

Joshimath Crisis

❖ Context

- A week **after cracks appeared in many roads and hundreds of houses of Joshimath**, Uttarakhand, authorities have declared it a landslide and subsidence-hit zone.

Key Highlights:

- The announcement came after a **high-level meeting** took place among the senior officials of the Central government, Uttarakhand state officials, and National Disaster Management Authority (**NDMA**), Geological Survey of India (**GSI**) and the National Institute of Hydrology (**NIH**).
- Around, **68 families have been evacuated** to temporary relief centers & around 90 more will be evacuated soon.

What Is Land Subsidence?

- According to the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**, subsidence is the “sinking of the ground because of underground material movement”.
- It can happen due to various reasons, man-made or natural, such as the removal of water, oil, or natural resources, along with mining activities.
- **Earthquakes, soil erosion, & soil compaction** are also some of the well-known causes of subsidence.



- This phenomenon can “happen over very large areas like whole states or provinces, or very small areas.

What Can Be the Reasons behind Joshimath's Subsidence?

- Experts suggest that the incident might have occurred because of **unplanned construction, over-population, & obstruction of the natural flow of water** & hydel power activities.
- Not only this, the **area is a seismic zone**, which makes it prone to frequent earthquake.
- The possibility of such an incident happening in the region was **first highlighted around 50 years in the MC Mishra committee report**.
- Joshimath city has been **built on an ancient landslide material** which means it rests on a deposit of sand & stone, not rock, which doesn't have high load-bearing capacity.
- This makes the **area extremely vulnerable** to ever-burgeoning infrastructure and population.
- Residents have also blamed **NTPC's Tapovan Vishnugad Hydro Power Project** for the incident.
- They allege that the **tunnel had water seepage** “from a punctured aquifer, leading to the drying of water sources in Joshimath.”
- Reports have pointed out that subsidence in Joshimath might have been triggered by the reactivation of a geographic fault.
- **Geographic fault is defined** as a fracture or zone of fractures between two blocks of rock, where the Indian Plate has pushed under the Eurasian Plate along the Himalayas.

Decennial Census

❖ Context

- Recently, officials said that the exercise to carry out the **decennial census** has been further postponed - at least till September 30.

Key Highlights:

- The housing listing phase of the census and the exercise to update the **National Population Register (NPR)** were scheduled to be carried out across the country from April 1 to September 30, 2020, but were **postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak**.
- According to norms, **census can be conducted only three months after the freezing of boundary limits** of administrative units such as districts, sub-districts, tehsils, talukas and police stations.
- The Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India conveyed that the date of freezing of administrative boundaries has been extended till June 30.

About Census

- Census is the basis for **reviewing** the country's progress in the past decade, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and plan for the future.
- Census provides detailed and authentic information on.
 - Demography.
 - Economic activity.
 - Literacy and education.
 - Housing and household amenities.

- Urbanisation.
- Fertility and Mortality.
- Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes,
- Language.
- Religion.
- Migration, Disability and many other socio-cultural and demographic data.

• **Historical Background**

- The first complete census of India was conducted in **1830 by Henry Walter in Dacca (now Dhaka)**.
- It has been undertaken every 10 years, beginning in 1872 under British Viceroy Lord Mayo.
- The first synchronous census was taken under British rule on February 17, **1881**, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India.
- The decennial Census of India has been **conducted 15 times**.

• **Nodal Ministry**

- Post 1949, it has been conducted by the Registrar General & Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

• **Legal Backing**

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10 January 2023

- All the censuses since 1951 were conducted under the **1948 Census of India Act**.
- The population census is a **Union subject under Article 246 of India Constitution**.
- **Confidentiality of Information**
 - The information collected during the population Census is so confidential that it is **not even accessible to the courts of law**.

- The confidentiality is guaranteed by the Census Act, 1948.
- The last census was held in 2011.
- 2011 marks the first time biometric information was collected.
- **16th Decennial Census will be the first digital census** in the country.

