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Current affairs summary for prelims

9 April, 2024

Ugadi, Gudi Padava, Cheti Chand, Chaitra Sukladi, Navreh and Sajibu Cheiraoba

Context: *On the eve of Chaitra Sukladi, Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Cheti Chand, Navreh, and Sajibu Cheiraoba, the President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, and Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar have extended their greetings to fellow citizens.*

- These festivities, symbolizing the commencement of the Indian New Year, epitomize our faith and heritage.
- They play a crucial role in fostering social harmony and unity within our society.
- Additionally, these festivals serve as expressions of gratitude towards nature.

➢ **Chaitra Sukladi:**

- Also recognized as Ugadi and Gudi Padwa, Chaitra Sukladi marks the inception of the New Year in the traditional Hindu calendar.
- Celebrated annually in either April or March, it commemorates the advent of the New Moon.
- This day is dedicated to Lord Brahma and signifies the onset of the harvest season.
- While customs vary across different Indian states, many individuals commence the day with an auspicious oil bath and embark on temple pilgrimages to offer special prayers.

➢ **Ugadi:**

- Known as Samvatsarādi, Ugadi heralds the New Year in states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, and Goa.
- Celebrated on the first day of the Indian lunar calendar's Chaitra month, it marks the advent of the first New Moon post-Equinox.
- Festivities include the creation of intricate Kolamulus or Rangolis, adornment of doors with mango leaves (torana), gift-giving, alms distribution, bathing rituals, oil massages, preparation of special food (pachadi), and temple visits.
- Followers of the Souramana calendar system in Karnataka observe Ugadi when the Sun transits through Aries, coinciding with the Baisakhi festival.

➢ **Gudhi Padwa:**

- Gudhi Padwa is a spring festival marking the traditional New Year for Marathi and Konkani communities.
- Celebrated in regions like Maharashtra, Goa, and Madhya Pradesh, it falls on the first day of the Chaitra month, signifying the commencement of the new year.
- Festivities include vibrant floor decorations (rangoli) and the display of a special Gudhi dwaja adorned with flowers, mango leaves, and sugar crystals.

➢ **Cheti Chand:**

- The Sindhi community celebrates Cheti Chand as their New Year and the emergence day of Lord Jhulelal.
- The festivities involve prayers to Lord Jhulelal and the preparation of delicacies like Tahiri (sweet rice) and Sai Bhaji (spinach with chana dal).

➢ **Navreh:**

- Navreh marks the first day of the Kashmiri Hindu New Year, derived from the Sanskrit term Nava Varsha.
- Dedicated to Goddess Sharika, this day is observed with homage and reverence.

➢ **Sajibu Cheiraoba:**

- Sajibu Nongma Pānba, or Meetei Cheiraoba, is the lunar New Year festival of Sanamahism practitioners in Manipur.
- The name derives from Manipuri words meaning the first day of the Sajibu month, symbolizing the commencement of the New Year.

Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS), 2024

Context: *India implemented the Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS), 2024, on April 1, 2024.*

➢ **Introduction to EMPS:**

- EMPS aims to promote the adoption of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers through demand incentives.
- It also seeks to develop an electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing ecosystem in the country.
- This initiative follows the conclusion of the second iteration of FAME II, which influenced the shift towards electric mobility.

➢ **FAME II Overview:**

- FAME II, lasting from 2019 to 2024 with a budget of ₹11,500 crore, supported the adoption of electric vehicles.
- It targeted 1.74 million vehicles, including two- and three-wheelers, commercial four-wheelers, and buses.
- EMPS, with a reduced budget of ₹500 crore, exclusively supports 370,000 electric two-wheelers, e-rickshaws, and electric auto rickshaws for four months.

➢ **Comparison of Sales Targets - FAME vs. EMPS:**

- FAME II initially allocated ₹10,000 crore, later increased to ₹11,500 crore, and supported 1.74 million vehicles.
- EMPS allocates ₹500 crore over four months exclusively for electric two-wheelers, e-rickshaws, and electric auto rickshaws.

