The Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill'

❖ Context

➢ **Rajya Sabha passed** a Bill which the government said would provide an effective legal instrument to combat maritime piracy. The Bill was passed by **Lok Sabha earlier.**

Key Highlights:

- **The Bill defines piracy** as any illegal act of violence, detention, or destruction committed against a ship, aircraft, any person or property, for private purposes, by the crew or passengers of a private ship or aircraft.
- **It also defines ship as vessel or watercraft**, and seaplanes and other aircraft capable of being used as means of transportation in water.

Applicability:

- Provides an effective legal instrument to combat piracy, not only in territorial waters and the **exclusive economic zone (EEZ)** but also on the high seas beyond the EEZ which is **200 nautical mile**s from the country's coastline.

Punishment for piracy:

- **The death penalty is not a mandatory clause now**. Punishments would include imprisonment for life or death. Imprisonment may extend to imprisonment for life, or fine, or both.
- Death or imprisonment for life **would be pronounced** if the act or attempt of piracy includes attempted murder, or causes death.

Imprisonment:

- Impose up to **10 years** of imprisonment, or fine, or both for participating, organising or directing others to commit piracy.

Power to carry out arrest and seizure:

- As per the official amendments**, only authorised personnel may carry out arrest and seizure.**
- These **personnel include** officers and sailors assigned to warships or military aircraft of Indian Navy, or officers and enrolled persons of Coast Guard, officers of the central or state government authorised for any ship or aircraft.
- Authorised personnel may carry **out arrest and seizure on grounds of suspicion.**

Jurisdiction:

- Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019 said the **territorial jurisdiction of designated courts will be specified by the Centre after consulting with the Chief Justice of India.** Now, official amendments "adds that port or place of disembarkation within India of the person suspected or accused will be taken into account while deciding jurisdiction of the court". **The ship or property seized will be disposed of only by a court order.**

Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill 2022

❖ Context

➢ Recently, The Lok Sabha referred the **Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill 2022** to **a joint committee of Parliament.**

Key Highlights

- The Bill was introduced on December 7.
- Many Opposition MPs asked for the Bill to be referred to a Standing Committee for review arguing that it encroached on the rights of States.

Co-operative Societies

- **About**
  - Cooperatives are **organisations formed at the grassroots level by people** to harness the power of collective bargaining in the marketplace.
  - This can mean different kinds of arrangements, such as using a common resource or sharing capital, to derive a common gain that would otherwise be difficult for an individual producer to get.
  - **Amul** is perhaps the best-known cooperative society in India.
  - In 2021, the government carved out a **separate Cooperation Ministry.**
- **Constitutional Provision**
  - 'Cooperatives' is a state subject under the Constitution.
    - **They come under the state governments'** jurisdiction.
    - However, there are many societies whose members and areas of operation are spread across more than one state.

The existing Law

- The **Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act (MSCS) of 2002** — was enacted for managing Multi-State Co-operative Societies.
- Cooperatives of more than one state are registered under the MSCS Act.
- Their board of directors has representation from all states they operate in.
- Administrative and financial control of these societies is with the central registrar, with the law making it clear that **no state government official can wield any control over them.**

Key Features of the Amendment Bill

- The Bill seeks to **strengthen governance, reform the electoral process, improve the monitoring mechanism**, and ensure ease of doing business in multi-State cooperative societies.
- It also aims to **improve the composition of boards.**
- It ensures financial discipline, besides enabling the raising of funds in the multi-State cooperative societies.
- The Bill has provisions for **setting up of a Cooperative Election Authority,** a Cooperative Information Officer and **a Cooperative Ombudsman.**
  - It will make the governance of multi-State cooperative societies more democratic, transparent and accountable.

- For example, most sugar mills along the districts on the Karnataka-Maharashtra border procure cane from both states.

- Through the **97th constitutional amendment, Part IXB** (The Co-Operative Societies) was inserted into the Constitution.
- The right to form cooperative societies was included as **Right to Freedom under article 19 (1).**
- **Article 43-B** (Promotion of Cooperation societies) was inserted as one of the Directive Principles of State Policy.

- To promote equity and facilitate inclusiveness, provisions relating to representation of women and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe members on the boards of multi-State cooperative societies have been included.

Vainu Bappu Observatory

❖ Context

➢ Recently, several stellar discoveries of the 40-inch telescope at the Vainu Bappu Observatory in Kavalur, Tamil Nadu, were highlighted at the celebration of its 50 years of operation.

