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Digital Currency: Future or Necessity

Resolving the Growing Differences Between the Government and the Supreme Court on the Collegium System is the Need of the Hour.

The Need of Prison Reforms in India.

India's Role in Isolating China From the Global Community.

Role of International Conventions in Biodiversity Conservation.

Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022: A Long Needed Initiative

Significant Decline in MMR: Has India Achieved the Targets of the National Health Policy.

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1. First of all, Perfect-7 Current Affairs Magazine is published **every 15 days** to keep students up-to-date with current affairs, while other coaching institutes have monthly magazines which aggregate the current affairs of the month. Due to large number of current affairs, students are often unable to read all the articles. Eventually they become dependent on annual and half yearly magazines.
2. Perfect-7 magazine has been created keeping in mind the **UPSC and State PCS centric exams**, whereas the magazines of other coaching institutes include unnecessary and extra material in the name of UPSC and State PCS exams, causing confusion among the students.
3. **Perfect-7 magazine has 7 editorial articles by subject experts on important events during 15 days, 42 articles on important events, 7 brain-boosters in creative style, current affairs, one liner, preliminary and mains exam related questions etc.** are given. Along with this there is also a section on eminent personality which shows the contribution of the historical personality towards the country and society. In this way, no important information and news is missed in the period of 15 days for UPSC and State PCS exams.
4. Along with this, through the **case study section**, students learn about the situations, an officer has to face during his tenure and what could be the possible solution.
5. Perfect-7 Current Affairs Magazine, helps students to prepare well for DhyeyaIAS's most important exam program **PMI (Pre + Mains + Interview)**.
6. In current affairs based classes, preparation is done through Perfect-7 Magazine, which enables quality preparation of the students.
7. Perfect-7 magazine becomes available to students on **10th and 25th of every month**, whereas current affairs magazine provided by other institutes are of the previous month and they create confusion in the minds of students by mentioning the current month of publication.
8. Perfect-7 Magazine contains prelims and mains exam focused mock questions through which students can make their preparation more precise.

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Message



Vinay Kumar Singh

**Founder
Dhyeya IAS**

Current Affairs has an important role in the examinations conducted by Union Public Service Commission and State Public Service Commissions. It is necessary for the candidate to have knowledge of relevant information on issues of national and international importance. Perfect 7 Magazine is being presented fortnightly to the students to fulfill this requirement. Preparation of civil services exam is only completed when candidates have holistic knowledge and analysis of the dynamic nature of the current affairs. 'Perfect7' keeps this vision and approach and understands the multidimensional need of students at the content level, so this magazine has presented the current affairs with relevant issues of general studies. Keeping in mind the needs of mains exam, current articles on 7 burning issues, Ethics Case Studies, Biographies of important personalities, coverage of most useful topics of various sections of General Studies and the most important current affairs issues are being covered for Preliminary Examination in which emphasis is being given on national, international, environment, ecology, art and culture, science and technology, economic issues.

Brain boosters with 7 themes based graphics are being presented in a concise form to enhance the conceptual understanding of the students. Apart from this, updated information on Global Initiatives, Global Institutions, Structure of Organizations, Functioning, Important Reports, and Indices will be included in this magazine, which is asked prominently in the Civil Services Examination. To give emphasis on facts and analysis, keeping in view the trends of new nature of questions in Preliminary and Main Examination of Civil Services, an inclusive magazine is being provided to the students so that they can give the right direction to their preparation by understanding the new requirements of Civil Services Examination. Columns have been included in the format of the magazine keeping in mind the factual needs of the candidates, mental development, developing writing technique etc. Along with this, we have been introducing new segments according to the changing needs of the candidates and these initiatives will continue in future also. Hope this issue will prove useful for all of you. Your suggestions are always welcome.

Best wishes.

Governance

The Need Of Prison Reforms in India

Recently the President of India while addressing the gathering on the occasion of Constitution Day, highlighted the plight of prisoners in Indian jails who spend 20-25 years or their whole life in prison. Such prisoners have limited resources and since they have no arrangement for their release, they have to serve the jail sentence. President Murmu during the Constitution Day celebrations said, that while she was MLA she was made the chairman of the Home Standing Committee and toured across the state to see the condition of the prisoners. From there she was inspired to hold meetings for improving the condition of the jails.

Raising this issue by Her Excellency the President underlines the great need for reform in the prison administration in the country. As this issue is not only about prison reform but also about human rights, fundamental rights, the right to a dignified life, and reducing the burden of trial on the Indian Judiciary.

It is worth mentioning here that 'Prison'/'Persons detained therein' is a "State-List" subject under Entry 4 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The administration and management of prisons and prisoners is the responsibility of the respective State Governments which are competent to take appropriate action in this regard. However, given the importance of prisons in the criminal justice system, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, has been providing regular guidance and assistance to the States and Union Territories on various issues relating to prison administration.

Keeping in mind the need to remove anomalies in prison administration the Supreme Court, in the case of State of Andhra Pradesh Vs. Challa Ramakrishna Reddy and others (2000), observed that "The prisoner whether convicted or under trial does not cease to be a human being even when he/she is lodged in jail. Therefore she/he should be given the benefit of all the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India, including the right to life guaranteed by the Constitution."

Measures by Government to improve conditions in jails:

➤ In the last 10 years, the Central Government has taken several necessary measures for improving the conditions in the jails. These measures include setting up fast-track courts and Lok Adalats,

which will reduce the pendency of under trials and consequently it will reduce the burden on the prison system. Further, the 'Jail Modernization Scheme' is being run by the Central Government, which costs around Rs 1800 crore and aims to build 199 new jails, 1572 additional barracks, and 8568 residential complexes (quarters) for prison personnel.

- Moreover, the state governments make efforts for prison modernization reform. The Ministry of Home Affairs, on the other hand, supports the States/UTs in implementing the e-Prisons project, which aims to bring efficiency to prison management through digitization.
- The e-Prison project is complementary to the Prisoner Information Management System (PIMS) developed by the National Informatics Centre, which provides a centralized approach to record and manage prisoner information and generate various types of reports. PIMS records the basic details of prisoners, family details, biometrics (fingerprint), photographs, medical details, prisoner case history, movement of prisoners, sentence details etc. Availability of these details on electronic platform is considered useful for tracking the status of prisoners.
- Considering the advisability of transferring high-risk prisoners from one State or Union Territory prison to the prison of another State or Union Territory has also been considered crucial in terms of prison reform and prison administration. The Transfer of Prisoners Act, 1950 also provides that high-risk prisoners can be transferred from one place to another, if necessary for the convenience of administration. States/UTs have to exercise utmost vigilance while transferring prisoners who are accused of heinous crimes such as murder, rape, human trafficking or organized crimes. Similar instructions have also been given by the Home Ministry of the country to the Chief Secretaries of all the States and Union Territories.
- On April 28, 2015, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed the State Governments to install CCTV cameras in all the jails of the country. After which the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, instructed all the State Governments to install CCTV cameras in all jails of their respective states within 1 year (should not exceed 2 years in any case).

Improvements related to the availability of medical personnel in jails are necessary:

- The issue of availability of medical staff in prisons is also seen as a major aspect of prison reforms in India. The Central Government and the State Governments need to pay special attention in addressing the acute shortage of Resident Medical Officers, Medical Officers, Pharmacists, Lab Technicians and Attendants in the jails on the basis of humanitarian grounds and principles of natural justice.
- Since this is an issue related to the health needs of the prisoners. As per the statistics of central government institutions, Goa, Karnataka, Ladakh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Haryana are at the top in terms of shortages of medical personnel. In Goa there are only 2 medical personnel available for more than 500 prisoners, while in Karnataka their ratio is only 26 for 14,308 prisoners.

Recent Judgment of the Supreme Court on mental health facilities for prisoners in Jails:

- The Supreme Court of India on 2 September issued a notice on a petition seeking to set up adequate mental health facilities in prisons across the country.
- A bench of Justice Abdul Nazeer and Justice V. Ramasubramaniam agreed to issue notice in a plea seeking to direct the central and state governments to provide training and awareness to prison staff and law enforcement officials about the Mental Health Act, 2017. The bench directed that the authorities concerned should ensure that the medical examination report of the prisoners is prepared regarding the mental condition of the arrested person during hospital visit.
- The Supreme Court says that the medical examination conducted when prisoners are admitted to jail does not include mental health assessment. On the other hand, the petition said that the lack or inadequate facility of mental health centres in the jails is a gross violation of the mandate of Section 103 (6) of the Mental Health Act, 2017, for which every state government should have at least one mental health establishment in medical branch of every jail.
- Significantly, the petition has raised concerns about the conducive environment of the prison, which also includes the issue of overcrowding. In addition, there have been reports of adverse effects on the mental

health of convicts, often resulting in suicides. NCRB data related to suicides by inmates in jail has been presented to substantiate the claim.

- Prison authorities are either indifferent to mental health concerns or do not have adequate infrastructure to provide medical assistance. It is on these grounds that the Supreme Court has held that the denial of adequate mental health care in prisons is a violation of the fundamental rights of prisoners.

Amitabh Roy Committee's recommendations for prison reform:

- The Supreme Court of India appointed Justice (Retd) Amitabh Roy Committee, a committee to give recommendations to remove the problem of overcrowding in jails. The committee said that to remove the unwanted situation of overcrowding, one of the quick and best ways are quick trials.
- This committee, in its recommendation related to prison reform, emphasized on the facility of lawyer for the prisoners. The committee said that in contrast to the present situation, there should be at least one lawyer available for every 30 prisoners.
- The Amitabh Roy Committee recommended that special fast-track courts should be set up to exclusively deal with cases of petty crimes pending for more than five years. Also, adjournments should not be granted in cases where witnesses are present.
- One of the specific recommendations of this committee was to promote the concept of 'plea bargaining', where the accused pleads guilty with a lesser sentence.

Work needs to be done on Model Jail Manual of the Central Government:

- After a comprehensive review under the leadership of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a model prison manual was brought in 2016 to replace the old prison manual, which has been adopted by only 11 states and union territories. It is worth mentioning that while inaugurating the 6th All India Prison Duty Meet at Kankaria, Ahmedabad this year, Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah urged all the states to accept the Model Prison Manual 2016 without any delay in their respective states to carry forward the prison reforms program of on its basis.
- Many reformative points have been included in

the Model Jail Manual and in the same order, the emphasize has been made on the human rights of the prisoners as well as for computerization in the jail to bring basic uniformity in the rules and regulations.

- In this, along with special provision for the rights of women prisoners, many good provisions have been made like after care facility, good scientific manual for prison inspection, rights of death row prisoners and provisions for the employees associated with prison reforms.

Central Government will bring Model Jail Act:

- After the Prison Manual, the Central Government is now going to bring the Model Jail Act as well. This act will bring necessary changes in the Act which has been in force since the British era. Right now a wide discussion is going on with all the states and such a possibility has also been expressed by the Ministry of Home Affairs of the country that within the next 6 months a Model Jail Act will be brought which will modernise all the jails of our country.
- The Indian Home Minister has expressed the view of the Central Government on this subject that all the states need to think towards the overcrowding in jails because jail administration cannot be improved until overcrowding is reduced. The Union Home Ministry, therefore, requested every state that they should provide video conference facility with the court in every district jail to deal with this issue of overcrowding. Along with this, there is also a need to make arrangements to separate the prisoners lodged in jail for the crime of narcotics and the one who spread the propaganda of radicalization. In this regard, a lot of information has also been given inside the manual to control gangs inside the jail.
- The prison sector has been neglected sector in the country while the jail has been a neglected area. Today, there is a need for change in jails in those states where even today the British built jails built remain same. Today, along with modernizing them, equipping them with technology, making them fit for safety, it is very crucial to make arrangements for the good living of the prisoners.
- Creating a library for the prisoners, making them rehabilitated by equipping them with various types of education, taking care of their health, a good hospital in the jail itself and various types of programs for

mental development programs can be started. The prisoners who used to come during the British era were mostly political prisoners, torturing them could have been a means of maintaining their rule of the British but now the country is free and the attitude towards imprisonment needs to be re-evaluated.

- The Central Government has also advised the State Governments on the use of Aadhaar for identification of visitors to the jails.
- There are many dimensions where reforms in prison administration are required today in order to protect the ideal of the Indian Constitution which says, that all individuals and citizens in the country including prisoners have the right to lead a dignified life. They include:
 1. Forwarding the report of the National Commission for Women to the States and Union Territories for improving the condition of women prisoners in prisons,
 2. Addressing the issue of overcrowding in prisons and providing relief to under-trial prisoners,
 3. Granting parole/furlough to prisoners and timely release from prison and review of Advises on their release earlier,
 4. Advise on treatment and care of transgender persons in prisons,
 5. Prevention and control of COVID-19 in prisons and correctional homes and advise on behavioural change of prison officials,
 6. Standard Operating Procedure for under-trial review committees prepared by NALSA
 7. Implementation of guidelines on allowing individuals / NGOs / companies / press inside prisons to conduct research, make documentaries, or interview prisoners,
 8. Use of mobile phones in prisons etc.
 9. Policy to ban, prevent/eliminate drug trafficking in prisons, treatment of terminally ill prisoners-prisoners (TIP),
 10. Sensitize prison inmates to HIV/AIDS, allowing the children of women prisoners to meet each other

International

India's Role in Isolating China From the Global Community

For one reason or the other, China remains a topic of discussion in view of the world's strategic, diplomatic, political, and economic interests. Often a question arises as to why China is in such way that no debate between countries and intellectuals is complete without relating China to controversies and conflicts. Canada creates its Indo Pacific strategy, Taiwan welcomes it while opposing China's expansionist policy and once again China gets uncomfortable. America and India conduct joint military exercises in Auli in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand. China feels bad and instructs America that the nation should not make any attempt to spoil the relations between the two countries on India-China Line of Actual Control.

China has once again become uneasy as to how India-US defense partnership can happen with such courage on the Uttarakhand China border. America India should respond to China that both nations have done it with same courage as China and Russia have done by running their maritime warships in the Russian-led Vostok joint naval exercise in the Pacific Ocean shortly before. China seeks to take Russia into confidence as its ally in the conspiracy against the security of the Indo-Pacific region. Despite this, in the last two years, apart from the Quad member countries, countries like Germany, European Union, Britain, France and now Canada have cleared their strategy and plans for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Canada has recently launched its Indo Pacific strategy and released a document related to it.

However, before knowing what this document says to counter China, it is pertinent to know that India is currently considering a Free Trade Agreement with Canada, which will also aid in influencing China. Canada's new Indo Pacific Strategy states that Canada sees China as a major social and economic power that cannot be ignored. It further says that China will not hold back in breaking the rules to serve its interests. The nation also said that it is necessary to keep an eye on China's objectives. In this strategy, China has been described as a rising disruptive global power on the world stage. This strategy says that despite the various threats posed by China, there is a need for cooperation on important issues such as climate change, global health, biodiversity and nuclear non-proliferation. Along with this, Canada also says that India's growing strategic, economic and demographic importance has made it an essential partner

in the pursuit of Canada's objectives.

In its new Indo Pacific strategy, Canada has stated that both nations have a shared tradition of democracy and pluralism, a common commitment to a rules-based international system and multilateralism, a mutual interest in expanding commercial ties, a wide-ranging partnership, and rising people-to-people ties. While Canada on the one hand believes that China has been benefited from a rules-based international order to grow and prosper, it is now actively seeking to reinterpret these rules to gain a greater advantage. On the other hand, India-Canada are seeking to enhance market access by concluding an Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA) as a step towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, cooperation on building a resilient supply chain and increasing bilateral trade and investment. Both nations are creating a Canada-India Desk within the Trade Commissioner's Service to promote the implementation of the EPTA for businesses and for the investors who are seeking to expand, enter the Indian market, or partner with Indian businesses. This will also increase investments and connect people, including increasing Canada's visa-processing capacity in New Delhi and Chandigarh.

It is clear from the above that the foundation of India Canada Indo Pacific Partnership is being prepared. In 2020, the European Union and Germany recently launched their Indo Pacific Strategy as well. The purpose of all these is to protect the Indo-Pacific region (including the entire Indian Ocean, Western Pacific Ocean, South East Asian countries, East African countries, countries like Japan and Australia) at the level of strategic, diplomatic, economic and maritime trade, which is threatened mainly by China.

Why China is a Threat to the Indo-Pacific Region:

China has seen the geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of the South China Sea in the context of its energy needs. Natural oil is supplied to China from the Middle East through the Strait of Malacca. US threats to block the Strait of Malacca have been troubling China as this may cut off its energy supplies. Perhaps that is why China has become alert and aggressive about its energy security in other countries around the world.

➤ China's dispute regarding Scarborough Shoal:

The South China Sea has reserves of 11 billion barrels of natural oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, of which up to 280 trillion cubic feet has

been estimated. International trade worth \$5 trillion is handled annually by this region. About 55 percent of the world's trade in fish either passes through here, or is found in the South China Sea. Hence there has been dispute between China and the Philippines and Taiwan regarding the fish resource-rich area called Scarborough Shoal.

- **Nine Dash Line Dispute:** There have been dispute between China, and countries like Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Taiwan over the South China Sea as part of the Pacific Ocean. The core of the dispute are the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. By encroaching into the exclusive economic zone of South East Asian countries, China has escalated the dispute by putting dashes or marks at nine places for its sovereignty claims, hence this dispute is also called the Nine Dash Line dispute. China's Nine Dash Line violates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982 for an Exclusive Economic Zone.
- **China's dispute with Vietnam, Philippines, and Malaysia:** China is eyeing the natural resources, natural oil, gas, and fishery resources found in the EEZ of South East Asian countries and islands of the South China Sea. Therefore, recently there have been disputes between China and Vietnam regarding Vanguard Bank. Further, China is in dispute with the Philippines over Reed Bank, and with Malaysia over Luconia Shoal.
- **China's aggression in South China Sea:** China has shown its expansionist mind-set by giving the South China Sea dispute much seriousness. It's attempt to build a wide-scale Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the South China Sea, reflects its intention to destroy ships, radars of any country passing through this area. The nation has also emphasized the construction work while rejecting the claims of territorial ownership of South East Asian countries in the South China Sea. It has been working on the construction of artificial islands there as well. From shooting down a Vietnamese ship and detaining fishermen, escalating a dispute with Indonesia over Natuna Island, halting its drilling operations off the coast of Malaysia, to targeting the ships near the Malampaya gas field in the western Philippines Sea, China has already shown its aggression in the Indo Pacific.
- India adopted its Indo Pacific strategy in 2018 at the Shangri La Dialogue (Singapore) under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Earlier India has launched several initiatives like Sagar Vision for Indo Pacific Security, Sagarmala Project, Project Mausam, Island Diplomacy, Indo Pacific Initiative, and Act East Policy (2015). It has worked towards Asia Africa Growth Corridor with Japan and also formed Act East Forum in 2017 with Japan. Through all these initiatives, somewhere, India has started responding to China's activism in the Indo-Pacific.
- Countries like Vietnam and Philippines have also started seek to take India into confidence on the South China Sea dispute. Vietnam informed India about the South China Sea dispute in July 2019. Just 100 nautical miles off Vietnam's Vanguard Bank is Oil Block No. 06/1, where India's ONGC, Russia's Rosneft and Vietnam's PetroVietnam oil and gas production joint venture have been operating for 17 years. Other Indian private companies are also eyeing oil exploration opportunities in this region. India supports freedom of navigation and access to resources in the South China Sea in line with the principles of the 1982 UNCLOS.
- 55 percent of India's trade passes through the oceanic waterways of the South China Sea. From this point of view, India prioritises to make it a zone of peace. India has called the South China Sea as the Philippines Sea in support of the Philippines. India has also been successful to a large extent in supporting the maritime sovereignty of nations, emphasizing on the development of blue economy and making the security of oceans an issue of global discourse. It is striving towards securing the Asia Pacific through military exercises such as MALABAR and RIMPAC and groupings such as the QUAD (US, Japan, India and Australia). India's strategic partners America and Australia also thwarted China's plan by agreeing to open Lombrum naval base in its Manas island along with Papua New Guinea.
- India is an advocate of freedom and security of the world's most important sea trade routes. If the ocean is safe then prosperity and stability is safe. Last year, India together with France issued a joint statement for freedom of navigation and gave a message to China while talking about the security of the Asia Pacific. In the year 2019 itself, in the fourth edition of the Indian Ocean Conference held in Maldives, India with countries like Sri Lanka and Singapore

India's role in isolating China in the Indo-Pacific and other regions:

kept the issue of maritime security on the priority.

- In addition, India and Russia agreed to launch a new Indo Pacific Maritime Route that would extend from the Russian Far East port city of Vladivostok to Chennai near the Bay of Bengal. Some part of this commercial sea route will also pass through the South China Sea. India considers this move in line with the Act East Policy which is designed for the regional security of the Asia Pacific. Today South East Asian countries believe in India's ability and its prowess to prove the legitimacy of any issue in global politics.