Face to Face Centres
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- **Incentive Structure - FAME II vs. EMPS:**
  - EMPS offers incentives based on battery capacity, capped at 15% of the ex-factory cost or predetermined amounts for different vehicle segments.
  - FAME II had fewer caps, providing higher incentives based on battery capacity and a percentage of the ex-factory cost.
- **Challenges with EMPS:**
  - EMPS requires re-registration of OEMs, dealers, and vehicles online, impacting subsidy eligibility.
  - Delays in certification approval may result in vehicles being sold without subsidies, affecting consumer demand.
- **Focus on Two-Wheelers and Three-Wheelers:**
  - EMPS maintains focus on segments that have driven electric vehicle adoption in India, particularly two-wheelers and three-wheelers.
  - These segments have shown consistent growth and demand, making them key areas for incentivization.
- **Gradual Phase-Out of Incentives:**
  - Gradual reduction of financial support is essential for fiscal sustainability and market-driven development.
  - Other measures like a zero-emission mandate and robust non-fiscal strategies can complement incentive phase-out programs.

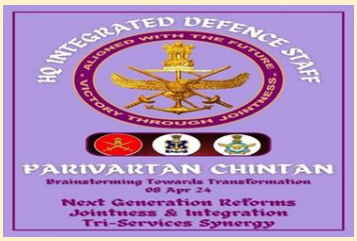
Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)

Context: *The Supreme Court announced last week that petitions for 100% verification of Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) slips would be addressed soon.*

- **What is a VVPAT machine?**
  - The VVPAT machine is attached to the ballot unit of the EVM and provides visual verification of the vote cast by printing a slip of paper with the voter's choice on it.
  - It displays the candidate's serial number, name, and party symbol behind a glass window for seven seconds for the voter to verify.
  - After verification, the slip falls into a compartment underneath and cannot be taken home by the voter.
- **Why did the Election Commission introduce VVPATs?**
  - The idea of the VVPAT machine emerged in 2010 during discussions with political parties to enhance transparency in the EVM-based polling process.
  - Field trials were conducted in various locations, leading to the design approval by an EC expert committee in February 2013.
  - The Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961 were amended to accommodate the VVPAT, and it was first used in Nagaland in 2013 before being phased in nationwide by June 2017.
- **Why are VVPAT slips of only five polling booths randomly counted?**
  - The Election Commission sought a statistically robust sample size for internal audit of VVPAT slips and initially mandated counting of slips from one randomly selected polling station per Assembly constituency.
  - Following a Supreme Court judgment in April 2019, the count was increased to five polling stations per Assembly seat, selected by draw of lots in the presence of candidates/their agents.
- **What have been the legal cases surrounding the VVPAT?**
  - The VVPAT has been subject to legal cases, including Subramanian Swamy vs Election Commission of India, which mandated the provision of a paper trail.
  - In 2019, Chandrababu Naidu moved the Supreme Court seeking a minimum 50% randomised counting of VVPAT slips, leading to the current practice of counting slips from five polling stations per constituency.
- **Why does the EC not want to count 50% VVPAT slips?**
  - The Election Commission cites logistical challenges, including time constraints and infrastructure limitations, as reasons for resisting wider verification of VVPAT slips.

News in Between the Lines

'Parivartan Chintan'



Recently, the Defence Ministry organized the first-ever Tri-service Conference named 'Parivartan Chintan' in New Delhi, chaired by Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan.

About the Parivartan Chintan:

- Parivartan Chintan is a pioneering first-ever **Tri-service** conference of the Heads of all Tri-Services Institutions, the Department of Military Affairs, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the three Services.
- The term "Parivartan Chintan" translates to "**Transformational Deliberation**" in English.
- This conference **aimed to foster a joint culture** within the Indian Armed Forces and integrate capabilities across all **three services** to enhance war fighting ability, interoperability and jointness.