News in Between the Lines

83rd All India Presiding Officers' Conference



❖ Context

- The Vice President & Rajya Sabha Chairman, will address the inaugural session of the **83rd All India Presiding Officers' Conference in Jaipur on 11th January, 2023**.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The All India Presiding Officers' Conference (**AIPOC**) is the **apex body of the Legislatures** in India that completed its hundred years in 2021.
- **The first Conference** was also held in Shimla in 1921.
- **The upcoming 83rd session** will focus on following themes of contemporary relevance in its day long discussions -
 - Leadership of **India in G-20** as the mother of democracy.
 - The need to make Parliament & Legislature more Effective, Accountable & Productive.
 - Integration of State Legislatures with **Digital Parliament**.
 - The need to maintain a harmonious relationship between the Legislature and the Judiciary in accordance with the **spirit of the Constitution**.
- Speaker Lok Sabha, Chief Minister Rajasthan, Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha & presiding officers of legislative bodies from across the states will be attending the Conference.

Himalayan Griffon vulture



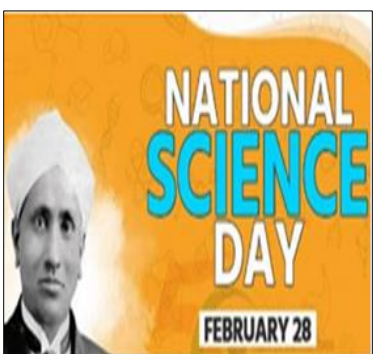
❖ Context

- A group of residents of village Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, **captured a rare Himalayan Griffon vulture**.

❖ About Himalayan Griffon Vulture:

- Himalayan vultures (*Gyps himalayensis*) are **indigenous** to the uplands of central Asia, ranging from **Kazakhstan and Afghanistan in the west to western China and Mongolia in the east**.
- Himalayan vultures are considered **localized scavengers of nature**.
- Himalayan vultures are **highly respected within the Buddhist** culture of the Tibetan plateau, playing a unique role in a centuries old sky burial tradition.
- **IUCN Red List: Near Threatened**
- A total of **nine species** of vultures are found in India. **Out of these six species are resident** (white-rumped vulture, Indian vulture, slender-billed vulture, red-headed vulture, bearded vulture and Egyptian vulture).
- **Three species are migratory** (cinereous vulture, griffon vulture and Himalayan vulture).

National Science Day 2023



❖ Context

- Union Minister unveils the **theme for National Science Day 2023**, titled "Global Science for Global Wellbeing" at National Media Centre, Delhi.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated every year on 28 February to **commemorate the discovery of the 'Raman Effect'**.
- Government of India designated 28 February as National Science Day (NSD) in 1986.
- On this day **Sir C.V. Raman** announced the **discovery of the 'Raman Effect'** for which he was awarded **the Nobel Prize in 1930**.
- **On this occasion**, theme-based science communication activities are carried out all over the country.
- **The Global Science for Global Wellbeing theme** has been chosen for the purpose of raising public appreciation of the scientific issues in global context which is having a bearing upon global wellbeing.

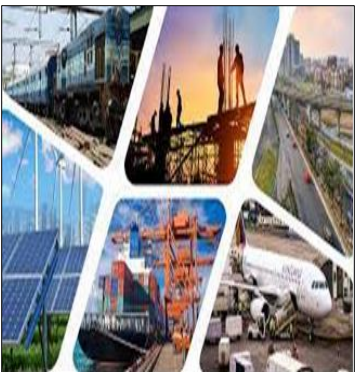
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Asset monetisation



❖ Context

- As against the FY23 **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)** target to generate Rs 1.62 trillion in revenues and investments, officials indicated that the shortfall could be about Rs 50,000 crore.

❖ Key Highlights:

- After achieving the target for the first year, the Centre's ambitious **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)** may miss the goal in **FY23** by a wide margin as railways, telecom and petroleum sector slip on their goals.
- Last year, a sum of about **Rs 1 trillion was raised** through the monetisation route as against the target of Rs 88,200.

❖ What Is Asset Monetisation:?

- Asset Monetization involves creation of new sources of revenue by **unlocking the value of the otherwise unutilized or underutilized public assets**.
- It is done by **leasing them out to private sector partners** for fixed terms with an aim to utilise the proceeds for capital expenditure towards new infrastructure creation.
- The policy framework for monetisation of core assets has **three key imperatives**.
 - Monetization of '**Rights**' not '**Ownership**' with assets being handed back to the government at the end of transaction life.
 - **Brownfield de-risked assets** with stable revenue streams.
 - **Structured partnerships** under defined contractual frameworks with strict KPIs & performance standards.

