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CURRENT AFFAIRS

NATIONAL NEWS

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.



JAGANNATH RATH YATRA -

- The Jagannath Rath Yatra officially begins in Puri, Odisha. This year, the festival commenced on June 20, 2023 and will culminate on June 28, 2023.
- Jagannath Rath Yatra is an annual Hindu festival that celebrates the journey of Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Lord Balabhadra, and his younger sister Goddess Subhadra from their home temple in Puri, Odisha to their aunt's temple in Gundicha, about three kilometres away.
- The legend behind the festival is that once, Goddess Subhadra expressed her desire to visit her aunt's place in Gundicha.
- To fulfil her wish, Lord Jagannath and Lord Balabhadra decided to accompany her on a chariot ride. This event is commemorated every year by taking the deities on a similar journey.

- The festival dates back to at least the 12th century CE, when the Jagannath temple was built by King Anantavarman Chodaganga Deva. However, some sources suggest that the festival was already in practice since ancient times.
- The festival is also known as Festival of Chariots, as the deities are carried on three massive wooden chariots that are pulled by devotees with ropes.
- It begins on the second day of the bright fortnight of the month of Ashadha (June-July) and lasts for nine days.
- The rupakar servitors are skilled craftsmen responsible for carving intricate figures of birds, animals, flowers, and guardian deities on the chariots.



GOVERNMENT SETS UP 3-MEMBER PANEL TO PROBE MANIPUR VIOLENCE -

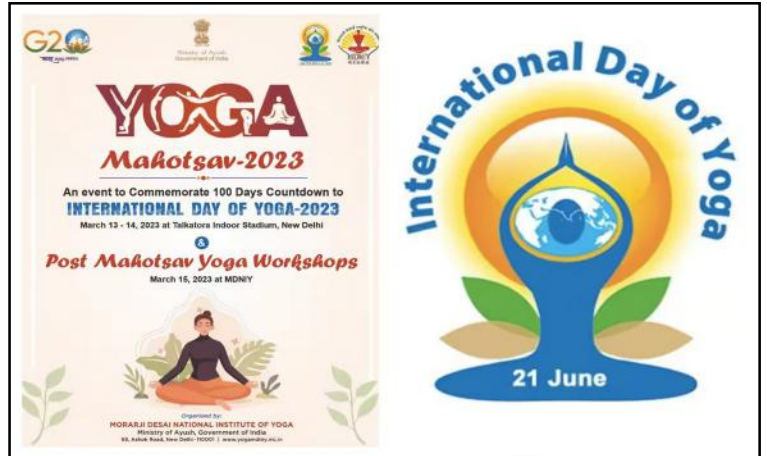
- The Indian government has established a commission of inquiry, led by former Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court, Ajai Lamba, to investigate the recent series of violent incidents in Manipur.
- With more than 80 lives lost, the violence and riots have targeted members of various communities. The commission aims to delve into the causes, spread, and administrative response to these tragic events.
- The commission of inquiry, established by the central government, has been given a clear mandate to investigate the Manipur violence. It will examine the sequence of events leading up to the violence, along with the facts surrounding the incidents. The commission will also assess whether there were any lapses or negligence on the part of authorities or individuals responsible for maintaining law and order.
- The commission will specifically investigate the causes and spread of the violence and riots targeting different communities in Manipur. It will examine the adequacy of administrative measures taken to prevent and address the violence, as well as the response to the incidents by responsible authorities. The commission is empowered to consider complaints or allegations brought before it by individuals or associations.
- Heading the commission is former Chief Justice Ajai Lamba, bringing significant legal expertise and experience to the inquiry. Assisting Justice Lamba are retired IAS officer Himanshu Shekhar Das and retired IPS officer Aloka Prabhakar. Their collective knowledge and insights from the administrative and law enforcement domains will contribute to a comprehensive investigation.



- The commission is expected to submit its final report to the central government as soon as possible, with a deadline of no later than six months from the date of its first sitting. However, the commission has the discretion to provide interim reports if it deems necessary, keeping the government informed of its findings and progress.

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.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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)-

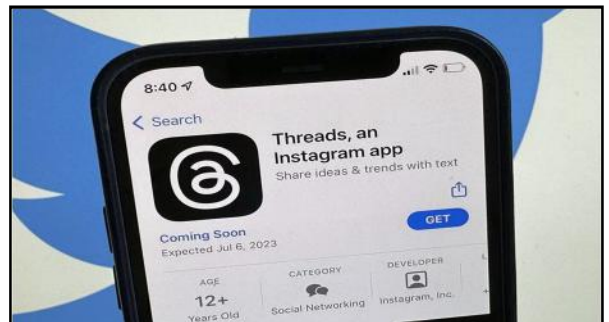
- It is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system. It is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.
- It was established in 2006. The Council was created by the United Nations General Assembly in 2006. It replaced the former United Nations 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.

ISRAELI MILITARY OPERATION IN JENIN REFUGEE CAMP -

- Recently, Israel launched a military operation in the Jenin Refugee Camp in the occupied West Bank, resembling wide-scale operations carried out during the second Palestinian uprising (2000-2005).
- The operation aimed to destroy and confiscate weapons and targeted specific militant groups. It involved around 2,000 soldiers and utilized military drones for strikes.
- The Jenin camp has historically been a stronghold for armed struggle against Israeli occupation and a focal point for violence.
- Jenin Refugee Camp is a Palestinian refugee camp located in the northern West Bank, specifically in the city of Jenin.
- Established in 1953, the camp was created to accommodate Palestinian refugees who were displaced during the 1948 Arab Israeli war, also known as the Nakba ("catastrophe" in Arabic).



Other Important Places Linked to Israel Palestine Conflict-

- Al Aqsa Mosque-** It is one of the holiest structures in the Islamic faith known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, and by Jews as the Temple Mount.
- Sheikh Jarrah-** Sheikh Jarrah is a neighborhood located north of the Old City in East Jerusalem.
- West Bank-** West Bank is a landlocked territory in West Asia. It also contains a significant section of the western Dead Sea.
- Gaza Strip-** The Gaza Strip is located between Israel and Egypt. Israel occupied the strip after 1967, but relinquished control of Gaza City and day-to-day administration in most of the territory during the Oslo peace process.
- Golan Heights-** The Golan Heights is a strategic plateau that Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war. Israel effectively annexed the territory in 1981.

CHINA BLOCKS PROPOSAL TO BLACKLIST PAKISTAN-BASED TERRORIST -

- China's recent move to block a proposal at the United Nations (UN) to designate a Pakistan-based LeT terrorist as a global terrorist has drawn attention and raised concerns among the international community.
- In September 2022, China had put a hold on the proposal to designate the terrorist at the UN.
- The blocked proposal, brought forward by India and the United States, aimed to blacklist a wanted individual for his involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council.



- This is not the first time China has blocked efforts to blacklist Pakistan-based terrorists under the UN Security Council's sanctions committee.
- China has consistently placed holds on listings that target individuals associated with terrorism in Pakistan including in 2009, 2016, 2017.
- China's actions have raised concerns among countries that seek to combat terrorism globally, as it appears to prioritise its relationship with Pakistan over international security cooperation.
- It also highlights the challenges of achieving consensus within the UN Security Council on sensitive issues related to terrorism.
- 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee- The committee is part of the UN Security Council and its job is to implement international sanctions against terrorists. The other two committees with similar roles are the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the Security Council Committee.
- The Al Qaeda committee was established as the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee on October 15, 1999, after Security Council Resolution 1267 designated al-Qaeda and the Taliban as terrorist bodies. In 2011, a separate committee was formed for the Taliban.

CHINA INKS DEAL WITH PAKISTAN TO SET UP NUCLEAR POWER PLANT -

- China and Pakistan have signed a significant agreement worth USD 4.8 billion to establish a 1,200-megawatt nuclear power plant. This deal reflects the deepening strategic cooperation between the two nations and comes as a welcome development for Pakistan.
- Pakistan is determined to enhance its energy sector and overcome its economic difficulties by assuring the prompt initiation of the nuclear power plant project.
- Pakistan's existing Chashma power plants play a crucial role in generating affordable nuclear power. With the addition of the 1,200-megawatt Chashma-V nuclear plant, Pakistan will further enhance its capacity for clean and sustainable energy production. The expansion of nuclear power facilities is vital for meeting the growing energy demands of the country and reducing its dependence on fossil fuels.
- Amid Pakistan's mounting financial debt, its ability to secure multilateral loans or bilateral assistance is heavily reliant on support from China. While other countries have been selective in their support, China has consistently stood by Pakistan's side. The ongoing cooperation between the two nations demonstrates the strength of their alliance and the confidence China has in Pakistan's potential for economic growth.
- IMF has signed a deal with Pakistan in 2019 to provide USD 6.5 billion on fulfilment of certain conditions. The plan was derailed several times and the full reimbursement is still pending. According to finance minister of Pakistan, Ishaq Dar about \$2.7bn are left to be disbursed from the package, which is scheduled to expire this month.



INDIA-EGYPT RELATIONS -

- Recently, the Indian Prime Minister (PM) has visited Egypt for the first time since 1997 to discuss bilateral relations between India and Egypt. The Government of Egypt bestowed the highest honor of the land — the Order of the Nile — on the PM.
- The visit marked the signing of a strategic partnership agreement between India and Egypt, which is a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. The strategic partnership will have broadly four elements:

- ❖ Political
 - ❖ Defense and Security
 - ❖ Economic engagement
 - ❖ Scientific and academic collaboration.
 - ❖ Cultural and people-to-people contact
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs):** Three MoUs were signed between India and Egypt in the fields of agriculture, archaeology and antiquities, and competition law, aiming to enhance cooperation in these areas.
 - Indian PM met with the India Unit, a group of high-level ministers constituted by Egyptian President in Egyptian Cabinet in March, 2023 to enhance India-Egypt relations. Indian PM paid homage to over 4,300 Indian soldiers who lost their lives in Egypt and Aden during World War I at the Heliopolis Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery.
 - **Egypt's Participation in G-20 Summit:** Egypt was designated as a "guest country" at the upcoming G-20 summit scheduled to be held in September, further strengthening bilateral ties between India and Egypt.
 - **Al-Hakim Mosque:** Indian Prime Minister visited the 11th-century Al-Hakim Mosque in Cairo, which was restored by India's Dawoodi Bohra community.



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

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.



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

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



AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

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 Bhagvad Gita. The institution has never relied on advertisement in its publications, for revenue generation.

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

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

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



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DEFENCE NEWS

INDIA GIFTS MISSILE CORVETTE INS KIRPAN TO VIETNAM -

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



INDIA'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.



DRDO AND L&T TIE-UP FOR AIP SYSTEM IN INDIAN NAVY -

- Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) have formed a partnership to create an Indigenous Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) System for the submarines in the Indian Navy.
- Under this collaboration, two AIP System Modules are being developed for the Kalvari Class submarines. These modules, comprising fuel cell-based Energy Modules (EMs), aim to generate power and produce hydrogen as needed. This innovative approach eliminates the requirement to store hydrogen onboard, thereby addressing safety issues associated with carrying hydrogen on submarines.
- L&T is the recipient of the Transfer of Technology (ToT) for this Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)-developed system. Through the integration of these modules, India will establish itself among a select group of nations with the capability to develop indigenous fuel cell-based AIP technology.



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.