	▪ It provided a platform for brainstorming and **generating new ideas**, initiatives and **reforms to propel jointness** and integration efforts, essential for the transformative journey of the Indian Armed Forces towards future readiness and effective multi-domain operations. ▪ Officers from varied service brackets, through their diverse understanding and experience will recommend measures to achieve the desired "**Joint and Integrated" end state with celerity.**
TSAT-1A e 	*Tata Advanced Systems Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Son has recently announced the "successful deployment" into space of its sub-metre optical satellite, TSAT-1A, by SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida in the US.* **About TSAT-1A:** ▪ TSAT-1A is an **Earth observation satellite** launched as part of the **Bandwagon-1 rideshare mission.** ▪ It **offers high-resolution optical satellite images** with increased collection capacity, dynamic range and low-latency delivery through its multispectral and hyperspectral capabilities. ▪ The satellite was **assembled and tested in India by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) at its Vemagal facility in Karnataka.** ▪ TASL partnered with Satellogic, utilizing their expertise in satellite development while contributing its own capabilities in complex system integration. ▪ The successful assembly and testing of TSAT-1A in India marks a milestone for TASL and signifies India's growing capabilities in the space sector. ▪ TSAT-1A's high-resolution optical satellite images will be utilized for various applications, including **environmental monitoring**, **agriculture**, **urban planning**, and **national security**, contributing to better decision-making processes.
Cicadas 	*Recently, maps have been released showcasing the locations across the United States where trillions of cicadas are expected to emerge this spring.* **About Cicadas:** ▪ Cicadas are insects belonging to the **order Hemiptera** and the family Cicadidae, undergoing incomplete metamorphosis with **egg**, **nymph** and **adult stages**. ▪ Notably, periodical cicadas, like those in **Brood XIX** and **Brood XIII,** spend long **periods of 13 or 17** years underground as nymphs before emerging as adults. ▪ Periodical cicadas emerge en masse at **regular intervals,** often synchronized with prime numbers like 13 or 17 years. ▪ They are characterized by their distinctive appearance, **featuring large**, **membranous wings** and **prominent eyes**, typically **brown or black in color**. ▪ They possess **transparent wings** and are **known for their loud buzzing sounds** produced by males using specialized structures called **tymbals** to attract females. ▪ They play vital ecological roles, particularly in forest ecosystems, where **nymphs feed on tree roots underground** and **adults feed on sap from tree branches**. ▪ Their emergence **enriches the soil with nutrients, promotes tree growth** and **facilitates soil aeration**, contributing to ecosystem health.
Junk DNA 	*Recently, Dr. Casey Luskin discussed on an episode of ID the Future the concept of "junk DNA," highlighting it as one of the biggest mistakes in science due to its alignment with evolutionary assumptions about non-coding DNA.* **About Junk DNA:** ▪ Junk DNA encompasses **non-coding DNA sequences** devoid of **direct protein-coding function within the genome.** ▪ In humans, **only about 1.5% of the genome codes** for proteins, while the rest is considered 'junk' DNA. ▪ Initially thought to have no function, 'junk' DNA is **now known to play various regulatory roles.** ▪ It controls when and where genes are turned on or off during development and in response to environmental stimuli. ▪ It **contains transposable elements**, **sequences of DNA** that can move or transpose within the genome.

	▪ One example is the **Alu element,** which is unique to primates and contributes to genomic diversity and evolution. ▪ It contains regulatory sequences that **influence gene expression**. ▪ It includes **promoters, enhancers** and **silencers**, which help regulate the activity of nearby genes.
Place in News **South Korea**	*Recently, South Korea put its second domestically made spy satellite into orbit on April 8, 2024, after it launched from an American space centre on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.* **South Korea (Capital: Seoul** **Location:** South Korea is located in East Asia, on the southern part of the **Korean Peninsula**. **Boundaries:** South Korea shares its borders with the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** (North Korea) to the north, **the East Sea** (Sea of Japan) to the east, the **East China Sea** to the south, the **Yellow Sea** to the west and the **Korea Strait**, which separates it from Japan's Tsushima island. **Physical Features:** ▪ **Hallasan** is the highest mountain peak in South Korea. ▪ The **Taebaek** Mountains and the Sobaek Mountains are both mountain ranges in South Korea. ▪ **The Han River** in South Korea is the fourth longest river on the Korean peninsula.

POINTS TO PONDER

- What is the theme of 'World Health Day 2024'? **– My Health, My Right**
- Who has become the first Indian to be appointed a jury member at the 33rd Summer Olympics 2024 to be held in Paris? **– Bilquis Mir**
- Phanigiri Buddhist site, recently seen in news, is located in which state? **– Telangana**
- Recently, Indian Coast Guard Aquatic Centre has been inaugurated at which place? **– Rameshwaram, Tamil Nadu**
- Lunar Polar Exploration Mission (LUPEX), recently seen in news, is a joint mission between which two space agencies? **– ISRO & JAXA**