Indo Pacific Partnership currently led by India:

- Recently, India along with France is strengthening Indo Pacific Natural Park Partnership, India France Australia Indo Pacific Trilateral Framework, and India France United Arab Emirates Indo Pacific Trilateral Framework. Apart from this, India's membership and the US-led Indo Pacific Economic Framework have also been launched. The US made itself a member of the India-led Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in 2019, declaring its intention to cooperate for the development of sustainable infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific as a strategic partner.
- While the UK joined India and together they launched the Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS) on November 2, 2021, which is part of the India-led Coalition on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). This will certainly help in safeguarding the interests of the island nations of the Indian Pacific. Further, Britain has deployed The UK Carrier Strike Group to protect the Indian Ocean, which serves the seas under the leadership of the United Kingdom's largest warship, HMS Queen Elizabeth.
- It is noteworthy that the United Kingdom has 7 Permanent Points of Presence (Diago Gracia, Bahrain, Oman, Kenya, Brunei, Singapore and Qatar) in the Indian Ocean. Now by giving message of further strengthening the Maritime Domain Awareness with India, Britain under the leadership of newly elected Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has given a big message to China against its activism in Indo Pacific.
- Apart from this, the navies of the Quad are participating in the French-led La Perouse joint naval exercise for the security of the Bay of Bengal (East Indian Ocean) today, which is a proof that the Quad countries including India and France are now

working on a solid strategy to siege China.

- China, through its String of Pearls strategy, has expanded its footprints to contain the Indian hold in the Indian Ocean and to answer that India has started working on its Necklace of Diamonds strategy as well.

India's strategic bases under the Necklace of Diamond strategy

- **Changi Naval Base, Singapore:** In the year 2018, Prime Minister Modi signed an agreement with Singapore. The agreement has given the Indian Navy direct access to the base. While sailing through the South China Sea, the Indian Navy can refuel and resupply its ships through this base.
- **Sabang Port, Indonesia:** In 2018, India got military access to Sabang Port, which is located at the entrance to the Strait of Malacca. This strait is one of the famous choke points of the world. A major part of the trade and crude oil from this region goes to China.
- **Duqm Port, Oman:** India got another military access after Indonesia's Sabang Port in 2018. Duqm Port is located on the south-eastern sea coast of Oman. The port facilitates India's import of crude oil from the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the Indian facility is located between two important Chinese pearls - Djibouti in Africa and Gwadar in Pakistan.
- **Assumption Island, Seychelles:** In 2015, India and Seychelles had agreed to develop a naval base in the area. This gives access to the army to India. The base is of strategic importance to India as China seeks to expand its presence in the African continent through the Maritime Silk Road.
- **Chabahar Port, Iran:** Prime Minister Modi signed an agreement in 2016 for the construction of this port. The port provides access to Afghanistan and an important trade route to Central Asia.

India lays emphasis on the development of blue economy or ocean economy. India has also been successful to a great extent in making the security of the oceans an issue of global discussion. Nations strive towards securing the Asia Pacific through military exercises such as MALABAR and RIMPAC and groupings such as the QUAD (US, Japan, India and Australia). In order to respond to China's expansionist policy, India's foreign policy has become more realistic than before.

Economy

Digital Currency: Future or Necessity

Indian economy, while striving to grow and develop simultaneously is seeking to integrate and ensuring inclusivity of its people. While India is working towards keeping up with the current global trends, in order to ensure its global presence. The recent launch of RBI's first Indian digital currency retail pilot on December 1, 2022, was a major step in this regard.

What is Retail e-Rupee or e₹-R?

In layman terms, the retail e-rupee is an electronic version of cash or paper currency, and is primarily meant for retail transactions. Unlike cryptocurrencies, the digital Rupee is central bank digital currency (CBDC) and created in the same denominations as paper money and coins.

- It functions exactly like a fiat currency and may be exchanged one-to-one with it. It will be distributed through banks and the users could use it through wallets (issued by participatory banks) and they could store the currency in mobile phones and other e-devices.
- It can be transacted both through person to person (P2P) and person to merchant (P2M). Further, the payments can be made by scanning the QR code available at merchant's location.
- The e₹-R will be equipped with same features as that of physical cash, i.e. trust, safety and settlement finality. Further, it cannot be converted into other forms of money and will not earn any interest.

The digital rupee has been demarcated into two broad categories by RBI: one for the purpose of wholesale while the other for retail purposes. The former was launched on November 1, 2022 for the wholesale segment and for settling the transaction for secondary market in government securities.

Digital currencies: The potential drivers of the future economies:

- Digital currency is any currency which is available exclusively in electronic form.
- The majority of nations' financial systems already predominately use electronic forms of cash. The fact that digital cash never assumes physical form sets it apart from the electronic currency.
- Right now, one may quickly convert the digital record of currency holdings into actual cash by going to an

ATM. However, digital currency is only exchanged digitally and never leaves a computer network.

- The three primary types of digital currency are cryptocurrencies, stablecoins, and CBDCs (central bank digital currencies).

Digital Transactions in India:

- On Independence Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Unified Payment Interface (UPI), the fintech industry, and claimed that India leads the globe in real-time digital payments, accounting for about 40% of all such transactions.
- A recent report by PhonePe and Boston Consulting Group said India's digital payments market will more than triple from \$3 trillion to \$10 trillion by 2026. Digital payments (non-cash) will constitute nearly 65 per cent of all payments by 2026 i.e., 2 out of 3 transactions (by value) will be digital.

How CBDCs Differ from Electronic Payments Systems Like UPI-BHIM etc.

- When perceived from customer point of view, dealing with Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and Digital Currency may seem no different. Both required certain equipment and both are dealt digitally.
- However, there is a difference when previewed from banking and economical point of view. For instance, If one sends money through UPI, it is just a promise that the money will be transferred. The account balance may show the funds, but money had not actually moved between banks for a while.
- With transfers through CBDC, the funds would be sent close to instantly and the other party couldn't cancel after.
- In FY22, UPI processed more than 46 billion transactions amounting to more than Rs 84.17 trillion. In FY21, it had processed 22.28 billion transactions, amounting to Rs 41.03 trillion. So, both volume and value of transactions doubled in a year's time.
- With increasing digital payments CBDCs will aid in reducing the burden over the banks in processing such large amount of transactions.

Cryptocurrencies: its growing impact over the world and India:

- Cryptocurrency became a buzz word in the last few years. Its decentralising tendency backed with highly secured block chained technology attracted many, which included people, companies, cities as well as the nations. Countries like el Salvador made the cryptocurrency as their legal tender in 2021. The tech giants like Amazon, Facebook are planning to launch their own virtual currency.
- When it comes to India, the nation led the list of countries with the most cryptocurrency owners, with over 10 crore, followed by the US and Russia. In August of 2021, Chainalysis released its 2021 Global Crypto Adoption Index, which placed India second out of 154 nations.
- The importance of cryptocurrencies in generating jobs is also rising right now. According to a report Nasscom and the cryptocurrency exchange WazirX released last month, the industry in India has the potential to grow from 50,000 people now to more than 8 lakh workers by 2030, with an estimated market value of \$241 million.
- While the sector, which comprises crypto applications in trading, P2P payments, remittances, and retail among others, increased 39% in India over the last five years, Indian retail investors have so far spent \$6.6 billion in cryptocurrencies.
- In emerging markets, many people use cryptocurrencies to send and receive remittances, conduct business transactions, and preserve their savings in the face of currency devaluation, whereas institutional investment has largely driven adoption in North America, Western Europe, and Eastern Asia over the past year.
- For instance, Wannacry virus was used by criminals to make ransom payments in Bitcoin. Further, the Hyderabad Narcotics Enforcement Wing arrested several drug traffickers for operating on the Dark Web using crypto transactions.
- Since these digital currencies lack any sort of regulatory authority, the likelihood of fraud increases which endangers investor protection and the flow of money throughout the economy.

India and its stand for the Digital Currencies:

- The RBI has often brought up issues with digital assets and it has repeatedly flagged concerns over money laundering, terror financing, tax evasion, etc. with private cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin, Ether, etc. In the RBI's annual report, governor Shaktikanta Das referred to cryptocurrencies as a "clear danger" and claimed that anything that draws value from make-believe, "without any underlying" is only speculation cloaked in a clever nomenclature.
- Further, the government too announced tax on gains from virtual assets. The 30% tax rate on virtual currency assets has come into effect from April 1 and the latest addition was 1% TDS from July 1 this year.
- Although, inhibition is one of the key strategy to regulate the digital currency the step to introduce a centrally backed digital currency, that is stable, secure, easily transactional, and can be easily regulated and monitored, is definitely a welcomed step as well the need of the hour.
- Many countries around the world, including China, Ghana, Jamaica, and certain European nations, are investigating their CBDC products, while some nations have launched their digital currencies. Nine nations have completed the launch of their CBDCs.
- Sector experts say that India's CBDC programme is very much in line with its recent global efforts at digitalization. India is one of the few nations to have established its own CBDC.

Challenges that remain:

Drawbacks relating to the digital currency/cryptocurrency

- The value of these private owned digital currencies is market based, which makes it highly volatile and erratic. As the prices fluctuate frequently, people who have invested in these currencies may suffer huge losses.
- This is worsens with the lack of accountability and grievance redressal mechanism where the user can possibly reach out for help.
- Due to its characteristic feature to conduct transactions digitally, cryptocurrency has emerged as a popular platform for hacking, financing terrorism, and drug trade.

- Although, the digital payments have been growing gradually in recent years, both in value and volume terms across countries, data also suggests that during the same time, currency in circulation to GDP ratio has also increased in consonance with the overall economic growth.
- The government led by Prime Minister Narendra

Modi implemented demonetisation in 2016, which was intended to push the nation towards the cashless economy. According to official statistics, even six years after, public confidence in money is still at an all-time high. Cash usage remains robust with public wherein it has been made known that currency with public stands at a new high of ₹30.88 lakh crore as of 21 October.

- Further, most of the Indian population that resides in the villages, hardly is comfortable with access to mobile phones and internet services. And most of the older population might not be comfortable with device usages and might find it complicated to use.

infrastructure. With a world population that is projected to grow to 9 billion by 2050, technology and digitisation are going to be key pillars in integrating and developing the population as well as the countries.

The digital currencies too will have a major role in the future environment, the seeds of which are already sowed and its growth is pretty dynamic and vast. Thus, it can be safely said, that regulating digital currency and continuously analysing its growing aspects is not just a dream to envisage but a reality that needs to be achieved.

Conclusion:

The Covid-19 pandemic has provided the necessary impetus for the need of the ever-expanding digital



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6 Technology

Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022: A Long Needed Initiative

Introduction:

A new version of the Personal Data Protection Bill, now known as the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, has been published by the Union Government. After going through several revisions, the Bill is anticipated to be table in the Parliament in the budget session of 2023.

The Justice Srikrishna Committee put up the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018's initial draft. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) established the Committee with the task of establishing an Indian data protection law. The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 (PDP Bill, 2019), an updated version of this draft, was presented to the Lok Sabha in 2019. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) was given the bill. The Data Protection Bill, 2021, a new draft bill that included the JPC's recommendations, was submitted along with the JPC Report. However, in August 2022, the Bill was withdrawn. The new Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, has now been presented by the government.

What Constitutes The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill's Core Elements?

Data Fiduciary and Data Principal:

- The term "Data Principal" describes the person whose data is being gathered.
 - » Children (under the age of 18) will be referred to as having "Data Principals" who are their parents or legal guardians.
- A 'data fiduciary' is any person, business, government agency, or other organization that determines the "purpose and methods of the processing of an individual's personal data."
 - » "Any data by which an individual may be recognized" is referred to as personal data. Processing is defined as "the whole range of processes that may be applied to personal data."

Significant Data Fiduciary:

- Significant Data Fiduciaries are people who handle a lot of private information. Who falls within this group will be determined by the central government depending on a variety of variables. These organizations will be required to employ a "Data protection officer" and an impartial data auditor.

Individuals' Rights:

- **Availability of Information:** The measure provides that people should be able to "access fundamental

information" in the languages included in the Indian Constitution's eighth schedule.

- **The right to consent:** As per the law, before their data is processed, individuals must provide their consent, and "every individual should know what types of personal data a Data Fiduciary wishes to collect and the aim of such collection and further processing". Additionally, people have the option to revoke their consent from a data fiduciary.
- **The right to erase:** Data principals will have the ability to request the deletion and updating of data that the data fiduciary has acquired.
- **Right to Elect:** In the case of their death or disability, data principals will also be able to designate someone to act in their place.
- **Data Protection Board:** Additionally, the bill suggests creating a data protection board to monitor adherence to the legislation. Consumers can complain to the Data Protection Board if they get an unacceptable response from the Data Fiduciary
- **Transfer of Data Across Borders:** The law permits the storage and transfer of data across international borders to "certain recognized nations and territories," providing that they have an adequate data security environment and that the government has access to Indian citizens' data from such locations.

Financial Penalties:

- **Regarding Data Fiduciary:** Businesses that have data breaches or fail to notify users when breaches occur would face stiff fines, according to the proposed legislation. From Rs. 50 crores to Rs. 500 crores in fines would be enforced.
- **For the Data Principal:** A user faces a Rs 10,000 fee for filing frivolous grievances or providing fraudulent documentation while registering for an online service.

Exemptions:

- Based on the number of users and the volume of personal data handled by the organization, the government may exempt some enterprises from complying to the rules of the law.
 - » The entrepreneurs in the nation that had complained that the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was too "compliance heavy" had been taken into consideration when doing this.
- Similar to the prior 2019 version, national security-

related exclusions have been preserved.

- » In the interest of maintaining India's sovereignty and integrity, the security of the nation, good relations with other nations, maintaining public order, or preventing incitement to any cognisable offense, the Centre has been given the authority to exempt its agencies from adhering to the Bill's provisions.

The Significance Of The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill:

- In contrast to the controversial necessity of local storage of data inside India's geography in the previous Bill, the new Bill allows major allowances on cross-border data transfers.
- It takes a somewhat accommodative stance on the need for data localization and allows data flow to a few worldwide locations, which is expected to encourage trade agreements between states.
- The PDP Bill, 2019, does not recognize the data principal's right to posthumous privacy (Withdraw Consent), notwithstanding the Joint Parliamentary Committee's recommendation (JPC).
- **Data Protection Board of India:** The Board would have the authority to order Data Fiduciaries to take immediate action in the event that Personal Data were compromised. It will have the same status as a civil court and have an appeal process to the High Court.
- **Concept of "Deemed Consent" Introduced:** DPDP Bill aims to make it possible to process personal data when it is "reasonably expected that the Data Principal would provide such personal data," even without receiving a person's explicit consent.
- **Rights of Data Principals:** The DPDP Bill maintains the rights of Data Principals with regard to their Personal Data, including the rights to rectification, deletion, and forgetfulness. In the case of the Data Principal's death or incapacity, the DPDP Bill allows for the nomination of any other person to exercise such powers.

What Issues Does The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 Raise?

- **Government Control:** The Data Protection Board currently serves as the regulatory body, and its duties are restricted to enforcement and sanctions. The Union government, rather than the specialized regulator, will execute all other facets of the legislation (which it will accomplish through rules). The Data Protection Board was established by the Union Government, whereas the Data Protection Authority was initially intended to be a statutory

authority (under the 2019 Bill). The board's makeup, the terms of its employment, and other matters will be subject to government approval.

- **Localization of Data:** The proposed law does not mandate local data storage. It does not require companies to exclusively keep sensitive and important data in India or to mirror a duplicate of such data on Indian servers, as it did in prior editions. The free flow of data across borders is also prohibited. Businesses may only transfer data to nations that have received notification from the Indian government. Uncertainty surrounds the whitelisting of areas (where data flow will be permitted).
- **Narrow Focus:** It is only concerned with personal data and excludes non-personal data, which was demanded by both the private sector and civic society. It does not divide personal data into sensitive and crucial categories.
- **No Criminal Liability:** The DPDP Bill's Schedule 1 only specifies monetary fines for violations and non-compliances, and it only applies these fines to violations and non-compliances that the Data Protection Board deems to be "serious." Criminal penalties and fines that were based on an offending Data Fiduciary's turnover or income were eliminated by the DPD Bill. Penalties range from 50 crore to 250 crore Indian rupees. The maximum punishment is restricted to INR 500 crore, according to Section 25.
- **Data Collection:** Specific data protection principles, such as collection restriction, are no longer explicitly included in the Draft. Any personal information that the data principal has authorized, the data fiduciary may collect it.
- **Government Exemptions:** In the interests of India's sovereignty and integrity, security, international relations, public order, and other factors, government bodies may be excluded from the implementation of the law. Governmental organizations are free to keep data for whatever long they choose. The newest form of the Bill lacks the "just, fair, reasonable, and proportionate" criteria that was applied to government exemptions under the prior version.

Conclusion:

The Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022 has received praise from a number of experts for its improvements over previous iterations. But there are still a few issues. Before the Bill is tabled in the Parliament, the Government should make efforts to take account of the public's and civil society's opinions.

6 Constitutional Issues

Resolving the Growing Differences Between the Government and the Supreme Court on the Collegium System is the Need of the Hour

Context:

Recently, the Union Law and Justice Minister criticized the collegium system. He has said that judges appoint other judges at their convenience, by ignoring the merit. After this, the collegium system made for the recruitment of judges in the Supreme Court and the High Court has once again come into the limelight.

What is the Collegium System?

- It is a system for appointment and transfer of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts in India.
- The Supreme Court Collegium consists of the Chief Justice of India (Chairman) and four other senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- In the appointment of High Court judges, the Collegium comprising the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court consults the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.
- Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed only through the collegium system
- It is neither a statutory nor a constitutional body but the system has evolved through various judgments of the Supreme Court of India.

Evolution of Collegium System:

- Articles 124(2) and 217 of the Indian Constitution deal with the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and High Courts respectively. The collegium system has evolved from the interpretation of these articles in different cases.
- **Article 124 (2):** After consultation with such judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts of the States as the President considers it necessary to consult for the purpose, the President shall, by warrant under his hand and seal, appoint every Judge of the Supreme Court. and that Judge shall hold office until he attains the age of sixty-five years.
- **Article 217:** The Chief Justice of the High Court will be appointed by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice of India (CJI), the Governor of the State. In case of appointment of a judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court is consulted.

The collegium system evolved after the interpretation of these articles in the following cases.

- **First Judge's Case (1982):** In this case, the word 'consultation' mentioned in Article 124 was interpreted. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in this case

also said that consultation does not mean agreeing but the exchange of views and that the "precedence" of the suggestion of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on judicial appointments and transfers can be overruled for "cogent reasons". After this case, the supremacy of judiciary and executive was established in India.

- **Second Judge's Case (1993):** In this case, the Court changed its earlier decision and held that consultation means giving consent. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the advice given by the Chief Justice would be binding on the President and the Chief Justice would give this advice after consulting his two senior-most colleagues.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** In this case, the Supreme Court converted the consultative process by the Chief Justice into a process of the majority opinion. The Supreme Court observed that the Chief Justice of India would consult four senior judges and if two of them were in opposition, he would not send the recommendation for appointment. The government's obligation to strike down the recommendation sent without consulting other judges was done away with.
- **Fourth Judge Case (2015):** In 2015, the Supreme Court termed the 99th Constitutional Amendment Act 2014 and the Judicial Appointments Commission Act 2014 as unconstitutional, in which arrangements were made to replace the collegium system with the National Judicial Appointments Commission. The judiciary considered it as an encroachment on the judiciary by the executive and declared it unconstitutional.
- Thus the collegium system was established for the appointment of judges in the higher judiciary. However, it has many defects, which are described below.

Challenges with the Collegium System:

- **Lack of Transparency:** Appointment of judges on the advice of judges takes place in a closed-room meetings without any examination which is an opaque process and not ideal for thriving democracy.
- **Lack of Institutional Democracy:** It shows the lack of institutional democracy. The collegium system is neither created by the constitution nor by any act. It is only established by various decisions of the Supreme Court where Supreme Court has rather empowered itself.
- **Possibility of Nepotism:** In the absence of

transparency and any other accountability, the possibility of nepotism increases which is fatal for democracy.

- **Possibility of Corruption:** On December 2021, former Chief Justice of India (CJI) Ranjan Gogoi said that “corruption is as old as society. Corruption has become a part of life and judges do not come from heaven.” In this situation, we cannot say that the collegium system is free from corruption.
- **Mutual Differences of Judges:** Disputes have emerged many times between the Chief Justice and the four senior judges coming in the collegium system. In a meeting of the collegium convened by former Chief Justice U U Lalit, one judge failed to turn up on time and the meeting had to be rescheduled, but two judges opposed it on the grounds of circulation. These differences emerge as a major problem in light of the problem of delayed justice in India.
- **Centralization of Power:** The Court itself retains the final power to appoint judges which gives discretion to the judges who are part of the Collegium. There is no seat in the collegium for any non-judge - neither from the executive, nor from the bar, nor anywhere else who can question the collegium. It promotes the centralization of power which is antithetical to democracy.

Points of Difference with the Government:

- The collegium, has consistently not put forward names that have been disapproved by the government, over the years, This makes it a biased system.
- Appointments to the apex court seem to have been reserved for judges of the high courts.
- No appointment has been made from the category of eminent jurists mentioned in Article 124.
- There is no representation of the executive in the collegium system. If a lawyer or a high court judge is appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court by the collegium system, the government's role is limited to conducting an inquiry. Along with this, if the government registers an objection to any names, the collegium system again recommends the same names, then the government is compelled to appoint them as judges.
- Declaring NJAC unconstitutional is also a point of contention between the government and the judiciary.