Country	Deployed warheads ^a	Stored warheads ^b	Total stockpile ^c		Total inventory ^d	
	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 ^e	225	225	225 ^f
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 ^g	25	30 ^g
Israel	–	90	90	90	90	90
Total	3 844	5 732	9 490	9 576	12 710	12 512

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

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

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



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

- The Global Firepower Index ranks the countries based on their potential military strength. India is ranked fourth in the index. The Global Firepower Index ranked 145 countries. The countries were evaluated based on prolonged offensive and defensive military campaigns.
- The Global Firepower Index is calculated using fifty individual factors from geography to logistical capability.
- It also includes manpower, land forces, airpower, natural resources, naval forces, logistics and financials.
- Under manpower, the factors considered are total population, paramilitary, reaching military age annually, active reserves and active services.
- Under equipment, the factors considered are trainer fleet, aircraft fleet strength, helicopter fleet, attack fleets, rocket projectors, tank strength, towed artillery, aircraft carriers, naval fleet strength, destroyers, submarines, coastal patrol craft, frigates, mine warfare craft, coastal patrol craft and tanker fleets.
- The finance factors include external debt, defence budget, reserves of foreign exchange and gold and purchasing power parity.
- The Global Firepower Index, 2022, puts the US at the top, Russia at the second spot, China at No. 3, and India at No. 4.

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

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

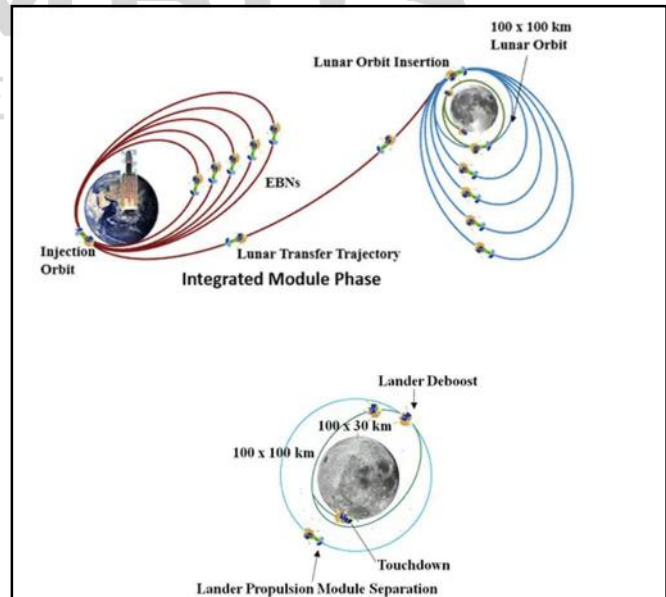
CHANDRAYAAN 3 LIFTS OFF FOR ITS JOURNEY TO THE MOON -

- India launched its ambitious Chandrayaan-3 mission to the Moon. The spacecraft launched aboard India's heaviest rocket, Launch vehicle Mark-III a.k.a LVM3 on a journey to the Moon.
- The spacecraft will complete the 3,84,000 kilometers-long journey in nearly 45 days to attempt a soft-landing on the Moon by end of August. The Chandrayaan-3 mission began its journey to the Moon onboard India's heaviest rocket, the Launch Vehicle Mark-III.
- Over 10,000 people from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka have arrived at Sriharikota since early morning and they are witnessing the launch from the dedicated space gallery set up by Isro adjacent to the main entrance of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC).



CHANDRAYAAN-3 TO BE LAUNCHED ON JULY 14 -

- India's lunar mission Chandrayaan-3 is going to be launched on July 14, at 2:35 P.M. from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota announced by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The date was later confirmed by Secretary of Space department and ISRO Chairman S. Somnath at a press briefing on the sidelines of the G-20 Fourth Economy Leaders Meeting in Bengluru.
- Chandrayaan-3 is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.
- Chandrayaan-3 consists of Lander and Rover configuration. Chandrayaan-3 will be launched by Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.
- The Lander and the Rover have scientific payloads to carryout experiments on the lunar surface. The launcher identifies for Chandrayaan-3 is GSLV-MK3.
- Chandrayaan-3 is expected to soft land between August 23 and 24 at moon's South Pole, the area which will have sunlight. The sunlight has to fall on the solar panels of the spacecraft. If these two dates were missed then the landing will be postponed to September around the time when there is sunlight on the moon. There is sunlight on the moon for 14-15 days.



To achieve the objectives of the mission, several technologies are used in Lander and that are:

- Altimeters: Laser and RF based Altimeters.
- Velocimeters: Laser Doppler Velocimeter and Lander Horizontal Velocity Camera.
- Inertial Measurement: Laser Gyro based Inertial referencing and Accelerometer package.

- Propulsion System: 800N Throttleable Liquid Engines, 58N altitude thrusters and Throttleable Engine Control Electronics.
- Navigation, Guidance and Control: Powered descent trajectory design and associate software elements.
- Hazard Detection and Avoidance: Lander hazard detection & avoidance camera and processing algorithm.
- Landing Leg Mechanism.

CHANDRAYAAN-3: ISRO COMPLETES ROCKET ASSEMBLY, FINAL TESTS AWAITED FOR LAUNCH -

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has completed the assembly of the Chandrayaan-3 rocket and is now preparing for the final round of tests before the anticipated launch.
- The spacecraft, including the indigenous lander module, propulsion module, and rover, is fully integrated, and the payload fairing has also been completed. The launch is expected to take place between July 12 and July 19.
- Chandrayaan-3 aims to develop and demonstrate new technologies required for interplanetary missions. The lander will possess the capability to softly land on a designated lunar site and deploy the rover, which will conduct in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface. Both the lander and the rover will carry scientific payloads to perform experiments on the moon.
- Chandrayaan-1: The Chandrayaan-1 mission was launched on October 22, 2008. It was India's first lunar mission and the first spacecraft to discover water molecules on the Moon's surface. The mission also confirmed the presence of high amounts of helium-3, a potential fuel for future nuclear fusion.
- Chandrayaan-2: Chandrayaan-2 was India's second lunar mission and was launched on July 22, 2019. It consisted of an orbiter, a lander named Vikram, and a rover named Pragyan. The objective of the mission was to further explore the Moon's surface and attempt a soft landing near the lunar south pole. However, the lander lost communication with ground control and the mission was partially successful, but it still provided valuable data.



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.

TITANIC SUB DESTROYED IN 'CATASTROPHIC IMPLOSION' -

- A deep-sea submersible named Titan, operated by OceanGate Expeditions, met a devastating end during its mission to explore the century-old wreck of the Titanic.
- The United States Coast Guard announced that the submersible was discovered in pieces, resulting from a catastrophic implosion that claimed the lives of all five people on board. The multinational search for the

vessel concluded with the detection of a debris field, including major fragments of the Titan, near the bow of the Titanic in the remote depths of the North Atlantic.

- The Titan had been missing since it lost contact with its surface support ship from a week. Coast Guard officials stated that the debris field aligned with the characteristics of a catastrophic implosion of the submersible. The exact cause of the implosion and subsequent destruction of the Titan remains unknown.
- OceanGate confirmed that there were no survivors among the five men on board the Titan. The crew included Stockton Rush, the founder and CEO of OceanGate Expeditions, who was piloting the submersible. The other victims were British billionaire and explorer Hamish Harding, Pakistani-born businessman Shahzada Dawood and his 19-year-old son Suleman (both British citizens), and French oceanographer and renowned Titanic expert Paul-Henri Nargeolet.
- RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of 15 April 1912, after colliding with an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City. The recent expedition to explore the wreck has drawn significant interest due to the Titanic's historical significance and the popularity of books and movies, such as the blockbuster film "Titanic" released in 1997.



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

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.



RECENTLY, INDIA AND UAE SIGNED A HISTORIC MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON LOCAL CURRENCY SETTLEMENT (LCS) SYSTEM -

- The agreement was signed between the Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of the UAE, The objective is to revolutionise cross-border transactions between the two nations.
- The Local Currency Settlement (LCS) system enables exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies. The LCS system between India and UAE allows for the use of the Indian Rupee and UAE Dirham in bilateral trade.
- It is India's first-ever LCS arrangement. This innovative system is expected to have a transformative impact on transaction costs and processing time.
- It is anticipated to have a ripple effect on global economic engagements, encouraging the use of local currencies and fostering greater financial independence.
- It will enable the use of surplus balances in local currencies for investment in various local currency assets, such as corporate bonds, government securities, and equity markets, creating new avenues for growth and collaboration.
- It will amplify the preferential terms already established by the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), bringing new opportunities for trade and investment.



- CEPA- A free trade agreement between two countries which covers negotiation on the trade in services and investment, and provides for an institutional mechanism to encourage and improve trade between the two countries.
- This arrangement would also promote investments and remittances.

50TH MEETING OF GST COUNCIL -

- At its 50th meeting, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council made changes to tax rates on various items and resolved the tax treatment for online gaming, casinos, and horse racing.
- The Council decided to levy a uniform 28% tax on the full face value of bets placed for online gaming, casinos and horse-racing.



What are the Major Highlights of the Meet-

- **Uncooked or Unfried Snack pellets and Fish Soluble Paste:** The tax rate was reduced from 18% to 5%.
- **Imitation Zari Threads or Yarn:** The tax rate was reduced from 12% to 5%.
- **Food and Beverages Consumed Inside Cinema Halls:** The tax rate was set at 5% without input tax credits, as opposed to the previous 18% on cinema services.

Tax Treatment of Online Gaming, Casinos, and Horse Racing-

- Regardless of whether they involve skill, chance, or a combination thereof (or neither), bets and wagers made on online gaming, casinos, and horse racing activities will now attract a 28% GST levy.

Establishment of GST Appellate Tribunals-

- The Council examined proposals from states to establish 50 Benches of the GST Appellate Tribunals in the country. The initial Benches will be set up in state capitals and locations where High Courts have Benches.

GST Council

- As per Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution, the GST Council was constituted by the President.
- The members of the Council include the Union Finance Minister (chairperson), the Union Minister of State (Finance) from the Centre.

FOREX RESERVES RISE BY \$1.85 BILLION TO \$595.05 BILLION -

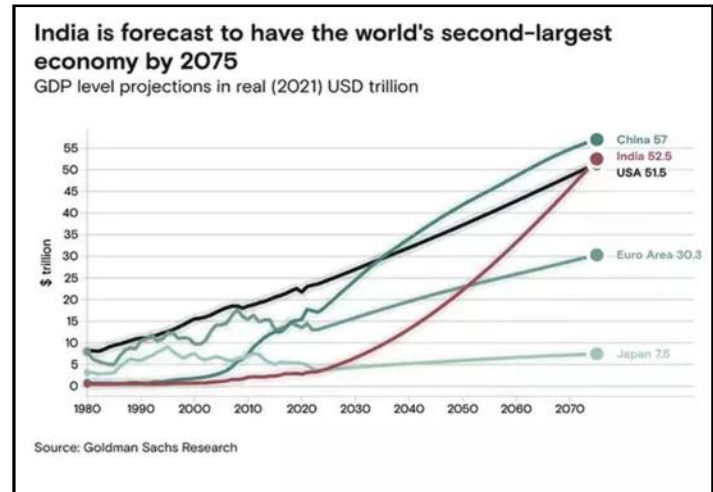
- According to the RBI, India's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$1.853 billion to \$595.051 billion in the week ended on June 30, 2023.
- The overall reserve had dropped by \$2.901 billion to \$593.198 billion in the previous reporting week.
- In October 2021, the country's forex reserve had reached an all-time high of \$645 billion.
- The reserves have been declining as the central bank deploys the kitty to defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.



