmers' income by reducing irrigation costs through the use of solar pumps and enabling them to sell surplus solar power to the grid.
- Water and Energy Security for Farmers-** By providing access to solar pumps and promoting solar-based community irrigation projects, the scheme aims to enhance water and energy security for farmers.
- Curbing Environmental Pollution-** Through the adoption of clean and renewable solar energy.

### **SECTION 144 OF CODE OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (CRPC), 1973 -**

- The Delhi Police imposed prohibitory measures under CrPC section 144 in flood-prone areas of the city.
- Section 144 CrPC is a law retained from the colonial era. It empowers a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate or any other executive magistrate specially empowered by the state government in this behalf to issue orders to prevent and address urgent cases of apprehended danger or nuisance.

### **The magistrate has to pass a written order which may be directed against:**

- a particular individual, or
- to persons residing in a particular place or area, or

to the public generally when frequenting or visiting a particular place or area.

In emergency cases, the magistrate can pass these orders without prior notice to the individual against whom the order is directed.

**Features of Section 144-**

- It places restrictions on handling or transporting any kind of weapon in the given jurisdiction. The maximum punishment for such an act is three years.
- According to the order under this section, there shall be no movement of public and all educational institutions shall remain closed. Further, there will be a complete bar on holding any kind of public meeting or rallies during the period of operation of this order.

**Duration of Section 144 Order-**

- No order under this section can remain in force for a period of more than 2 months. Under the state government's discretion, it can choose to extend the validity for two more months with the maximum validity extendable to six months.

<p><b>Section 144: What it Says and What it Means</b></p>	<p><b>3</b> Such orders are issued for two months at a time and powers are supposed to be used in cases of urgency and when a quick response is needed</p>	<p><b>4</b> The Supreme Court has ruled that section 144, if used appropriately, is not unconstitutional. Powers are supposed to be used in an emergency</p>
<p><b>1</b> Usually seen as a law to ban protests in a certain area, the ambit of section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code is actually much wider</p>	<p><b>2</b> First Introduced In 1861, the law gives powers to a magistrate to order a person to abstain from an act, which could obstruct or cause annoyance or injury to any person "lawfully employed", or pose a "danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquility"</p>	

**PM-PRANAM SCHEME -**

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), approved the PM-PRANAM scheme, aimed at restoring and nurturing Mother Earth through the use of biofertilizers.
- Furthermore, the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane has been increased by Rs 10 to Rs 315 per quintal for the 2023-24 season starting from October.
- Additionally, the government has extended the urea subsidy scheme until March 2025 with an allocation of ₹3.68 lakh crore. Alongside, a nutrient-based subsidy of ₹38,000 crore has been sanctioned for the Kharif season of 2023-24.
- PM-PRANAM stands for PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth.
- PM-PRANAM was first announced in the 2023-24 Budget by the Union government. The scheme aims to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers by incentivizing states to adopt alternative fertilizers.
- The objective is to encourage the balanced use of fertilizers in conjunction with biofertilizers and organic fertilizers also to reduce the subsidy burden on chemical fertilizers, which was around Rs 2.25 lakh crores in 2022-2023.
- The scheme will be financed by the savings of existing fertilizer subsidies under schemes run by the Department of Fertilizers, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers. There will be no separate budget for the PM-PRANAM scheme.
- The Centre will provide 50% of the subsidy savings to the states as a grant. Out of the grant, 70% can be used to create assets related to the technological adoption of alternative fertilizers and production units at various levels.
- The remaining 30% can be used to reward and encourage farmers, panchayats, and other stakeholders involved in fertilizer reduction and awareness generation.



**HAR GHAR JAL PROGRAMME -**

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



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

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

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

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

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

- The Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Hardeep Singh Puri, recently praised the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme on its momentous completion of three years.
- The scheme, launched in June 2020, aimed to empower street vendors by restoring self-employment, self-sustenance, and self-confidence. Over the years, PM SVANidhi has emerged as one of the most beneficial and rapidly growing micro-credit schemes in India, fostering financial inclusion, digital literacy, and offering dignity and stability to street vendors.



- PM SVANidhi Scheme: Empowering Street Vendors with Affordable Micro-Credit The Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme is a special micro-credit facility aimed at providing affordable loans to street vendors in India.
- Launched with the objective of empowering street vendors and promoting their self-sufficiency, the scheme offers loans of up to ₹10,000 to over 50 lakh street vendors who had operational businesses on or before March 24th.



# IMPORTANT DATES

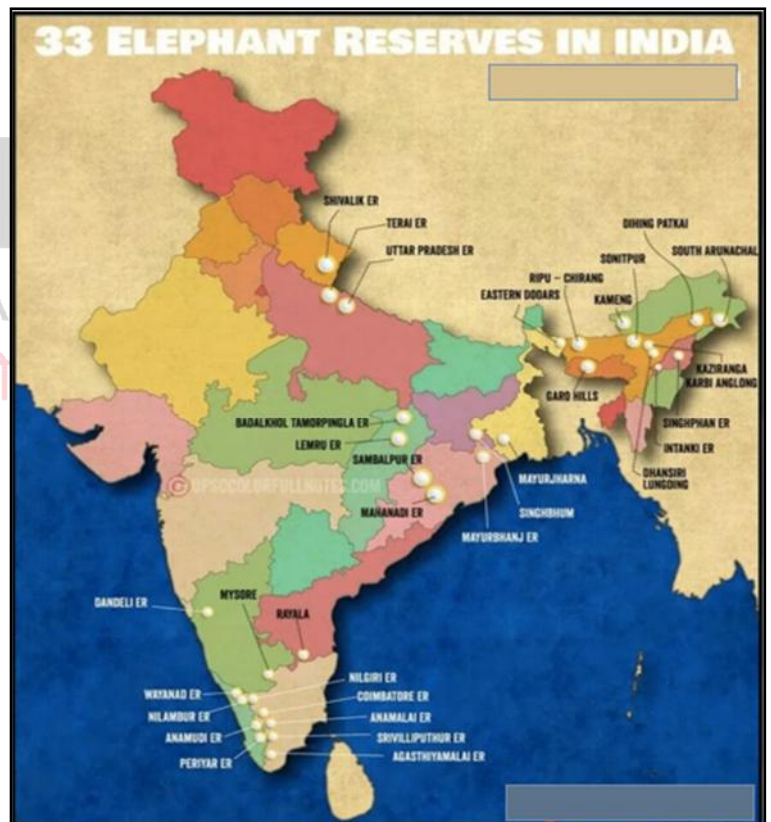
## INTERNATIONAL MOON DAY 2023 -

- International Moon Day, observed on July 20, commemorates the historic Apollo 11 mission's landing on the Moon in 1969. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made history by stepping onto the lunar surface at the site named Tranquility Base, while Michael Collins piloted the Columbia Command Module in lunar orbit.
- The United Nations General Assembly declared it as an international day to be observed in its resolution 76/76 on "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space" in 2021.



## WORLD ELEPHANT DAY 2023 -

- Recently, on the occasion of World Elephant Day, the Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Labour and Employment highlighted various initiatives and accomplishments in India's elephant conservation journey.
- World Elephant Day, observed globally on August 12, is a dedicated observance aimed at raising awareness about the critical challenges confronting elephants and advocating for their protection and conservation.
- The campaign World Elephant Day was initiated in 2012 to bring awareness to the disturbing situations of African and Asian elephants. The objective of this campaign is to create a sustainable environment where animals are not exploited and taken care of.
- India has the largest number of wild Asian Elephants, estimated at 29,964 according to the 2017 census by Project Elephant. It is about 60% of the species' global population.
- Karnataka has the highest number of elephants, followed by Assam and Kerala.
- Establishment of over 40 elephant corridors and 88 wildlife crossings to reduce conflicts. Creation of buffer zones around protected areas covering more than 17,000 sq. km.
- Project Elephant launched in 1992, covering 23 states across India. Improved the status of wild elephants, with a population increase from about 25,000 in 1992 to around 30,000 in 2021.
- Establishment of 33 Elephant Reserves covering approximately 80,777 Sq.km. These reserves play a crucial role in safeguarding wild elephant populations and their habitats.