The Need of the hour is to remove the growing Differences between the Government and the Supreme Court on the Collegium System:

At present, the judiciary is suffering from many problems like delay in justice, opacity, and corruption, due to which it is necessary that the growing differences between the

government and the Supreme Court on the collegium system must be addressed, for this the following steps can be taken -

- A continuous and collaborative process of filling the vacancies should be adopted involving the executive and the judiciary. Like the Monetary Policy Committee, a one-judge appointment committee should be set up with equal representation from the government and the judiciary. But in case of a difference of opinion, the opinion of the Chief Justice Must be accepted.
- In harmony with the independence of the judiciary and the principles of democracy, such a system should be made, through which there is the decentralization of power, but the freedom of the judiciary is not Compromised. For this, a commission should be set up like the Union Public Service Commission, in which judges are appointed through examination and promotion. A working group of Supreme Court judges can also be constituted to determine its syllabus, exam pattern, etc.
- Supreme Court should reconsider NJAC. The NJAC Act can be further amended by the Parliament keeping in view the recommendation of the Supreme Court.
- According to the Memorandum of Procedure of the Department of Justice, for the appointment of additional judges in the High Court, the State Governments can make appointments with the permission of the Central Government. Recently Union Law Ministry appointed 2 Additional Judges for Mumbai High Court. This type of cooperation can also be done in the appointment of temporary judges.

Conclusion:

For democracy the separation between the executive and the judiciary has been widely talked of, however, this is worth keeping in mind that the separation of the judiciary is from the executive and not from the public. Judiciary has to bring more transparency in its procedures. Although case processes have been made transparent, it is equally important to bring transparency in the process of appointment. It is the responsibility of the Judiciary to make India's judicial process more efficient and smooth by selecting judges of true integrity among the people of the country. The government is the representative of the people, so in the process of appointment, the government and the judiciary must end their differences and work together for the development of the people.

Social Issues

Significant Decline in MMR: Has India Achieved the Targets of the National Health Policy

Context:

Recently a special bulletin was issued by the Office of the Registrar General of India. In this, it has been told that there has been a significant decline in the maternal mortality rate in India.

Introduction:

Under the Ministry of Home Affairs in India, the office of the Registrar General perform these works. In India, the Sample Registration Survey (SRS) is used to estimate the maternal mortality. The Office of the Registrar General Sample Registration System (SRS) has recently released a special bulletin on Maternal Mortality Rate in India.

Key Points of the bulletin issued by the Office of the Registrar General:

- According to this, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has come down from 130 per lakh live births in 2014-16 to 97 per lakh live births in 2018-20.
- Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is highest in Assam (195), followed by Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh (167) with an MMR of 173 per lakh live births.
- It is the lowest in Kerala at 19 per lakh live births.
- 8 states in India have shown outstanding progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to Kerala other states that were ranked are Maharashtra (33), Telangana (43), Andhra Pradesh (45), Tamil Nadu (54), Jharkhand (56), Gujarat (57) and Karnataka (69).
- Target 3.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations aims to reduce the global maternal mortality rate to less than 70 per 100,000 live births.

What is the Maternal mortality Ratio:

- The maternal mortality ratio is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 1,00,000 live births during a given period.
- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), maternal death is the death of a woman during pregnancy or within 42 days after the termination of pregnancy, from any cause related to pregnancy, regardless of the stage and location of the pregnancy.

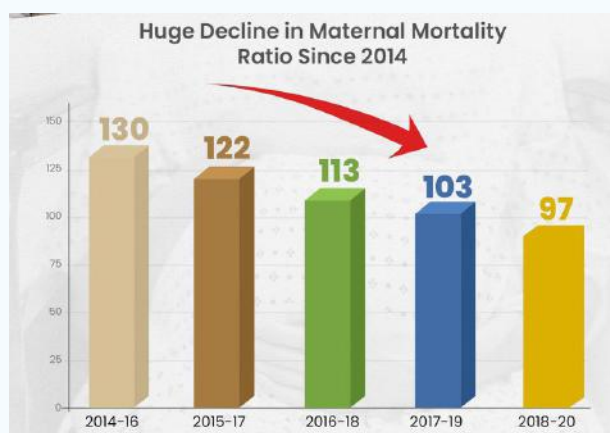
Reasons for the decline in maternal mortality Ratio in India:

- There has been a steady decline in the maternal

mortality ratio in India from 2004-05 to 2022. It was 254 in 2004-05, now it has reached 97. The Government of India is continuously committed to reducing the maternal mortality ratio, in this context several schemes have been implemented by the government, which are described below.

- **Action against anemia in women:** One of the biggest causes of death during the period of pregnancy was anemia in women. In 2018, the Government of India took the initiative to prevent anemia through the Nutrition Campaign for children, adolescents, and women. For this, the government ensured the dosage of folic acid and iron under the nutrition campaign. And gave importance to the availability of fortified food, which succeeded in preventing anemia.
- **Safe Motherhood Assurance (SUMAN):** Safe Motherhood Assurance (SUMAN) was launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2019. Under this scheme, free public health facilities were provided to all pregnant women, newborns, and mothers (up to 6 months after delivery). Its objective was the policy of zero tolerance for maternal death and neonatal death.
- **LaQshya Scheme:** The scheme is related to quality improvement of delivery operation theaters to facilitate delivery at public health centers. Under this, all Community Health Centers (CHC), First Referral Units (FRU), District Hospitals, and Medical College Hospitals are covered.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana:** Started in 2017, mothers are given financial benefits under this scheme. This economic benefit is provided through Direct Benefit Transfer. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana-Common Application Software (PMMVY-CAS) is used to monitor the program.
- Along with this, the implementation of the Janani Suraksha Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Yojana organized by the National Health Mission has helped in reducing the maternal mortality ratio in India. The recently passed Abortion Act and the changes made in maternity benefits will also help in reducing this problem.
- Along with the above government facilities, as well as increasing the level of education among women, efforts like institutional delivery, awareness, and family planning have registered a significant decline

in the maternal mortality ratio in India.



Has India been successful in achieving the goals set by the National Health Policy?

- According to the Sustainable Development Goals, India had to bring down the maternal mortality rate below 70 by 2030. Making efforts in this direction, the Government of India had set a target in the National Health Policy in 2017 that by 2020 India would reduce the maternal mortality ratio to less than 100. However, the period from 2019 to 2021 was affected by the Corona pandemic, due to which success in achieving the target could not be achieved. However, in 2022, at the national level, the country's maternal mortality rate has reached to target, which is a big achievement. The trends in this regard are described below
- 8 states of India have achieved the target mentioned in the Sustainable Development Goals. Among these, Kerala (19), Maharashtra (33), Telangana (43), Andhra Pradesh (45), Tamil Nadu (54), Jharkhand (56), Gujarat (57) and Karnataka (69) are ranked.
- However, states like Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh are still far away from this target. Although, these states have registered better improvements in maternal mortality ratio. The maternal mortality rate in Uttar Pradesh was 197 during 2016-18, which has now reached 167.
- Apart from Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan have also registered significant reductions.

Related Concerns:

- Although there has been a significant reduction in the maternal mortality ratio in India, there are still many concerns that need to be addressed.
- It has been observed that both anemia and maternal mortality are found to be high in states where the level of education is low.

- Some social fabrications in India such as child marriage, patriarchal thinking, and economic dependence on women and other problems still hinder this path.
- Along with this, lack of delivery facilities at primary health centers, lack of access to institutional delivery for a large population, lack of basic health infrastructure, etc. hinders the achievement of the target of maternal mortality rate.
- The absence of women's organizations in rural areas of India, and sometimes the insensitive attitude of doctors towards rural areas can become a big problem in achieving this goal.
- Underreporting is another big problem. It is also observed that accurate MMR calculation is not possible as many deaths are not recorded due to reasons like abortion, abuse, and lack of medical reasons.
- Apart from this, problems like climate change, and extreme weather events can also affect safe delivery.



Other Facts

- Trend of Declining MMR in India
- Time Period MMR
- 2004-2006 254
- 2007-2009 212
- 2010-2012 178
- 2011-2013 167
- 2014-2016 130
- 2015-2017 122
- 2016-2018 113
- 2017-2019 103
- 2019-2022 97

Conclusion:

Studies have shown that most deaths during pregnancy and childbirth can be avoided if proper treatment is provided to women. To reach the figure of 97 in 20 years after a high of 254 in 2004 is remarkable progress in itself. If the reduction in maternal mortality ratio in India continues at the same rate, then by 2030 we will be within the figure of 50. But importance must be given to the works of social reform in India while reducing the effect of climate change occurring during this period. Providing economic independence to women can be an important step. The government and many women empowerment organizations are making continuous efforts in this matter, the result of which is also in front of us.

Environment

Role of International Conventions in Biodiversity Conservation

Protection of biodiversity, ecosystems, or transit, whether at the national level or the international level, cannot be done without effective laws, treaties or conventions. Treaties and conventions at different levels are created with such a framework, standards, targets, or statutory forms that they provide appropriate guidelines to various countries. Whether it is about the Biodiversity Convention, the Bonn convention on migratory birds, the Ramsar Convention which protects the wetlands of international importance, or the UNFCCC, all the countries around the world get effective environmental rules and regulations from all these, that help them achieve the sustainable development goals. Various convention related meetings bring a ray of hope among the environmentalists that exists around the world, that these event will form a common support on some crucial topics that are in favour of the earth.

Recently, COP 15 of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity has been announced to be held in Montreal, Canada from 7 to 19 December. Earlier its event was to be held in Kunming, China, but given the COVID outbreak in China, the venues had to be changed. COP 15 of the CBD can be considered significant in various aspects. The main theme of the conference is "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth".

Main aspects of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- The Convention on Biological Diversity is a legally binding multilateral treaty. This agreement was signed during the Earth Summit (Rio Summit) in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, after which the agreement came into effect in December 1993. The first session of the Conference on Parties was held in the year 1994 in Nassau, Bahamas, while the 14th meeting (COP 14) of this Conference was held in the year 2018 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

India's stand in COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) Secretary J. Justin Mohan has clarified that India is a member of the 'High Ambition Coalition' (HAC) of 113 countries which aims to conserve 30 percent of its geographical area by 2030. India can easily achieve the target of conserving 30 percent of its land water by 2030. The nation has already protected about 27

per cent of its area, which includes protected forests, national parks, mangroves, wildlife sanctuaries, Ramsar site sensitive areas, and community protected areas.

- Biodiversity Convention has three main goals: Conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use of biodiversity and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of Genetic Resources. The two major agreements of biodiversity convention are the Cartagena Protocol and the Nagoya Protocol.
- The Cartagena Protocol on Bio-Safety is an international standing law aimed at ensuring the safe handling, transport, and use of living-modified organisms made through modern biotechnology. It is noteworthy that the Cartagena Protocol was adopted in the year 2000 and it came into effect in the year 2003.
- On the other hand, the Nagoya Protocol was adopted with the objective of ensuring access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use. The Nagoya Protocol was adopted in 2010 and came into effect in the year 2014. The provisions made in the Nagoya Protocol for countries around the world will provide transparency and legal support to both the user and the recipient of the Genetic Resources. This convention also enables a framework to be created to promote the use of genetic resources and the traditional knowledge related to it, as well as makes it mandatory to share the benefits arising from those goals with the community and individuals who are fielding it. In simple words, if any company or individual is using plant germ plasm, other genetic resources or traditional knowledge for commercial purpose, then they are bound to share a part of their earnings with that community who is conserving the same.
- Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is an international treaty aimed at ensuring the safe handling, transport and use of modern biotechnology-related obligations. It was adopted in the year 2000 and implemented in the year 2003.

Stockholm Convention and Protection of Environment :

- On January 13, 2006, India ratified this convention. The Stockholm Convention is a global convention to protect human health and the environment from

Persistent Biological Pollutants (POPs). POPs are chemicals that persist in the environment for long periods of time, and are widespread geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissues of live organism and are toxic to humans and wildlife. POPs spread globally and can cause harm wherever they reach. The Convention, which came into force on May 17, 2004, states that with its implementation, governments will take measures to eliminate or reduce the emission of POPs into the environment.

- The Stockholm Convention calls for the elimination or restriction of the production and use of all intentionally produced POPs (Industrial Chemicals and Pesticides). The Convention also aims at the sustained reduction and, wherever possible, the eventual elimination of emissions of unintentionally produced POPs, such as dioxins and furans. Twenty chemicals are currently covered under the Stockholm Convention, of which the use of DDT is banned in India. The use of DDT is prohibited for agricultural purposes; It is produced in a limited way only for use in vector control, as India has obtained an exemption for the use of DDT for vector control.
- POP-containing reserves and wastes must be managed and disposed off in a safe, efficient and environment-friendly manner, taking into account international regulations, standards and guidelines. Every nation must prepare a plan to implement the obligations under this Convention. A Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been established as an interim financial mechanism to assist developing countries in the implementation of the Convention.

Important efforts for biodiversity conservation in India:

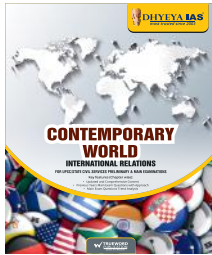
- India is part of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) 1992, which has recognized states' right to use and sovereignty over their biological resources. To strengthen and help the objectives of CBD, the Government of India has enacted an Act, which has been named the Biodiversity Act 2002.
- Its purpose is to conserve biological resources and make proper use of the knowledge related to it. Under this Act, the National Biodiversity Authority was also established in the year 2003, whose headquarter is in Chennai. This law is effective in enhancing the existing laws for the protection of flora and fauna, the Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Along with this, India has implemented various

conservation initiatives like wetland conservation, Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Gharial etc.

- The Biological Diversity Act 2002 mainly provides provisions for the usage of genetic resources and any foreign knowledge and information related to it, before companies or institutions, to be used judiciously for the country and its citizens. Before this Act, there was no provision for this in any legislation.
- India is one of the signing parties to the Ramsar Convention signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971. India signed it on February 1, 1982. From 1982 to 2013, a total of 26 sites were added to the list of Ramsar sites, however, during this period from 2014 to 2022, the country added 49 new wetlands to the list of Ramsar sites.
- Now in the 75th year of independence in India, 11 more wetlands have been added to the list of Ramsar sites to make a total of 75 Ramsar sites in the country covering an area of 13,26,677 hectares.
- India has taken over the presidency of the United Nations System on Migratory Species (CMS) for three years in the year 2020. The 13th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Migratory Species was also held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat state of India. India started the Super Year of Biodiversity in this.
- Significantly, India has four hotspots of biodiversity—the Eastern Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Indo-Myanmar region and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which are home to over 500 species of migratory birds from around the world. The Convention on Migratory Species is the only dedicated multilateral treaty to address the problem of migratory species and their habitats at the global level. The conference will discuss the steps needed for better conservation of migratory species.
- Migratory species of wild animals moves from one place to another at different times of the year due to various reasons like food, sunlight, temperature, climate etc. Some migratory birds live thousands of kilometres away. The passage of birds requires the availability of nesting sites, breeding sites, preferred food, and suitable habitat before and after each migration. India is home to many migratory species such as snow leopard, Amur eagle, swan, black-necked stork, sea turtle, dugong and humpback whale. For the protection of all these, India is continuously formulating a strategy and taking the help of various international conventions.



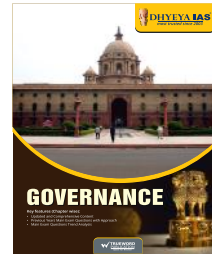
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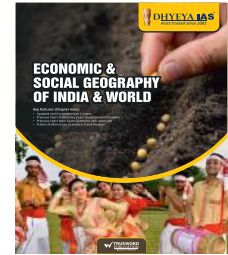
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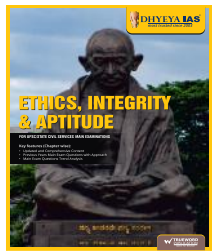
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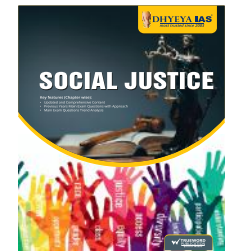
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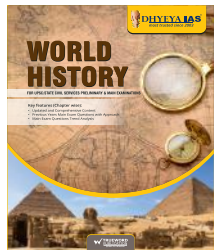
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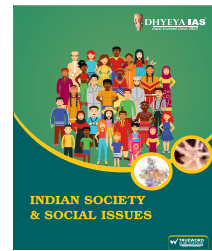
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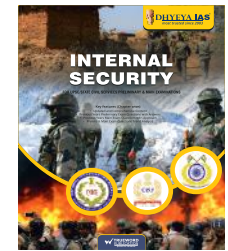
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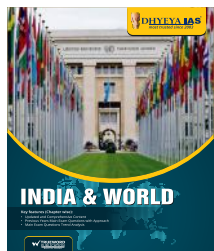
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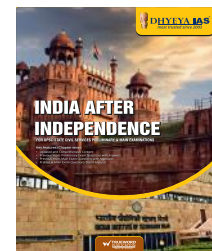
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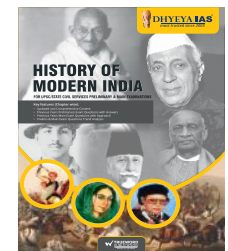
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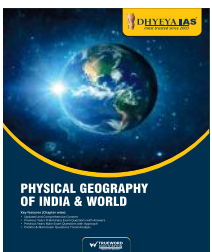
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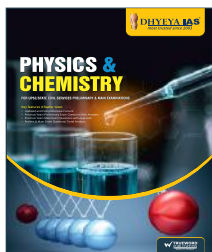
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1 Millets-Smart Nutritive Food Conclave

Why in News:

The Government of India organized a day-long 'Millets-Smart Nutritive Food' Conclave on December 5, 2022 in New Delhi to promote the export of millets.

'Millets-Smart Nutritive Food' Conclave:

- The conclave was organized by Ministry of Commerce and Industry through its apex agricultural export promotion body, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).
- The objective of the conclave was to promote the export of millets.
- The conclave was a pre-launch event of the 'International Year of Millets-2023' (IYoM-2023).
- The government will release e-catalogue on 30 potential importing countries and 21 millet producing states of India.

About Millets:

- Millets are group of small-seeded grasses used as cereals.
- Millets have superior nutritional values in comparison to highly consumed cereals such as rice and wheat.
- Millets are rich in calcium, iron, and fibers that help in fortifying essential nutrients for the healthy growth in children.
- There are 16 major varieties of millet which are produced and exported, including Sorghum (Jowar), Pearl Millet (Bajra), Finger Millet (Ragi), Minor Millets (Kangani), Proso Millet (Cheena), Kodo Millet (Kodo), Barnyard Millet (sawa/sanwa), Two pseudo millets (Buck wheat/Kuttu) and Brown Top Millet.

2 Re-Hab Project

Why in News:

KVIC Chairman Shri Manoj Kumar inaugurated the ambitious Re-Hab Project (Reducing Human Attacks using Honey Bees) by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Government of India) at village Chausla in Nainital.

Millet Production in India:

- India is one of the leading producers of millets in the world with an estimated share of around 41 percent in the global production.
- As per FAO, India's share was 12.49 million metric tonnes (MMT), out of world production of 30.464 MMT in 2020.
- India recorded 27 percent growth in millet production in 2021-22 as compared to previous year.
- Top five millet producing states in India- Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

International Trade in Millets:

- Millet export is just 1 percent of the total millet production in the country. The export is mainly in the form of whole grain.
- India's major millet exporting countries are UAE, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Oman, Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, UK and USA.
- The varieties of millets exported from India include Bajra, Ragi, Canary, Jawar and Buckwheat.
- The major millet importing countries include Indonesia, Belgium, Japan, Germany, Mexico, Italy, USA, UK, Brazil and Netherlands.

Way Forward:

Millets are considered the food of the poor due to their ability to grow even in the most marginalised lands and they are ideal for rain-fed conditions and saline soils. Policy changes need to address the infrastructural development in millet-growing regions.

About Re-Hab Project:

- The project is an initiative of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC). It is a sub-mission of the National Honey Mission of KVIC. The aim of the project is to create a "bee fence" using bees to thwart elephant attacks into human habitations. Bee boxes will drive away elephants without harming them. Highly cost effective as compared to various

other measures like trench digging or fencing. The initiative will increase honey production and farmers' income.

- This project is running in 7 states of the country, namely Karnataka, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Assam and Orissa, where attacks of the elephants is more common, and under this project fencing of bee boxes is installed in such areas from where elephants move towards the human settlements and farmers' agriculture.

About Honey Mission:

- KVIC has launched Honey Mission to create awareness, training and provide 'bee boxes' to farmers with bee colonies. The mission was launched in August 2017 in line with the 'Sweet Revolution'.

About Sweet Revolution:

- Sweet revolution is an ambitious initiative of the Government of India to promote beekeeping in India. It was called by prime minister of India in 2016 with aim to increase in honey production which can be a major contributor to doubling the income of the farmers. To boost the sweet revolution, the government launched the National Beekeeping and Honey Mission in 2020 (under the Ministry

of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare). It aims to accelerate the production of quality honey and other allied products.

About Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC):

- KVIC is a statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956. The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary. It functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Conclusion:

Elephant attacks in India kill about 500 people every year. This is almost 10 times the number of deaths from big cats nationwide. From 2015 to 2020, about 2500 people have lost their lives in elephant attacks. Out of this, about 170 people have died in Karnataka alone. Nearly 500 elephants have also been killed in retaliation by humans in the last 5 years. Through this project, this type of fatalities can be stop.

3

Personality Rights

Why in News:

Delhi high court recently passed an interim order to prevent unlawful use of Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachhan's name, image and voice for advertisement purpose. The court restrained the person at large from infringing the personality rights of actor.