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

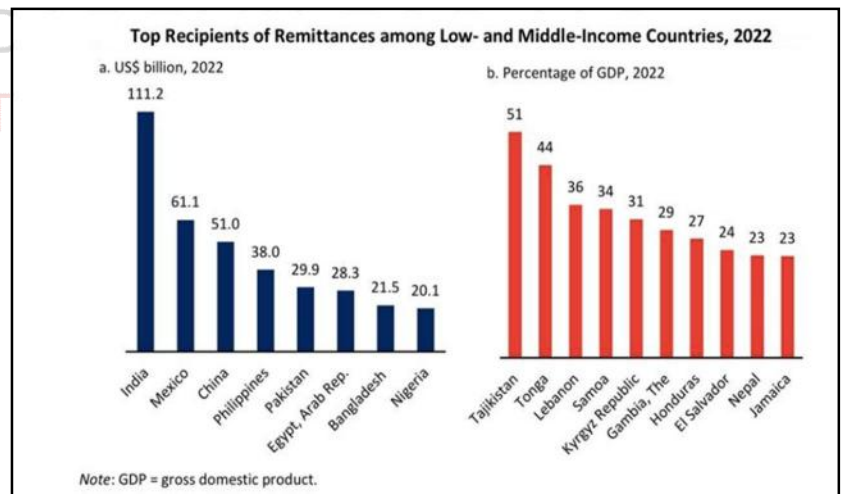
- Goldman Sachs analysts project India to become the world's second-largest economy by 2075. The report suggests India will surpass the US in terms of GDP, reaching \$52.5 trillion by 2075.

- 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.



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

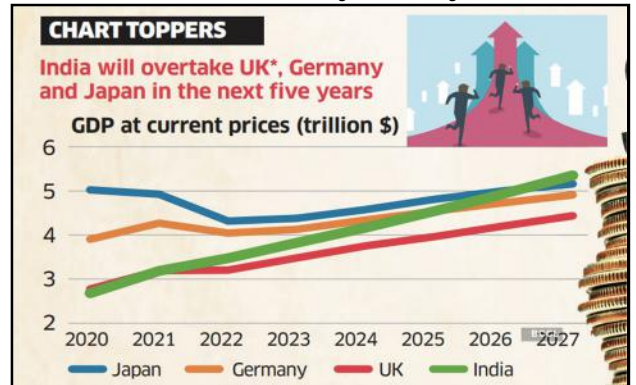
- According to the World Bank's latest Migration and Development Brief, India, which saw a record-high of USD 111 billion in remittances in 2022, is expected to experience minimal growth of just 0.2% in remittance inflows in 2023.
- The main reasons for this are the slower growth in OECD economies, especially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



- Remittance inflows played a vital role in funding current account and fiscal shortfalls in countries like Tajikistan, Tonga, Lebanon, Samoa, and the Kyrgyz Republic.

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

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



FOREIGN TRADE POLICY 2023 -

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



The Key Approach is based on Four Pillars:

- ❖ Incentive to Remission,
- ❖ Export promotion through collaboration - Exporters, States, Districts, Indian Missions,
- ❖ Ease of doing business, reduction in transaction cost and e-initiatives, and
- ❖ Emerging Areas - E-Commerce Developing Districts as Export Hubs and streamlining Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies (SCOMET) policy.
- The government aims to increase India's overall exports to USD 2 trillion by 2030, with equal contributions from the merchandise and services sectors.
- The government also intends to encourage the use of the Indian currency in cross-border trade, aided by a new payment settlement framework introduced by the RBI in July 2022.
- This could be particularly advantageous in the case of countries with which India enjoys a trade surplus.

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

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



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

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



REPORTS & INDICES

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.
























INDIA MOVES UP 8 PLACES TO 127 IN WEF GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT -

- The World Economic Forum (WEF) recently released the annual Gender Gap Report for 2023, which measures the gender disparity in various aspects of society. India has shown progress by moving up eight places to rank 127 out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity.
- The Global Gender Gap Index is a benchmark index introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006. It tracks progress and compares nations' advancements toward gender parity and equality across four key dimensions with sub-parameters. These dimensions are Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.
- India's progress in terms of gender parity is notable. Compared to the previous year, India has improved by 1.4 percentage points and eight positions, now ranking 127th out of 146 countries. In the 2022 edition, India was ranked 135th. The country has closed 64.3% of the overall gender gap.



GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX 2023 -

- The Economist Intelligence Unit released its 2023 report on global liveability index, placing Austria's capital Vienna as the top ranked city to live in 2023.
- The Index rates living conditions in 173 cities across five categories: stability, health care, culture and environment, education and infrastructure.
- Many developing nations have shown incremental improvements in their livability rankings.
- Asia-Pacific cities have demonstrated significant progress, while Western European cities have slipped in the 2023 rankings.
- The report highlights the growing emphasis on healthcare and education in Asian, African, and Middle Eastern countries, signalling a positive trend.
- However, it also notes a decline in stability scores attributed to civil unrest in certain parts of the world.
- New Delhi and Mumbai are at 141st position and Chennai at 144th. Ahmedabad and Bengaluru are ranked 147 and 148, respectively.
- Despite ongoing efforts, Kyiv ranks at a lowly 165th out of 173 cities, reflecting the challenges faced by the war-ravaged capital.
- Damascus, Syria, and Tripoli, Libya: These cities continue to occupy the bottom positions on the livability index, similar to the 2022.

Top 10 positions				Bottom 10 positions			
City	Location		Rank	City	Location		Rank
Vienna	Austria		1	Douala	Cameroon		164
Copenhagen	Denmark		2	Kyiv	Ukraine		165
Melbourne	Australia		3	Harare	Zimbabwe		166
Sydney	Australia		4	Dhaka	Bangladesh		166
Vancouver	Canada		5	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea		168
Zurich	Switzerland		6	Karachi	Pakistan		169
Calgary	Canada		7	Lagos	Nigeria		170
Geneva	Switzerland		7	Algiers	Algeria		171
Toronto	Canada		9	Tripoli	Libya		172
Osaka	Japan		10	Damascus	Syria		173
Auckland	New Zealand		10				

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

- Union Minister of Steel and Civil Aviation, Sh. Jyotiraditya M. Scindia has stated that India has moved from 4th largest producer of crude steel to the second largest producer of crude steel from 2014-15 to 2022-23 standing just behind China which is the largest exporter of crude steel in the world. India has reported a hike of 42% in Crude steel production from 88.98 MT (Metric ton) in 2014-15 to 126.26 MT in 2022-23.
- India stands as a net exporter of steel witnessing an export of 6.72 MT of finished steel against the import of 6.02 MT in the year 2022-23.
- In the financial year 2022-23 alone, total finished Steel Production was 122.28 MT which is a increase of 49 % as compared to 81.86 MT in financial year 2014-15.
- In the past 9 years (2014-15 to 2022-23), Steel CPSEs viz. SAIL, NMDC, MOIL, KIOCL, MSTC, and MECON, used ₹90,273.88 crores



of their own resources for CAPEX(Capital expenditure) and paid a dividend to the Government of India to the tune of ₹21,204.18 crores.

- The National Steel Policy formulated by the Government of India in 2017 to promote the growth and development of the steel industry in the country has set the targets of achieving the total crude steel capacity of 300 MTPA(Million Tonnes Per Annum) and total crude steel demand/production of 255 MTPA by 2030-31. By 2030-31, it is also envisaged to enhance the operational capacity of crude steel production of SAIL from existing 19.51 MTPA to around 35.65 MTPA tentatively.
- Under the PLI (Productive linked Incentive) scheme, the Government has approved Rs. 6322 crores to give a new impetus to the Steel sector. Shri Scindia said that the PLI scheme is expected to generate an investment of about Rs. 30,000 Crores and additional capacity creation of about 25 Million Tonnes of specialty steel in the next 5 years.

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

- According to the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, India’s rank in the 7th edition of the World Bank’s Logistics Performance Index 2023 has improved by 6 positions, and it now stands at 38th among 139 countries. The ministry further stated that India has shown significant progress in 4 out of 6 LPI indicators.
- The government also mentioned that the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, launched in October 2021, is responsible for this update.
- The plan aims to address the evolving requirements of logistics due to factors such as e-commerce, urbanization, energy preferences, and the need to establish sturdy supply chains.
- Additionally, the Ministry stated that India’s ranking was improved due to the implementation of the National Logistics Policy (NLP), which provides guidance for States or UTs in developing logistics policies.
- The Ministry stated that the Logistics Data Bank project by NICDC, which involves the use of RFID tags on containers and has been implemented in the Western region of India since 2016, and expanded to a Pan India level in 2020, has resulted in significant improvements in cross-border trade facilitation.
- Additionally, the project fosters competition among ports by offering data on performance benchmarking, congestion, dwell time, speed, and transit time analysis, according to the Ministry. The Ministry also recognized that initiatives such as Sagarmala and Bharatmala have been instrumental in enhancing India’s logistics efficiency.

Logistics Jump

India jumped six places on the World Bank Logistics Index

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

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

2023 rank is grouped rank out of 139 countries, 2018 rank considered 160 countries
Source: World Bank LPI 2023

ENVIRONMENT

AS PER RECENT REPORTS, EVACUATION OF PEOPLE FROM LOW-LYING AREAS AROUND THE RIVER YAMUNA IS TO START SOON -

- **Origin:** It originates from the Yamunotri Glacier.
- **Yamunotri Glacier:** it lies on the southwestern slopes or Banderpoonch Peak, in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- Yamuna joins the Ganges (Ganga) River near Prayagraj (Allahabad), it flows along the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Haryana and enters Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.
- It is the largest tributary of the Ganga in the northern plains. Total length: from its origin till Allahabad is 1,376 km.
- It creates the highly fertile alluvial, Yamuna-Ganges Doab region between itself and the Ganges in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Important Cities: The cities of Bhagpat, Delhi, Noida, Mathura, Agra, Firozabad, Etawah, Hamirpur, and Allahabad lie on its banks.
- Yamuna is joined by its biggest tributary, the Tons River near Dehradun, Uttarakhand.
- Right bank tributaries: Chambal, Hindon, Sarda and Giri rivers.
- Chambal River is Yamuna's biggest tributary right bank tributary. Left bank tributaries: Betwa and Sindh.



PARIS GLOBAL CLIMATE FINANCING SUMMIT -

- The Summit for a New Global Financing Pact was recently held in Paris with an objective of tackling the lack of financial support for developing countries.
- The Summit was announced at the 27th Conference of Parties (COP27) of the UNFCCC. The summit was also attended by India's Finance Minister.
- Developing countries are grappling with a combination of crises, including poverty, escalating debt levels, and inflation triggered by events such as the Russia-Ukraine Conflict.
- Besides economic challenges, developing nations are under pressure to decarbonise their economies while lacking sufficient Climate Finance.
- Leaders from the Global South demand that Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) address transboundary challenges and provide increased resources for development, including climate finance.
- The Summit announced the unlocking of an additional USD 200 billion lending capacity for emerging economies.
- The World Bank introduced disaster clauses to suspend debt payments during extreme weather events.
- The IMF announced the allocation of USD 100 billion in SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) for vulnerable countries, although some SDRs still require approval from the US Congress.
- The EU called for increased coverage of global emissions by Carbon Pricing Mechanisms and allocating a portion of revenues to climate finance.
- The Summit indicated that the long-awaited USD 100 billion climate finance goal would be achieved this year.

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

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.