**5 COUNTRIES THAT CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE DAY ON AUGUST 15 -**

- August 15 is a day of celebration for many countries around the world. It is the day on which they gained their independence from colonial rule. India, South Korea, North Korea, Bahrain, and Liechtenstein all celebrate their independence on August 15.
- India gained its independence from British rule in 1947. This was a momentous occasion for the Indian people, who had long struggled for freedom. The day is celebrated with parades, flag hoisting ceremonies, and cultural events.



**Republic of Congo-** The Republic of Congo, also known as Congo-Brazzaville, gained independence from France on August 15, 1960.

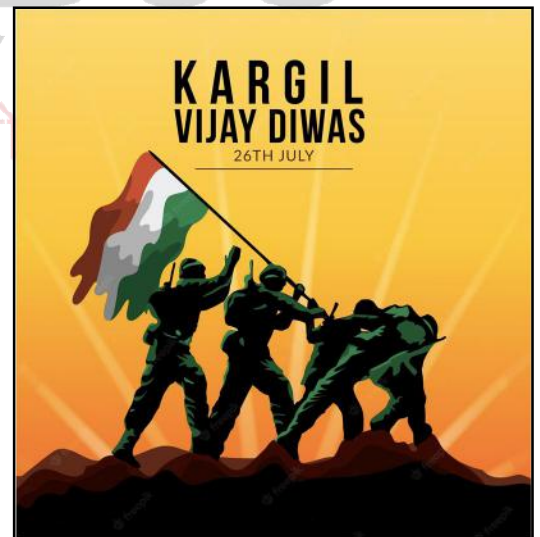
**South & North Korea-** On August 15, 1945, the Korean peninsula was freed from Japanese rule. South Korea and North Korea both celebrate this day as their National Liberation Day. South Korea and North Korea are two countries on the Korean Peninsula in East Asia. The countries are technically still at war, as the Korean War ended in 1953 with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

**Liechtenstein-** Liechtenstein is a small country in Europe that is surrounded by Switzerland and Austria. It gained independence from German rule on August 15, 1866. However, it did not officially declare August 15 as its National Day until 1940.

**Bahrain-** Bahrain is an island country in the Persian Gulf. It gained independence from the United Kingdom on August 15, 1971.

**KARGIL VIJAY DIWAS -**

- Recently, leaders across India's political spectrum paid their tributes to India's armed forces and the fallen martyrs on the occasion of Kargil Vijay Diwas.
- The Kargil War officially ended on July 26, 1999. The day is dedicated to the martyred soldiers of the Kargil War. Time period: – May-July of 1999.
- Location- Kargil (now a district in the Union Territory of Ladakh) district of Jammu and Kashmir along the Line of Control (LoC). Line of Control (LoC): it is a military control line between the Indian and Pakistani-controlled parts of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Cause of the war- The conflict was triggered when infiltrators from Pakistan crossed the LoC and occupied high positions in Ladakh's Kargil district.



**Operation Vijay-**

In the year 1999, India and Pakistan signed the Lahore Agreement to mutually resolve the Kashmir issue in a peaceful manner. However, the Pakistani troops began infiltrating toward the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC) under Operation Badr, hoping to cut off Indian Troops in Siachen.

The Indian Army responded by launching Operation Vijay. It had infiltrated into the high altitudes in the rocky mountainous region of Kargil with around 5,000 soldiers and captured it.

When the Indian Government got the information about it, 'Operation Vijay' was launched by the Indian army to throw back the intruders who had treacherously occupied Indian Territory.

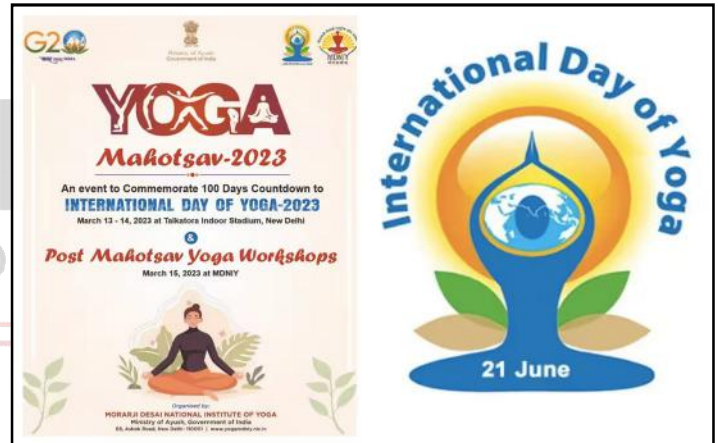
**ON JULY 23RD, WE COMMEMORATE THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF CHANDRA SHEKHAR AZAD, AN ICONIC AND FEARLESS FREEDOM FIGHTER OF INDIA -**

- Born in Bhabhra village (now in Alirajpur District of Madhya Pradesh) in 1906, Azad joined Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement at a young age of 15 and adopted the name "Azad" as a symbol of his defiance against British rule.
- He became a prominent member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a revolutionary group dedicated to armed struggle against the colonial government.
- Azad was also involved in daring acts of resistance, including the Kakori train robbery.
- Known for his organizational skills and mastery of disguise, he pledged to never be captured alive. Tragically, he lost his life on February 27, 1931, in a fierce gunfight with the police.