About the personality rights:

- Personality rights is the right in which person has the right to protect their personality under the right to privacy or property. This right is very important for personalities as many times their names, photographs or even voice is misused for advertisement purposes. Therefore, it becomes important for personalities to register their names to save their personality rights.

Position of Personality Rights in Indian Law:

- In India, the closest statute to protect personality rights is Article 21 of the Constitution of India under right to privacy and right to publicity. There is no

statute or law that protects personality rights in India per se. However judicial precedents are governing personality rights in India.

- In case of Arun jaitley vs network solution private limited and ors, 2011, court stated that popularity or fame of individual will be no different on the internet than reality. Thus on the internet, personality rights are protected and no one can use the name of any famous personality without his authorisation.
- In 2015, the Delhi High Court in Tata Sons Limited & Anr vs Aniket case observed that India has finally begun to address the multi-dimensional concept of Personality Rights and held that commercialisation of personality rights by person not authorised to do so should amount to right to sue for such embezzlement.
- Personality rights consist of:
 - » The right of publicity or the right to keep one's image and likeness from being commercially exploited without permission or contractual compensation.

- » The right to privacy.

False endorsement by Celebrities:

- While the celebrities are protected from commercial misuse of their name and personality, there have also been instances where the consumers are misled owing to false advertisements or endorsements by such personalities. While on one side Indian courts have considered recognition of Personality Rights, the Government has realised the imminent need to also protect the consumers in large from false and misleading advertisement of products endorsed by such personalities. As a result of same, to find a balance to the scale, the Amendment to the Consumer

Protection Act of 2019 was passed to keep a check on the misleading advertisements and endorsements of consumer products by imposing penalty on the endorser as well. It will be interesting to see the fallout of this legislation in the light of the increasing endorsement deals involving famous personalities and celebrities.

Conclusion:

Right of personality should be protected at the same time it is also equally responsible to protect the interest of the consumers as well from any kind of misleading advertisements and endorsements.

4 UGC's Push for University Textbooks in Indian Languages

Why in News:

UGC held a high-level meeting with international book publishers to discuss the possibilities of bringing out undergraduate English textbooks in Indian languages. University Grant Commission (UGC) has constituted an apex committee to prepare a roadmap and work towards bringing out textbooks in different Indian languages.

About the Meeting:

- The meeting focused on the ways to translate textbooks for undergraduate programmes in higher education institutions across the India in regional languages like Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Odiya, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu etc.
- In the meeting, representatives from Wiley India, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Cambridge University Press, Cengage India, McGraw-Hill India, and others participated.
- During this meeting international publishers expressed their willingness to collaborate in achieving the goals of the national mission that seeks to bring textbooks in different Indian languages.

UGC Announcement:

- During the meeting, the UGC announced that it would provide assistance to the publishers regarding identification of textbooks, translation tools, editors for editing, etc.
- It also emphasized that a model will be created for providing textbooks in digital format at an affordable cost in collaboration with publishers.

- UGC will encourage Indian authors and academics to write text books in regional languages and connect publishers to help authors who are looking for translations.

About UGC:

- The UGC was established in 1953 and was made a statutory organization in 1956 with the UGC Act. UGC is responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education. UGC headquarter is situated in New Delhi.

The mandate of the UGC Includes:

- Promoting and coordinating university education
- Determination and maintenance of standards of teaching, examination and research in universities
- Making rules on minimum standards of education.
- Monitoring developments in collegiate and university education
- Distribution of Grants to Universities and Colleges
- To act as an important link between the Union and State Governments and institutions of higher education
- To advise the Central and State Governments on measures necessary for the improvement of university education.

Conclusion:

This roadmap of UGC is in line with the National Education Policy, 2020. Textbooks in different Indian languages will encourage students to pursue higher studies and increase the literacy rate in India. This

decision will bring positive changes in the society and promote the philosophy of unity in diversity.

5 NADA India Inclusion Conclave

Why in News:

- Recently NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency) hosted an Inclusion Conclave for the first time to focus on anti-doping education and practices for athletes with disabilities. Secretary, Department of Sports, Sujata Chaturvedi, United Nations Resident Coordinator Shomby Sharp and WADA Asia-Oceania Regional Office Manager, Kenny Lee addressed the conclave.
- The Inclusion of persons with disabilities is a central objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- for such athletes.
- NADA India is in the process of sensitizing 20 Dope Control Officers to collect samples of athletes with disabilities keeping in view the various requirements. NADA will equip itself with assistive devices in the doping control process to facilitate athletes with disabilities in line with the World Anti-Doping Code and Standards.
- India's National Anti-Doping Agency is developing an app to help athletes verify drugs.
- Anti-doping lessons can be learned from the experience of those who have tested positive. Tokyo 2020 Paralympic high jump medalist Sharad Kumar has shared his experience of inadvertently serving a two-year ban for an anti-doping violation, highlighting its negative impact as a good example for the future.

Work done by NADA

- NADA has developed a comprehensive module on Anti-Doping Education and Awareness in Universal Design of Learning (UDL) for athletes with disabilities. UDL is a multi-modal framework for improving and optimizing teaching and learning for all who use sign language visual representations, transcribed subtitles and content audio.
- Some material, usually available only in print has now been produced in Braille and audio formats.
- NADA has also conducted sensitization workshops for Dope Control Officers who collect samples from athletes with disabilities and has upgraded DCO kits

Way Forward:

Athletes with disabilities have to be reached keeping their needs in mind. The utmost priority is to engage them with materials in print, audio, braille and sign language keeping in mind the Universal Design of Learning (UDL) principles. In striving for excellence in sport, we cannot ignore anti-doping. The National Anti-Doping Act is a good step in this direction.

6 Home Ministry Proposed Amendments in the Birth and Death Registration Act-1969

Why in News:

The ministry of home affairs proposed a bill to amend RBD Act 1969. This bill was kept in public domain last year to invite Suggestions from state governments, various organizations and citizens. The Bill is likely to be introduced in the Winter Session of Parliament in December 2022.

Proposed Amendments:

- In the amendment bill by the Ministry of Home Affairs, it is proposed to make birth certificate mandatory in every walk of life. Such as admission in educational institutions, enrollment in voter list, appointment in central and state government jobs,
- driving license, issuing passport, etc.
- In this proposed amendment, it will be the responsibility of the hospitals and medical institutions to provide a copy of all the death certificates noting down the cause of death to the local registrar, apart from the next of kin of the deceased person.
- According to the Civil Registration System (CRS), the level of birth certificate increased from 82.0% in 2010 to 92.7% in 2019, while death registration increased from 66.9% in 2010 to 92.0%.
- CRS is an online system for registration of births and deaths under RGI control process.

Need of the Amendment

- The amendment will enable the Registrar General of

India (RGI) under the Ministry of Home Affairs to maintain a database of registered births and deaths at the national level.

- The national level database available with TPP can be used for updating the Population Register, Electoral Register, Aadhaar, Ration Card, Passport and Driving License database.
- If the amendment is implemented, the data could be used to update the central National Population Register (NPR), which was first revised in 2010 through a door-to-door enumeration.
- NPR already has a database of 119 crore citizens and under the Citizenship Act-2003, it is a step taken in the direction of regulation of the National Register of Citizens.
- The centrally stored data can be updated on real time basis without any human intervention, which will automatically include the name of the citizens in the voter list when they turn 18 and will remove the name on death.

About the Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act, 1969:

- Birth and death registration is mandatory under the RBD Act, 1969, the violation of which is a punishable offence.
- Facilities have been set up for registration and record keeping of births and deaths under the RBD Act-1969.
- In each State, a Chief Registrar, appointed by the State Government, is the executive officer for the implementation of the Act. Along with him, there is a chain of concerned officers at the district and lower level.
- The RGI appointed under this Act is responsible for the implementation, coordination and integration of the RBD Act.

Way Forward:

Some states are already registering births and deaths through CRS, while some states have their own separate system. Thus, the purpose of the proposed amendment is to bring all such amendments on a common platform so that a national level database can be prepared and used in future if required.

7

Hornbill Festival

Why in News:

Recently the 23rd edition of Hornbill Festival was inaugurated at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama near Kohima, the capital of Nagaland. India's G20 chairmanship was inaugurated through the venue of the Hornbill festival.

Hornbill Festival:

- The Hornbill Festival is an annual festival celebrated in the northeastern Indian state of Nagaland from 1 to 10 December.
- The festival was first organized in 2000 as a mix of cultural exhibitions. This year's celebration was its 23rd edition. The purpose of the Hornbill Festival is to introduce the Naga tribes to each other and to introduce the country and the world with the culture of the Naga society. The festival is named after the 'Hornbill' bird, which is the most revered bird for the Nagas. It is often seen in the forests of Nagaland state. The festival showcases a mix of cultural performances and aims at preserving and reviving the culture. The festivities include dance performances, crafts, parades, games, food fairs, religious ceremonies, etc.
- It also includes traditional Naga Morangs exhibition and sale of arts and crafts, herbal medicine stalls,

flower show and sale, cultural medley, Naga wrestling etc.

The Great Hornbill Bird

- Hornbills (Beucerotidae) are a family of birds found in tropical and subtropical Africa, Asia and Melanesia.
- India is home to nine species of hornbills.
- The Northeast region has the highest diversity of hornbill species within India.
- The Great Hornbill is a colorful bird found in the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia.
- They have a long, downward-curving beak that is often brightly coloured. Sometimes there is a cover on the upper jaw.
- The Great Hornbill is the state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala.

Threats:

- The Great Hornbill is threatened primarily by habitat loss due to deforestation.
- It is hunted for its meat, fat and body parts such as coverts and tail feathers, which are used as adornments.

Conservation status:

- It is listed as a vulnerable bird in the IUCN Red List.

1

Prime Minister of India is Unlikely to Visit Moscow for Annual India-Russia Summit

Why in News:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not be travelling to Russia for the annual summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin this year citing 'scheduling issues'. This comes in the backdrop of Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Annual India-Russia Summit:

- The annual summit is the highest institutionalized dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between the two countries.
- So far, 21 annual summits have taken place alternatively in India and Russia.
- The annual summits started in 2000 with the last one held in 2021.

India's Stand on Russia-Ukraine War:

- India has not explicitly criticised Russia for its "Special military operation" in Ukraine.
- New Delhi has also abstained from voting at UN condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has called for the resolution of the crisis through dialogue.
- India has extended support on specific concerns, such as supply of food grains and fertilizers, as indeed on security of nuclear installations.
- Despite pressure from the West, India has continued to buy oil from Moscow at discounted prices.
- According to a report by SIPRI, between 2019 and 2020, 60 percent of weapon imports in India was from Russia.

Significance of Russia for India:

- Emerging sectors of economic engagement such as mining, agro-industrial, and high technology including robotics, nanotech and biotech, are likely to emerge.
- India's footprint in Russian far-east and in Arctic is going to increase.
- Russia is one of the top military exporters to India.
- Russia can also contribute to defusing border tensions with China.
- Additionally, Russia supports India's claim for permanent membership at UNSC and of Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG).



Way Forward:

India has always advocated for a peaceful, dialogue-way for ending the conflict. In order to improve their positions in the international order, both India and Russia need to see the realism in the face of difficulties arising from both bilateral and regional as well as the global forces.

2

International Conference on Emerging Trends in Biosciences and Chemical Technology-2022

Why In News:

International Conference on Emerging Trends in Biosciences and Chemical Technology-2022 was organized in Jammu in December 2022.

About the Conference:

- The conference was organized by Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, School of Biotechnology Jammu in collaboration with CSIR-IIIM Jammu and the Biotech Research Society of India.

- The conference had 14 international participants including Argentina, Brazil, Greece, USA, S.Korea, Scotland, Singapore, Mexico, etc. apart from national speakers and representatives.
- Scientific sessions of the conference were divided under different themes on Health Sciences, Enzymology and Molecular Biology, Synthetic Biology, Material Science, etc.

Bio-economy of India:

- It was highlighted in the conference that India's bio-economy has grown 8 times in the last 8 years from \$10 billion in 2014 to over \$80 billion in 2022.
- Biotech start-ups have grown 100 times in last 8 years. 3 biotech start-ups were incorporated every day in 2021, signalling the rapid growth of the sector in India.
- The investment in Bio-economy increased 400 times to Rs.4200 crore in 2022 as compared to Rs.10 crore in 2014, creating over 25,000 high skilled jobs.
- Also, the biotech industry crossed one-billion-dollar on R&D spends.
- The number of biotech incubators has grown from 6 to 75 from 2014 to 2022, whereas the biotech

products have risen from 10 to over 700 today.

Reasons for Biotech Growth in India:

- Diverse Population and diverse climatic zones.
- Talented human capital pool of India.
- Increasing efforts for ease of doing business in India.
- Demand for Biotech-products.
- India's biotech sector and its track record of success.

Way Forward:

With increasing reputation and profile of Indian professionals on the global stage in the bio-economy decade, India will soon enter the league of top-5 countries in Biotech's global ecosystem.

3 India got the Wassenaar Arrangement Chair

Why in News:

India will officially assume the chairmanship of the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) on January 1, 2023. The chairmanship was handed over to India during the 26th annual plenary meeting of the Wassenaar Arrangement in Vienna on December 1, 2022.

Importance of Chairmanship for India:

- India's presidency of the Wassenaar Arrangement attests to its commitment and credibility as a country committed to disarmament and preventing the misuse of dual-use products and technologies.
- As chair of the plenary, India will be in a position to steer the group's discussions on further strengthening export controls to prevent the use of weapons by terrorists or sovereign states that support terrorism.
- India remains ready and committed to working in close cooperation with other members of this grouping to contribute to regional international security and stability.

About the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA):

- Wassenaar Arrangement was established in 1996. It is a group of 42 countries that seek to advance security and stability in the sale and transfer of materials and technologies that could be used to make nuclear and conventional weapons.
- India became a member of this arrangement in 2017.

The working of Wassenaar arrangement:

- The group works by regularly exchanging

information regarding technology, both conventional and nuclear-capable, that is sold or discarded to countries outside the group.

- This is done through the maintenance and updating of comprehensive lists of chemicals, technologies, processes, and products that are considered to be militarily important.
- Through this exchange of information, the group aims to control the movement of technology, materials, or components to countries or entities that undermine international security and stability. India is set to become the chair of the plenary session from January 1, 2023.
- The Plenary Session, comprising all 42 countries of the group, is the primary decision-making body and is chaired annually by rotation.

Conclusion

The timing of India's WA chairmanship coincides with the recent upgrade of the country's counter-terrorism status in international bodies. Terrorism is one of the three challenges, along with climate change and pandemics, on India's agenda for its presidency of the G20 starting 1 December 2022. India is also actively engaging global stakeholders in curbing terrorist financing. Whereas WA intends to stop cross-border trade/transfer of technology and equipment which will further help in eliminating terrorism and radicalization.

4

First India-Central Asia Meeting of the National Security Advisers

Why in News:

New Delhi hosted the first India-Central Asia meeting of NSAs. This is the first time that India hosted a conclave of top security officials from Central Asian countries that included nations like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting focused on the evolving security situation in Afghanistan and ways to deal with the threat of terrorism emanating from that country.

Priorities of India:

- India said in meeting that connectivity with Central Asian countries remains India's key priority. Connectivity projects like Chabahar ports, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Ashgabat Agreement, require priority consideration and could be a force multiplier for trade and economic cooperation between the two regions.
- Further India wants peaceful, secure and prosperous Central Asia region.
- Countering terror financing is one of the top priorities of India and the nation has urged all UN members to refrain from providing support to entities that are involved in terrorist acts.
- On the issue of Afghanistan, India noted that it is an important issue for all countries and it should be solved as early possible.

Relationship between India and Central Asia

- India's relations with Central Asian countries have gained momentum recently due to a revitalized Central Asia policy adopted by New Delhi and a

proactive approach to increase India's footprint in the region. India and Central Asia Summit is another achievement of India's Central Asia policy in recent years.

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had hosted the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Summit, which was attended by the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- This was the first engagement of its kind between India and the Central Asian countries at the level of leaders.
- The Summit was a reflection of India's growing engagement with the Central Asian countries, which are a part of India's "Extended Neighbourhood" policy.
- The inception of the India-Central Asia Dialogue at Foreign Ministers' level, the 3rd meeting of which was held in New Delhi from 18-20 December 2021, has provided an impetus to India-Central Asia relations.

Conclusion:

Through Delhi Declaration, India has made major progress in relationship with central Asian countries. India and central Asian countries agreed to establish India-Central Asia Centre, India-Central Asia Parliamentary Forum, Joint Working Group (JWG) on Afghanistan, India-Central Asia Investment Club and Joint Working Group on Chabahar port. These initiatives will aid the growth of India-Central Asia multifaceted relations.

5

India Supports Digitization in IMO Strategic Plan

Why in News:

128th Session of the Council of International Maritime Organisation (IMO) held at London. During the session, India supports UAE's proposal to include the element of digitization in the next Strategic Plan as well as the adoption of a maritime single window system as a part of the digitization initiative.

Reason for supporting the Proposal:

- Since it will help in resolving the regulatory bottlenecks faced in the maritime industry. Time bound action plans for digitization should be part

of the IMO strategic directions. India has noted that this element does not appear to be comprehensively absorbed within the ambition of the 8 strategic directions under the existing Strategic Plan. India, therefore, considers this aspect as crucial for the effective usage of financial and technical resources available with IMO through Technical Cooperation Committee's work to assist developing states.

Strategic Plan of IMO:

- The IMO Assembly, which meets every two years, adopts the Strategic Plan for the Organization, which

covers a six-year period 2018 to 2023

The strategic directions under the Plan:

- SD 1 Improve implementation
- SD 2 Integrate new and advancing technologies in the regulatory framework
- SD 3 Respond to climate change
- SD 4 Engage in ocean governance
- SD 5 Enhance global facilitation and security of international trade
- SD 6 Address the human element
- SD 7 Ensure regulatory effectiveness
- SD 8 Ensure organizational effectiveness

International Maritime Organization:

- The IMO was established following agreement at a UN conference held in Geneva in 1948 and the IMO came into existence in 1959. International Maritime Organization (IMO), as a United Nations specialized

agency, is to promote safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation. This will be accomplished by adopting the highest practicable standards of maritime safety and security, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of pollution from ships, as well as through consideration of the related legal matters and effective implementation of IMO instruments, with a view to their universal and uniform application.

Conclusion:

IMO is working to ensure shipping can embrace the digital revolution while ensuring safety, boosting environmental protection and managing cyber security risks. Cooperation between all relevant stakeholders, from shipping, ports and logistics, will be vital to drive the digitalization of shipping, enhance its efficiency and sustainability, and therefore facilitating trade and fostering economic prosperity.

6

India's Staunch Stand on Terrorism: 'Classification of Terrorists for Political Comfort Must End'

Why in News:

At the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) meet, India staunchly affirmed its stand on terrorism and asserted that the classification of terrorists on the basis of political convenience must be stopped immediately.

India's voice against terrorism at UNSC:

- India is the current president of the 15-nation UN Security Council.
- At the UNSC, India underlined that categorising terror acts by intent as religious or ideologically motivated will dilute the shared global commitment to fighting terrorism.
- Two signature events on reformed multilateralism and counter-terrorism will be held which will be chaired by External Affairs Minister of India on Dec 14 & 15.
- India proposed to organise a briefing of the Security Council on 'Global counter terrorism approach-principles and way forward', under the "Threat to International peace and security caused by terrorist acts".
- Under India's UNSC presidency in Aug'2021, a resolution 2593 was adopted which expresses that Afghan soil would not be used for terrorism, to

threaten or attack any country, to shelter or train terrorists or to plan or finance terrorist acts.

- India issued a 'Concept Note' intended to guide the discussions on the topic.

Concept Note of India

- The note highlighted that threat of terrorism is grave & universal and transnational.
- It noted that the era of classifying terrorists as "bad", "no so bad" or "good" on the basis of political convenience must end immediately.
- It said that existing and emerging threats, call for a renewed collective approach to terrorism.
- The terrorist threat is further complicated by pirates and organised criminal networks facilitating trafficking in arms, drugs, humans and finance for the terrorist groups.
- Risk of radicalisation through the Internet and social media, and terror financing using cryptocurrencies and crowd funding platforms, was heightened during the COVID-9 pandemic.

About UNSC:

- UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations which was established by the UN Charter in

1945.

- Headquarter of UNSC is in New York and its primary responsibility is to maintain international peace and security.
- It consists of 15 members out of which 5 are permanent members (P5) viz. Russian Federation, United States, China, France and United Kingdom and 10 non-permanent members elected by General Assembly for the term of two-years. Each member

of UNSC has one vote and the permanent members have veto power over the decisions of the UNSC.

Way Forward:

The threat of terrorism is transnational which can be defeated only by the collective efforts of all State Members of the United Nations. Terrorism cannot be associated with any religion.

7

China's Increasing Interest in West Asia

Why in News:

Recently, China's president Xi Jinping participated in first China- Arab states summit and China -gulf cooperation summit. The three-day visit of Chinese leader Xi Jinping to Saudi Arabia, his talks with the Saudi rulers and other important GCC leaders, as well as the signing of dozens of agreements with Riyadh, shows that Beijing is trying to increase its influence in the region. At the same time Saudi Arabia has been recalibrating its relations with the US and China.

