Panel of Vice Chairpersons

Context: The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has nominated 50% women members to the panel of Vice-Chairpersons, achieving gender parity in the panel.

What is it?

- The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha can nominate a panel of up to 6 vice-chairpersons from among the members of the Council.
- One of the vice-chairpersons can preside over the Council in the absence of the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman.
- The vice-chairpersons nominated will hold office until a new panel is nominated.

Recent Women Appointees:

- Smt. P. T. Usha
- Smt. S. Phangnon Konyak
- Dr. Fauzia Khan
- Smt. Sulata Deo

Rajya Sabha Chairman

- **Constitutional Position**: The Vice-President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. **(Article 64)**
- **Role**: The Chairman safeguards the eminence and dignity of the House.
- **Powers**:
  - ✓ Can adjourn/suspend the House in case of a quorum absence.
  - ✓ Decides on disqualification of members due to defection **(10th Schedule)**.
  - ✓ Approves questions of breach of privilege.
  - ✓ Nominates members to various committees.
  - ✓ Chairs the Business Advisory, Rules, and General Purposes Committees.
- **Interpretation**: The Chairman's interpretation of the Constitution and rules for the House is final and unchallenged.
- **Removal**: The Chairman can only be removed with the Vice-President's removal from office. **(Article 64)**

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Livestock Sector

Context: The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, implements the Credit Guarantee Scheme under AHIDF.

- Credit Guarantee Scheme under AHIDF facilitates finance access for underserved livestock sector.
- Targets first-generation entrepreneurs and underprivileged sections without collateral security.
- **Main objective**: Emphasizes project viability as primary security for credit facility.
- Credit Guarantee Fund Trust established under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan stimulus package (Rs. 15,000 crores).
- Aims to incentivize investments in livestock infrastructure and value addition.
- **Focus areas**:
  - ✓ Dairy processing and value addition.
  - ✓ Meat processing and value addition.
  - ✓ Animal feed plants.
  - ✓ Breed improvement technology and breed multiplication farms.
  - ✓ Animal waste to wealth management (Agri-waste management).
  - ✓ Setting up veterinary vaccine and drugs manufacturing facilities.

Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF)

- **Overview:**
  - ✓ The fund size for AHIDF is Rs. 15,000 crore.
  - ✓ The fund aims to incentivize infrastructure investments in dairy, meat processing, and animal feed plants.
- **Eligibility, Funding, and Implementation**:

- ✓ **Eligible Entities**: Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), MSMEs, Section 8 Companies, Private Companies, and individual entrepreneurs.
- ✓ **Margin Contribution**: Eligible entities need to contribute only 10% as margin money.
- ✓ **Loan Component**: The remaining 90% of the funding will be provided as a loan by scheduled banks.
- ✓ **Interest Subvention**: The Government of India (GOI) will provide 3% interest subvention to eligible beneficiaries.
- ✓ **Moratorium Period**: There will be a 2-year moratorium period for loan repayment.
- ✓ **Repayment Period**: After the moratorium, the repayment period will extend to 6 years.

➢ **Credit Guarantee Fund**:
- ✓ A Credit Guarantee Fund of Rs. 750 crore was established.
- ✓ Managed by NABARD, the fund will provide credit guarantees to projects within the MSME-defined ceilings.
- ✓ **Guarantee Coverage**: The guarantee coverage will be up to 25% of the borrower's credit facility.

Sovereign Green Bond (SGB)

Context: The Chairman of the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) expressed the regulator's interest in having pension funds invest in sovereign green bonds (SGBs).

About SGB

- ➢ Sovereign green bonds are issued by sovereign entities, inter-governmental groups, alliances, and corporates.
- ➢ **Purpose:** Funds from these bonds support environmentally sustainable projects.
- ➢ Longer maturity period compared to regular bonds.
- ➢ India introduced its framework for sovereign green bonds on November 9, 2022.
- ➢ Apple was the first tech company to issue Green Bonds and Poland was the first country to issue it, both in 2016.
- ➢ Presently European Investment Bank is the leading issuer of Green Bonds in the World.

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

- ➢ Statutory regulatory body established under the PFRDA Act of 2014.
- ➢ **Objective:** Promote old age income security through pension funds and protect subscribers' interests.
- ➢ **Composition:** Chairperson and up to six members (minimum three Whole-Time Members) appointed by the Central Government.
- ➢ **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Finance.
- ➢ **Headquarters:** New Delhi.
- ➢ **Functions:**
  - ✓ Regulates National Pension System (NPS) and other applicable pension schemes.
  - ✓ Establishes and develops pension funds.
  - ✓ Protects the interests of pension fund subscribers.
  - ✓ Registers and regulates intermediaries.
  - ✓ Lays down norms for pension fund corpus management.
  - ✓ Establishes grievance redressal mechanism for subscribers.
  - ✓ Resolves disputes among intermediaries and between intermediaries and subscribers.

Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA)

Context: In Rome, Italy, delegates from around the globe convened for the 19th session of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA).

About

- ➢ The only permanent intergovernmental body for all components of biodiversity in food and agriculture.
- ➢ Established in 1983.
- ➢ **Aim**: Achieve international consensus on sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources and fair sharing of benefits.
- ➢ **Membership**: 179 countries.
- ➢ India is also a member of this commission.

- **Functions**:
  - ✓ Guides preparation of global assessments on genetic resources and biodiversity for food and agriculture.
  - ✓ Develops global plans of action, codes of conduct, and policy instruments.
  - ✓ Monitors the implementation of these plans and policies.
- **Landmark achievement**: International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA).

- ✓ The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) was adopted during the Thirty-First Session of the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations Conference on 3 November 2001.
- ✓ **Objectives of treaty:**
  - ✓ Acknowledging farmers' significant role in crop diversity for global food supply.
  - ✓ Establishing a global system for access to plant genetic materials for farmers, plant breeders, and scientists.
  - ✓ Ensuring recipients share benefits with the countries of origin for the use of these genetic materials.

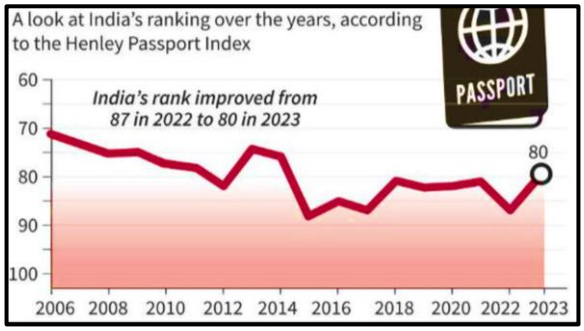
Henley Passport Index 2023

Context: In the latest Henley Passport Index ranking, India's passport climbed five spots from the previous year, securing the 80th position.

- The Henley Passport Index ranks passports based on visa-free access to destinations.
- Published by Henley & Partners, a global citizenship advisory firm, in collaboration with IATA.
- Includes 199 passports and 227 travel destinations.
- Data sourced from IATA and further enhanced by Henley & Partners' research team.

Highlights of Index 2023

- Singapore holds the top rank with visa-free access to 192 destinations.
- Germany, Italy, and Spain share the second rank with access to 190 destinations.
- Japan, Austria, Finland, France, Luxembourg, South Korea, and Sweden are tied at the third rank.
- Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan have the weakest passports, ranked 101st, 102nd, and 103rd, respectively.
- Pakistan is placed at the 100th spot in the passport rankings.



India's Rank

- India climbed seven places to the 80th rank from 87th last year.
- It shares this position with Senegal and Togo.
- Passport holders enjoy visa-free access to 57 destinations.

News in Between the Lines

Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN)

Recently, the President of India (Draupadi Murmu) emphasized the importance of implementing a Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN).

Unique Land Parcel Identification Number:

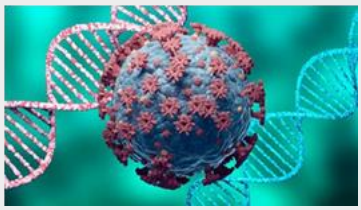
- ULPIN (Bhu-Aadhaar) is a 14-digit Alpha–Numeric Unique ID for each land parcel.
- Part of Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) since 2008.
- ULPIN generated using ECCMA standards based on longitude and latitude coordinates.
- DILRMP aims to develop an Integrated Land Information Management System (ILIMS).
- Includes computerization of land records, survey activities, and digitization of registration processes.

Benefits of ULPIN:

- Curbs malpractices and enhances transparency in land transactions.