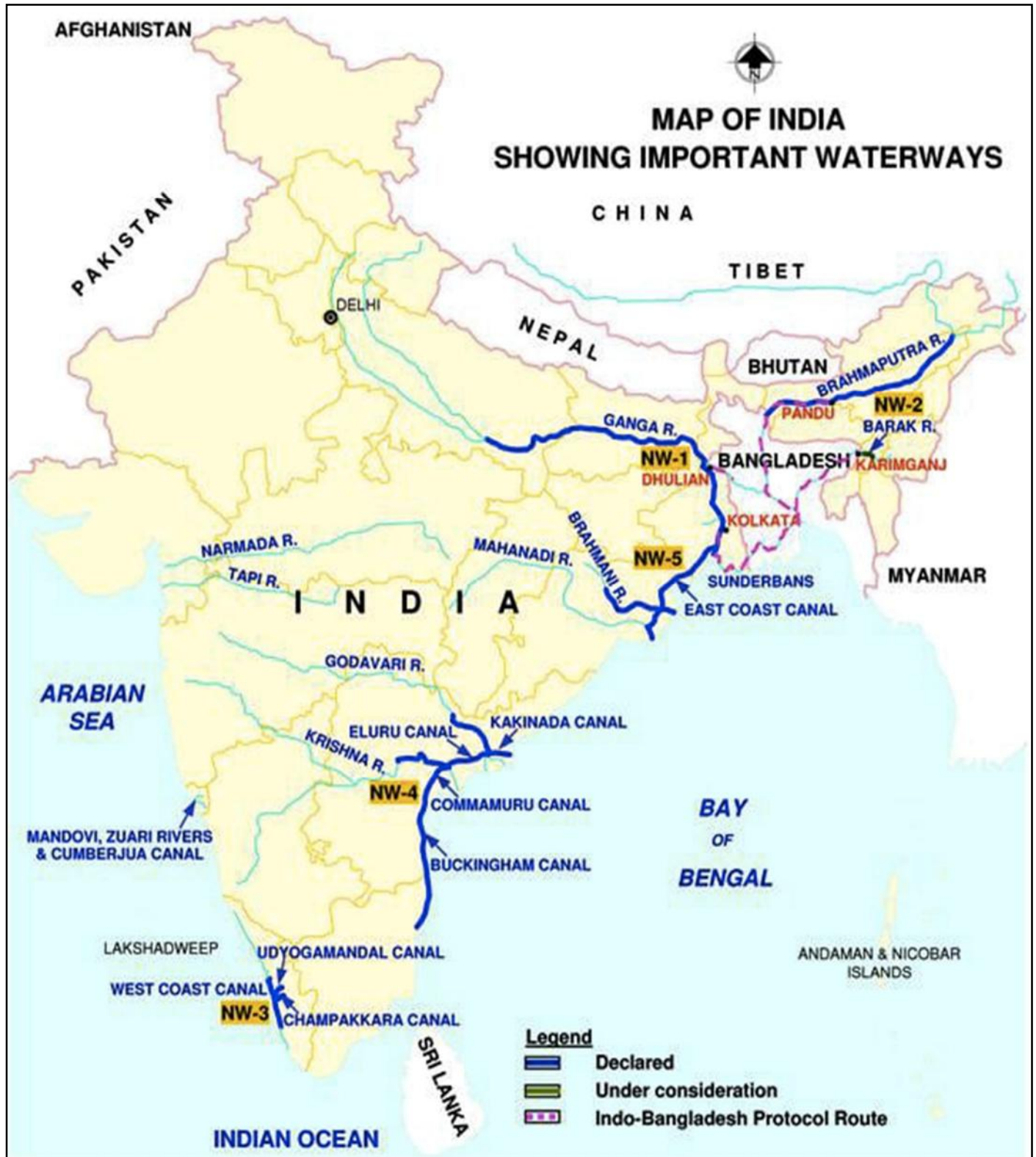
**INTERNATIONAL YOGA DAY 2023 -**

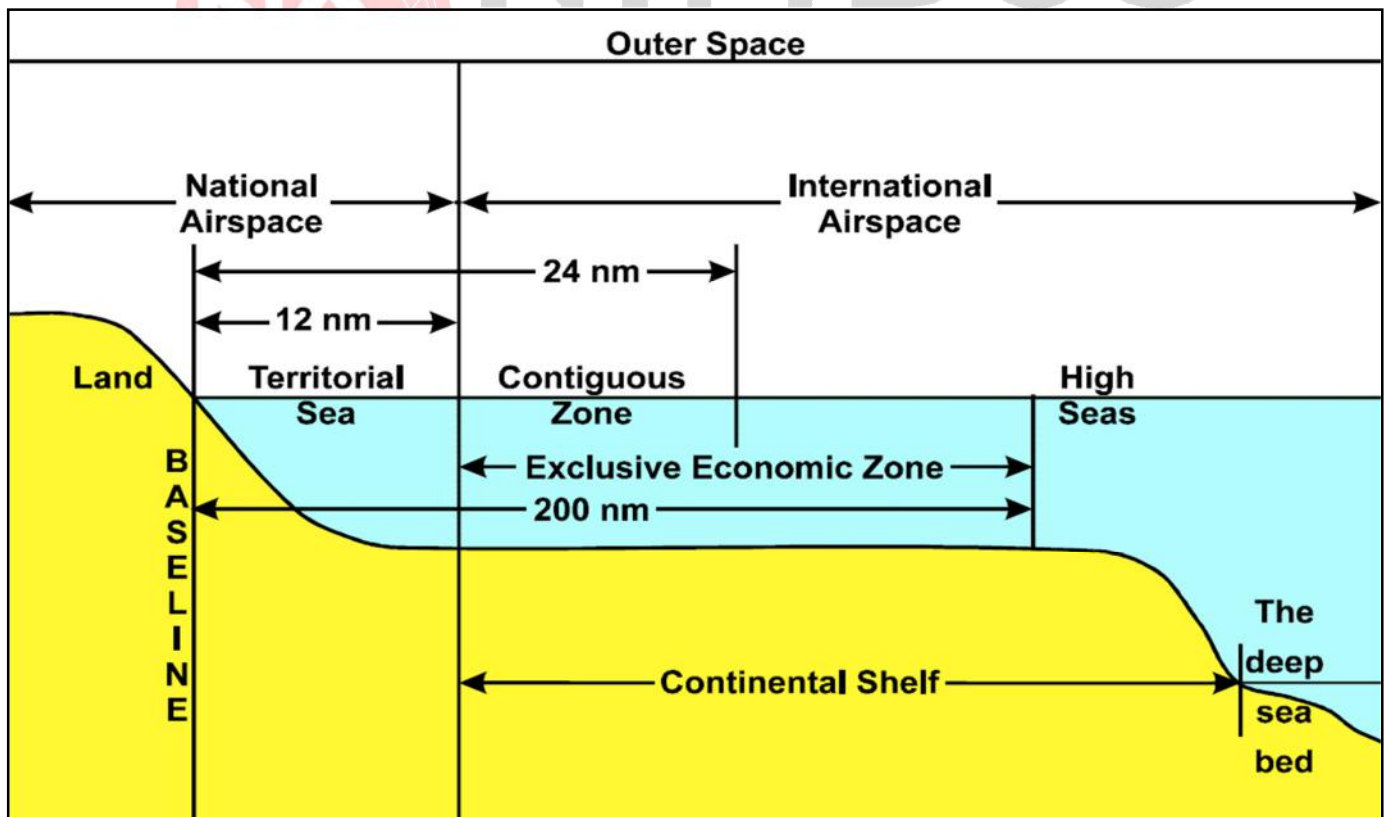
- International Yoga Day 2023 is celebrated every year on June 21st to promote the numerous benefits of practicing yoga. The chosen date coincides with the summer solstice, the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.
- This day serves as a platform to raise awareness about the holistic approach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