About the China- Arab states summit:

- It is first kind of summit between China and Arab league. China and the Arab League member states issued the 'Riyadh Declaration' at the first Sino-Arab Summit, agreeing to strengthen cooperation and enhance China-Arab strategic partnership.
- China and Arab states are committed to deepen China-Arab cooperation in various fields through mechanisms under the framework of the Platform for China-Arab States Cooperation.
- The declaration stressed that Arab states firmly adhere to the one-China principle, supporting China in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and affirming that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory.

About China -gulf cooperation summit:

- China and states of the GCC also agreed to strengthen their strategic partnership, issuing a joint statement to stress the importance of taking their strategic partnership into a new era in such fields as politics, economy and culture.
- In the joint statement, when it comes to the issue of the three islands -- the Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa - the leaders emphasized their support for

all peace efforts, including the initiative and efforts of the UAE for negotiations in line with the norms of the international law.

China- Saudi Arab joint statement:

- China and Saudi Arabia released a joint statement, affirming to continue making the China-Saudi relationship a priority in their respective foreign relations, and build a model of solidarity and cooperation for mutual benefits among developing countries. The two countries also agreed to enhance the comprehensive strategic partnership to include a biannual meeting between the two heads of state, and upgrade regular high-level talks led by premier level.
- In the joint statement, the two sides agreed on the need to strengthen joint cooperation to ensure the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. The two sides also called on Iran to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency, maintain the non- proliferation regime, and emphasize respect for the principles of good- neighborliness and non-interference in internal affairs of states.

Conclusion:

The West is closely watching the relationship between China and the Middle East region, although Joe Biden also told Arab leaders that America stands by the Middle East. Although with the US engaging in a strategic contraction in the Middle East and intensifying competition with China and Russia, the overall ability and willingness of the US to invest in the Middle East has declined. But it is expected that America will still maintain its dominance in the Middle Eastern countries and will continue to counter China.

1 International Jaguar Day

Why in News:

Recently, the National Zoological Park in New Delhi celebrated International Jaguar Day on 29 November.

International Jaguar Day:

- International Jaguar Day was created to raise awareness of the growing threats facing jaguars and critical conservation efforts to ensure their existence.
- It also represents the collective voice of jaguar range countries, in collaboration with national and international partners, to draw attention to the need to conserve jaguar corridors and their habitats as part of broader efforts to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

About Jaguars:

- Jaguars are the only big cat in America and the third largest in the world after tigers and lions.
- While many cats avoid water, jaguars are great swimmers. They look like cheetahs, which live in Africa and Asia, but jaguars are more complex and often have a dot in the centre.
- The scientific name of the Jaguar is *Panthera onca* which belongs to the carnivore group of animals.
- Jaguars once roamed widely from central Argentina to the Southwestern United States. However, since the 1880s, they have lost more than half their habitats.
- Although their main stronghold today is the Amazon Basin, they still exist in small numbers in Central America.
- They are usually found in tropical rainforests, but also live in savannahs and grasslands. Habitat fragmentation, poaching, and trading are the main threats to a jaguar.

2 Bird Survey in Kanger Valley National Park

Why in News:

The forest department has for the first time conducted a comprehensive and scientific survey of birds in Chhattisgarh's Kanger Valley National Park, which is home to the state bird 'hill myna'. The three-day exercise, by 56 experts from 11 states of the country, was held in Kanger Valley located in the Maoist-hit Bastar district.

About the survey:

- This is the first such survey that was conducted for

- In the IUCN Red List, its status is near-threatened, and in CITES, it belongs to Appendix-I.

About National Zoological Park

- The National Zoological Park is a 176-acre zoo in New Delhi, a green island and a motley collection of animals and birds.

What is a Zoological Park?

- A zoological garden, zoological park, or zoo is a place where living animals are kept in enclosures and usually displayed to the public.
- Zoos perform research, education, and conservation (such as breeding endangered animals and sometimes reintroducing them into the wild) in addition to recreation.
- Zoos are critical for wildlife conservation.

About Central Zoo Authority (CZA):

- The Central Zoo Authority is a statutory body whose primary goal is to enforce minimum standards and norms for animal maintenance and health care in zoos in India. Zoos are governed by the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972 and the National Zoo Policy of 1992. In 1991, the Wildlife Protection Act was amended to create the Central Zoo Authority.

Conclusion:

The birds and animals in the Zoological Park live in an environment that is similar to their natural habitat in many ways. Zoological Park is not only home to endangered species but also helps them breed in captivity. They may eventually be able to thrive in the wild again. Thus, they can conserve our biodiversity.

wolf, and kanger dhara.

- During the bird survey, participants also saw mammals like Malabar giant squirrel, spotted deer, rhesus macaque, grey langur, along with scat of sloth bear, and pug-marks of leopard and Indian wolf (an endangered species).

Kanger Valley National Park

- Kanger National Park is spread over a total area of 200 square kilometers and is situated on the banks of river Kholaba which is at a distance of 20 km from Jagdalpur.
- The park was established as a national park in the year 1982 and it derives its name from the Kanger river flowing through it.

Other resources in the park:

- The park is a typical mixed moist deciduous type of forest, with Sal, Saugun, Teak, and Bamboo trees available in abundance.

3 Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary

Why in News:

Foresters of Kurseong forest division have decided to drive a herd of 150-odd wild elephants, roaming in different blocks of the Siliguri sub-division, to the Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Siliguri.

Why this drive is taking place:

- Over the past couple of months, the wild animals have damaged crops, property and have caused eight deaths so far.
- Every year, elephant herds reach these areas in search of fodder, just ahead of paddy harvest in September and stay till the start of winter. This year, however, the number of elephants was high, which is why incidents of depredation also increased, thus it became necessary to start drive.

About Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary:

- The Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary was started in 1955 as a normal forest or Sanctuary. Later, in 1959, this Sanctuary acquired the status of a Wildlife sanctuary.
- The Darjeeling Wildlife Division of the Government of West Bengal is maintaining and managing of the Sanctuary. This Wildlife Sanctuary is considered the most important sanctuary of North Bengal, Because

- The most popular species in the region is the Bastar Hill Myna, the state bird of Chhattisgarh, which is capable of imitating human voices.
- The forest is also home to other migratory and resident birds.
- Further, the park has three extraordinary caves named Kutumbasar, Kailash, and Dandak, which are famous for their geological formations of stalagmites and stalactites.
- The park is also known for the presence of underground limestone caves

Conclusion:

One of the main objectives of the exercise was to check the count of the state bird Hill Myna, which was earlier facing the threat of extinction, but now its population is reportedly increasing. Besides, the survey aided in establishing the major hotspots for further studies with a scientific approach.

of protecting the little number of Royal Bengal Tiger and Indian Bison (Gaur).

Flora and fauna in the Mahananda wildlife sanctuary:

- The Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary has more than 300 species of plants. Some are the most common flora species found in this sanctuary are Sal, Teak etc.
- Mahananda Forest is also known as Elephant Migration Zone since many elephants migrate from here between West Bengal, Nepal, and Assam.
- Apart from the Royal Bengal Tiger, Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary is the home of other many animals like sambar, rhesus monkey, Mountain Goats (Serow), and Himalayan black bears.
- Moreover, this Wildlife Sanctuary also contains some endangered birds such as the Oriental Pied Hornbill, Rufus-naked Hornbill, and the Great Hornbill.

About wildlife sanctuary

- A wildlife sanctuary is a geographical territory, a protected area where wildlife is conserved (preserved). Its goal is to protect wildlife species from hunting, predation, competition, and poaching.
- The Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972 authorised the State Government to designate certain areas as wildlife sanctuaries if they were deemed to be of

sufficient ecological, geomorphological, and natural significance. India's wildlife sanctuaries are IUCN Category IV protected areas.

in India. There are many incidents of human- animal conflict particularly elephants-human conflict that is increasing happening day by day. This problem can be tackled through steps like wildlife corridors for safe migration of elephants and bee fencing for their safe prevention.

Conclusion:

Roaming of elephants in resident's area is more common

4 United Nations Wildlife Conference – COP19

Why in News:

- Recently, the 19th World Wildlife Conference was conducted in Panama City (Panama), calling for humanity to take timely action and measures to protect species and restore the balance in nature. The conference discussed protection for more than 500 species.
- COP19 gathers representatives from 184 countries and territories and representatives of international agencies, organizations and institutions dealing with global trade in animal and plant species.
- CITES is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and it regulates trade in approximately 40,000 species worldwide. Its purpose is to prevent international trade from threatening the viability of any of the species listed.

Important points of the international conference:

- The convention voted to ban trade of South American freshwater turtles known as matamata. Their pointed, pre-historic appearance has made them popular with collectors.
- Assembly of 184 countries called for combating trade in species facing extinction.
- CITES approved 46 of the 52 proposals submitted, including bans on dozens of tree species.
- Hippo fans and nature documentaries had hoped that the convention would ban commercial trade but that

proposal was not accepted. The proposal to ban the hippo trade has been met with opposition from the European Union, some African countries and several conservation groups, arguing that many countries have healthy hippo populations and that the trade is not a factor in their decline.

- The conference agreed to tighten trade rules on sharks targeted by the fin trade and small frogs with translucent skin.
- The UN Wildlife Conference also rejected a proposal to reopen the ivory trade. In 1989 the ivory ban was implemented.
- Joaquin de la Torre, director of the International Fund for Animal Welfare, IFAW, praised translucent or 'glass' frogs for their tough competition from habitat loss, diseases and their popularity in the pet trade.
- The CITES Secretariat has published the World Wildlife Trade Report for the first time which gives insight and analysis into global trade in animals and plants regulated under this international treaty.

Way Forward:

Business is the basis for human welfare but we need to improve our relationship with nature. The decisions that were taken in this meeting will serve the interests of conservation and the wildlife trade without jeopardizing the existence of plant and animal species in the forests for future generations.

5 National Conference on Soil Health Management for Sustainable Farming

Why in News:

Recently, on the occasion of Amrit Mahotsav of Independence and World Soil Day, NITI Aayog in association with GIZ affiliated to the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany, Chief Guest Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare,

inaugurated the National Conference on Soil Health Management. Expressing concern over soil fertility and climate change, the minister talked about promoting natural farming.

Why there is the need for soil health management?

- Decrease in soil fertility due to chemical farming and

other reasons.

- Depletion of soil organic carbon.

Government initiatives for soil health management:

- The government has re-adopted the Indian Natural Farming System for agriculture. Natural farming system is an ancient technique used by farmers for farming.
- Government of India is working with the states to promote natural farming. States like Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu etc. have made many innovations to promote natural farming. Last year, an additional area of 4.78 lakh hectares has been brought under natural farming in 17 states.
- To promote natural farming, the Central Government has approved the National Mission on Natural Farming as a separate scheme, on which Rs 500 crore has been spent.
- Under the Namami Gange programme, a natural farming project is underway on the banks of the Ganges.
- Government of India is also working through Soil Health Card. In two phases, more than 22 crore soil

health cards have been distributed to farmers across the country.

- Infrastructure development is also being done by the government under the Soil Health Management Scheme, in which there is a provision to set up different types of soil testing laboratories. So far, 499 permanent soil testing laboratories, 113 mobile soil testing laboratories, 8,811 mini soil testing laboratories and 2,395 village-level soil testing laboratories have been established.
- Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and all Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Central and State Agricultural Universities and Colleges are making all-out efforts to promote natural farming.

Way forward:

Today with climate change, maintaining soil health is a big challenge. Due to chemical farming, the fertility of the soil is depleting. To deal with this serious challenge and for better soil health, we have to promote natural farming, which is beneficial for the environment. India and the world should fulfill their environmental responsibility.

6 Regenerative Agriculture

Why in News:

- Regenerative agriculture has recently attracted a lot of attention from all stakeholders including producers, policymakers, scientists, and consumers.
- The importance of regenerative agriculture was also emphasized in the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on Climate Change and Land.
- The report lists it as a 'sustainable land management practice' that focuses on ecological actions that can be effective in building the resilience of agro-ecosystems.

Problems with the current agriculture System:

- The current intensive farming system has resulted in soil erosion and continuous loss. According to international scientists, there may not be enough fertile soil to feed the world in the next 50 years. Soil fertility and biodiversity are decreasing around the world.
- Regenerating soils on more than four billion acres

of agricultural land is essential to feeding the world, keeping global warming below 2°C, and preventing biodiversity loss.

About regenerative agriculture:

Regenerative agriculture is a holistic farming system that focuses on soil health, food quality, biodiversity improvement, water quality, and air quality. Soil organic carbon and soil organic matter is important for plant growth. Regenerative agriculture adheres to the following principles:

- Minimise soil distribution through conservation tillage.
- Diversify crops to replenish nutrients and disrupt pest and disease lifecycles.
- Retain soil cover using cover crops.
- Integrate livestock, which adds manure to the soil and serves as a source of carbon sinks.

Benefits of regenerative agriculture:

- Regenerative agriculture improves soil health

through practices that enhance soil organic matter, biota, and biodiversity.

- It also aims to increase water-holding capacity and carbon sequestration. Regenerative agriculture builds soil health, supports biodiversity, and returns carbon and nutrients to the soil.
- Biodiversity is a key driver of soil carbon sequestration and other ecosystem benefits. It facilitates soil aggregation, water infiltration, retention, and nutrient cycling. Regenerative agriculture also reduces erosion, provides habitat and food for a variety of species, and goes beyond sustainability.

7

Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2022

Why in News:

Parliament has passed the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill 2022. The bill aims to implement the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and expand the number of species protected by the convention.

Key amendment proposed in the bill:

- This amendment proposed a new schedule for species listed in the Appendix under CITES. CITES is an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species.
- Section 43 of the Act was amended to allow the use of elephants for 'religious or any other purpose.
- Reduction in the number of schedules to Four
 - » Schedule I Animal species that will enjoy the highest level of protection
 - » Schedule II Animal species that will be subject to a lesser degree of protection
 - » Schedule III Protected Plant species
 - » Schedule IV Specimens listed in the Appendices under CITES (scheduled specimens)
- The central government can designate a Management Authority, which grants export or import permits for the trade of specimens.
- Permitting the Central Government to appoint a scientific authority to provide guidance on matters relating to the impact on the survival of specimens being traded.
- The Bill also empowers the central government to regulate and prevent the import, trade or possession

Conclusion:

Regenerative agriculture can be practised by many names and is often also known as - agro-ecological farming, alternative agriculture, biodynamic agriculture, carbon farming, inclusive nature farming, conservation agriculture, green agriculture, organic regenerative agriculture and sustainable agriculture. It is based on zero tillage, crop diversification and rotation. These preserve soil organic matter and moisture, which help suppress weeds, protect soil from the impact of extreme weather patterns and avoid compaction of the soil.

of invasive plant or animal exotic species.

- The Bill also enhances the penalties prescribed for violation of the provisions of the Act.
 - » For 'common contravention', the maximum fine has been increased from Rs 25,000 to Rs 1 lakh.
 - » In case of specially protected animals, the minimum fine is Rs. 10,000 has been increased to Rs. 25,000.

Issues with the Bill:

- The phrase; any other purpose in Section 43 of the Act, has potential of encouraging commercial trade of elephants.
- The bill severely curtailed the ability to graze across pastoral spaces in the conservation areas
- Some important issues regarding Human-Wildlife conflict, Eco-sensitive zone rule, etc., has not been addressed.

About Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:

- The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 provides a legal framework for the protection of various species of wild animals and plants, management of their habitats, regulation and control of trade in wild animals, plants and their products.

Conclusion:

The Wildlife Protection Act, 2022 is a good initiative for the protection of wildlife and environment. But there are some concerns that must be addressed, for example Act was amended to allow the use of elephants for 'religious or any other purpose' is a big concern regarding the act.

1 New Artificial Photosynthetic System to Capture Solar Energy

Why in News:

IISER -Thiruvananthapuram, and IIT - Indore researchers have jointly developed an Artificial light-harvesting system that can efficiently capture light for power conversion by mimicking photosynthesis.

What is photosynthesis?

Photosynthesis is the process used by plants to absorb sunlight and convert it into chemical energy to produce their food.

What is Artificial Light-Harvesting System?

- While natural photosynthesis allows plants to turn carbon dioxide (CO₂) and water into carbohydrates using the power of the sun, the artificial method can turn carbon dioxide and water into energy-dense fuels like methane and ethanol. This could provide an alternative to fossil fuels drilled out of ancient rock.
- This system will help the scientists to cope up with the problems of transmitters and light absorbers.

Significance of the Development:

- Scientists have been trying from a long time to mimic the process of photosynthesis (the process by which plants absorb sunlight and produce sugars) for use in solar cells or artificial leaves.
- Many scientists have attempted to replicate the molecular and atomic structure of the light-harvesting mechanism of plants in the laboratory. They have used polymeric structures, detergent-like molecules, vesicles, gels, and other bio-inspired structures to accomplish this feat. The most common

obstacle these technologies face is the aggregation or clumping of molecules, making it difficult to capture and store light effectively.

- Now, the new artificial photosynthetic system uses Silver clusters with a nanometric dimension one hundred thousand times smaller than the width of a human hair.
- These silver nanoclusters have intricate and exotic photophysical properties. The researchers were able to stabilize them with bulky ligands and encapsulate the whole thing in another, larger molecule called cyclodextrin. This is the first time that atomically precise nanoclusters have been used for this application. It offers 93 percent effective energy transfer due to the presence of opposite charges on the surface and the combined electronic energy distribution. The collected energy can generate streams with higher yields than the individual components.
- The new technology paves the way for the development of new light-harvesting materials that can improve solar cell efficiency and minimize energy loss. Such technologies will help countries reduce their net-zero carbon emissions and meet future energy needs from renewable energy sources.

Way Forward:

Noting that 'India aims to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2070 and by 2030, to meet 50% of its electricity needs from renewable sources,' this development can prove to be very helpful. Scientists need to do such research regularly.

2 Use of Street Furniture for Small Cells and Aerial Fibre Deployment

Why in the News:

With India launching 5G, TRAI i.e., The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, on 29th November 2022, released its recommendations on "Use of Street Furniture for Small Cells and Aerial Fibre deployment".

What are small cells?

- Small Cells are low-power cellular access nodes usually installed in enterprise environments to extend the coverage and capacity of public cellular

networks to indoor locations.

Why are small cells useful for 5G Deployment?

- Using higher frequency bands for 5G deployment has smaller coverage and therefore they are installed in a dense or hyper-dense manner because signals in these bands cannot penetrate through buildings or obstacles.
- Small cells comparatively have lower-level of radiation, and they require less stringent security and

installation practices. They are easy to operate too.

- Small cells can easily be fixed on street furniture like on already existing poles, hoardings, etc, for mounting 5G Small Cells that will obviate the want for erecting lot of latest towers ensuing in the cost-effective and speedy deployment of small cells.

Salient features of the recommendation:

- The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has recommended amending the RoW application procedures again to bring clarity to the term “street furniture.”
- The CAA (Controlling administrative authorities) shared the Infrastructure with TSPs and IPIs. This will lead to saving the hassle and investment needed for new infrastructure.
- Rates have been finalized for the usage of infrastructure, the Authority has recommended that charges will be paid to service providers.
- Permission exemption for small cells and standardization of small cells and installation practices.

Issues:

- The use of small cells and aerial fiber in street furniture can pose many problems such as identifying

3 Sindhuja

Why in News:

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) Researchers have developed an ‘Ocean Wave Energy Converter’ that can generate electricity from sea waves. The trials of this device were successfully completed in November 2022. The Device was deployed at a location about 6 KM off the coast of Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, at a location with a depth of 20 metres. This device targets to generate 1MW of power from ocean waves in the next three years.

About the ‘Sindhuja’:

- The product has been named ‘Sindhuja-I,’ which means ‘generated from the ocean.’ The system has a floating buoy, a spar, and an electrical module.
- The buoy moves up and down as the wave moves up and down. In the present design, a balloon-like system called a ‘buoy’ has a central hole that allows a long rod called a spar to pass through it.
- The spar can be fixed to the seabed, and passing waves will not affect it, while the buoy will move up and down and produce relative motion between them.

the right street furniture based on the availability of backhaul, performance, and street furniture capabilities to mount appropriate equipment. Also there are scalability issues, and concerns about local approval and safety.

These issues can be simplified by:

- The government should eliminate the requirement of obtaining a permit for the installation of small telecom gear.
- DoT should exempt Low Power Base Transceiver Stations (LPBTS) with an effective radiated power of fewer than 600 watts to also apply for a permit under the Cell Tower Deployment Rules. A broadband steering committee, a statewide broadband committee, and a district or city monitoring committee can be established to evaluate and monitor the progress of small cell deployment.

Way Forward:

The aim of these recommendations is to develop and recommend to the government, a structured and consistent system for the deployment of small cells and aerial fibers by street furniture.

- The relative motion gives rotation to an electric generator to produce power. In the present design, the spar floats, and a mooring chain keeps the system in place.

Benefit of this project:

- The success of this project will help fulfil several objectives such as the UN Ocean decade and sustainable development goals as well as India’s goals include deep water missions, clean energy and achieving a blue economy.
- It could help India meet its climate change-related goals of generating 500 GW of electricity by 2030 through renewable energy.

Conclusion:

India has a 7,500 km long coastline capable of producing 54 GW of power. Through seawater stores tidal, wave, and ocean thermal energy etc. the harnessing of 40GW wave energy is possible in India. This development can fulfil a substantial amount of the country’s energy requirement.