Section 144: What it Says and What it Means

1 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

2 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 tranquillity"

3 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

4 The Supreme Court has ruled that section 144, if used appropriately, is not unconstitutional. Powers are supposed to be used in an emergency

Features of Section 144-

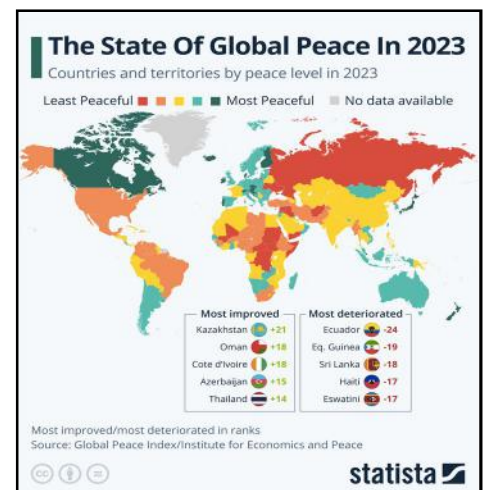
- It places restrictions on handling or transporting any kind of weapon in the given jurisdiction. The maximum punishment for such an act is three years.
- According to the order under this section, there shall be no movement of public and all educational institutions shall remain closed. Further, there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

2023 GLOBAL PEACE INDEX: ICELAND TOPS AS MOST PEACEFUL COUNTRY -

- The 2023 Global Peace Index, released by the Institute for Economics and Peace, provides a comprehensive ranking of the most peaceful countries in the world. The 17th edition of the annual Global Peace Index (GPI), the world's leading measure of peacefulness, reveals the average level of global peacefulness deteriorated for the ninth consecutive year, with 84 countries recording an improvement and 79 a deterioration.
- This demonstrates that the deteriorations were larger than the improvements, as the post-COVID rises of civil unrest and political instability remain high while regional and global conflicts accelerate. This article highlights key findings from the report, including Iceland's continued reign as the most peaceful country and India's ranking.
- Iceland the No. 1 Most Peaceful Country: Iceland has retained its position as the most peaceful country since the inaugural study in 2008. It excels in domains such as ongoing domestic and



international conflict, societal safety and security, and militarization. Additionally, Iceland ranks as the third happiest country globally, following Finland and Denmark.

- India's position on the Global Peace Index stands at 126 out of 163 countries. With an overall score of 2.31, India falls below the global average of 2.314. While the country faces ongoing challenges in achieving high levels of peace, it presents an opportunity for improvement.

Key Findings from the Global Peace Index-

- a) Global Peace Deterioration
- b) Increase in Conflict Deaths
- c) Economic Impact of Violence
- d) Changing Military Dynamics

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.



CEILING ON STOCKS OF WHEAT AND PULSES -

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

Concerns over Wheat Production:

- Unseasonal rains, hailstorms, and higher temperatures in Feb 2023 raised concerns about the overall wheat output.

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



What does the Government Seek from these Orders-

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

HAR GHAR JAL PROGRAMME -

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

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

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

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

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



PM SVANIDHI SCHEME CELEBRATES SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF 3 YEARS -

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



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

- The Indian government has recently approved a groundbreaking scheme worth Rs 1 lakh crore aimed at significantly expanding the foodgrain storage capacity in the cooperative sector.
- With the current grain storage capacity at approximately 1,450 lakh tonnes, this initiative seeks to add 700 lakh tonnes of storage over the next five years, eventually reaching a total capacity of 2,150 lakh tonnes. Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur has hailed this scheme as the "world's largest foodgrain storage programme" in the cooperative sector.
- One of the primary goals of this scheme is to address the challenges associated with inadequate storage facilities, which often lead to spoilage and distress sales of food grains by farmers. By constructing godowns with a capacity of 2,000 tonnes in every block across the country, the government aims to reduce damage to food grains caused by the lack of proper storage infrastructure.
- India is one of the world's largest foodgrain producers, with an annual production of about 3,100 lakh tonnes. However, the existing storage infrastructure can only accommodate approximately 47 percent of the total produce.
- This leads to post-harvest losses and hampers the efforts to maintain an optimal buffer stock. The new scheme aims to bridge this production and storage gap by significantly increasing storage capacity and reducing wastage.



APPOINTMENTS/PERSON IN NEWS

TUSHAR MEHTA REAPPOINTED AS SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA -

- Tushar Mehta, the incumbent Solicitor General of India, has been reappointed for a three-year term by the Appointments Committee of Cabinet (ACC). Mehta's reappointment, along with six other law officers, was announced after their previous terms in the Supreme Court concluded.
- The ACC's decision reflects the government's trust in their capabilities to handle the extensive legal matters faced by the country.
- As the highest law officer in the country after the Attorney General, the Solicitor General plays a crucial role in representing the government's interests in various legal matters. Tushar Mehta has been serving as the Solicitor General since October 2018, and his reappointment demonstrates the government's satisfaction with his performance during his tenure.
- The office of the Solicitor General handles a significant portion of the central government's litigation across the country, making it a vital position in the legal system.



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

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



DENNIS FRANCIS ELECTED 78TH UNGA PRESIDENT -

- The 193 UN Member States, elected a veteran diplomat from Trinidad and Tobago, Dennis Francis as the President of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly.
- Francis, who has had a nearly 40-year-career, will take the helm of the UN's main policy-making body, starting in September. He was elected by acclamation during a ceremony in the iconic General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York. The General Assembly consists of all 193 UN Member States, all of which have an equal vote.

- Its duties include appointing the Secretary-General, on the recommendation of the Security Council, and approving the Organisation's annual budget. Francis said he would prioritise encouraging and facilitating meaningful dialogue.
- The current General Assembly President, Csaba Kőrösi of Hungary, noted that his successor would bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the post. With 100 days remaining in his administration, Kőrösi said he will continue to promote the use of science for a sustainability transformation, namely in preparations for the SDG Summit during the High-Level Week of the General Assembly in September.



NIMBUS
ACADEMY FOR IAS
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ॥

IMPORTANT MAPS & ARTICLES





MEMBER COUNTRIES

Head-Quarter Paris, France

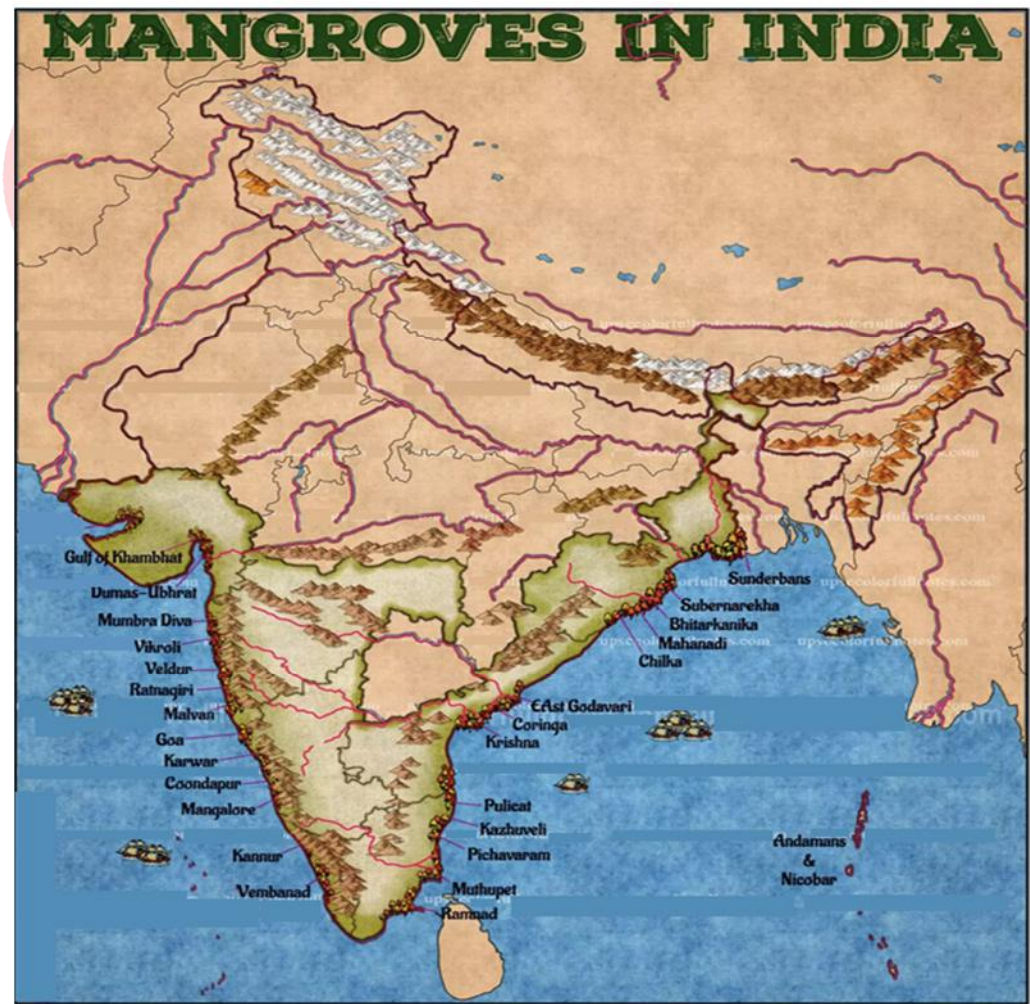
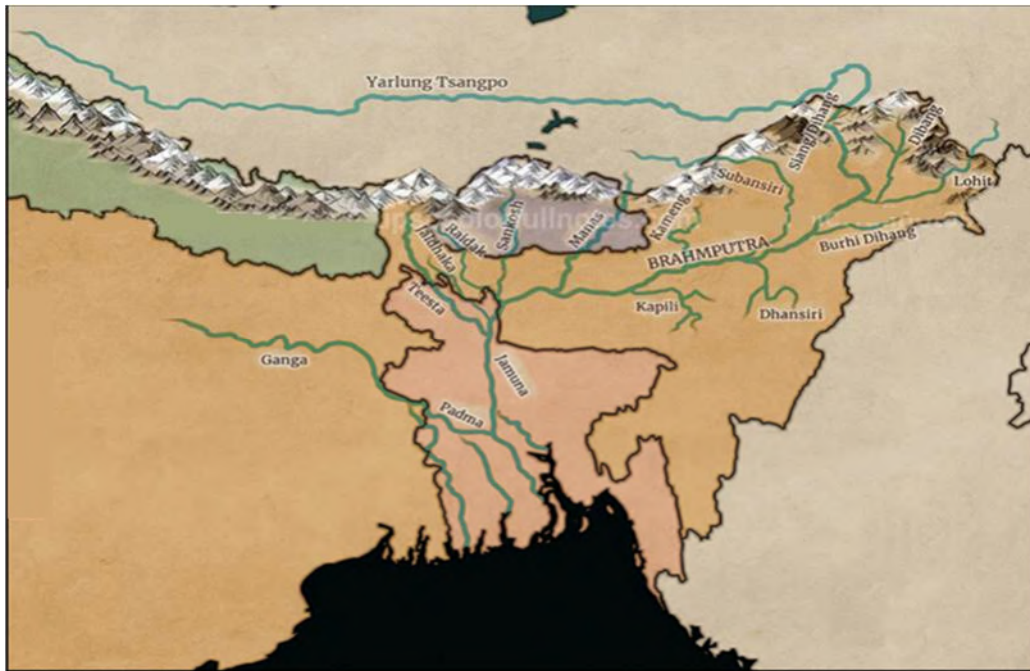
FATF

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE

The 39 Members of the FATF

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

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







E-COMMERCE EXPORTS

India has a huge potential to increase its e-commerce exports, which are currently only \$2 billion, or less than 0.5 per cent of its total exports of \$447.46 billion in 2022-23. By 2025, the global e-commerce exports are expected to reach \$2 trillion, and India can tap into this opportunity by aiming for \$200 billion to \$250 billion by 2030.