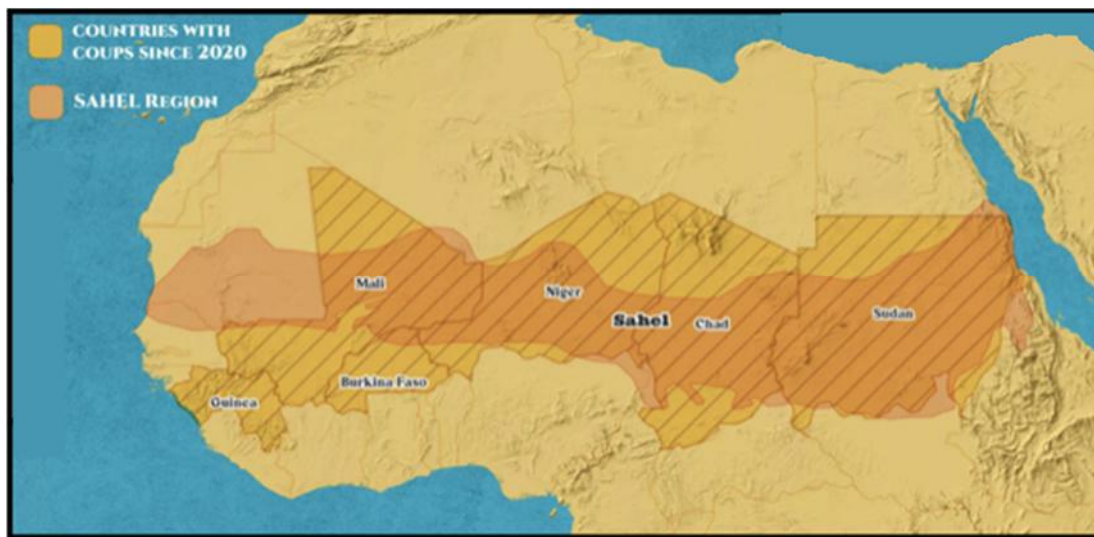
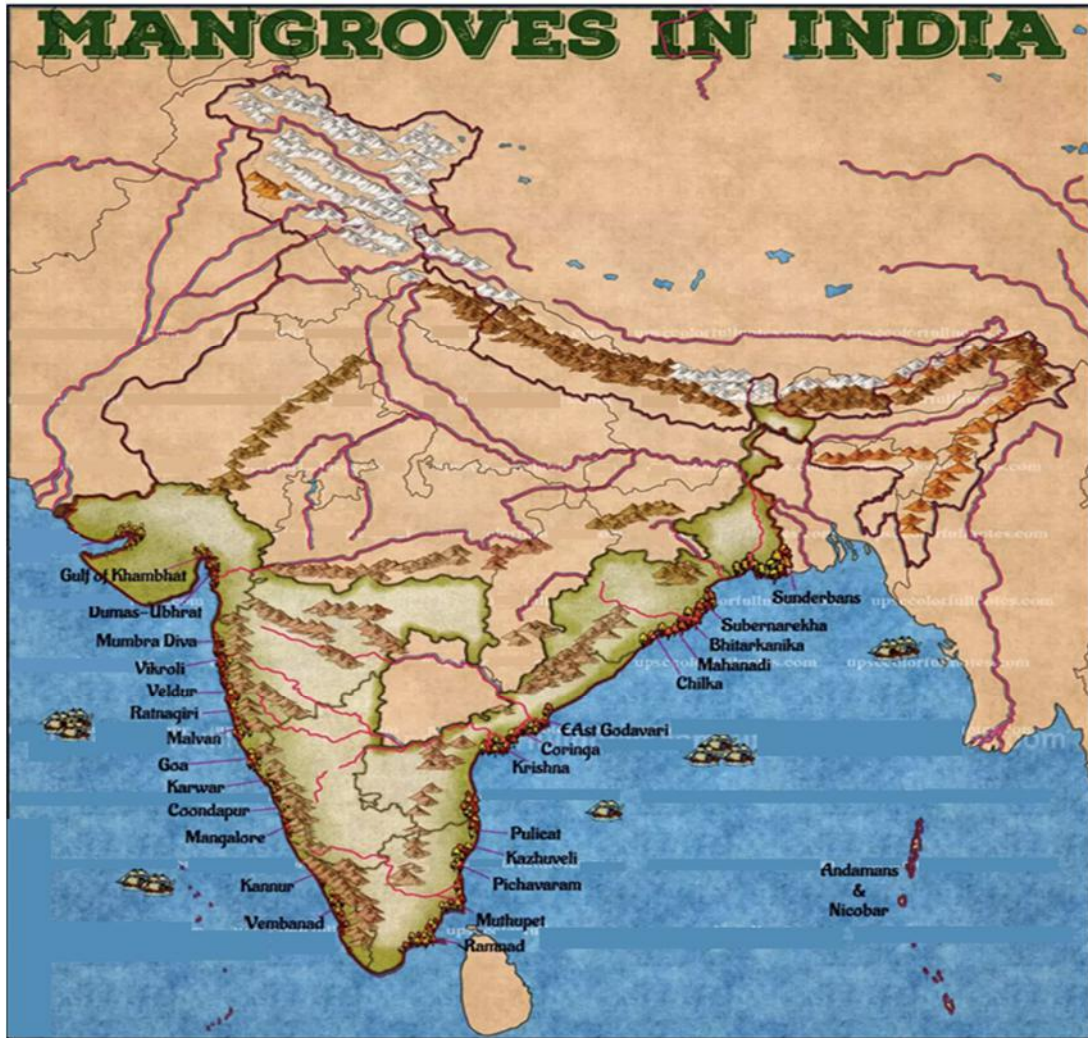


# IMPORTANT MAPS & ARTICLES











## RISE OF THE INDIAN RUPEE

In the realm of global trade, the US dollar has long reigned supreme, acting as the dominant currency for foreign exchange transactions, trade invoicing, and reserve holdings.

India's ongoing efforts to promote the use of the rupee in international trade represent a step towards de-dollarisation and currency diversification. While challenges remain, the combination of export growth, capital account convertibility, and sustained economic development may pave the way for the rupee to gain currency globally.

The journey to reduce dollar dominance requires concerted efforts, and success will depend on India's resilience and adaptability in a rapidly evolving global economic landscape.

However, an increasing number of countries are recognizing the inherent risks that come with an overreliance on the dollar, including exposure to US politics, sanctions, and exchange rate volatility. As a response to these concerns, many emerging economies are actively pursuing efforts to de-dollarize their trade and diversify their currency usage.

### What are the Trends in Currency Usage?

- **Use of Local Currencies in International Payments:**

- SWIFT data indicates a rise in the usage of local currencies in international transactions between 2013 and 2019.

- **Non-Dollar-Denominated Trade on the Rise:**

- The Triennial Bank Survey of 2022 shows a marginal increase in the share of dollars in daily turnover, but emerging economies are increasingly engaging in non-dollar-denominated trade.

- **Rise of the Chinese Renminbi:**

- In 2022, the Chinese renminbi became the fifth most traded currency globally, with over 70% of China-Russia trade settled in yuan and roubles.

- **Growth of Local Currency Bond Markets:**

- Emerging market local currency bond markets expanded significantly from 2015 to 2021, presenting an alternative to dollar-denominated assets.

### What are India's Efforts to Strengthen the Rupee?

- **Establishment of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC):**

- India's first IFSC in GIFT City, Gujarat, aimed to promote the use of the rupee in international financial transactions.

- **Liberalization of Capital Markets:**

- India increased the availability of rupee-denominated financial instruments, such as bonds and derivatives, to enhance the rupee's appeal.

- **Promotion of Digital Payment Systems:**

- Initiatives like the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have facilitated digital transactions in rupees.
- Recently, France and Singapore have adopted UPI.

- **Introduction of Special Vostro Rupee Accounts (SVRAs):**

- India permitted authorized banks from 18 countries to open SVRAs for settling payments in rupees at market-determined exchange rates.
- Objectives of the Mechanism are lower transaction costs, greater price transparency, faster settlement time, and overall promotion of international trade.

### What are the Opportunities for the Rupee's Global Standing?

- **Export Growth as a Catalyst:**

- India's ambitious export target of \$2 trillion by 2030 could contribute to improving the rupee's international standing.

- **Full Capital Account Convertibility:**
  - Achieving full convertibility of the rupee would enhance its attractiveness for international trade and investments.
- **Sustained Economic Growth:**
  - Higher and sustained economic growth would strengthen India's position in the global trade market.
- **Reducing US monetary Policy Influence:**
  - By reducing the use of the US dollar, countries can reduce the influence of US monetary policy on their own economies.
- **Improved Monetary Policy Effectiveness:**
  - Internationalisation can enhance the effectiveness of India's monetary policy.
  - With a broader international reach, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) can use the exchange rate as a tool to manage inflation and stimulate economic growth.
  - It provides greater flexibility in managing monetary conditions and responding to economic challenges.