4 ChatGPT

Why in News:

OpenAI, an independent research body along with Sam Altman, launched ChatGPT (chatting robot).. The chatbot has taken the internet by storm and within just a week, the service has peaked at over 1 million users. With human-like replies and prompt answers, this platform has made the internet curious.

What is ChatGPT?

- ChatGPT is a conversational dialogue model, a chatting robot, trained by artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning. It understands and responds to natural human language and answers questions. It talks like as one will talk to humans.
- It gets its name from GPT or Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, which is a deep-learning language model that specializes in generating human-like written text.
- Deep Learning which is a machine learning method with three or more layers of a neural network which attempts to simulate the behaviour of a human brain, which then allows the machine to learn like humans.

How is it different with others?

- It is different from Siri or Alexa because ChatGPT will remember your earlier conversations. It will

even admit its mistakes, challenge premises, and sometimes even decline to answer. These features are not available in Siri or Alexa.

How does ChatGPT work?

OpenAI has trained ChatGPT using a training method known as Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback. It uses a reward AND punishment system to train AI.

- Its actions are classified into two categories- desirable or punishable. The desired action is rewarded whereas an undesired one is punished. With this trial-and-error method, AI then learns what works and what wouldn't.
- OpenAI has also used humans as trainers of this AI. It is through conversations that these trainers played both the roles of a user and of an AI assistant.

Conclusion

Although highly intelligent, the ideal answer of this robot will depend on what the model knows, and this may be one of the limitations of the model. Therefore, if a user asks a complex question or doesn't phrase the question well, the bot may refuse to answer. It will also refuse to answer if it is not a proper question.

5 SpaceTech Innovation Network (SpIN)

Why in News:

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Social Alpha today signed an MoU to launch SpaceTech Innovation Network (SpIN). It will be India's first dedicated platform for innovation curation and venture development for the burgeoning space entrepreneurial ecosystem.

About SpIN:

- A one-of-its-kind public-private collaboration for start-ups and SMEs in the space industry, this novel partnership is a significant step forward in providing further stimulus to India's recent space reform policies.
- It will work towards identifying and unleashing the market potential of the most promising space tech innovators and entrepreneurs in India.

- SpIN will primarily focus on facilitating space tech entrepreneurs in three distinct innovation categories: Geospatial Technologies and Downstream Applications; Enabling Technologies for Space & Mobility; and Aerospace Materials, Sensors, and Avionics.

Benefits of SpIN:

- It has potential to contribute to various Sustainable Development Goals with high-impact applications in ensuring food security, reducing disaster risks, preventing humanitarian crises, and monitoring natural resources.
- SpIN has launched its first innovation challenge for developing solutions in areas of maritime and land transportation, urbanisation, mapping and surveying, disaster management, food security, sustainable

agriculture, environmental monitoring, and natural resources management etc.



About ISRO:

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is the space agency of India. ISRO was previously the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR), set up by the Government of India in 1962, as envisioned by Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.
- ISRO was formed on August 15, 1969 and superseded INCOSPAR with an expanded role to harness space technology. DOS was set up and ISRO was brought under DOS in 1972.
- The organisation is involved in science, engineering

and technology to harvest the benefits of outer space for India and the mankind. ISRO is a major constituent of the Department of Space (DOS), Government of India. The department executes the Indian Space Program primarily through various Centre or units within ISRO.

About Social Alpha:

- Social Alpha is a multistage innovation curation and venture development platform for science and technology start-ups that address the most critical social, economic, and environmental challenges through the power of entrepreneurship and market-creating innovations. Since its inception in 2016, Social Alpha has supported more 200 start-ups including 60+ seed investments.

Conclusion:

- The selected start-ups and innovators will be able to access both Social Alpha's and ISRO's infrastructure and resources as per the prevailing guidelines. They will be provided active handholding in critical areas including access to product design, testing and validation infrastructure, intellectual property management, go-to-market strategy, and access to long-term patient capital, among other technical and business inputs.

6 SARAS Radio Telescope

Why in News:

Scientists have determined the properties of radio luminous galaxies formed just 200 million years post the Big Bang, a period known as the Cosmic Dawn, thus providing an insight into the properties of the earliest radio-loud galaxies that are usually powered by supermassive

radio telescope in India to study the early stars and galaxies in our universe.

About the SARAS radio telescope:

- The SARAS-3 telescope has been indigenously designed and built at the Raman Research Institute.
- It was deployed in early 2020, on Dandiganahalli Lake and Shravati backwaters located in northern Karnataka.
- SARAS aims to design, build and deploy a precision

The key finding of the SARAS radio telescope

- By observing radiation from hydrogen atoms in and around galaxies emitted at a frequency of about 1420 MHz, scientists studied the properties of very early galaxies and found that the radiation is spread through the expansion of the universe as it travels through space and time.
- Further, it arrives at Earth in the low-frequency radio band 50–200 MHz, which is also used by FM and TV broadcasting.

What are radio waves?

- Radio waves are the waves with the longest wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum.
- These waves are a type of electromagnetic radiation and range in frequency from the high 300 GHz to the low 3 kHz. Their wavelength is 1 mm at 300 GHz and 100 km at 3 kHz.
- They travel at the speed of light as do all other electromagnetic waves. Lightning or celestial bodies create all the waves that are naturally generated.
- Artificially created radio waves are used in radio communications, radar, computer networks, broadcasting, various navigation systems, and a variety of applications.

About radio Telescopes:

- Radio telescopes collect weak radio light waves, they bring them into focus, amplify them, and make

them available for analysis.

- They help in studying naturally occurring radio light from stars, galaxies, black holes, and other astronomical objects. These specially designed telescopes observe the longest wavelengths of light, ranging from less than 1 millimetre to more than 10 meters.

Conclusion:

SARAS-3 has improved our understanding of the astrophysics of the cosmic dawn, telling us that less than 3 percent of the gaseous matter within early galaxies was converted into stars and that the early galaxies that were bright in radio emission, also strong in X-rays, which heated the cosmic gas in and around early galaxies.

7

Oldest Known DNA Peeks in the Past of Arctic World

Why in News:

Scientists have identified DNA from animals, plants and microbes dating back to almost 2 million years.

As per the study published in the journal Nature, this is the oldest record ever excavated from sediment at Greenland's northernmost point around the mouth of an Arctic Ocean fjord, revealing an amazing lost world this remote frontier.

Key points of research

- In research, Fragments of DNA were detected for a panoply of animals including mastodons, reindeer, hares, lemmings and geese as well as plants which included poplar, birch and thuja trees and microorganisms like bacteria and fungi. DNA is the self-replicating material carrying genetic information in living organisms.
- Study said that mastodon was a great surprise. It has never been found on Greenland before. However, the greatest surprise was this unique ecosystem of Arctic and temperate species mixed together with no modern analogue.
- The mastodon was an elephant relative that roamed North and Central America until its extinction alongside many other large Ice Age mammals roughly 10,000 years ago.

- The oldest previous DNA on record was extracted from the molar of a mammoth, another elephant relative, in north-eastern Siberia dating up to 1.2 million years ago, also preserved in permafrost conditions. By way of comparison, Homo sapiens, arose roughly 300,000 years ago. But new study reveals the DNA of 2 million year ago.

What study reveals ?

- The presence of marine species including horseshoe crab and green algae, also among the DNA detected, illustrated that warmer climate existed before, the researchers said.
- DNA has revealed this ancient ecosystem in detail, with an open alpine forest filled with trees, shrubs and small plants and animals.
- It is not known which large predators were present, but they may have included wolves, bears and sabre-toothed cats, according to study co-author Mikael Pedersen of the University of Copenhagen.

Conclusion:

The finding may help in better understanding of how human-driven climate change will alter the Arctic and it can help in analysing nature evolution.

1 WTO Goods Trade Barometer

Why in News:

The latest WTO Goods Trade Barometer predicted that the trade growth is likely to slow in closing months of 2022 and into 2023 as the global economy continued to be buffeted by strong headwinds.

About WTO Goods Trade Barometer:

- It is a composite leading indicator for world trade, providing real-time information on the trajectory of merchandise trade relative to recent trends.
- Previously known as World Trade Outlook indicator, the Goods Trade Barometer was developed by WTO to complement conventional trade statistics and forecasts.
- It is updated on a quarterly basis.
- A reading of 100 suggests above-trend growth while readings below 100 indicate below-trend growth.
- The Service Trade Barometer is a coincident indicator that illustrates the current state of services trade slightly ahead of official statistics.

Key Highlights of the Report:

- The recent report showed 96.2 on index indicating below-trend growth which reflects the declined demand for traded goods.

- Other indices showing negative readings are: export order (91.7), air-freight (93.3), and electronic components (91.0).
- The container shipping (99.3) and raw materials (97.6) have also lost the upward momentum.
- The automotive product index (103.8) showed above-trend mainly as a result of strong vehicle sales in USA and increased export from Japan.
- The reason for slow growth trend in global economy is mainly caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, energy inflation and monetary tightening across major economies.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

- It is an intergovernmental organization which regulates and facilitates international trade between member countries.
- It was established officially on 1 January 1995 after the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Its headquarter is located in Geneva (Switzerland).
- WTO has 164 members and 23 observer governments representing over 98 percent of global trade and global GDP.

2 Combined Index of Eight Core Industries

Why in News:

The combined Index of Eight Core Industries increased by 0.1 percent (provisional) in October 2022 as compared to the Index of October 2021.

What is Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)?

- It measures the combined and individual performance of production in selected eight core industries viz. Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement and Electricity.
- Refinery products sector has the highest weightage followed by Electricity sector. Fertilizer sector has the lowest weightage.
- The Eight core industries comprise 40.27 percent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

- IIP is an indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of industrial products during a given period.
- It is released by National Statistics Organization (NSO) under Ministry of Statistics.
- Base year: 2011-12.

Highlights of the October Index:

- Final growth rate of eight core industries for July 2022 was revised to 4.8 percent from its provisional level of 4.5 percent.
- The cumulative growth rate of ICI during April-October 2022-23 was 8.3 percent (P) as compared to the corresponding period of last year.
- The performance of Eight Core Industries in October 2022 over October 2021, is given below-
 1. **Coal-** (Weightage: 10.33) Coal production increased by 3.6 percent.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP):

2. **Crude Oil-** (Weightage: 8.98 percent); declined by 2.2 percent.
3. **Natural Gas-** (Weightage: 6.88 percent); declined by 4.2 percent.
4. **Petroleum Refinery Products-** (Weightage: 28.04 percent); declined by 3.1 percent.
5. **Fertilizers-** (Weightage: 2.63 percent); increased by 5.4 percent.
6. **Steel-** (Weightage: 17.92 percent); increased by 4.0 percent.
7. **Cement-** (Weightage: 5.3 percent); declined by 4.3 percent.
8. **Electricity-** (Weightage: 19.85 percent); increased by 0.4 percent.

Way Forward:

Core industries are the key industries in the country's economy. They play a significant role in influencing the macro parameters and represent the capital base of the economy. Market Policies should take into account the necessary infrastructural requirements for the core industries.

3 Ministry Of Civil Aviation Issues Guidelines For PLI Incentive Scheme To Support Indigenous Drone Industry

Why in News:

For the effective operation and smooth implementation of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has formulated and notified the operational guidelines for indigenous drone industry.

Guidelines Include:

These guidelines inter-alia cover the following:

- Definitions
- Qualifications and Eligibility
- Application and Online Portal
- Project Management Agency (PMA), Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS), and Competent Authority

PLI Scheme for Drone Industry:

- To promote the growth of drone manufacturing in India, the Government notified the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) in 2021.
- The beneficiaries include 12 manufacturers of the drones and 11 manufacturers of drone components.
- Under the scheme, an incentive for manufacturers shall be as high as 20 percent of the value addition.
- The PLI rate is constant at 20 percent over three years starting in FY 2021-22. PLI for manufacturer shall be capped at 25 percent of the annual outlay.

Significance of PLI Scheme for Drones:

- The scheme is intended to catalyse super-normal growth in the drone sector.
- Together with the liberalised Drones Rules, 2021,

the scheme aims to make India a global hub for the research and development, testing, manufacturing, and operation of drones and to enable a growth-oriented regulatory framework in the country.

- It is expected to attract an investment of over INR 5,000 crores over next three years.

Drones Rules, 2021:

1. **Airspace mapping-** it segregates entire airspace into red, yellow and green zones on the digital sky platform.
 - » Drone operation in red and yellow requires approval of Central Government and concerned Air Traffic Control (ATC) authority respectively.
 - » No approval required for drone operation in green zones.
2. Unique Identification number (UIN) and registration for every drone except for those meant for research, development and testing purposes.
3. Owner and operator need to furnish the necessary personal details for issuance of license.
4. Authorization of Remote Pilot Training Organization (RPTO) to be done by DGCA within specified time limits.

Way Forward:

Drone industry has tremendous potential for generating employment and aiding economic growth. Leveraging on India's traditional strengths in innovation, IT, engineering and huge domestic demand, India has the potential of becoming a global hub for drones by 2030.

4 Russian Oil Cap

Why in News:

The G7 group of nations and its allies have reached an agreement to cap the price of Russian oil at \$60 (£49) a barrel. The decision comes after OPEC+, a group of oil producers, agreed to stick to its policy to reduce output amid slowing global growth and high-interest rates.

About Russian Oil Price Cap

- The \$60 cap on Russian oil set by the G7, Australia, and 27 EU countries is in force.
- The main purpose of the price cap is to reduce Moscow's ability to finance its war in Ukraine and maintain stability in the global oil market. It was proposed by the G7 in September.
- Russian oil bought for less than \$60 a barrel will be allowed to use G7 and EU tankers, insurance companies and credit institutions. This could make it difficult for Moscow to sell its oil at a higher price, as many major shipping and insurance companies are based within the G7.

What happens if the price cap is not followed?

- If a third-party country-flagged vessel intentionally carries Russian oil above the price cap, EU operators will prohibit insuring, financing, and servicing this vessel for 90 days after the cargo has been unloaded.

5 RBI MPC Hikes Rate, Lowers Growth Forecast

Why in News:

In the bimonthly meeting of MPC, RBI raised the repo rate by 35 basis points and cuts the GDP growth forecast to 6.8 percent from the 7 percent projected earlier.

Need of monetary policy review:

- In India, the RBI is entrusted with the responsibility of devising monetary with the primary objective of maintaining price stability while keeping in mind the objective of growth. Through committee review, inflation is targeted at an upper limit of 6 percent and a lower limit of 2 percent.
- When inflation is high, RBI raises the repo rate and when inflation is low, RBI lowers the repo rate. Through repo rate, RBI controls the money circulation in the economy.

- EU-flagged vessels will be subject to penalties as per the national legislation. The EU is already working on a penalty of 5% of global turnover for the companies that break EU sanctions.

About G7

- The G7 is an organization of the world's seven largest so-called "advanced" economies and was formed in 1975, which dominates global trade and the international financial system.
- It includes Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain, and the United States.

About OPEC+

- OPEC+ is a group of 23 oil-exporting nations, including Russia that meets regularly to decide how much crude to sell in the world market.

Conclusion:

Russia is the world's second top producer of crude oil after Saudi Arabia. It supplies around a third of Europe's needs. Although the measures will most certainly be felt by Russia, the blow will be partially softened by the nation's move to sell its oil to other markets such as India and China, which are currently the largest single buyers

Mechanism of repo rate:

- High repo rate means that RBI will provide loans to banks at high interest rate, as a result, banks will lend money to lenders at a higher interest rate. Thus people will not borrow from the bank and money circulation will reduce.
- Similarly, money circulation will increase in the case of low repo rate.

Significance of latest monetary policy review:

- Since the beginning of 2022, inflation is above 6 percent, which means it violates the inflation ceiling set by the RBI. Poor people have suffered a lot due to higher inflation. At the same time, RBI has to ensure economic recovery of India from sluggish growth due to Covid 19 and Russia-Ukraine war. Thus, monetary policy review is crucial to contain inflation

and for the recovery of India's economy.

RBI stance: hawkish:

- The term 'hawks' refers to central banks that have a very low threshold for tolerating variation from the targeted inflation level. In order to keep inflation in check, the hawkish stance favours high-interest rates. Because of the high-interest rates, borrowing will become less attractive.

GDP growth:

- The RBI has cut the GDP forecast marginally for

the second MPC in a row. It now expects the GDP to grow by 6.8% in the current financial year. Since April, repo rates have now gone up by 225 basis points. Higher interest rates progressively drag down the economy.

Conclusion:

The Reserve Bank's policy action to hike the policy repo rate by 35 bps was widely expected as the war against inflation is far from over. This action will ultimately be beneficial for the poor population.

6

UNGA Resolution on International Tax Cooperation Framework

Why in News:

The resolution proposed by Africa Group to develop an International tax cooperation framework was approved by consensus at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

About the Resolution on International Tax Cooperation Framework

- The resolution calls for more inclusive and effective international tax cooperation and urges Member states to commence negotiations on a global tax treaty led by UN.
- The resolution gives the UN a mandate to monitor, evaluate and determine global tax rules and support the establishment of a global tax body.
- This would put global South countries, particularly the African countries on an equal footing to navigate and negotiate global tax rules.

Need of International Tax Cooperation Framework:

- Current international tax-architecture rules, frameworks and decision-making spaces are geared towards the interests of the wealthy and global North countries.
- Low income countries are under-represented and are in urgent need of solution as debt distress levels, socio-economic inequalities and climate crises worsen.
- Besides covering tax issues related to digital economy, it is also expected to focus on the problem of illegal money flows and provide solutions for the same.

Two-Pillar Solution:

- It was put forward by the OECD with the objective to address the tax challenges occurring within digital economy.
- Pillar One-deals with the most profitable multinational enterprises and reallocates a part of their profit to countries where their products and services are being sold.
- Pillar Two-deals with enterprises with annual revenue of over 750 million euros, which will be the subjects to a global minimum corporate tax.

About United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):

- UNGA is one of the 6 organs of United Nations, established in 1945 when the UN was founded.
- This is highest deliberative, policy making and representative organ of the UN.
- It has representation from all 193 member states of the UN.
- The decisions are taken by simple majority.
- President of UNGA is elected every year by assembly for tenure of one year.

Way Forward:

International tax reforms, like a global tax body under the auspices of United Nations, should promote a rights-based economy, to ensure human rights obligations are at the centre of financial and fiscal decision-making.

7

Efficacy of MGNREGA

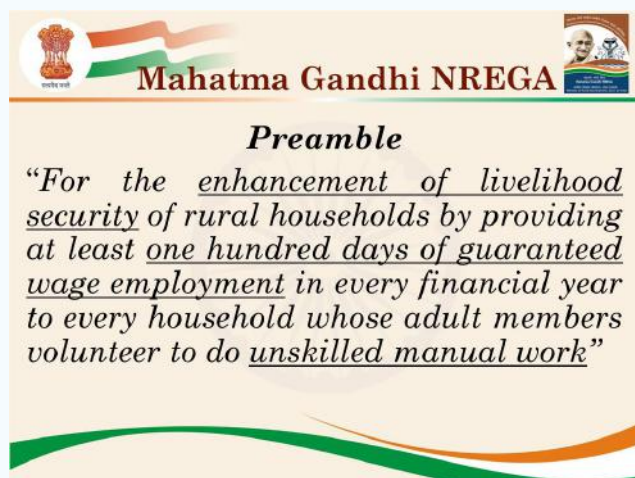
Why in News:

Recently, the Central Government constituted a committee under the chairmanship of “Abhijeet Sinha” to review the MGNREGA scheme. The committee will submit a report especially after assessing the effectiveness of the scheme as a tool for poverty alleviation. The committee will suggest focus points and structural changes needed to make MGNREGA more effective.

Over the years it has been seen that poorer states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have been unable to make better use of the scheme while richer states like Kerala have been successful in using the scheme as a wealth creation tool. These parameters are rather compelling for the government to study the success and failures of MGNREGA.

About MGNREGA:

- The Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act-2005 was launched from Andhra Pradesh on 2 February 2006 as a means for eradicating poverty in rural areas.
- This program provides a safety net in the form of guaranteed work and wages to the unskilled unemployed.



Features of MGNREGA:

- This demand driven scheme guarantees 100 days of unskilled work to adult youth of each rural household.
- It is mandatory to have one-third women in MGNREGA beneficiaries.
- Guarantee to provide employment within 15 days of

submission of application is implied.

- Panchayati Raj Institutions have been made responsible for planning, implementation and monitoring of works under MGNREGA.

Challenges associated with MGNREGA:

- Problem of insufficient funding. In 2020-2021, 24 States /Union Territories found shortage of funds.
- Delay in payment of wages to workers.
- According to the report of the Social Audit Unit of Rural Development Department of Jharkhand, many irregularities were found in MGNREGA.
 - » Non-availability of enlisted workers at the work site.
 - » Alliance between beneficiaries and contractors.
 - » Delay in audit etc.
- Gram Panchayats are under-equipped to implement the act effectively due to lack of autonomy.

Suggestion:

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj submitted its report on MGNREGA in February 2022. In which the suggestions were-

- Increase in the number of days of work State governments can demand an additional 50 days of work in addition to 100 days in case of natural calamity.
- There should be equality between different states / union territories in fair wage rates under MGNREGA.
- Increase in wage rate in line with inflation ie wage rate should be indexed on the basis of Consumer Price Index (CPI) Rural.
- Social audit of all the projects under MGNREGA should be done and the report should be placed in the public domain immediately after the audit is over.