To achieve this, India needs to formulate an e-Commerce Export policy that addresses the challenges faced by SME (Small and Medium enterprises) exporters.

What are the Challenges Faced by SMEs in E-Commerce Exports?

- **Shipping and Clearance Costs:**
 - SMEs have to bear high shipping costs for transport and custom clearance of their products, which can reduce their profit margins and competitiveness.
- **Payment Collection and Regularisation:**
 - SMEs have to pay high charges to payment gateways or aggregators for collecting sales realisation from foreign customers.
 - They also have to submit physical documents at Authorized dealers Banks for regularisation of their export bills, which can be cumbersome and costly.
- **Trade Barriers and Regulatory Hurdles:**
 - SMEs have to deal with various trade barriers and regulatory hurdles in foreign markets, such as tariffs, quotas, standards, certifications, licenses, etc.
 - These can increase the time and cost of exporting and affect the quality and quantity of products.
- **Knowledge and Financing Gap:**
 - SMEs often lack the necessary knowledge and financing to access and compete in international markets.
 - They may not have adequate information about market opportunities, customer preferences, cultural differences, legal requirements, etc.
 - They may also face difficulties in obtaining credit, insurance, or other financial services to support their export activities.
- **E-commerce Adoption Issues:**
 - SMEs may face various issues related to e-commerce adoption, such as technical infrastructure, online payment security, cyber scams, customer service, etc.
 - They may also need to adapt their products or services to suit the online platform and the global market.

What is the Need for Comprehensive E-commerce Policy?

- **Providing a Level Playing Field:**
 - It involves addressing issues such as market access, foreign direct investment, taxation, consumer protection, data privacy, intellectual property, etc. to ensure fair competition and equal opportunities for domestic and foreign e-commerce players, as well as for online and offline retailers.
- **Facilitating Negotiations at WTO and Other Regional Trade Agreements:**
 - It involves articulating India's interests and positions on e-commerce issues, such as cross-border data flows, digital trade facilitation, digital taxation, etc. to enable India to participate and benefit from the global rules and frameworks on e-commerce.
- **Saving the Policy Space for Future Developments and Innovations**
 - Adopting a flexible and forward-looking approach that balances the objectives of facilitation and regulation to allow the e-commerce sector to evolve and innovate in response to the changing dynamics and trends of the digital economy.
- **Promoting the Competitiveness and Inclusiveness of E-commerce Exports**

- Providing financial, technical, and legal support, simplifying customs procedures, harmonizing standards and certifications, etc. to enable e-commerce exporters, especially SMEs, to access and compete in international markets.
- Protecting the Data Sovereignty and Security of India
- Adopting a data protection law that regulates the collection, processing, storage, transfer, disclosure, and deletion of personal data by e-commerce entities to ensure the privacy and security of Indian citizens and businesses.

What is the Regulatory Framework for E-commerce in India?

- India does not have a specific law or regulation that exclusively governs e-commerce activities.
- Instead, various ministries and departments of the Indian government deal with different aspects of e-commerce, such as information technology, consumer protection, foreign direct investment, taxation, competition, data privacy, intellectual property, etc.
- **The Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:**
 - These provide the legal recognition and framework for electronic transactions, electronic signatures, electronic contracts, cyber security, cybercrimes, intermediary liability, etc.
 - They also regulate the content and conduct of digital media platforms, including e-commerce platforms.
- **The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020:**
 - These aim to protect the rights and interests of consumers in e-commerce transactions, such as fair-trade practices, disclosure of information, grievance redressal, etc.
 - They also impose obligations and liabilities on e-commerce entities, such as registration, verification, refund policy, etc.
- **The Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 and the Foreign Direct Investment Policy:**
 - These regulate the inflow and outflow of foreign exchange and foreign investment in India.
 - They also prescribe the sector-specific guidelines and restrictions for foreign direct investment in e-commerce activities, such as inventory-based model, marketplace model, single-brand retail trading, multi-brand retail trading, etc.
- **Comparison with Other Countries:**
 - **Scope and definition of e-commerce:**
 - India does not have a clear and uniform definition of e-commerce, and different laws and regulations may apply to different types of e-commerce activities, such as B2B, B2C, C2C, inventory-based, marketplace-based, etc.
 - Other countries, such as the US, the EU, China, etc., have adopted more comprehensive and consistent definitions of e-commerce that cover various aspects and modes of online transactions.
 - **Foreign Direct Investment:**
 - India has imposed restrictions and conditions on foreign direct investment in e-commerce activities, such as allowing only marketplace-based model and not inventory-based model, prohibiting exclusive deals and predatory pricing, mandating local sourcing and storage of data, etc.
 - Other countries like the United States have more liberal and flexible policies on foreign direct investment in e-commerce activities, allowing both inventory-based and marketplace-based models, encouraging innovation and competition, and adopting data protection and privacy laws.
 - **Consumer Protection:**
 - India has recently enacted the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 to protect the rights and interests of consumers in e-commerce transactions.
 - These laws and rules impose various obligations and liabilities on e-commerce entities, such as registration, verification, disclosure of information, grievance redressal, refund policy, etc.

- Other countries such as China have also enacted similar laws and rules to protect consumers in e-commerce transactions.
- **Taxation of e-commerce:**
- India has levied goods and services tax (GST) on the supply of goods and services in e-commerce transactions.
- It has also imposed equalization levy on the online advertising services provided by foreign e-commerce operators to Indian customers.
- Other countries such as the EU have also levied various taxes on e-commerce transactions, such as digital services tax (DST), etc.
- However, there is no global consensus or coordination on the taxation of e-commerce transactions.

What are the Recommendations for a Comprehensive E-commerce Export Policy?

▪ **Developing a National Trade Ecosystem:**

- Integrating various stakeholders, such as RBI, Customs, DGFT, GSTN (GST Network), India Post, couriers, e-commerce platforms, and exporters, to provide a single window system for e-commerce exports, with simplified documentation and customs clearance procedures.

▪ **Providing Financial, Technical, and Legal Support:**

- Offering subsidies, grants, loans, insurance, training, consultancy, etc. to e-commerce exporters, especially SMEs, to help them access and compete in international markets.

▪ **Harmonizing the Standards and Certifications:**

- Ensuring quality and safety of products and services by aligning the standards and certifications for e-commerce exports with international norms and best practices.
- Promote cross-border e-trade by making it easier for them to do business with overseas buyers.

▪ **Streamlining the Taxation Regime:**

- Adopting a uniform GST rate for all types of e-commerce transactions and providing tax incentives and exemptions for e-commerce exporters.

▪ **Protecting the Data Privacy and Security:**

- Adopting a data protection law that regulates the collection, processing, storage, transfer, disclosure, and deletion of personal data by e-commerce entities.
- Providing SMEs with information on how to identify and avoid scams, as well as by providing them with resources to help them recover from cyberattacks.

▪ **Promoting Innovation and Competition:**

- Creating incubators, accelerators, hubs, networks, etc. to foster digital entrepreneurship and research and development in the e-commerce sector.
- Engagement with Districts Industries Centres (DICs) to establish Export Facilitation Cells (EFCs) which will help SMEs identify products and markets that are in demand overseas.

▪ **Strengthening Regional and International Cooperation and Dialogue:**

- Engaging in forums, agreements, negotiations, etc. to share best practices, exchange data, harmonize standards, resolve disputes, and build trust on e-commerce export policies.
- The e-commerce export policy should be jointly formulated by the customs and the directorate general of foreign trade (DGFT) and the RBI after necessary changes in their regulations, including redefining the responsibilities of sellers and simplifying payment facilitation, accounts and procedures.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The Law Commission of India has initiated asked for views and proposals from the public regarding the UCC. The UCC has been a highly debated and politically charged issue in India. The Law Commission's previous

stance on the UCC was that it was neither necessary nor desirable. UCC is a proposal to replace the personal laws of various religious communities with a common set of laws for all citizens.

What is Uniform Civil Code?

- **About:**

- The Uniform Civil Code is mentioned in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy.
- These principles are not legally enforceable but are meant to guide the state in making policies.
- It has been supported by some as a way to promote national integration and gender justice, but opposed by others as a threat to religious freedom and diversity.
- The only state in India that has a UCC is Goa, which retained its common family law known as the Goa Civil Code after it was liberated from Portuguese rule in 1961.
- The rest of India follows different personal laws based on their religious or community identity.

- **Personal Laws in India:**

- Currently, not only Muslims but also Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Sikhs, Parsis, and Jews are governed by their own personal laws.
- Personal laws are determined based on religious identity.
- The reformed Hindu Personal Law still incorporates certain traditional practices.
- Differences arise when Hindus and Muslims marry under the Special Marriage Act, where Hindus continue to be governed by Hindu Personal Law, but Muslims are not.

What are the Challenges in Implementing UCC?

- **Diverse Personal Laws and Customary Practices:**

- India is a country of diverse religions, cultures and traditions.
- Each community has its own set of personal laws and customs that govern their civil matters.
- These laws and practices vary widely across regions, sects and groups.
- To find a common ground and uniformity among such diversity is very difficult and complex.
- Moreover, many personal laws are not codified or documented, but are based on oral or written sources that are often ambiguous or contradictory.

- **Resistance from Religious and Minority Groups:**

- Many religious and minority group's view UCC as an infringement on their religious freedom and cultural autonomy.
- They fear that UCC would impose a majoritarian or homogenous law that would disregard their identity and diversity.
- They also argue that UCC would violate their constitutional rights under Article 25, which guarantees the freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion.

- **Lack of Political Will and Consensus:**

- There is a lack of political will and consensus among the government, the legislature, the judiciary and the civil society to initiate and implement UCC.
- There are also apprehensions that UCC could provoke communal tensions and conflicts in the society.

- **Practical Difficulties and Complexities:**

- UCC would require a massive exercise of drafting, codifying, harmonising and rationalising the various personal laws and practices in India.
- It would require a wide consultation and participation of various stakeholders, including religious leaders, legal experts, women's organisations, etc.
- It would also require a robust mechanism of enforcement and awareness to ensure compliance and acceptance of UCC by the people.

What are the Benefits of UCC?

▪ **National Integration and Secularism:**

- UCC would promote national integration and secularism by creating a common identity and sense of belonging among all citizens.
- It would also reduce the communal and sectarian conflicts that arise due to different personal laws.
- It would uphold the constitutional values of equality, fraternity and dignity for all.

▪ **Gender Justice and Equality:**

- UCC would ensure gender justice and equality by removing the discrimination and oppression faced by women under various personal laws.
- It would grant equal rights and status to women in matters of marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, maintenance, etc.
- It would also empower women to challenge the patriarchal and regressive practices that violate their fundamental rights.

▪ **Simplification and Rationalisation of the Legal System:**

- UCC would simplify and rationalise the legal system by removing the complexities and contradictions of multiple personal laws.
- **It would harmonise the civil and criminal laws by removing the anomalies and loopholes that arise due to different personal laws.**
- It would make the law more accessible and understandable for the common people.