#### What are the Challenges and Limitations of Trade in Rupee?

- **High Dependency on Dollar Invoicing:**
  - Despite efforts, a significant portion (86%) of India's imports is still dollar invoiced, limiting the impact of de-dollarisation.
- **Non-Convertible Currency Concerns:**
  - Partner countries may hesitate to engage in local currency trade due to the rupee's lack of convertibility, leading to potential trade challenges.
- **Ballooning Rupee Reserves:**
  - Accumulation of rupees in partner countries' reserves without adequate avenues for its use may pose issues.
- **Exchange Rate Volatility:**
  - Internationalising the rupee exposes it to greater exchange rate volatility.
  - Fluctuations in the value of the rupee can impact trade competitiveness, foreign investment flows, and financial market stability.
  - Managing exchange rate risks becomes crucial in order to mitigate potential adverse effects.
- **Capital Flight and Financial Stability:**
  - Opening up the rupee to international markets may lead to capital flight if investors lose confidence in the currency or anticipate unfavourable economic conditions.
  - This can strain the country's foreign exchange reserves, impact financial stability, and create challenges for monetary policy management.
- **Capital Controls:**
  - India still has capital controls in place that limit the ability of foreigners to invest and trade in Indian markets.
  - These restrictions make it difficult for the rupee to be used widely as an international currency.
- **Competing Currencies:**
  - The rupee faces competition from established international currencies like the US dollar, euro, and yen, which enjoy widespread acceptance and liquidity.
  - Gaining market share and displacing these dominant currencies can be a significant challenge.

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Strengthening Currency Convertibility:**
  - India should focus on achieving full capital account convertibility for the rupee.
  - This will enhance its attractiveness as a viable currency for international trade and investments.
  - Efforts to liberalize capital flows and ease foreign exchange controls are crucial in this regard.

- **Encouraging Bilateral Currency Arrangements:**
  - India can explore bilateral currency swap agreements with partner countries to promote the use of the rupee in trade settlements.
  - Such arrangements can reduce dependence on the dollar and foster stronger economic ties with other nations.
- **Leveraging Regional Initiatives:**
  - India can collaborate with other countries in the region to promote regional trade settlements in local currencies.
  - Participating in initiatives like the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) can strengthen the use of Asian currencies in trade and reduce reliance on the dollar.
- **Diversifying Trade Partnerships:**
  - India should diversify its trade partnerships to reduce the concentration of imports and exports with specific countries.
  - Engaging with a broader range of trading partners will create opportunities for increased usage of the rupee in global trade.
- **Building Trust in Currency Stability:**
  - Demonstrating prudent fiscal and monetary policies and maintaining currency stability will instil confidence in the rupee as a reliable and stable currency for international trade.

## BIG CATS CHALLENGE IN INDIA

India's sprawling landscapes are graced by the presence of majestic big cat species, each embodying power, grace, and an integral part of the nation's natural heritage. From the Royal Bengal tiger that prowls through dense forests to the elusive snow leopard that leaves its mark in the high Himalayas, these apex predators are not just emblematic of India's biodiversity, but also guardians of the delicate ecological balance. Recognizing the urgent need for their protection, India pioneered a visionary initiative known as Project Tiger in 1973, marking a crucial step in the conservation of big cats and their habitats.

The Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) of tiger reserves in India, 2022 (Fifth Cycle) report for Indian tiger reserves prepared by the Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger Conservation Authority revealed a mixed picture of progress and challenges. Concerns are emerging as India's wild tiger population has increased to a healthy 3,167 from just 1,400 in 2006, prompting discussions about the nation's forest capacity to sustain these numbers.

### What is Project Tiger?

- **About:**
  - Project Tiger is a tiger conservation programme launched on April 1, 1973, by the Government of India.
- **Objectives:**
  - Reduce factors that lead to the depletion of tiger habitats and to mitigate them by suitable management.
  - The damages done to the habitat shall be rectified to facilitate the recovery of the ecosystem to the maximum possible extent.
  - Ensure a viable tiger population for economic, scientific, cultural, aesthetic and ecological values.

### What are the Benefits of Project Tiger?

- **Tiger Population Recovery:**
  - One of the primary objectives of Project Tiger was to reverse the declining trend of the tiger population.
  - Through dedicated conservation efforts, the project has successfully increased the number of tigers in designated tiger reserves across the country.



- This increase in population not only preserves the species itself but also contributes to the overall health of the ecosystem.
- **Habitat Preservation:**
  - Project Tiger emphasizes the protection of tiger habitats, which has a positive ripple effect on the entire ecosystem.
  - By safeguarding these landscapes, the project indirectly benefits a wide range of flora and fauna that depend on these habitats for survival.
- This contributes to maintaining biodiversity and ecological balance.
- **Economic Value and Tourism:**
  - Tigers are charismatic megafauna that attract tourists from around the world. The project's success in conserving tiger populations has led to an increase in eco-tourism, generating revenue for local communities and the country.
  - This economic benefit helps incentivize local communities to participate in conservation efforts.
- **Ecological Balance:**
  - Tigers are apex predators that play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of their ecosystems.
  - By controlling prey populations, they prevent overgrazing and help manage the health of herbivore species.
  - This, in turn, has cascading effects on vegetation and other animal populations, contributing to a healthier ecosystem.
- **Protection of Keystone Species:**
  - Tigers are considered keystone species, as their presence or absence can dramatically affect the structure of their ecosystems.
  - By protecting tigers, Project Tiger indirectly safeguards a host of other species that are interconnected within the food web.
  - This helps maintain the overall stability of the ecosystem.

#### **What are the Challenges of Project Tiger?**

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:**
  - Rapid urbanization, infrastructure development, and agricultural expansion have led to habitat loss and fragmentation.
  - This poses a significant threat to tigers by reducing their living spaces.
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict:**
  - As tiger habitats shrink and human populations expand, instances of human-tiger conflicts have risen.
  - Tigers may attack livestock or even humans, leading to retaliatory killings and negative perceptions about tiger conservation. Balancing the needs of local communities and tiger conservation is a delicate challenge.
- **Poaching and Illegal Wildlife Trade:**
  - Despite conservation efforts, poaching remains a critical issue. Demand for tiger body parts, driven by traditional medicine and illegal trade, continues to threaten the species.
  - Effective enforcement against poachers and traffickers is essential to curb this illegal activity.
- **Lack of Connectivity between Habitats:**
  - Isolated tiger populations in fragmented habitats face genetic bottlenecks and reduced genetic diversity.
  - Establishing corridors to connect these populations is crucial for maintaining genetic health and allowing tigers to move freely between areas.
- **Climate Change Impact:**
  - Changing climatic conditions can alter tiger habitats and prey availability, impacting their survival.

- Project Tiger must incorporate climate resilience strategies to adapt to these changes and ensure the long-term survival of tigers and their ecosystems.
- **Limited Community Participation:**
- Involving local communities in conservation efforts is vital for success. However, limited community engagement and benefits from tiger reserves can lead to resistance and lack of support for conservation initiatives.
- **Conflict between Conservation and Development:**
- Balancing conservation goals with development projects, such as dams or roads, can lead to conflicts.
- Ensuring sustainable development that considers both human needs and environmental conservation is a delicate task.

#### What are the Concerns about India's Forest Capacity Reaching its Limit to Support Tigers?

- **Roaming Outside Protected Areas:**
- Almost 30% of the tiger population roams outside protected areas and regularly enters human habitations, leading to human-tiger conflicts.
- **Shrinking Tiger Corridors:**
- The construction of linear infrastructure, such as railway lines, highways, and canals, has resulted in the shrinking of tiger corridors, essential patches that connect two large forest areas.
- **Foraging into Human-Dominated Landscapes:**
- Tigers are believed to leave forests in search of herbivores that increasingly venture into human-dominated landscapes.
- This behaviour is driven by the takeover of natural flora by invasive species like lantana, which disrupts the natural ecosystem and forces herbivores to seek food in areas inhabited by humans.
- **Carrying Capacity:**
- With the increasing tiger population, questions arise about whether India's forests are nearing their carrying capacity to sustain these apex predators.
- **Inequitable Population Distribution:**
- While India has 53 tiger reserves spread over 75,000 sq km, just 20 reserves cover one-third of the area for tiger conservation, leading to inequitable population distribution.
- **Human-Tiger Conflict:**
- Emergent conflicts have been addressed through compassionate yet unscientific solutions, such as feeding and rescuing incapacitated wild tigers, artificially enriching tiger habitats, and translocating "problem" tigers.