African Swine Fever



❖ Context

- The district administration of Damoh in **Madhya Pradesh** has killed **700 pigs in the last two days** amid fear of African Swine Fever in the area.

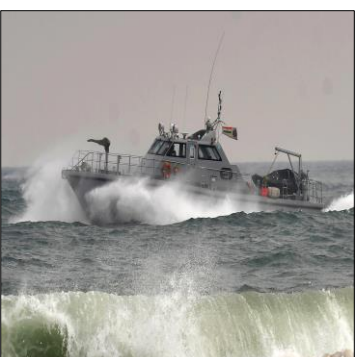
❖ Key Highlights:

- In 2021, the northeastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram & Manipur were swept by the disease.
- In December 2022, cases were confirmed in Kerala, Assam and Manipur.

❖ African Swine Fever:

- African Swine Fever is a **viral disease** that attacks pigs and boars & has a high mortality rate.
- It is **caused by a DNA virus** of the Asfarviridae family.
- It is **endemic to sub-Saharan Africa** but has spread to many other regions of the world, including Asia and Europe.
- It is **not known to affect human beings**.
- There is no cure or precaution available for the infection yet.
- **Symptoms**
 - Acute forms are characterised by high fever, depression, anorexia and loss of appetite, haemorrhages in the skin), abortion in pregnant sows, cyanosis, vomiting, diarrhea.
 - Mortality rates may be as high as 100%.
- **Routes of Transmission**
 - Direct contact between infected pigs, domestic or wild.
 - Ingestion of material contaminated with the virus.
 - contact with contaminated fomites (such as clothing, footwear or vehicles).
 - bite of biological vectors (soft ticks of the genus Ornithodoros), where present.

SPRINT Initiative



❖ Context

- Recently, the Indian Navy has inked an agreement with **Sagar Defence Engineering Pvt. Ltd** for acquiring armed autonomous boat swarms under the 'SPRINT' initiative.

❖ Key Highlights:

- The initiative was unveiled by PM of India during Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO) seminar 'Swavlamban' in New Delhi in July 2022.
- NIIO, in conjunction with the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), aims to induct at least 75 new indigenous technologies/products into the Indian Navy. This collaborative initiative has been named SPRINT.
- It aims to promote development & usage of indigenous defence technologies by domestic companies.

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A New System to Measure Performance of Hospitals Empaneled under Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY Scheme 	❖ Context ➤ Recently, National Health Authority (NHA) introduced a new system to measure and grade performance of hospitals empaneled under Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY) scheme. ❖ Key Highlights: • Existing System ▪ Traditionally, from the payer's perspective, the healthcare model has been focussed on the quantity of services delivered, where case-based bundled payment is made on the basis of the number of services provided. • The New System ▪ The new initiative will introduce the concept of 'value- based care', where payment will be outcome based and providers will be rewarded according to the quality of the treatment delivered. ▪ Under the new model, the providers will be rewarded for helping the patients improve their health, which consequently will reduce the effects of disease in the population in the long term. • Objective ▪ To incentivize and encourage healthcare providers to focus on delivering patient centric services.
A New Material which Removes Pollutants from Water 	❖ Context ➤ Recently, A team at Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Pune developed a new material which removes pollutants from water. ❖ Key Highlights: • They came up with a custom-designed unique molecular sponge-like material — macro/microporous ionic organic framework — which can swiftly clean polluted water by soaking up sinister contaminants. • In general, commonly utilised sorbent materials often trap these pollutants through ion-exchange strategy to purify water but suffer from poor kinetics and specificity. • To mitigate this issue, they prepared a newly engineered material called viologen-unit grafted organic-framework (iVOFm). • The material employs amalgamation of electrostatics driven ion-exchange combined with nanometer-sized macropores and specific binding sites for the targeted pollutants. • The size and number of tunable macropores along with the strong electrostatic interaction of iVOFm can quickly remove various toxic pollutants from water.

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