▪ **Modernisation and Reform of Outdated and Regressive Practices:**

- UCC would modernise and reform the outdated and regressive practices that are prevalent in some personal laws.
- It would eliminate the practices that are against the human rights and values enshrined in the Constitution of India, such as triple talaq, polygamy, child marriage, etc.
- It would also accommodate the changing social realities and aspirations of the people.

What are the Important Cases Related to UCC?

▪ **Shah Bano Begum v. Mohammad Ahmed Khan (1985):**

- The Supreme Court upheld the right of a Muslim woman to claim maintenance from her husband under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, even after the expiry of the Iddat period.
- It also observed that a UCC would help in removing contradictions based on ideologies.

▪ **Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995):**

- The Supreme Court held that a Hindu husband cannot convert to Islam and marry another woman without dissolving his first marriage.
- It also stated that a UCC would prevent such fraudulent conversions and bigamous marriages.

▪ **Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017):**

- The Supreme Court declared the practice of triple talaq as unconstitutional and violative of the dignity and equality of Muslim women.
- It also recommended that the Parliament should enact a law to regulate Muslim marriages and divorces.

What Should be the Way Forward?

▪ **Unity and Uniformity:**

- The recommended UCC should reflect India's multiculturalism and preserve its diversity.
- Unity is more important than uniformity.
- The Indian Constitution allows for both integrationist and restricted multicultural approaches to accommodate cultural differences.

▪ **Discussion and Deliberations with Stakeholders:**

- Also, involving a broad range of stakeholders, including religious leaders, legal experts, and community representatives, in the process of developing and implementing the UCC.
- This could help to ensure that the UCC takes into account the diverse perspectives and needs of different groups, and that it is seen as fair and legitimate by all citizens.
- **Striking a Balance:**
- The Law Commission should aim to eliminate only those practices that do not meet the constitutional standards.
- Cultural practices must align with substantive equality and gender justice goals.
- The Commission should avoid contributing to reactive culturalism among different communities.
- The Muslim clergy should lead the reform process of Muslim Personal Law by identifying discriminatory and oppressive issues and considering progressive views.
- **Constitutional Perspective:**
- The Indian Constitution upholds the right to cultural autonomy and aims for cultural accommodation.
- Article 29(1) protects the distinctive culture of all citizens.
- Muslims need to question whether practices like polygamy and arbitrary unilateral divorce align with their cultural values.
- The focus should be on achieving a just code that promotes equality and justice.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS IN INDIA: CAUSES AND SAFETY MEASURES

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

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

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

Furthermore, there have been comparisons made with Railway systems abroad, highlighting the need for India to improve its infrastructure and safety measures to match those of other countries. Overall, this incident has brought attention to the importance of ensuring that the Indian Railways are safe and reliable for everyone who uses them.

What are the Primary Reasons behind Railway Accidents?

- **Infrastructure Defects:** The railway infrastructure, which includes tracks, bridges, overhead wires, and rolling stock, is often defective due to poor maintenance, ageing, vandalism, sabotage, or natural disasters.
- Much of the infrastructure was built in the 19th and 20th centuries and has not been upgraded to meet the growing demand and modern standards.
- The railway system also suffers from a lack of funds, corruption, and inefficiency, which hamper its development and maintenance.
- Moreover, many routes are operating at over 100% capacity, which increases the risk of accidents due to congestion and overloading.

- **Human Errors:** The railway staff, who are responsible for operating, maintaining, and managing the trains and tracks, are prone to human errors due to fatigue, negligence, corruption, or disregard for safety rules and procedures.
 - Human errors can result in wrong signalling, miscommunication, over speeding, or overlooking defects or hazards.
 - The railway staff also lack adequate training and communication skills, which affect their performance and coordination.
- **Signalling Failures:** The signalling system, which controls the movement and direction of trains on the tracks, can fail due to technical glitches, power outages, or human errors.
 - Signalling failures can lead to trains running on the wrong track, colliding with other trains or stationary objects, or overshooting stations.
 - For example, the recent train accident in Odisha was reportedly caused by a change in electronic interlocking that was not communicated properly to the drivers.
- **Unmanned level crossings (UMLCs):** UMLCs are places where railway tracks crossroads without any barriers or signals to regulate traffic.
 - UMLCs pose a high risk of accidents as vehicles or pedestrians may not notice the approaching train or may try to cross the track when the train is near.
 - In 2018-19, UMLCs accounted for 16% of all train accidents in India.
 - The railways have eliminated all the unmanned level crossings (UMLCs) on broad gauge routes, but there are still many manned level crossings (MLCs) that pose a risk of accidents.

What has Railways Done to Reduce Accidents so far?

- **Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK):** A safety fund for critical assets. It was established in 2017-18 with a corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore over a period of five years for critical safety related works such as track renewals, signalling projects, bridge rehabilitation, etc.
- **Technological Upgradation:** Improved design and features of coaches and wagons. This includes introducing Modified Centre Buffer Couplers, Bogie Mounted Air Brake System (BMBS), improved suspension design and provision of Automatic fire & smoke detection system in coaches. It also includes installing KAVACH - an indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP).
- **LHB Design Coaches:** Lighter and safer coaches for Mail/Express trains. These coaches are based on German technology and have better anti-climbing features, fire retardant materials, higher speed potential and longer service life than conventional ICF design coaches.
- **GPS based Fog Pass Device:** A device to help loco pilots navigate in foggy conditions. It is a GPS enabled hand-held device that displays the exact distance of the approaching landmarks such as signals, level crossing gates, etc. It also alerts the loco pilot with a loud buzzer when the train approaches a signal or a level crossing gate.
- **Modern Track Structure:** Stronger and more durable tracks and bridges. This includes using Prestressed Concrete Sleeper (PSC), higher Ultimate Tensile Strength (UTS) rails, fan shaped layout turnout on PSC sleepers, Steel Channel Sleepers on girder bridges, etc.
- **Ultrasonic Flaw Detection (USFD):** A technique to detect and remove faulty rails. It is a non-destructive testing method that uses high frequency sound waves to inspect the rails for cracks, defects or flaws that may cause derailments or accidents. The defective rails are then removed and replaced with new ones.
- **Mechanization of Track Maintenance:** A system to automate and optimize track maintenance. This includes using machines such as track tamping machines, ballast regulating machines, dynamic track stabilizers, etc to carry out track maintenance activities such as tamping, dressing, stabilizing, etc. This reduces human errors and improves track quality and safety.

- **Interlocking System:** A system to control points and signals centrally. It is a system that uses electrical or electronic devices to operate the points and signals from a central location. It eliminates the need for manual operation of points and signals by staff on the ground. It also reduces the chances of human failure and enhances safety.
- **Elimination of Unmanned Level Crossings (UMLCs):** UMLCs are being eliminated progressively by closing, merging, manning, or providing subways/road under bridges/road over bridges.

What have the Various Committees recommended to ensure Railways Safety?

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

What should be Done More to Enhance Safety in India?

- **Invest More in Safety-Related Works:** Allocate more funds for track renewal, bridge repair, signalling upgrade, coach refurbishment, etc.
- **Train Employees to Minimize Human Errors:** Provide regular and comprehensive training to the railway staff on the latest technologies, equipment, systems, safety rules and procedures.
- **Eliminate Level Crossings:** Construct Road overbridges (ROBs) or road underbridges (RUBs) to replace the unmanned and manned level crossings.
- **Adopt advanced technologies:** Install anti-collision devices (ACDs) such as Kavach/ Train Collision Avoidance System (TCAS), Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), Automatic Train Control (ATC), etc.
 - The railways are in the process of installing these technologies on some sections of tracks, but they need to be expanded to cover the entire network.
- **Introduce Performance-Linked Incentives:** Reward the railway staff based on their performance and compliance with the safety rules and procedures.
- **Outsource Non-Core Work:** Transfer the non-core activities such as maintaining hospitals, colleges etc to private or public sector entities, which can improve efficiency and reduce costs.
- **Create A Statutory Railway Safety Authority:** Set up a railway safety authority as a statutory body with powers to frame safety standards, conduct safety audits and inspections, enforce accountability and penalties for lapses, and investigate accidents.
- **Conduct Regular Safety Audits and Inspections:** Monitor, evaluate and audit the safety performance of the railway staff, infrastructure and equipment, and enforce strict accountability and penalties for lapses.
- **Enhance Coordination and Communication:** Improve the communication and coordination among the railway board, zonal railways, divisions, production units, research organisations, etc., which are involved in railway operations.

- **Establish a Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS):** It was developed by a British University; a similar mechanism should be implemented that encourages lower-level staff to report deviations in real-time while maintaining confidentiality.
 - This system should be supported by the necessary communication and information technology infrastructure, making it accessible and user-friendly for all staff members.
 - Simultaneously, transform the management mindset from a fault-finding and punishment-oriented approach to one that emphasizes shared commitment to safety, focusing on correction rather than punishment and actively listening to the voices of staff at all levels.
 - In matters of railway safety, there has to be an attitudinal change — from the conventional approach of fault-finding and punishment to one of shared commitment to ensure complete safety at all levels.
- **Rethink Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS) Scheme:** Conduct a thorough evaluation of the IRMS scheme and its impact on loyalty, ownership, and safety management. Consider revising or modifying the scheme to preserve a sense of specialization and loyalty towards specific disciplines or departments, promoting a stronger commitment to safety.

What are Some of the Best Global Practices?

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

IMPORTANT MCQ FOR COMPETITIVE EXAMS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>1. The International Boxing Association (AIBA) has its headquarter at_____ ?
a) London, United Kingdom
b) Paris, France
c) Lausanne, Switzerland
d) Rome, Italy</p> <p>2. Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the President of which country ?
a) Bolivia
b) Chile
c) Slovakia
d) Turkey</p> <p>3. Heliopolis Memorial, which was seen in the news, is located in which country ?
a) Japan
b) USA
c) Egypt
d) Germany</p> <p>4. The Green Diamond, which was presented by Prime Minister Modi to the US President Joe Biden and First Lady, was developed in which state ?
a) Gujarat
b) Andhra Pradesh
c) Goa
d) Telangana</p> <p>5. Which institution released the 'Gender Gap Report 2023' ?
a) World Bank
b) NITI Aayog
c) World Economic Forum
d) ADB</p> <p>6. The Livestock and Livestock Products Bill 2023 categorizes livestock as which entity ?
a) Life
b) Commodity
c) Product
d) Asset</p> <p>7. Which IIT successfully conducted a test flight for cloud seeding ?
a) IIT Kanpur</p> | <p>b) IIT Mumbai
c) IIT Delhi
d) IIT Madras</p> <p>8. From which district of Haryana will India's first hydrogen-powered train run ?
a) Karnal
b) Panchkula
c) Jind
d) Rohtak</p> <p>9. Who is the new Chairman and Managing Director of Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) ?
a) Amarendra Prakash
b) Amarendu Prakash
c) Prakash Amarendu
d) Amarendra Singh</p> <p>10. How many Indian universities are included in the QS World University Rankings 2024 ?
a) 35
b) 41
c) 45
d) 50</p> <p>11. Consider the following statements about the PM-PRANAM Scheme:
1. This scheme aims to promote sustainable agriculture and reduce the dependency on chemical fertilizers.
2. The funding for the scheme will come from the savings generated by existing fertilizer subsidies.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>12. Consider the following statements regarding Geographical Indication (GI) Certification:
1. It is used for agricultural, natural and manufactured goods.</p> | <p>2. It is also a part of the World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2</p> <p>13. Which component of GST recorded the highest collection in May 2023 ?
a) CGST
b) SGST
c) IGST
d) Cess</p> <p>14. How many consecutive months has the monthly GST mop-up exceeded the Rs 1.4-lakh-crore mark ?
a) 10 months
b) 12 months
c) 14 months
d) 15 months</p> <p>15. Sammi is a famous traditional dance form originating from which state ?
a) Himachal Pradesh
b) Punjab
c) West Bengal
d) Haryana</p> <p>16. The Vivekananda Setu is built over which river ?
a) Mahanadi
b) Hoogly
c) Krishna
d) Sutlej</p> <p>17. Which country signed partnership agreement with the UNWTO for promoting tourism ?
a) Sri Lanka
b) Myanmar
c) Laos
d) India</p> |
|--|---|--|