	➢ Connects E-Courts with land records for streamlined legal processes. ➢ Provides indestructible documentation for disaster recovery. ➢ Supports informed decision-making and resource management. **Impacts on Development and Welfare:** ➢ Acts as a development catalyst by enabling informed decision-making. ➢ Facilitates efficient implementation of welfare schemes like PM Awas Yojana. ➢ Helps in beneficiary targeting and targeted delivery of benefits and services.
Pashmina Shawl 	A Pashmina shawl is a luxurious, soft, and warm shawl made from the fine wool of the Pashmina goat found in the Himalayan regions. It is prized for its elegance and high-quality craftsmanship **Origin:** Pashmina is a Geographical Indication (GI) certified wool from Kashmir, India. **Usage:** Kashmiri people used Pashmina shawls for winter warmth. **Etymology:** The term 'Pashmina' comes from the Persian word "Pashm," meaning a weavable wool fiber. **Cost & Time:** Pashmina shawls are expensive due to fine quality and labor-intensive production, taking around 72 hours to weave one shawl. **Source:** Pashmina is obtained from Changthangi goats in Ladakh. **Weaving Process:** Raw Pashm is cleaned, combed, hand-spun and woven into luxurious shawls by Kashmiri weavers.
Kuki Zo Tribe 	Recently, in Churachandpur district of Manipur, thousands of Kuki-Zo people organized a rally demanding a separate administration due to the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state. **Kuki Zo Tribe:** The Kuki Zo tribe is an indigenous ethnic group found in parts of Northeast India, Myanmar (Burma), and Bangladesh. They are also known as Kukis or Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi. **Territorial Distribution:** They are primarily found in the states of Manipur, Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, as well as certain areas of Myanmar and Bangladesh. **Language:** The Kuki-Zo people speak Tibeto-Burman languages, which are part of the Sino-Tibetan language family. **Livelihood and Economy:** Traditionally, the Kuki-Zo people were primarily agrarian, cultivating crops like rice, millet, and maize. They also engage in activities such as weaving, pottery, and **Land Rights and Empowerment:** Efforts are being made to address challenges related to land rights, social and economic development, and the protection of traditional knowledge and practices. **Historical Significance:** The Kuki Rebellion, also known as the Kuki Uprising, was a significant armed movement against British colonial rule in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
National Commission for Women National Commission for Women, India राष्ट्रीय महिला आयोग	Recently, the National Commission for Women (NCW) has condemned an incident in Manipur. **What is National Commission for Women?** The National Commission for Women is a statutory body established in 1992 under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990. **Mandate:** Its primary mandate is to safeguard and promote women's rights and welfare, aiming for gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women. **Functions:** NCW investigates and examines complaints related to women's rights violations, reviews and recommends changes to existing laws for women's empowerment, and conducts research and awareness programs on women's issues. **Composition:** NCW consists of a Chairperson and members appointed by the government. **Autonomy:** NCW is an autonomous body, not under the Ministry of Women and Child Development. **Limitations:** It lacks the power to take direct legal action and its recommendations are not binding. **Support Services:** NCW provides legal aid and counselling to women facing rights violations.

Picolinic Acid



A recent study by Indian Institute of Science (IISc.) reveals picolinic acid's ability to block viruses, including SARS-CoV-2 and influenza A.

What is Picolinic Acid?

Picolinic Acid is a pyridinemonocarboxylic acid in which the carboxy group is located at position 2. It serves as an intermediate in the metabolism of tryptophan and acts as a MALDI matrix material and a human metabolite. Picolinic acid has shown antiviral properties, including the ability to block viruses like SARS-CoV-2 and influenza. A, making it potentially significant in viral research and treatment.

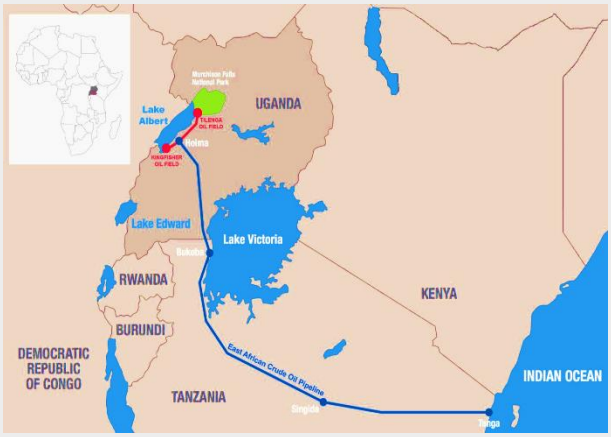
Antiviral Discoveries:

- Disrupts virus entry into host cells, preventing infection.
- Facilitates absorption of zinc and trace elements from the gut.
- Protects animals from infection and reduces viral load in lungs.
- Enhances the number of immune cells in animals.

Place in News

Port of Tanga

Recently, the international non-profit Human Rights Watch (HRW) raised concerns about an East Africa oil pipeline, especially at the Port of Tanga, due to potential environmental impacts and the global climate crisis.



Geographical Location: Port of Tanga is situated in the coastal city of Tanga, Tanzania, in East Africa, along the shores of the Indian Ocean.

Strategic Importance: It serves as a crucial seaport on the Indian Ocean, facilitating regional trade and connecting landlocked East African countries to international markets.

Cargo Handling: The port handles diverse cargo, including agricultural products, minerals, and industrial goods.

Transport Hub: It plays a pivotal role in improving regional connectivity by providing access to global trade routes.

Infrastructure Development: Ongoing development aims to enhance the port's capacity and efficiency.

Environmental Concerns: Reports have raised environmental concerns, particularly with regards to an oil pipeline project associated with the port's activities.