#### What are the Conservation Efforts of Big Cats in India?

- **Project Lion:**
- To conserve the critically endangered Asiatic lion, Project Lion was launched, primarily focusing on the Gir Forest National Park in Gujarat.
- This initiative emphasizes habitat management, scientific research, anti-poaching measures, and community participation. It aims to ensure a sustainable and growing population of Asiatic lions.
- **Project Leopard:**
- Considering the widespread distribution of leopards and their adaptable nature, Project Leopard focuses on studying and conserving these elusive predators.
- It involves monitoring leopard populations, mitigating human-leopard conflicts, and preserving their habitats through a mix of protected areas and corridors.
- **Snow Leopard Conservation:**
- India's Himalayan landscapes are home to the elusive snow leopard. Conservation efforts include habitat protection, community engagement, research, and anti-poaching measures.

- Collaboration with neighbouring countries and international organizations helps in safeguarding this high-altitude predator.
- **Cheetah Reintroduction Project:**
- India has reintroduced the cheetah, an extinct species, in its original habitat. This initiative involves selecting suitable areas, restoring ecosystems, and addressing potential challenges in reintroducing and maintaining a viable cheetah population.
- **Legislation and Policy Framework:**
- Wildlife protection acts, like the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, provide the legal foundation for conserving big cats. These laws regulate hunting, poaching, and trade in wildlife and their derivatives.

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Strengthening Habitat Protection and Restoration:**
- Identify and protect critical tiger habitats from further encroachment, ensuring adequate space for population growth and genetic diversity.
- Invest in habitat restoration efforts, including reforestation and removal of invasive species, to create resilient and interconnected ecosystems.
- **Enhancing Anti-Poaching Measures:**
- Strengthen law enforcement through modern technology, intelligence networks, and rapid response teams to curb poaching and wildlife trafficking.
- Implement stringent penalties for offenders and work collaboratively with international partners to dismantle illegal wildlife trade networks.
- **Promoting Sustainable Human-Wildlife Coexistence:**
- Develop and implement community-based conservation models that engage local communities in conservation efforts, provide alternative livelihoods, and reduce human-wildlife conflicts.
- Employ innovative technologies such as early warning systems to minimize human-tiger conflicts and enhance safety for both humans and animals.
- **Integrating Climate-Resilient Strategies:**
- Develop climate adaptation plans within tiger reserves to mitigate the impacts of climate change on tiger habitats and prey availability.
- Establish buffer zones that can serve as refuges for wildlife during extreme weather events.
- **Addressing Carrying Capacity Concerns:**
- Conduct comprehensive studies to assess the carrying capacity of India's forests and ensure that the current and future tiger populations remain sustainable.
- Prioritize the creation and restoration of tiger corridors to facilitate genetic exchange and enable tigers to thrive.

## G20 AND OPPORTUNITIES OF BETTER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The world is facing multiple crises of climate change, socio-economic inequality, poverty, and conflict. The current model of economic growth is not equitable. Mere economic growth will not solve the world's problems; it needs to be sustainable and equitable too.

The G20, which represents 80% of the world's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and 2/3rd of the global population, is one of the most influential forum for global governance. However, it is at an impasse because the US wants its members to shut out Russia and China who it sees as obstacles in its personal gains.. India, as the chair of the G20, is not easily swayed by pressure from the G-7 and wants the G20 to concentrate on the agenda of 90% of humanity outside the G-7.



India, as chair of the G20, has offered a vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One Earth, One Family, One Future) to bring all citizens of the world together and make the world better for everyone. India has also proposed an approach of LIFE (lifestyles for sustainable development) to the G20. It requires “coherent actions amongst stakeholders at all levels rooted in collective actions across society”. It also recognizes and amplifies the role of local communities, local and regional governments and traditional knowledge in supporting sustainable lifestyles.

#### **What is the G20's Role in Shaping Global Governance?**

- **Economic Coordination:**

- Economic issues transcend national borders, necessitating coordinated efforts.
- The G20 acts as a platform for major economies to discuss and align their economic policies, promoting global stability and growth.
- The G20 accounts for more than 80% of world GDP, 75% of global trade.

- **Crisis Management:**

- The G20 emerged as a response to the 2008 financial crisis. Since then, it has played a critical role in crisis management by convening leaders to address immediate challenges and formulate strategies for recovery.
- In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, G20 leaders held an Extraordinary Virtual Leaders' Summit to coordinate global efforts. They committed to supporting research, ensuring access to medical supplies, and sharing best practices.

- **Global Financial System Reform:**

- The G20 aims to enhance the resilience and stability of the global financial system. It has pushed for reforms to financial institutions, regulations, and oversight mechanisms to prevent future crises.
- The G20's commitment to financial regulation led to the establishment of the Financial Stability Board (FSB), which monitors and makes recommendations about the global financial system.

- **Climate Change and Sustainable Development:**

- While not its primary mandate, the G20 addresses environmental issues and sustainable development. The group's decisions impact resource allocation, energy policies, and international climate commitments.

- **Shaping Agendas:**

- The G20 can set agendas and influence priorities on a global scale. Its discussions often drive international discourse and guide policies adopted by other international organizations.

#### **What are the Challenges of Global Governance?**

- **Diverse Interests and Priorities:**

- Countries have varied and often conflicting interests and priorities. Balancing these diverse perspectives while seeking common solutions can be immensely challenging.
- Disagreements over climate change commitments in international agreements like the Paris Agreement showcase how countries' diverse interests hinder reaching common solutions.

- **Lack of Coordinated Action:**

- Global governance requires coordinated action among numerous stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.

- **Inequitable Resource Distribution:**

- Unequal distribution of resources, both financial and technological, creates disparities in addressing global challenges.
- Developing countries often lack the resources and infrastructure to fully participate in and benefit from global governance initiatives.
- Limited access to Covid-19 vaccines in low-income countries highlighted resource disparities and challenges in providing equitable global public goods.

- **Complexity of Global Issues:**
  - Many global challenges are multifaceted, spanning economic, social, environmental, and political dimensions.
  - Addressing these issues requires comprehensive and integrated approaches that can be difficult to develop and implement.
- **Power Imbalances:**
  - Power imbalances among countries can lead to unequal influence in global governance processes.
  - Powerful nations may exert disproportionate control over decision-making, sidelining the voices of less powerful countries.
  - Unequal representation in global decision-making bodies like the UN Security Council can lead to skewed priorities and resolutions.
- **Environmental Degradation and Climate Change:**
  - Environmental issues, including climate change, require global cooperation to mitigate their impact. Disagreements over responsibility, mitigation strategies, and resource allocation hinder effective global responses.
  - The lack of consensus on climate finance commitments and emission reduction targets reflects the difficulty of achieving global cooperation on environmental issues.
- **Short-Termism and Political Pressures:**
  - Short political cycles and domestic pressures within individual countries may lead to decision-making that prioritizes immediate gains over long-term global benefits.
  - This short-term focus can hinder efforts to address complex, gradual challenges.
- **Challenges of G20 in Global Governance:**
  - The G20 has a limited membership that excludes many countries and regions, which may undermine its legitimacy and representation.
  - Feud among member countries, some even major economies, also hinders better coordination at global level

#### How Strengthening Local Governance can Strengthen Global Governance?

- **Community-Led Solutions for SDGs:**
  - Engaging the people most affected by the SDGs' challenges, such as local farmers for sustainable agriculture or healthcare workers for healthcare access, can lead to context-specific, innovative solutions.
  - Example: In rural areas, engaging local farmers in adopting climate-smart agriculture practices tailored to their environment boosts agricultural productivity and environmental conservation.
- **Strengthening Local Services and Resilience:**
  - Enhancing access to basic services like education, healthcare, clean water, and social safety nets directly ensures well-being and reduces vulnerability to shocks, ensuring a stronger foundation for communities.
  - Example: Constructing water purification units in remote villages enhances health and hygiene, addressing clean water and health-related SDGs.
- **Participatory Governance and Accountability:**
  - Promoting transparent decision-making processes involving local citizens, civic organizations, and elected representatives ensures that policies align with community needs, building trust and accountability.
- **Cooperative Networks for Shared Progress:**
  - Establishing platforms for local and international collaboration, knowledge exchange, and resource-sharing enables communities to collectively address challenges like climate change, poverty, and inequality.