18. Which country is facing a 30% skill gap resulting in the inability to fill cybersecurity jobs ?
a) Indonesia
b) India
c) Iran
d) Iraq
19. On which date is International Olympic Day celebrated ?
a) June 21
b) June 22
c) June 23
d) June 24
20. Where was North India's first skin bank inaugurated ?
a) Noida
b) New Delhi
c) Ajmer
d) Jaipur
21. Which two organizations have formed a partnership to develop an Indigenous Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) System for submarines in the Indian Navy?
a) Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
b) Indian Navy and Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL)
c) Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
d) Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL)
22. According to the Global Liveability Index 2023 report, which city has been ranked as the most livable city globally?
a) Copenhagen
b) Melbourne
c) Vienna
d) Sydney
23. What is the name of the collaborative platform launched between India and the United States in the defense sector ?
a) INDIA-US DEFENSE
b) INDUS X
c) DEFENSE X
d) INDIA-USA ALLIANCE
24. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was founded in 2003 under the provisions of the Competition Act, 2002. Which ministry does the CCI come under ?
a) Ministry of Finance
b) Ministry of Commerce and Industry
c) Ministry of Corporate Affairs
d) Ministry of Home Affairs
25. In the context of Kedarnath Temple, consider the following statements:
1. The Kedarnath Temple is located near the Mandakini River in the Rudraprayag District of Uttarakhand.
2. The original Kedarnath Temple was built by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century A.D.
3. Kedarnath Temple is a part of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India.
How many of the statements given above are correct ?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) All three
d) None
26. Consider the following pairs regarding Four Foundational Defence Agreements between India and USA:
1. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement- 2020
2. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement- 2018
3. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement- 2015
4. General Security of Military Information Agreement- 2010
27. Who has been named as the Chairman of GIFT City Ltd ?
a) Hardik Patel
b) Arun Goel
c) Kunal Kapoor
d) Hasmukh Adhia
28. Who has been appointed as a Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India ?
a) Aalok Kumar
b) James Braid Taylor
c) Swaminathan Janakiraman
d) Manilal Balabhai Nanavati
29. Baku is the capital of which country ?
a) Belize
b) Brunei
c) Azerbaijan
d) Cyprus
30. Jaitak Fort is located in which state of India ?
a) West Bengal
b) Himachal Pradesh
c) Rajasthan
d) Kerala
31. Which state/UT recently withdraw its general consent for the CBI investigations ?
a) Andhra Pradesh
b) Karnataka
c) Tamil Nadu
d) Goa
32. Which state has topped in the adoption of wind energy ?
a) Assam
b) Odisha
c) Rajasthan
d) Gujarat
33. In which two countries will the Asia Cup 2023 be scheduled in the stadiums ?
a) India and Pakistan

- b) Kenya and Pakistan
c) Sri Lanka and Pakistan
d) New Zealand and Pakistan
34. With which country did India's Defence Ministry approve the 'Predator Drone' deal ?
a) United Kingdom
b) Ukraine
c) Uganda
d) United States of America
35. In which city will Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar confer the 4th National Water Awards ?
a) Varanasi
b) Bikaner
c) Jaipur
d) New Delhi
36. Which Village Panchayat received the Best Village Panchayat award at the National Water Awards ?
a) Jagannadhapuram Village Panchayat (Telangana)
b) Raghunathpur Village Panchayat (West Bengal)
c) Chandanpur Village Panchayat (Odisha)
d) Kottur Village Panchayat (Kerala)
37. Who will be conferred with the Gandhi Peace Prize for 2021 ?
a) ISRO
b) Ramakrishna Mission
c) Gita Press
d) Grameen Bank of Bangladesh
38. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the United States from June 21 to June 24 is one of the most important diplomatic visits of 2023, highlighting the significance of India's geopolitical role. During his visit, PM Modi will address a joint session of the US Congress for the ___ time.
a) First
b) Second
c) Third
d) Fourth
39. Consider the following statements:
Statement-I: Miyawaki forests are multi-layered and maintenance-free, creating self-sustainable ecosystems.
Statement-II: The Miyawaki method involves improving soil quality, using mulch to prevent dryness, erosion, and weed growth, and planting native trees in close proximity. Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?
a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
40. Consider the following statements regarding the Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR) method:
1. Under this method, pre-germinated seeds are directly drilled into the field by powered machine.
2. There is nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method.
3. It requires lesser water than transplanting method of paddy cultivation.
How many statements given above are correct ?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) All three
d) None
41. According to the RBI Remittance Survey, the country with the highest share in inward remittances to India in 2020-21 was ____.
a) United States
b) United Arab Emirates
c) United Kingdom
d) Singapore
42. What was SBI's net profit for the full financial year 2022-23?
a) Rs 5,232.45 crore
b) Rs 31,675.98 crore
c) Rs 50,232.45 crore
d) Rs 740 crore
43. Quit India Day is held every year on ____ ?
a) September 9
b) July 7
c) August 8
d) May 10
44. ____ is the smallest desert in the world ?
a) Carcross Desert, Canada
b) Sonoran Desert, USA
c) Gobi Desert, China
d) Atacama Desert, South America
45. India gifted indigenously-built in-service Missile Corvette INS Kirpan to which country?
a) Sri Lanka
b) Vietnam
c) Myanmar
d) Nepal
46. Which country is the host of the 'Ex Khan Quest 2023' multilateral peacekeeping joint exercise ?
a) India
b) Sri Lanka
c) Mongolia
d) Israel
47. Which state's prisons are being renamed as "Reform Homes" ?
a) Uttar Pradesh
b) Maharashtra
c) Odisha
d) Uttarakhand

48. In which state will the G20 Tourism Working Group and Tourism Ministerial meetings take place ?
a) Odisha
b) Goa
c) Meghalaya
d) Sikkim
49. In which city did the Indian Men's Senior Football Team defeat Lebanon 2-0 to win the Intercontinental Cup ?
a) Chandigarh
b) Chennai
c) Kanpur
d) Bhubaneswar
50. What is the main objective of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between GE Aerospace and HAL?
a) To produce fighter jet engines for the Indian Air Force (IAF)
b) To develop advanced technology for commercial aircraft
c) To establish a joint venture between GE Aerospace and HAL
d) To improve bilateral trade between India and the United States
51. What is India's rank in the Global Gender Gap Index for 2023 ?
a) 142
b) 116
c) 115
d) 127
52. Which of the following is the primary goal of the Artemis Accords ?
a) Establishing a permanent human settlement on the Moon
b) Expanding space exploration to Mars and beyond
c) Preventing harmful interference in space activities
d) Promoting international cooperation in lunar missions
53. Consider the following statements:
1. India and the US will develop a framework for a joint mission to the International Space Station in 2024.
2. ISRO is likely to collaborate with NASA on a manned mission to the moon by 2025.
How many of the statements given above are correct ?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
54. Consider the following pairs regarding Four Foundational Defence Agreements between India and USA:
1. Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement- 2020
2. Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement- 2018
3. Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement- 2015
4. General Security of Military Information Agreement- 2010
How many of the above pairs are correctly matched ?
a) Only one pairs
b) Only two pairs
c) Only three pairs
d) All four pairs
55. In which country has Sberbank introduced Indian rupee accounts for individuals?
a) Siberia
b) Switzerland
c) Russia
d) Germany
56. How might the high debt and inflation impact government spending ?
a) Decreased debt interest payments.
b) Decreased spending on benefits and tax credits.
c) Increased debt interest payments.
- d) Reduced pressure on the government.
57. Bratislava is the capital of _____?
a) Croatia
b) Serbia
c) Slovakia
d) Czech Republic
58. International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) is based in _____?
a) Brussels, Belgium
b) Copenhagen, Denmark
c) Geneva, Switzerland
d) Dubai, United Arab Emirates
59. Which city is the host of 'International Conference on Green Hydrogen' ?
a) Mysuru
b) Bengaluru
c) New Delhi
d) Pune
60. Kyriakos Mitsotaki has been elected as the Prime Minister of which country ?
a) France
b) Greece
c) South Korea
d) Japan
61. Which bloc has conducted a joint military drill named 'Solidarity Exercise' ?
a) EU
b) G-20
c) ASEAN
d) BIMSTEC
62. What did Chandrayaan-1 discover on the Moon's surface?
a) Presence of water molecules
b) Alien life forms
c) Helium-3 fuel reserves
d) Lunar volcanoes
63. Ajit Pawar is currently serving as the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra. Which party does Ajit Pawar belong to ?
a) Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)

- b) Indian National Congress (INC)
c) Shiv Sena
d) Nationalist Congress Party (NCP)
64. Which rank did the Indian men's national football team achieve in FIFA's latest world rankings ?
a) 100th
b) 94th
c) 99th
d) 96th
65. India's first domestically built 700 MW nuclear reactor recently started commercial operations at the Kakrapar Atomic Power Project in Gujarat. How much power capacity is the first indigenous 700 MWe Unit, KAPP-3, currently operating at ?
a) 50%
b) 70%
c) 80%
d) 90%
66. What is India's position in terms of sourcing energy from non-fossil fuel sources ?
a) 20%
b) 30%
c) 40%
d) 60%
67. With reference to World Environment Day, consider the following statements:
1. The theme for World Environment Day on 5 June 2023 will focus on solutions to plastic pollution under the campaign 'Beat Plastic Pollution'.
2. India aims to increase its non-fossil fuel energy capacity to 500 GW by 2035, and become Net Zero Carbon emitter.
Which of the above statements is/are correct ?
a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
68. Consider the following statements, with respect to Chandrayaan-3 mission:
1. It is a follow-on mission to Chandrayaan-2 to demonstrate end-to-end capability in safe landing and roving on the lunar surface.
2. It consists of an indigenous Lander module (LM), Propulsion module (PM) and a Rover.
Which of the statements given above is/are correct ?
a) 1 only
b) 2 only
c) Both 1 and 2
d) Neither 1 nor 2
69. What was the gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection in June 2023 in India ?
a) 1.61 crore
b) 1.61 lakh crore
c) 1.61 billion
d) 1.61 trillion
70. What was the total external debt of India at the end of March 2023 ?
a) \$624.1 billion
b) \$624.7 billion
c) \$619.1 billion
d) \$619.7 billion
71. Which body releases the World Economic Outlook report ?
a) World Economic Forum
b) International Monetary Fund
c) United Nations Development Programme
d) World Bank
72. Where is the headquarters of NTRO ?
a) New Delhi
b) Lucknow
c) Chennai
d) Hyderabad
73. According to the Goldman Sachs report, by which year is India expected to surpass the United States to become the world's second-largest economy?
a) 2030
b) 2040
c) 2075
d) 2060
74. Operation Broader Sword aimed to prevent the shipment of which of the following items ?
a) Counterfeit luxury goods
b) Illicit pharmaceuticals and precursor chemicals
c) Stolen artwork
d) Unauthorized electronic devices
75. Peru declared a state of national emergency in response to the unusual increase in Guillain-Barre Syndrome cases. What is Guillain-Barre Syndrome ?
a) A respiratory illness caused by a virus
b) A neurological condition characterized by an immune system attack on the nervous system
c) A type of cancer affecting the brain
d) A genetic disorder affecting muscle function
76. The United Nations officially designated July 12 as International Malala Day in 2015, recognizing the importance of promoting education and girls' rights. What is the theme of World Malala Day 2023 ?
a) Advancing Women's Rights
b) Education for All
c) The Power of Fame and Role Models
d) Confronting Hatred and Extremism