Key Highlights

- The Vainu Bappu Observatory is an **astronomical observatory owned and operated by Indian Institute of Astrophysics.**
- It is located at Kavalur in the **Javadi hills** near Vaniyambadi in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu.
- **Technical Details**
  - The observatory houses a number of optical telescopes, including currently **India's largest optical telescope the 2.3m Vainu Bappu telescope, 1.3 meter J.C Bhattacharya telescope, 1m Carl Zeiss Telescope** and many other smaller ones.
  - The observatory is home to the Vainu Bappu Telescope, the l**argest telescope in Asia until a 3.6-meter telescope was set up at Devasthal, Nainital, by ARIES.**
  - Apart from the Telescopes, there is also a **Fabry-Perot Interferometer** which is being used to study airglow emissions from the Earth's thermosphere.

- **Significance**
  - It discovered the **presence of rings around the planet Uranus,** a new satellite of Uranus, the presence of an atmosphere around Ganymede which is a satellite of Jupiter.
  - Other important research conducted with this telescope includes the discovery and study of many 'Be stars', Lithium depletion in giant stars, optical variability in Blazars, the dynamics of the famous supernova SN 1987A etc.

News in Between the Lines

ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation forum

❖ Context

➢ **Ms Shalini Kumari from India** received **first prize** in the Grassroots Innovation Competition at the 3rd ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation forum for her innovation '**Modified walker with adjustable legs.**

❖ Key Highlights

- The **technology which was transferre**d to the industry**, Vissco Rehabilitation Aids**, a leading manufacturer of orthopaedic products in the country.
- She has won the **cash prize of USD 1,500** by virtue of being the winner **of first prize.**
- The three-day 3rd ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation forum **organized by** the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation (**COSTI)** in partnership with the Department of Science and Technology **(DST**), Government of India and the National Innovation Foundation (**NIF**) India at Phnom Penh.
- About **100 technologies from 9 countries** were on display during the three-day exhibition.
- On the side-lines of 3rd ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation forum**, a Government 2 Government meeting was also held** in Cambodia which included representation from ASEAN Member States**, India and ASEAN Secretariat.**
- The **2nd and 3rd prize** have been won by grassroots innovators from **Philippines and Myanma**r respectively who have won USD 1000 and USD 500 respectively.
- Altogether, a total of **45 grassroots innovators have participated** and representing 9 nationalities in this competition.
- The ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation forum organized annually.

Meity's AI Pe Charcha

❖ Context

- National eGovernance Division (NeGD) under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) recently organized an AI Pe Charcha.

❖ Key Highlights:

- Panelist discussed the importance of and approaches for enabling access to quality datasets for AI.
- The recently released report "**Unlocking Potential of India's Open Data**" was also discussed during this session.
- NASSCOM, MeitY along with industry partners such **as Fractal, Microsoft, Infosys, IDFC Institute, TCS & Amazon** had constituted **the Data Taskforce** in 2021 to suggest ways to unlock the potential of India's Open Government Data.
- The **biggest challenges** that emerging AI companies and innovators face today with respect to data.
- The **AI Pe Charcha series** has been initiated as a part of **Responsible AI for Social Empowerment (RAISE**), India's first global AI summit, which was organized by MeitY in 2020.
- AI has the potential to **raise India's annual growth rate by 1.3% and add USD 957 billion to the country's economy by 2035**.
- **At a global level, AI** is expected to unlock USD 15.7 trillion in productivity by 2030.

❖ What Is Artificial Intelligence?

- Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the machine-displayed intelligence that simulates human behavior or thinking and can be trained to solve specific problems.
- AI is a **combination of Machine Learning techniques and Deep Learning.**
- AI is now being used in almost every sector-Transportation, Healthcare, Banking Retail etc.

Lion @ 47: "Vision for Amrutkal"

❖ Context

- Lion @ 47: Vision for Amrutkal" to secure and restore lions' habitat. **Project Lion** envisages landscape ecology based conservation of the Asiatic Lion in Gujarat Project.

❖ Key Highlights

- The Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change informed that the Project Lion document titled "Lion @ 47: Vision for Amrutkal" has been prepared with the following objectives:-
  - **To secure** & restore lions' habitats for managing its growing population;
  - Scale up livelihood generation and **participation of local communities**;
  - Become a **global hub of knowledge** on big cat disease diagnostics and treatment and create inclusive biodiversity conservation through project lion initiative.
- The Project is being **implemented in the Gir landscape in Gujarat** which is the last home of the Asiatic lion'.
- The Minister further informed that **Project Tiger is being implemented** in tiger landscapes spread across **the country in 53 tiger reserves.**
- Project Lion is being **implemented by the State Government** of Gujarat and other stakeholders like Central Zoo Authority.
- **IUCN status of Asiatic lion- Endangered.**
- The Asiatic Lions is listed in **Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.