#### How India is Changing the Trajectory of Progress?

- Promoting a vision of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam that respects diversity and fosters solidarity among nations and peoples.
- Advocating for an approach of LiFE that encourages sustainable lifestyles and consumption patterns that are compatible with planetary boundaries and human dignity.
  - Inspiring other countries to follow its example and learn from its successes and failures.
- Besides these steps, the Government of India shall empower local communities and local governments to find and implement solutions to their own problems using their own resources and knowledge.

#### **How G20 Can Strengthen Global Governance ?**

- **Collaborative Leadership and Agenda Setting:**

- The G20 should prioritize collaborative leadership, focusing on setting agendas that reflect the diverse interests of its member nations while also promoting sustainable development, equitable resource distribution, and global stability.
- Regular dialogues and consultations can ensure that decisions made are inclusive and holistic.

- **Integration of Sustainable Practices:**

- The G20 should take proactive measures to integrate sustainability into economic policies and decisions.
- This could involve incentivizing green investments, supporting renewable energy adoption, and encouraging circular economy models.
- Member nations could also collectively commit to carbon neutrality targets and align their energy policies with the Paris Agreement.

- **Strengthening Crisis Preparedness:**

- Building upon its role in crisis management, the G20 should establish a framework for rapid response to global emergencies, whether financial, health-related, or environmental.
- This framework could involve preemptive planning, information sharing, and coordinated resource allocation to ensure a swift and effective response to crises.

- **Bridging the Gap in Resource Distribution:**

- To address inequitable resource distribution, the G20 should create initiatives that facilitate technology transfer, knowledge sharing, and capacity building for developing nations.
- Investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure can empower these countries to actively participate in global governance and contribute to sustainable solutions.

- **Empowering Local Governance:**

- The G20 should encourage member nations to empower local communities by devolving decision-making powers and resources.
- Support for participatory governance, capacity development at the local level, and mechanisms for sharing best practices can enhance the effectiveness of local initiatives in addressing global challenges.



## IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1. Consider the following pairs:</p> <p>1. <b>Dhala Crater:</b> It is India's oldest and largest impact crater.</p> <p>2. <b>Lonar Crater:</b> It is a highly saline and alkaline water lake with no outflow.</p> <p>3. <b>Ramgarh Crater:</b> It is located in Rajasthan's Baran district.</p> <p>How many of the above pairs are correct ?</p> <p>a) Only one<br/>b) Only two<br/>c) All three<br/>d) None</p>   | <p>containing ethyl alcohol that is at least 99% pure, derived from agricultural products and blended exclusively with gasoline.</p> <p>2. The Government of India has advanced the target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol to 2025 from 2030.</p> <p>3. The government has allowed ethanol production from surplus rice with Food Corporation of India and maize respectively for blending with petrol under Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme.</p> <p>How many of the above statements is/are correct ?</p> <p>a) Only one<br/>b) Only two<br/>c) All three<br/>d) None</p>   | <p>d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct</p>  |
| <p>2. With reference to No Confidence Motion, consider the following statements:</p> <p><b>Statement I</b> - A No-Confidence Motion should state the reasons for its adoption in the Lok Sabha.</p> <p><b>Statement II</b> - It can be moved against the entire council of ministers and not against an individual minister.</p> <p>Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?</p> <p>a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.<br/>b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.<br/>c) Statement-I is correct but Statement II is incorrect.<br/>d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement II is correct.</p> | <p>4. Consider the following statements regarding Hygroelectricity:</p> <p><b>Statement I</b> - Hygroelectricity is the generation of electricity from the humidity of the air.</p> <p><b>Statement II</b> - The key to harvesting electricity from humid air lies in a tiny device comprising two electrodes and a thin layer of material filled with nanopores.</p> <p>Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?</p> <p>a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I.<br/>b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.<br/>c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect</p> | <p>5. Consider the following statements:</p> <p><b>Statement-I:</b> UNESCO was established with the aim of promoting international collaboration in education, science, culture, and communication.</p> <p><b>Statement-II:</b> The founders of UNESCO believed that fostering mutual understanding and knowledge-sharing among nations would contribute to world peace and security.</p> <p>Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?</p> <p>a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation of Statement-I.<br/>b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.<br/>c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.<br/>d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.</p> |
| <p>3. With reference to ethanol blending, consider the following statements:</p> <p>1. An ethanol blend is defined as a blended motor fuel</p>  | <p>6. Consider the following district of Uttar Pradesh:</p> <p>1. Agra<br/>2. Aligarh<br/>3. Lucknow<br/>4. Kanpur<br/>5. Chitrakoot<br/>6. Jhansi</p> <p>How many of the above are nodes of Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) ?</p> <p>a) Only Three<br/>b) Only Four<br/>c) Only Five<br/>d) All six</p>   |   |

7. With reference to Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (AB-PMJAY) consider the following statements:

1. It is the world's largest health assurance scheme fully financed by the government and the cost of implementation is shared between the Central and State Governments.
2. It provides a cover of Rs. 10 lakhs per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empaneled hospitals in India.
3. It is only applicable to the economically weaker sections of the society.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

8. Consider the following statements, with reference to Select Committee in the Parliament of India:

**Statement I** - Select Committee is an adhoc or temporary committees, which are set up for a specific purpose, such as examining a particular Bill and are dissolved after it.

**Statement II** - The committee is entirely made of MPs of the opposition headed by the leader of opposition.

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

- a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and

Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.  
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement II is incorrect.  
d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement II is correct.

9. Consider the following statements:

**Statement I** - International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed on 9 August each year to raise awareness and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population.

**Statement II** - The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the period between 2022 and 2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages.

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

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

10. Which Indian state is conducting a caste-based survey across the state ?

- a) Madhya Pradesh
- b) Bihar
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Kerala

11. Recently an island named Katchatheevu was in the news. In which of the following strait is the island located ?

- a) Sunda strait
- b) Malacca strait
- c) Palk strait
- d) Bass strait

12. With reference to the Aditya-L1 mission, consider the following statements:

1. Its primary objective is to observe the layers of the Sun
2. The mission carries ten payloads.
3. It aims to provide insights into various solar phenomena and their impact on space weather.

How many of the statements given above are correct ?

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

13. Consider the following pairs:

1. Indian Penal Code, 1860	Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha sanhita Billm 2023
2. Criminal Procedure Code, 1898	Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023
3. Indian Evidence Act, 1872	Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?