77. **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is transferring its Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) to the private sector. What are some key features of the SSLV ?**
a) High cost, long turn-around time, limited flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites
b) Low cost, short turn-around time, limited flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites
c) High cost, long turn-around time, flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites
d) Low cost, low turn-around time, flexibility in accommodating multiple satellites
78. **Which country received the torch of Startup 20 from India?**
a) Cyprus
b) Brazil
c) New Zealand
d) Netherlands
79. **Which space agency owns the heavy-lift rocket Ariane-5, which launches into space ?**
a) NASA
b) JAXA
c) ISRO
d) ESA
80. **SALVEX is an exercise of India conducted with which country ?**
a) United Kingdom
b) United States of America
c) Germany
d) Laos
81. **Which of the following activities are subject to taxation under the Goods and service tax ?**
1. Online gaming
2. Casinos
3. Horse-racing
- How many of the above is/are correct ?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) Only three
d) None
82. **Consider the following statement about the Solomon Islands :**
1. It is an archipelago located in the western Indian Ocean.
2. It was a colony of France before 1978.
3. The official language of the Solomon Islands is French.
4. The majority of the population resides in rural areas.
How many of the above statements are correct ?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) Only three
d) All four
83. **What is the projected GDP of India by 2075, according to the Goldman Sachs report ?**
a) \$51.5 trillion
b) \$52.5 trillion
c) \$51.0 trillion
d) \$53.5 trillion
84. **Among the following Indian states, which one attracted the highest FDI inflows in FY 2023?**
a) Maharashtra
b) Gujarat
c) Delhi
d) Karnataka
85. **Where is the Bamboo Island Wild Life Sanctuary situated ?**
a) Andhra Pradesh
b) Andaman & Nicobar Islands
c) Arunachal Pradesh
d) Assam
86. **Bison (Rajbari) National Park is situated in which of the following states ?**
a) Tripura
b) Madhya Pradesh
c) Odisha
d) Bihar
87. **Louvre Museum, which was seen in the news, is located in which country ?**
a) Russia
b) Ukraine
c) France
d) Germany
88. **How many people were lifted out of poverty in India from 2005-06 to 2019-21, as per the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) ?**
a) 215 million
b) 315 million
c) 415 million
d) 515 million
89. **The joint exercise JIMEX 23 hosted by the Indian Navy in the Bay of Bengal involved which country ?**
a) Germany
b) South Korea
c) USA
d) Japan
90. **NATO nations have gathered at the annual summit of NATO in Vilnius. Vilnius is the capital of which country ?**
a) Luxembourg
b) Libya
c) Lithuania
d) Lebanon
91. **According to Global Firepower, which country has the world's most powerful military ?**
a) India
b) Germany
c) USA
d) Russia
92. **How many medals did India secure in the 2023 World Archery Youth Championships?**
a) 6
b) 11
c) 15

- d) 8
93. Bangladesh and India have initiated trade transactions in rupees, aiming to reduce reliance on the US dollar and strengthen regional currency and trade. What is the trade deficit between Bangladesh and India according to the given information ?
a) USD 2 billion
b) USD 11.69 billion
c) USD 15.69 billion
d) USD 111.69 billion
94. Which department issued Quality Control Orders for 'Potable water bottles' and 'Flame-Producing Lighter' ?
a) Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)
b) Department of Commerce
c) Department of Economic Affairs
d) Department of Revenue
95. Consider the following statements:
Statement-I: The HathniKund barrage is located on the Yamuna River in Yamuna Nagar district of Haryana.
Statement-II: The HathniKund Barrage ensures water distribution of the Yamuna river among riparian states.
Which of the following is correct in respect of the above statements ?
a) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement -II is the correct explanation of Statement-I.
b) Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
c) Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
d) Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct
96. Consider the following countries:
1. United States of America
2. Russia
3. China
4. Japan
5. India
6. Israel
How many of the above-mentioned countries have successfully achieved a soft landing on the moon ?
a) Only three
b) Only four
c) Only five
d) All six
97. NABARD was established in 1982 by the Indian government. What is the main function of NABARD ?
a) Providing financial and developmental support to the agricultural and rural sectors
b) Regulating urban banks in India
c) Promoting industrial development in rural areas
d) Facilitating international trade in agricultural products
98. What was discussed and recommended in the 50th Meeting of the GST Council ?
a) Changes in GST tax rates, measures to facilitate trade, and streamline compliance processes
b) Amendments to the Income Tax Act
c) Reforms in the banking sector
d) Measures to promote foreign direct investment
99. The headquarter of International Astronomical Union is located in which country ?
a) Paris, France
b) Vienna, Austria
c) London, UK
d) Rome, Italy
100. The World Customs Organization is headquartered at _____ ?
a) London
b) Brussels
c) Colombo
d) Berlin
101. On which date is International Plastic Bag Free Day observed ?
a) July 02
b) July 03
c) July 04
d) July 05
102. France has partnered with which country to accelerate the shift towards clean energy as part of a trilateral initiative with India ?
a) Germany
b) Russia
c) UAE
d) Canada
103. The traditional soil festival 'Chikal Kalo' was recently celebrated in which state ?
a) Rajasthan
b) Punjab
c) Goa
d) Telangana
104. Which company has achieved the milestone of becoming the world's most valuable company with a market capitalization of \$3 trillion ?
a) Apple
b) Aramco
c) Berkshire Hathaway
d) Tesla
105. In the Global Peace Index, what is the rank of India ?
a) 125th
b) 126th
c) 127th
d) 128th
106. In which city has India's first 'Police Drone Unit' been launched ?
a) Hyderabad

- b) Chennai
c) Ahmedabad
d) Kanpur
107. Taiwan has recently announced its plans to open a third representative office in India, specifically in Mumbai, as a significant step towards strengthening economic linkages between the two nations. What percentage of the world's most advanced logic chips and smartphone chipsets does Taiwan produce as of 2022?
a) 10%
b) 30%
c) 70%
d) 90%
108. The collapse of the Dutch government due to differences on migration policy has set the stage for a highly contentious election campaign in November. Who is the longest-serving leader in the Netherlands ?
a) Mark Rutte
b) Sigrid Kaag
c) Wopke Hoekstra
d) Carola Schouten
109. The Institute for Economics and Peace has recently released the 2023 Global Peace Index (GPI), the index measures peace across domains:
1. Societal Safety and Security
2. Ongoing Domestic and International Conflict
3. Militarization.
How many of the above-mentioned domains are correct?
a) Only one
b) Only Two
c) All Three
d) None
110. Supercomputing plays an important role in the following fields:
1. Quantum mechanics
2. Weather forecasting
3. Genomics
4. Oil and gas exploration
How many of the above are correct ?
a) Only one
b) Only two
c) Only three
d) All four
111. Which country has reached a USD 3 Billion Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with IMF ?
a) Afghanistan
b) Pakistan
c) Iran
d) Thailand
112. Which rate provides a safety valve for banks to meet unforeseen liquidity requirements by borrowing funds from the RBI against the collateral of government securities ?
a) Reverse Repo Rate
b) Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)
c) Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)
d) Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate
113. DRDO Day is held every year on ____ ?
a) January 1
b) January 11
c) January 16
d) January 21
114. National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) is situated at ____ ?
a) Bengaluru
b) Hyderabad
c) Aurangabad
d) Guwahati
115. Nomadic Elephant is a military exercise between India and which country ?
a) Bangladesh
b) Mongolia
c) Sri Lanka
d) France
116. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approved procurement of 26 Rafale Marine aircraft from which country ?
a) Germany
b) France
c) Israel
d) Russia
117. Which country's parliament approved a bill to limit the Supreme Court's power ?
a) Italy
b) India
c) Iran
d) Israel
118. Phosphine has recently been discovered in the atmosphere of which planet ?
a) Venus
b) Mercury
c) Neptune
d) Mars
119. India finishes 3rd with 27 medals at Asian Athletics Championships 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand. Which country topped the list ?
a) China
b) Sri Lanka
c) Japan
d) Singapore
120. India & France announced a co-development of combat aircraft engines developed by which company ?
a) Hindustan Aeronautics
b) Cochin shipyard
c) Bharat Dynamic
d) Data Patterns
121. The number of persons living in multidimensional poverty in the country has fallen from 24.85 per cent to 14.96 per cent. Which organization has released the report ?
a) CRISIL
b) CARE
c) NITI Aayog
d) Fitch India

122. Which country is the host of 'ASEAN Countries Conference on Traditional Medicines' ?

- a) Thailand
- b) India
- c) Sri Lanka
- d) Myanmar

123. Consider the following statements with respect to 'PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) scheme':

Statement 1 - The scheme will offer the opportunity to create an Integrated Textiles Value Chain from spinning to garment manufacturing at one location.
Statement 2 - A Special Purpose Vehicle owned exclusively by the Centre will be set up for each park which will oversee the implementation of the project.
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.

124. With reference to Local Currency Settlement (LCS) system, consider the following statements:

1. The Local Currency Settlement (LCS) system enables exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies.
2. The LCS system between India and Bangladesh allows for the use of the Indian Rupee and Bangladesh Taka in bilateral trade.

Which of the above statements is/are correct ?

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

125. Where was the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting held ?

- a) New Delhi
- b) Gujarat
- c) Tamil Nadu
- d) Maharashtra

126. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will inaugurate the New Integrated Terminal Building of Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair at a cost of how much rupees (in crores) ?

- a) 650
- b) 720
- c) 710
- d) 690

ANSWER KEY

1-c	2-d	3-c	4-a	5-c	6-b	7-a	8-c	9-b	10-c	11-c	12-c	13-c	14-c	15-b
16-b	17-d	18-b	19-c	20-b	21-c	22-c	23-b	24-c	25-c	26-b	27-d	28-c	29-c	30-b
31-c	32-c	33-c	34-d	35-d	36-a	37-c	38-b	39-b	40-b	41-a	42-c	43-c	44-a	45-b
46-c	47-a	48-b	49-d	50-a	51-d	52-d	53-c	54-b	55-c	56-c	57-c	58-b	59-c	60-b
61-c	62-a	63-d	64-a	65-d	66-c	67-a	68-c	69-b	70-b	71-b	72-a	73-c	74-b	75-b
76-c	77-d	78-b	79-d	80-b	81-c	82-a	83-b	84-a	85-b	86-a	87-c	88-c	89-d	90-c
91-c	92-b	93-b	94-a	95-b	96-a	97-a	98-a	99-a	100-b	101-b	102-c	103-c	104-a	105-b
106-b	107-d	108-a	109-c	110-d	111-b	112-d	113-a	114-b	115-c	116-b	117-d	118-a	119-c	120-a
121-c	122-b	123-c	124-a	125-b	126-c									