❖ Context

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has decided to **phase out** the **buyback of shares** of listed companies through the exchange route.

❖ Key Highlights

- Sebi will phase out buyback through the stock exchange route **with effect from April 1, 2025.**
- SEBI favours the repurchase of shares by companies from shareholders on a proportionate basis through the tender offer **because that is considered more equitable, transparent, and fair.**

❖ Stock Exchange Route

- Under the stock exchange route, a company can **buy back shares only on the stock exchanges having nationwide trading terminals.**

Stock Exchange Route

- The buyback of shares is made only through the order-matching mechanism.
- In this method, the promoters, or persons in control of a company are not allowed to participate.

❖ **Share Buyback**

- When a **listed company buys its own shares from the existing shareholders**, it is known as a share buyback, which is also called share repurchase.
- The process reduces the number of outstanding shares in the open market over a period which can lead to better valuation and earnings per share (EPS).
- Currently, a company can **buy back its shares from shareholders on a proportionate basis through a tender offer**, or from the open market via a book-building process, or from the odd-lot holders.
- The maximum limit of any buyback is 25 per cent or less of the aggregate of paid-up capital and free reserves of a company.

SAMARTH Scheme

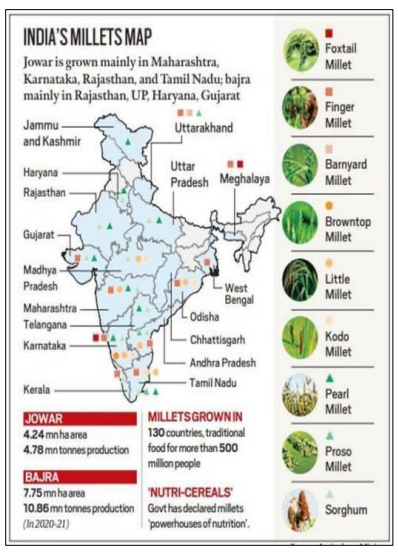
❖ **Context**

- Recently, The Union Minister of State for Textiles, informed the Lok Sabha that Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) is implementing the **Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SAMARTH)** to provide skill training to handicraft artisans.
- Under SAMARTH scheme more than 13,235 artisans have been trained in the last 3 years.

❖ **SAMARTH Scheme**

- Samarth (Scheme For Capacity Building In Textile Sector) is a flagship skill development scheme approved in continuation to the Integrated Skill Development Scheme for 12th FYP.
- **Nodal Ministry**- Ministry of Textile.
- **Objectives.**
  - To provide demand driven, placement oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textile, excluding Spinning and Weaving.
  - To **promote skilling and skill upgradation** in the traditional sectors of handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and jute.

2023: The Year of Millets



❖ **Context**

- In March , 2021, the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** adopted a resolution to declare **2023 as the International Year of Millets.**

❖ **Millets**

- The term millet is used to describe small-grained cereals like **sorghum (jowar), pearl millet (bajra),** foxtail millet (kangni/ Italian millet), little millet (kutki), kodo millet, **finger millet (ragi/ mandua),** proso millet (cheena/ common millet), barnyard millet (sawa/ sanwa/ jhangora), and brown top millet (korale).
- There is evidence for consumption of millets in the **Indus-Sarasvati civilisation (3,300 to 1300 BCE).**
- Globally, **sorghum (jowar) is the biggest millet crop.**
  - The major producers of jowar are the United States, China, Australia, India, Argentina, Nigeria, and Sudan.
  - Jowar is mainly grown in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh.
- Bajra is another major millet crop; India and some African countries are major producers.
  - Bajra is mainly grown in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- The consumption of millets was reported mainly from these states
  - Gujarat (jowar and bajra), Karnataka (jowar and ragi), Maharashtra (jowar and bajra), Rajasthan (bajra), and Uttarakhand (ragi).
- In India, millets are mainly a **kharif crop.**
- **Benefits of Millet.**
  - Millets are eco-friendly crops – they **require much less water than rice and wheat,** and can be grown in rainfed areas without additional irrigation.
  - They are highly **nutritious**.