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

14. Which one of the following countries has been suffering from decades of civil strife and food shortages and was in the news in the recent past for its very severe famine? (2023)

- a) Angola

- b) Costa Rica  
c) Ecuador  
d) Somalia
- 15. Consider the following statements**  
**Statement-I:** Order of precedence of gallantry Awards is Param Vir Chakra, the Mahavir Chakra, the Kirti Chakra, the Ashoka Chakra, the Vir Chakra, and the Shaurya Chakra.  
**Statement-II:** All the gallantry awards may be awarded posthumously. Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?  
a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I  
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I  
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement II is incorrect  
d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement II is correct
- 16. In the 'Index of Eight Core Industries', which one of the following is given the highest weight?**  
a) Coal production  
b) Electricity generation  
c) Fertilizer production  
d) Steel production
- 17. Consider the following countries:**  
1. Kazakhstan  
2. Turkmenistan  
3. Iraq  
4. Uzbekistan  
How many of the countries given above border the Caspian Sea ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) Only three  
d) All four
- 18. Consider the following statements about Women Empowerment Index:**  
1. It is developed by UN Women and UNESCO.  
2. It includes 5 dimensions of which one is freedom from any type of violence.  
3. SDG-10 focuses on creating Gender Equality.  
How many of the above statements are correct ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) All three  
d) None
- 19. Consider the following statements:**  
**Statement I** - IMEI numbers are fixed for a mobile device throughout its lifetime and cannot be changed.  
**Statement II** - IMEI numbers are hard coded into the hardware of the device during production, making them unique and unchangeable.  
Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statement ?  
a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.  
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct, and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.  
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.  
d) Statement-I is incorrect, but Statement-II is correct.
- 20. Consider the following statements with reference to 'Floodwatch' Mobile App:**  
1. The App provides real time information of flood like situation up to 5 days.  
2. The App is launched by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.  
3. The App is inclusive as it is available in all the 22 scheduled languages.  
How many of the statements given above are correct ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) All Three  
d) None
- 21. Consider the following statements regarding INS Vindhyagiri:**  
1. It is an advanced stealth frigate, named after the mountain range in Kerala.  
2. This ship was built under Project 17A.  
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 22. Bagdogra Airport is based in which state ?**  
a) Gujarat  
b) Andaman & Nicobar Island  
c) Arunachal Pradesh  
d) West Bengal
- 23. Where is India's first 3D-printed post office located?**  
a) Mumbai, Bandra-Kurla Complex  
b) New Delhi, Connaught Place  
c) Bengaluru, Cambridge Layout  
d) Chennai, Anna Salai



24. Where is the World Athletics Championships 2023 taking place?

- a) Tokyo, Japan
- b) Budapest, Hungary
- c) Paris, France
- d) Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

25. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is a micro credit scheme, facilitating a working capital collateral free loan without any interest.
2. It is launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2020 and covers whole India.
3. Recently, lending period of this scheme has been extended till December 2025.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

26. Consider the following statements, with reference NAMASTE scheme:

1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
2. Its main aim is to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

27. Consider the following statements regarding Spike missile:

1. It is a fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile (ATGM).
2. It is indigenously built in India by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
3. It can work in non-line-of-sight (NLOS) mode allowing the

gunner to operate from a covered position.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

28. Consider the following statements, with reference to the Kuril Islands:

1. The Kuril Islands are a group of four islands located between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean.
2. They are administered as part of the Sakhalin Oblast in the Russian Far East.
3. These islands are claimed by Russia but occupied by Japan.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

29. Consider the following statements regarding Spike missile:

1. It is a fire-and-forget anti-tank guided missile (ATGM).
2. It is indigenously built in India by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
3. It can work in non-line-of-sight (NLOS) mode allowing the

gunner to operate from a covered position.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

gunner to operate from a covered position.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

30. Consider the following statements, with reference to the Kuril Islands:

1. The Kuril Islands are a group of four islands located between the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean.
2. They are administered as part of the Sakhalin Oblast in the Russian Far East.
3. These islands are claimed by Russia but occupied by Japan.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

31. With reference to Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It is a micro credit scheme, facilitating a working capital collateral free loan without any interest.
2. It is launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 2020 and covers whole India.
3. Recently, lending period of this scheme has been extended till December 2025.

How many of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

- 32. Consider the following statements, with reference NAMASTE scheme:**  
1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).  
2. Its main aim is to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.  
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 33. With reference to ethanol blending, consider the following statements:**  
1. An ethanol blend is defined as a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol that is at least 99% pure, derived from agricultural products and blended exclusively with gasoline.  
2. The Government of India has advanced the target for 20% ethanol blending in petrol to 2025 from 2030.  
3. The government has allowed ethanol production from surplus rice with Food Corporation of India and maize respectively for blending with petrol under Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme.  
How many of the above statements is/are correct ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) All three  
d) None
- 34. Consider the following statements, with reference to Pong Dam:**  
1. It is the highest earth fill dam in India that has been declared as Ramsar Site in 2002.  
2. Pong Dam is a manmade reservoir. It was constructed in 1975 on river Beas in wetland of Shivalik hills of Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.  
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 35. With reference to coal-based thermal power plants in India, consider the following statements:**  
1) None of them uses seawater.  
2) None of them is set up in a water-stressed district.  
3) None of them is privately owned.  
How many of the above statements are correct ?  
a) Only one  
b) Only two  
c) All three  
d) None
- 36. What was the exact constitutional status of India on 26th January 1950 ?**  
a) A Democratic Republic  
b) A Sovereign Democratic Republic  
c) A Sovereign Secular Democratic Republic  
d) A Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic
- 37. Where will the 31st edition of the Malabar exercise be held ?**  
a) Tokyo  
b) New Delhi  
c) Sydney  
d) Washington D.C.
- 38. Food Safety and Standard Authority of India (FSSAI) has approved which animal as a 'food animal' ?**  
a) Himalayan Yak  
b) Buffalo  
c) Mule  
d) Camel
- 39. In India, which one among the following formulates the fiscal policy ?**  
a) Planning Commission  
b) Ministry of Finance  
c) Finance Commission  
d) The Reserve Bank of India
- 40. Consider the following statements with reference to Astra Missile:**  
1. ASTRA is an all-weather indigenous Beyond Visual Range (BVR) class of Air-to-Air Missile system.  
2. It was developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and capable of destroying the targets up to 1000 kilometre.  
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?  
a) 1 only  
b) 2 only  
c) Both 1 and 2  
d) Neither 1 nor 2
- 41. The Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (LUPEX) is a joint initiative between the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and which of the following space agencies ?**  
a) Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)  
b) Canadian Space Agency (CSA)  
c) European Space Agency (ESA)  
d) National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

42. Consider the following statements with reference, to Bharat New Car Assessment Programme (Bharat NCAP):

1. Bharat NCAP is an indigenous programme for testing cars in which car manufacturers can volunteer to get a star rating indicating the safety of their models in a crash.

2. Under the programme, crash tests will evaluate vehicle performance and award ratings from 0 to 5 stars.

3. The programme is mandatory for the vehicles with gross weight exceeding 3,500 kg. How many of the statements given above are correct ?

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

43. Which country is the host of 'World Water Week 2023' event?

- a) Sweden
- b) USA
- c) Sri Lanka
- d) Bangladesh

44. Which company is set to launch 'India's first kerosene-oxygen-powered rocket' ?

- a) Agnikul Cosmos
- b) Dhruv Cosmos
- c) Pixxel Cosmos
- d) Orbit Cosmos

45. Which institution plans to set up 'Research Analyst Administration and Supervisory Body (RAASB)' ?

- a) RBI
- b) SEBI
- c) NITI Aayog
- d) NASSCOM

**ANSWER KEY**

1-c	2-d	3-c	4-a	5-b	6-d	7-b	8-c	9-b	10-b	11-c	12-c	13-a	14-d	15-a
16-b	17-b	18-a	19-a	20-d	21-b	22-d	23-c	24-b	25-d	26-b	27-b	28-b	29-c	30-b
31-d	32-b	33-c	34-c	35-d	36-b	37-c	38-a	39-b	40-a	41-a	42-a	43-a	44-a	45-b