Conclusion:

MGNREGA program has played a major role in poverty alleviation, women empowerment, financial inclusion, rural asset creation, and empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Therefore, by making the implementation side of the plan effective, the main goals of the plan can be achieved.

1 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Museum

Why in News:

- Recently the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) has been awarded the 'Award of Excellence' at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation-2022. In this conference 13 projects from 6 countries (Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Nepal and Thailand) have received the 2022 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Prize for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The purpose of these awards is to promote public and private preservation efforts of historic properties, either independently or through public-private partnerships.
- India from prehistoric times to modern times.
- It was built in the Indo-Saracenic style of architecture, integrating elements from other architectural styles such as the Mughal, Maratha and Jain.
- The museum currently houses about 50,000 exhibits from ancient India as well as foreign lands. The artifacts belong to the Indus Valley Civilization, Gupta, Mauryan, Chalukya and Rashtrakuta times.
- The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation Program was initiated in 2000 to recognize the efforts of private individuals and organizations involved in restoring, conserving and transforming structures and buildings of cultural significance.
- The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya Restoration Project was recognized for setting the standard for the conservation of World Heritage Monuments. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the project overcame significant difficulties during the pandemic by using smart architectural and engineering solutions to withstand extensive degradation. The project sets a benchmark for the conservation of World Heritage Monuments.

Establishment of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Museum:

- The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya was established in 1922 as the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. It was established to commemorate the visit of the Prince of Wales (George V) to India. Later the museum was named after the founder of the Maratha Empire – Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Importance of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Museum:

- It is part of the Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of the Mumbai World Heritage Property in India.
- This 100 year old museum documents the history of

Way Forward:

There are many important institutions of ancient cultural heritage in India which can prove to be unique for the World Heritage List, the government and the organizations associated with them should pay attention to this.

2 Launch Of 'Ikshak' Third Ship Of Survey Vessel

Why in News:

'Ikshak', the third of the four Survey Vessels (Large) (SVL) Project, being built by GRSE/L&T for the Indian Navy was launched on 26 November, 2022 at Kattupalli, Chennai.

'IKSHAK':

- 'IKSHAK' is the third ship among the four Survey Vessels built under the Survey Vessels (Large) Project for the Indian Navy.
- This ship has been named to honor the commitment of the Survey ships toward providing safe passage

for Mariners at Sea. The name 'IKSHAK' means 'Guide'.

- It is being built by GRSE i.e., Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Limited and L&T Shipbuilding. They aimed to deliver the ship by October 2023.

The Survey Vessel (Large) Ships (SVL) Project:

- A contract of Rs 2,435 Crore was signed between MoD and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata on 30 October 2018 for building four Survey Vessels (Large).

- The first ship, 'Sandhayak', under the contract was delivered in December 2021 at GRSE in Kolkata. The remaining three are being built by L&T Shipbuilding.
- Survey Vessel (Large) ships will replace the existing Sandhayak Class survey ships with new-generation hydrographic equipment to collect oceanographic data.
- The features of the new SVL ships are- a width of 16 meters with a deep displacement of 3400 tons and a length of 110 meters.

Purpose and Features of the project:

- These ships can carry four Survey Motor Boats and an integral helicopter and would be undertaking deep-water hydrographic and full-scale coastal surveys of the ports and the navigational channels.
- The vessels will be used to collect oceanographic and geophysical data for civil and military applications. Serving as hospital ships during emergencies, these

ships are capable of providing limited defense as their secondary role.

- The propulsion system of the SVL has two main engines in twin shaft configuration, designed to reach a maximum speed of 18 knots. Bow & Stern Thrusters have been catered for better maneuvering at low speeds required during shallow water survey operations.

Way Forward:

The SVL ships will further empower the Indian Navy and the launch of the third survey vessel reaffirms our commitment to indigenous shipbuilding as part of our Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India' and furthering the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Large survey ships will have more than 80% indigenous content measured by cost. This will also ensure that defense manufacturing is carried out on a large scale by Indian manufacturing units, hence generating employment and capability build-up within the country.

3 Coastal Security Conference

Why in News:

The Indian Coast Guard held a two-day maiden Coastal Security Conference (CoSC) under the aegis of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) in Chennai with the participation of coast guards from four member countries--India, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius. The representatives from Bangladesh, an observer of the Coastal Security Conference, also participated.

Theme of conclave:

- The theme of the Coastal Security Summit 2022 is Collaborative Efforts for Coastal Security. Chiefs of Marine Police from each state and union territory and representatives of other national and state stakeholders also participated.
- In the conference, it was envisaged to address common issues pertaining to maritime safety and security, countering terrorism, transnational organized crime, cyber security, protection of critical coastal infrastructure, and disaster relief.

Five basic principles to address the issues:

- Removing barriers from legitimate maritime trade
- Settle maritime disputes by peaceful means through International Law
- Mitigating natural disasters and maritime threats
- Preservation and protection of the maritime

environment

- Encouraging responsible maritime connectivity increase maritime trade through the creation of sustainable infrastructure

About Colombo Security Conclave (CSC):

- The CSC was formed in 2011 as a trilateral maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives. Mauritius was joined as the fourth member in the fifth meeting of the National Security Advisors.
- The fifth meeting of the National Security Advisors of the CSC identified key areas of cooperation to enhance and strengthen regional security in the following five pillars:
 - » Maritime Safety and Security
 - » combating terrorism and extremism
 - » Smuggling and combating transnational organized crime.
 - » Cyber Security, Protection of Critical Infrastructure and Technology.
 - » humanitarian assistance and disaster relief

Conclusion:

The CoSC under the aegis of the CSC is seen as India's outreach to the Indian Ocean to underline regional cooperation and shared security objectives. At the same time, it is important for restricting China's influence

in the Indian Ocean areas. The grouping is in line with India's vision of "SAGAR: Security and Growth for All in the Region" thus, it is established India as a leader for the ocean and coastal security. The coming together of Indian Ocean region countries on a common maritime

and security platform indicates the evolution of sub-regionalism and is also important in the wider global context.

4 Sylhet-Silchar Festival

Why in News:

The Sylhet-Silchar Festival was recently held in Assam's Barak Valley to celebrate the cultural ties between India and Bangladesh. The aim of the Sylhet-Silchar Festival is to strengthen bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh. It was organized with the help of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, Government of Assam, Bangladesh India Friendship Society and India-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

About the festival:

- The two-day festival was jointly organized by the India Foundation (which comes under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Culture) and the Bangladesh Foundation for Regional Studies.
- The event celebrated the 75th anniversary of India's independence and the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Bangladesh from Pakistan.
- It showcased the cuisine, arts, crafts, culture and local products of the two neighbouring regions of Sylhet (Bangladesh) and Silchar (India).
- It's provided a platform to explore multidisciplinary

business opportunities in sectors such as healthcare, tourism, education and digital infrastructure.

Focus of the event

- Sylhet and Silchar have had close cultural ties for many years, such as a common language, traditions and cuisine. The festival sought to further strengthen the people-to-people ties between the two regions. Eminent people from India and Bangladesh discussed issues of mutual interest during the event.

Conclusion:

In the event, both countries have reiterated their desire to restore bus and flight services between India and Bangladesh, including starting direct flights between Sylhet and Guwahati. The officials also discussed the importance of conserving and protecting the ecosystems in the neighboring areas. The officials called for a concerted approach to protect the Meghna river basin which is shared by both the countries.

5 UKIBC's 'Doing Business in India' Report 2022

Why in News:

The eighth edition of the 'Doing Business in India' report was released on November 24th, 2022 by the 'UK India Business Council.'

What is the 'Doing Business in India' report?

- 'UK India Business Council' has been releasing a report every year since 2015 in which they uncover the views and experiences of 111 UK businesses and higher education institutions on the Indian business environment.
- This report describes the Drivers of UK companies doing business in India, the challenges they face in entering India and doing business, their reform priorities, and analyzes various aspects of the Indian business environment.

- This is done with the aim of continuing the UK's partnership with the Government of India and State Governments to build on the substantial achievements already made in improving business operations in India.

Key findings of the report:

- The highest-rated state in terms of the operating state is Maharashtra, followed by the states- Gujarat, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.
- 'Telecommunication facilities' and the 'availability of skilled labor' scored the highest and are considered India's strengths.
- 'Simplification of the GST processes' and 'increasing regulatory certainty' are the frequently desired

reforms but chosen by 54 percent of businesses surveyed, the most desired reform by UK businesses is improving the turnaround time of approvals and bureaucratic processes.

- Selected by 65% of businesses the 'size of the Indian consumer market' attracted the most UK investors to India. Followed by a 'Product or service request from customers in India,' which came second with 50% of the responses.
- With the affirmation by 67% of businesses, the report states that the UK businesses believe that Atmanirbhar Bharat will present an opportunity to do more trade and investment with India. However, 33% of UK Businesses consider Atmanirbhar Bharat as a challenge.

What is UKIBC?

- The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) is a membership-based non-profit organization formed

in 2007 to promote trade and commerce between the UK and India. The organization works with companies from both countries, as well as the UK and Indian governments, to promote and increase bilateral trade.

- UKIBC is a sister organization to the UK-ASEAN Business Council.
- The UK India Business Council is the sole accredited provider of the UK Government Overseas Business Network Initiative for India.
- UKIBC is accredited by the British Chambers of Commerce and works with UK Trade & Investment.

Way forward:

The Government of India should keep conducting such surveys in a fixed time so that suggestions are received for improving the business process, which will strengthen Indian interests.

6

Delhi Celebrates Assam Day as Eminent Scholars Light up role of the Ahom King Sukhapa- the Great Unifier

Why in News?

On pious occasion of Assam Day, celebrated annually on December 2, scholars paid tribute to the first Assam King Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha. The day is also celebrated as "Sukapha Diwas".

About Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha:

- King Sukhapa was a 13th century ruler who is considered a great unifier and the founder of the great Ahom dynasty in Assam.
- Chaolung Sukhapa is widely referred to as the architect of 'Bor Asom' or the greater Assam, because he consolidated power, culture and religion in the region and managed to group diverse mix of people.
- Under his stewardship, Assamese society started manufacturing weapons, tools, goods that made the society an invincible military power.
- He empowered the Assamese communities to regularly thwart any foreign invasion including the multiple ones by the Mughals.
- Swargadeo Sukapha is a symbol of unity, good governance and bravery.
- The book 'A History of Assam' written by Sir Edward Gait mentions about Sukapha.

About Ahoms:

- The Ahom society was divided into clans, called Khels. A khel consisted of several villages.
- Ahoms suppressed the older political system of Bhuijyins (landlords).
- The state was dependent on forced labourers, called Paiks.

Ahom Kingdom:

- The Ahom Dynasty was founded in 1228 in Brahmaputra valley of Assam.
- The kingdom lasted for around 600 years.
- The Mughal-Ahom conflict began in 1615 which led to the capturing of Ahom capital of Garhgaon in 1662. The Mughals were defeated in later battles.
- The Ahoms ruled the land till the province was annexed to British India in 1826 with the signing of 'Treaty of Yandaboo'.

Way Forward:

King Swargadeo Sukapha unified various communities to build the greater Assamese society which remains the cornerstone of Assamese identity. His ideals of maintaining peace, harmony and integrity in the society should be acknowledged and admired at pan India level.

7

Mamallapuram Sculptures Rank Among the Best Due to Their Very Humane Quality

Why in News?

Documentary titled 'Enchanted Mammalapuram', which is a part of Spectacular India Series produced by Doordarshan showcased the varied architecture of the Mamallapuram's sculptures.

About Mamallapuram:

- The town, also known as Mahabalipuram lies along the Coromandel Coast of the Bay of Bengal, 60 km south of Chennai in Tamilnadu.
- Marco Polo and other Europeans named it Seven Pagodas, as it is believed that 6 more temples stood along with the lone standing Shore temple.
- The town's religious centre was founded by the 7th century Pallava King, Narsimhavarman, famously called 'Mamalla'.
- Chief architectures in Mamallapuram- Sculptured rock relief popularly called "Arjuna's Penance", or "Descent of Ganges", a series of sculptured cave temples, and a Shiva temple on the seashore.
- The varied architecture of the Pancha Rathas form the basis of temples in the Chola, Nayaka and Vijaynagar periods.
- The entire assemblage collectively was designated a

UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1984.

Shore Temple:

- It is a cave temple which was built during Pallava dynasty.
- It contains Lord Vishnu shrine between two shrines of Lord Shiva.
- The structure has multi-storeyed pyramidal superstructures of typical Dravidian style.

Descent of Ganges:

- It was sculpted during the Pallavas rule.
- It depicts the story of descent of Ganga River from heavens to Earth.
- The monument also portrays Arjuna's penance.

Way Forward:

The sculptures at Mamallapuram depict the true art and architecture of ancient India. It is not a sculpted piece but more of a handiwork of nature. Mahabalipuram has created its image as the country's premier beach resort, at the same time maintaining its cultural significance.



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NEWS OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

1. Global Minority Index

Patna-based research institute Center for Policy Analysis (CPA) has released 'Global Minorities Index' tabulating 110 countries where India has topped the list followed by South Korea, Japan, Panama and the US.

The grading of these countries was based on the state's approach to minority religions and the extent of their inclusiveness. Maldives, Afghanistan and Somalia are at the bottom of the list, while the UK is ranked 54th and UAE 61st.



2. Tribal Development Report

Tribal Development Report 2022 was launched by Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation (BRLF). BRLF was established as an independent society under the Union Ministry of Rural Development through a Union Cabinet decision in 2013 to enhance civil society action in partnership with the Central and State Governments. It claims to be the first report of its kind since 1947. The report states that India's tribal communities have been driven away from alluvial plains and fertile river valleys into the harshest ecological regions of the country such as hills, forests and drylands.

Of the 257 Scheduled Tribe districts in the country, 230 (90 per cent) are either forested or hilly or dry. They constitute 80 per cent of India's tribal population. According to the 2011 census, the tribal communities of India constitute 8.6 per cent of the country's population. Central India is home to 80% of the tribal communities of the country.



3. Discovery of RHT13 Genes

Scientists have discovered a new 'short height' or semi-dwarf gene called RHT13.

Since the 1960s and the Green Revolution, low-height genes have increased global wheat yields because short-stemmed wheat production invests more in the grain rather than the stem and has improved standing capacity. However, they give optimum yield under irrigated conditions with high fertility. These genes, when introduced into wheat, do not work under drought-like conditions due to reduced seedling emergence. The newly discovered gene overcomes this problem of seedling emergence. The study states that wheat varieties containing the *rht13* gene can be rapidly bred into wheat varieties to enable farmers to grow low-altitude wheat under dry soil conditions. These seeds can be sown deeper into the soil, providing access to moisture, without the adverse effects on germination seen with existing wheat varieties.

4. Composite License

The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has issued a memorandum seeking comments from various stakeholders regarding a comprehensive revision of the legislative framework governing the insurance sector. The insurance sector is governed by the laws Insurance Act 1938 and IRDA Act 1999. The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has proposed to facilitate entry of more players, reduce capital requirement and issue composite licences. Composite license is a common license to deal in both life insurance and general insurance. This means that a life insurer can enter into non-life insurance sector like motor or health business which was restricted till now.

5. Remittances to India Likely to Reach \$100 Billion

According to the World Bank's 'Migration and Development Report', Indians are likely to receive \$100 billion in remittances this year. This is the first time that a single country has reached the \$100 billion mark. This increase is primarily due to wage growth and strong labor markets in the US and other developed countries. Remittances are linked to improved health and social indicators. In recent years, many Indians have taken up well-paying jobs in high-income countries, such as the US, UK and Singapore - which has helped them to send more money home. This remittance is about 3% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India. While remittances have increased in India and Nepal, other countries in South Asia have seen a decline. With a share of 23%, the US overtook UAE as the top source country in 2020-21. The share of five Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, declined to 28% in 2020-21 as compared to 2016-17.

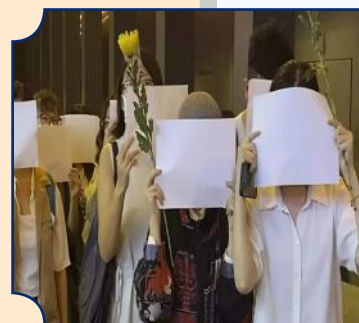
Transaction Costs Worldwide:

The cost of sending \$200 is 6%. One of the SDG targets is to reduce this cost by 3% by 2030. SDG Goal 10 is about reducing inequality within and between countries. Banks remain the costliest medium for sending remittances. Mobile operations are the cheapest service providers, but they account for less than 1% of the total transaction volume.

6. White Paper Protest

Recently, there have been protests in China against the 'zero-covid policy'. The movement has been widely referred to as the 'White Paper Revolution' as during these protests many protesters were seen holding blank sheets of white A4 size paper. However, this movement is no longer confined to China only. It has become a symbol of 'suppression of freedom of expression' in China. The white paper was used as a sign for the first protest in Hong Kong in 2020 to avoid slogans banned under new national security legislation.

White is the color of funeral in China and protesters are also using it to mourn those lost in the protests. They have also been used this year by protesters in Moscow to protest Russia's war with Ukraine. This movement is trending on social media sites by the name "A4Revolution".



7. Global Report on Health Equity for Persons with Disabilities 2022

Recently, the Global Report on Health Equality for Persons with Disabilities 2022 was released by the World Health Organization (WHO). It was released ahead of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. 16% of the global population (estimated at 1.3 billion) experience a disability. Many people with disabilities die prematurely, which can be attributed not to underlying health conditions, but to unfair and unjust conditions created by systemic and pervasive health inequities. They may face a double risk of developing chronic diseases such as asthma, depression, diabetes, obesity, dental disorders and stroke. The report identified a number of factors that explain differences in health outcomes. This includes the following:

- » Insensitive attitude of health care providers.
- » Lack of understanding of the format of health information.

Physical barriers, lack of transportation or financial constraints make health facilities inaccessible. These factors can be difficult to address because an estimated 80 percent of people with disabilities live in low- and middle-income countries with limited resources and facilities.



8. Samruddhi Corridor

The much-awaited Nagpur-Mumbai Super Communication Expressway, the country's longest greenfield road project, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi. It is formally known as The Hindu Hriday Samrat Balasaheb Thackeray Maharashtra Samridhi Mahamarg. This new expressway will connect Mumbai with Nagpur. The expressway passes through ten districts namely Nagpur, Wardha, Amravati, Washim, Buldhana, Aurangabad, Jalna, Ahmednagar, Nashik and Thane. It will connect other fourteen districts namely Chandrapur, Bhandara, Gondia, Gadchiroli, Yavatmal, Akola, Hingoli, Parbhani, Nanded, Beed, Dhule, Jalgaon, Palghar and Raigad. In this way total 24 districts of Maharashtra will be connected by this expressway. It will connect several industrial areas, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) and the dry ports of Wardha and Jalna. It will have direct connectivity with the country's largest container port JNPT. This will increase EXIM trade in the state.

It passes through three wildlife sanctuaries-

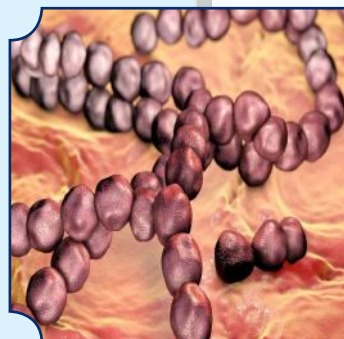
- i. Akola's Katepurna Wildlife Sanctuary.
- ii. Karanja-Sohol Black Buck Sanctuary in Washim.
- iii. Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary in Thane.

It is the second greenfield expressway in the state after the Mumbai-Pune Expressway or E-way (formally the Yashwantrao Chavan Expressway).

9. 'Strep A' infection

Six children have died from the bacterial infection Strep A in the United Kingdom. This is a common bacterial infection. Its symptoms include fever, skin rash and are easily treatable with antibiotics. However, an infection can become serious if the bacteria enter the bloodstream. It is called Invasive group A Strep (iGAS). It usually presents as high fever, severe muscle pain, pain in one area of the body, and vomiting and diarrhea.

A bacteria called group A streptococcus (group A strep) can cause many different infections. These infections can result from minor illnesses to very serious and fatal diseases such as strep throat, scarlet fever, impetigo, necrotizing fasciitis, cellulitis, rheumatic fever, streptococcal toxic shock syndrome, and post-streptococcal glomerulonephritis.



10. Geo-Ladakh

Recently the Union Minister informed that the Government of the Union Territory of Ladakh has approached the Indian Institute of Remote Sensing (IIRS), a unit of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), to develop a "Spatial Data Infrastructure Geoportal 'Geo-Ladakh'" for Ladakh. An MoU was also signed between IIRS (ISRO) and UT-Ladakh Administration on January 1, 2022 to complete the project.

The project involves creation of spatial database (water resources, vegetation and energy potential) using remote sensing, geospatial techniques and development of geo-portal to host this database. The portal provides geospatial data visualization and analysis for UT-Ladakh, which includes spatial viewer, carbon neutrality, geospatial utility mapping and geo-tourism.

It can be used to create spatial databases across sites for time series snow cover, fresh water availability, renewable energy potential (solar and wind). It can show the availability of alpine pastures/grazing lands for natural resource management and change assessment at periodic intervals.



11. Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary

The Supreme Court (SC) recently exempted Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) from its June 3 order mandating creation of one kilometer Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) around all protected areas in India. The Supreme Court said that practical difficulties and ground realities have to be taken into account before passing a uniform order for creating ESZs as per the June 3 order.

Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, also known as Tungareshwar National Park, is located on a plateau in Palghar district, north of Mumbai in Maharashtra. It forms a corridor between Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary.



12. G20 Sherpa Meeting

Recently a four day meeting of Sherpas of G20 members was held in Udaipur. The G20 summit is held annually under a rotational presidency. In 2023, India is its president. The group does not have a permanent secretariat, but is supported by its chairpersons (the former chairperson, the current chairperson and the chairperson-designate for the next year), who together are known as the Troika. The 2023 troika comprises India, Indonesia and Brazil. Processes under the G20 are divided into two parallel tracks - the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track. The finance track is led by the finance ministers and central bank governors of the member countries, who meet throughout the year. Sherpas are the personal messengers of the leaders, these Sherpas lead the track. They meet throughout the year to discuss agenda items for the summit and coordinate substantial work of the G20. Working groups designed around specific themes operate within both tracks. These include representatives of the concerned Ministries of the Member States and also the Invitee/Guest countries. Various international organizations such as the UN, IMF and OECD also participate in the working groups.



13. Badri Cow

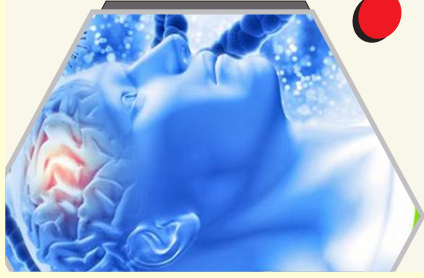
Uttarakhand is planning for genetic enhancement of indigenous Badri cows to increase productivity. Officials of the animal husbandry department of the hill state proposed to use sex-sorted semen technology to improve the milk production of Badri cattle. They also proposed to opt for embryo transfer method to produce more cattle of high genetic stock. The state has decided to opt for Multiple Ovulation Embryo Transfer (MOET). It is a traditional embryo flush, used as the most common procedure in advanced animal breeding. Ovum Pickup In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) is another technique that will be used to increase production per animal. It is proposed to introduce Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) to the project to generate employment and entrepreneurship through local residents.

Badri cow eats medicinal herbs of Himalayas. Due to this the breed is comparatively more resistant to diseases. Badri cow is the first registered cattle breed of Uttarakhand which has been certified by the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR).



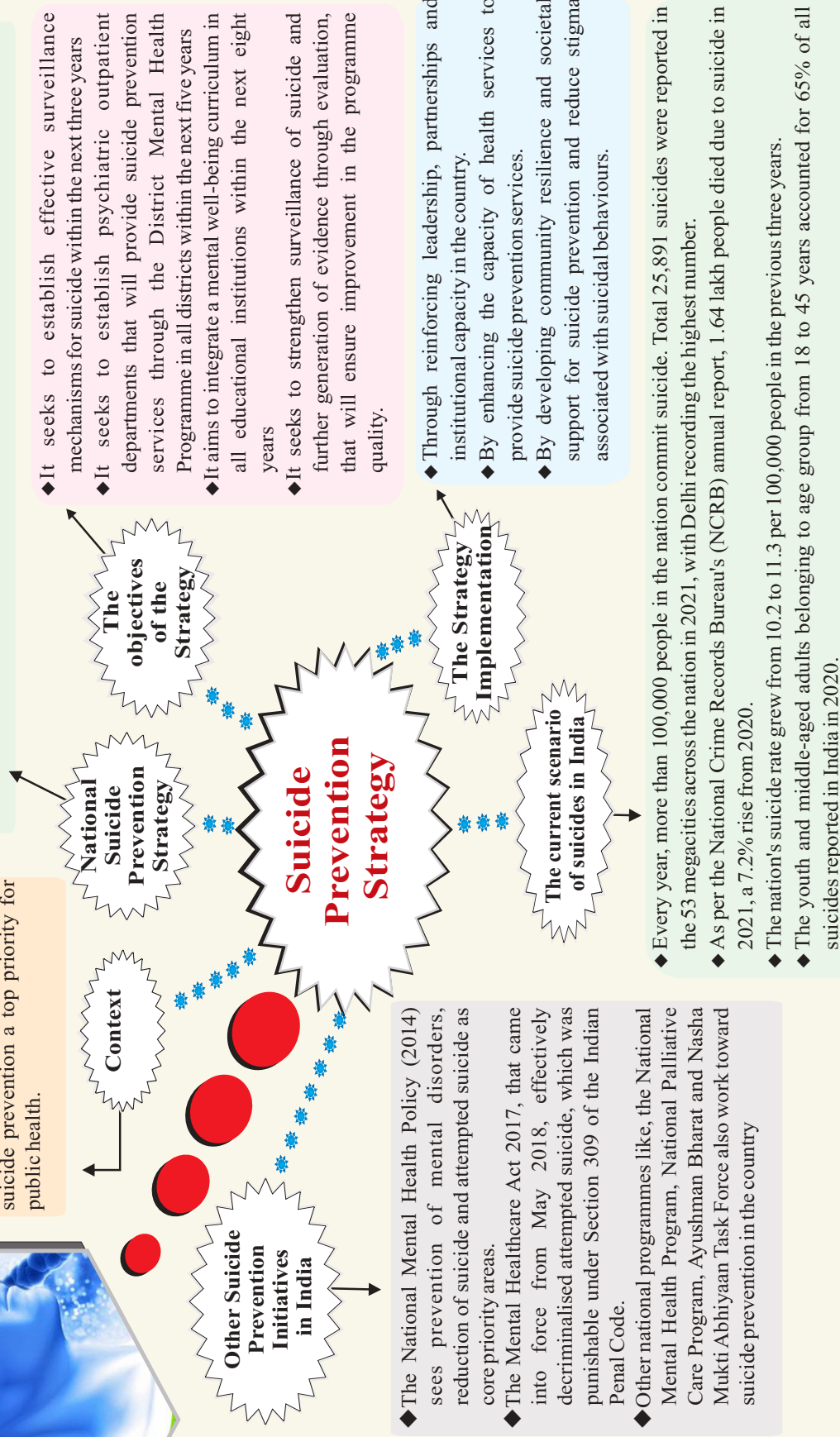
Current Affairs at a Glance

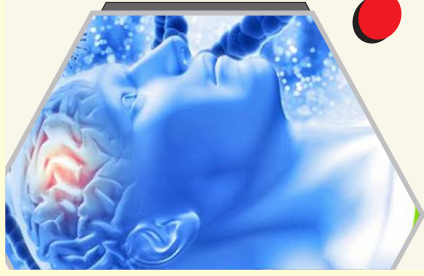
1. US announces historic nuclear fusion breakthrough that could pave the way for clean and cheap energy
2. The Tamil Nadu government has banned the sale and use of phosphorus paste or any by product containing substances under the Insecticides Act.
3. India celebrated National Energy Conservation Day on 14 December. The day is dedicated to taking initiatives to conserve energy resources and raise public awareness about global warming and climate change.
4. India and Finland have signed a Joint Declaration on Migration and Mobility to reach a mutually beneficial arrangement on migration and mobility between the two countries.
5. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Biocon executive chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, and Nykaa founder Falguni Nair are among six Indians who have made it to Forbes' annual list of the world's 100 most powerful women.
6. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has signed a currency swap agreement with the Maldives Monetary Authority under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework.
7. The 12th World Hindi Conference will be organized by the Ministry of External Affairs in Fiji from 15-17 February 2023 in collaboration with the Government of Fiji.
8. Canara Bank has received the Bankers Bank of the Year Award 2022 for the India segment at the Global Banking Summit held in London.
9. Hansraj Gangaram Ahir has been appointed as the chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC).
10. Soil Day was observed on 5 December to highlight the importance of healthy soil and promote sustainable management of soil resources.
11. Meghalaya has become the first state in the Northeast to pass a mental health and social care policy.
12. The central government launched its facial recognition system DigiYatra at Delhi, Bangalore and Varanasi airports on December 1, which will allow domestic passengers to travel seamlessly without identity cards.
13. PT Usha is elected the first woman President of the Indian Olympic Association.
14. Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 intranasal vaccine iNCOVACC (BBV154) has received Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) approval under restricted use in emergency situations.
15. Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organizes 'Divya Kala Mela' to showcase products and craftsmanship of Divyang entrepreneurs/artisans from across the country
16. Five villages of Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Bihar's West Champaran district will be developed as a model human-carnivore coexistence zone, with the state government joining hands with the Wildlife Trust of India, a Nepalese organization and a UK-based zoo for the project.
17. Hawaii's Mauna Loa, the world's largest active volcano, erupted for the first time in nearly 40 years.
18. World AIDS Day was observed on 1 December. The theme of World AIDS Day for 2022 is 'Equalize'.
19. Recently, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has approved the Himalayan Yak as a 'Food Animal'.
20. Avani Lekhara has been awarded the Para Sports Person of the Year 2022.
21. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with top six engineering institutes of India to incorporate Indian Standards in the curriculum.



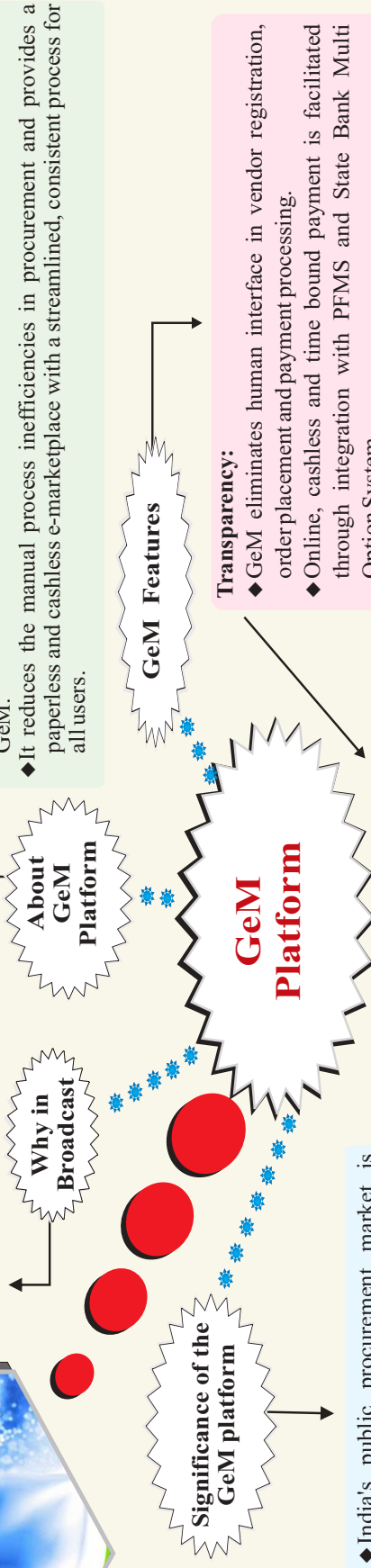
The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Monday, November 21 unveiled the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the first-of-its-kind government initiative to make suicide prevention a top priority for public health.

- ◆ The policy that will set the stage for promotion of mental health and prevention of suicides in the coming decade.
- ◆ The goal of the strategy is to reduce suicide mortality in the country by 10 per cent by 2023.
- ◆ It provides a framework for multiple stakeholders to implement activities for prevention of suicides in the country.





PM Narendra Modi applauded the vendors for displaying their products on GeM platform, as the platform crosses Rs 1 lakh crore Gross Merchandise value.



- ◆ Government-e-Marketplace Platform is a one-stop national public procurement portal that enables online procurement of the goods and services required by various Central and State Government Departments, Organizations, and Public Sector Entities (PSUs).
- ◆ It was launched in 2016 and its nodal ministry is Ministry of commerce and Industry.
- ◆ The platform offers reverse e-auction and e-bidding tools to help government users get the best value for their money.
- ◆ The procurement of goods and services by Ministries and the Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) is mandatory for goods and services available on GeM.
- ◆ It reduces the manual process inefficiencies in procurement and provides a paperless and cashless e-marketplace with a streamlined, consistent process for all users.

GeM Features

Transparency:

- ◆ GeM eliminates human interface in vendor registration, order placement and payment processing.
- ◆ Online, cashless and time bound payment is facilitated through integration with PFMS and State Bank Multi Option System.

Efficiency:

- ◆ Direct purchase on GeM can be done in a matter of minutes and the entire process in online, end to end integrated and with online tools for assessing price reasonability.
- ◆ The reasonableness of the rates can also be confirmed through online comparison with market price on leading e-Commerce portals.

Secure and safe:

- ◆ GeM is a completely secure platform and all the documents on GeM are e-Signed at various stages by the buyers and sellers.
- ◆ The antecedents of the suppliers are verified online and automatically through MCA21, Aadhar and PAN databases.
- ◆ SEBI empaneled credit rating agencies are being used for conducting third-party assessment of suppliers.

Potential to support Make in India:

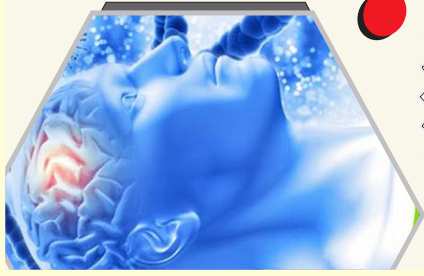
- ◆ On GeM, the filters for selecting goods which are Preferential Market Access (PMA) compliant and those manufactured by Small Scale Industries (SSI), enables the Government buyers to procure Make in India and SSI goods.

Savings to the Government:

- ◆ The transparency, efficiency and ease of use of the GeM portal has resulted in a substantial reduction in prices on GeM, in comparison to the tender, Rate Contract and direct purchase rates.
- ◆ The average prices on GeM are lower by atleast 15-20%.
- ◆ Demand aggregation for most of the common use goods and services is estimated to result in annual savings to the tune of Rs 40,000 Crore per annum.

- ◆ India's public procurement market is estimated to be between 20 and 22% of the GDP, or about \$500 billion annually.
- ◆ CPSEs are a major contributor to public procurement of projects, goods and services.

- ◆ The platform enables quick and effective procurement to the government organisations during crucial times or during time of emergency, like in Covid-19 pandemic.
- ◆ It implements the ideals of Make in India and other policies that work in the direction of MSME development and boost their inclusivity



Cybersecurity experts have pointed out that apps that allow users to connect their smartphones or computers to wireless earplugs have the potential to record conversations and are vulnerable to hacks.

Context

Hacking/malware attacks in India

- ◆ The American cybersecurity company Palo Alto Networks, in 2021 pointed out that India is one of the more economically lucrative countries for hacker groups.
- ◆ These hackers demand ransom payments from Indian companies, which are typically made with cryptocurrencies.
- ◆ Maharashtra was the most often attacked state in India, receiving 42% of all ransomware attacks.
- ◆ Ransomware attacks affected one in four Indian organisations in 2021, which is higher than the global average of 21%.

Bluebugging

About the bluebugging

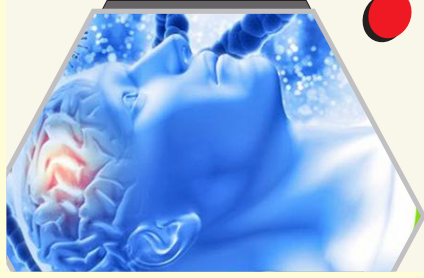
- ◆ It is a form of hacking that lets attackers access a device through its discoverable Bluetooth connection.
- ◆ Once a device or phone is bluebugged, a hacker can listen to the calls, read and send messages and steal and modify contacts.
- ◆ The Bluetooth settings on several smartphones are in discovery mode, which makes it simple for hackers to access the phones when they are less than 10 metres away from the device.
- ◆ Devices using short PINs for passwords can be vulnerable to these attacks and are quickly cracked using brute-force computing.

How the Devices are hacked through bluebugging?

- ◆ Bluebugging attacks work by exploiting Bluetooth-enabled devices. The device's Bluetooth must be in discoverable mode, which is the default setting on most devices.
- ◆ The hacker then tries to connect to the device through Bluetooth, and can employ brute force attacks to bypass authentication once a connection has been made.
- ◆ They can install malware in the compromised device to gain unauthorised access to the device.
- ◆ Although, bluebugging generally happens whenever a Bluetooth enabled device is within a 10-metre radius of the hacker. However, hackers can use booster antennas to widen the attack range.¹

Bluebugging Prevention

- ◆ The devices should be made undiscoverable from Bluetooth settings. This will keep them invisible to hackers, thereby not letting them pair with the device.
- ◆ Turning off Bluetooth and disconnecting paired Bluetooth devices when not in use, updating the device's system software to the latest version can reduce the vulnerability to such hacks.
- ◆ Further, limiting the use of public Wi-Fi, and using VPN as an additional security measure are some of the ways to prevent bluebugging.
- ◆ Users must also watch out for suspicious activities on their devices. Moreover, they should also monitor sudden spikes in their data usage.
- ◆ Modern anti-virus software can also help thwart such attacks, helping the users to detect strange and spam-like content by filtering, blocking and consistently reminding people to be alert



American Constitution was the first to come up with a Preamble. The Preamble of the Indian Constitution is based on the 'Objectives Resolution', drafted and moved by J L Nehru, and adopted by the Constituent Assembly.

"We, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:
JUSTICE, Social, Economic and Political;
LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;
EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;
and to promote among them all;
FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;
IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION".

Preamble as Basic Structure

In the Keshavananda Bharti Case, 1973 & Excel Wear Case, 1979 SC Observed that Objectives specified in the Preamble contain the basic structure of the constitution. Basic Structure contains:

- ◆ Supremacy of the Constitution.
- ◆ Republican & Democratic form of Government
- ◆ Secular character of the Constitution
- ◆ Separation of Powers between the Legislature, the Executive & the Judiciary
- ◆ Federal Character of the Constitution.

Background

The Preamble

Elements of the Preamble

Preamble of the Indian Constitution

Building blocks of the Preamble

Preamble as a part of the Constitution

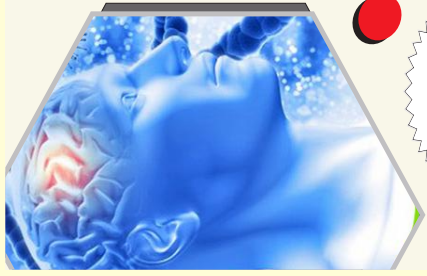
- ◆ **Source of authority:** The Preamble states that the Constitution derives its authority from the people of India.
- ◆ **Nature of Indian State:** It declares India to be of a sovereign, socialist, secular democratic and republican state.
- ◆ **Objectives:** It specifies justice, liberty, equality and fraternity as the objectives.
- ◆ **Date of adoption of the Constitution:** It stipulates November 26, 1949, as the date.

- ◆ **Sovereign:** Free from external control
- ◆ **Socialist:** Welfare of all, i.e. All equitable distribution of wealth
- ◆ **Secular:** State has no religion but citizen have.
- ◆ **Democratic:** Government is representative of people
- ◆ **Republic:** Head of the state is elected
- ◆ **Justice:** Fairness
- ◆ **Liberty:** Freedom
- ◆ **Equality:** No Discrimination
- ◆ **Fraternity:** Brotherhood
- ◆ **Unity:** Oneness
- ◆ **Integrity:** Emotional Oneness

Important notes:

- ◆ The Preamble is neither a source of power to legislature nor a prohibition upon the powers of legislature.
- ◆ It is non-justiciable, i.e. its provisions are not enforceable in courts of law.

- ◆ In the Keshavananda Bharti Vs State of Kerala Case, 1973 Supreme Court (SC) Observed that Preamble is a part of the constitution.
- ◆ In the Harihar Yadav Vs State of Jharkhand Case, 2014 SC Observed that Constitution casts a responsibility on the State to sustain social & economic security, for the Preamble is the floodlight illuminating the path to be persued by the State to set up a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic.



International Labour Organisation (ILO) released the 'Global Wage Report 2022-2023: The Impact of inflation and COVID-19 on wages and purchasing power'.

It discusses the twin crises:
 ◆ Inflation
 ◆ Economic slowdown

Remedies

Why in Broadcast

About the report

The global economic and labour market

- ◆ A multilateral approach is the key to solving the crises.
- ◆ There is an urgent need to address the negative effects of climate change; increasing inequalities; the poverty, discrimination, violence and exclusion endured by millions of people, including the discrimination that women and girls continue to suffer in many parts of the world; the lack of vaccines and access to adequate sanitation and essential healthcare for all; and the growing digital divide between poor and wealthier countries.

- ◆ In Pakistan, the growth is - 3.8%.
- ◆ In China, the growth decreased from 5.6% in 2019 to 2% in 2022.

Neighbours of India

India

- ◆ In India, the nominal wages rose to ₹ 17,017 per month in 2021 from ₹ 4,398 in 2006.
- ◆ When inflation is factored in, the real wage growth in India plunged to -0.2% in 2021 from 9.3% in 2006.
- ◆ The negative growth in India started after the pandemic.

Wage

Poverty

Economic growth:

- ◆ After the collapse of global economic growth in 2020 owing to the measures taken worldwide to control the spread of COVID-19, global output rose strongly during 2021 in both advanced and emerging economies.

- ◆ By the end of 2021, global economic growth had increased by 6.1%

- ◆ In advanced economies its 5.2%

- ◆ In developing economies its 6.6%

Public debt:

- ◆ Debt among advanced economies in % of real GDP.

- ◆ before the pandemic (2019) 103%

- ◆ In 2020 its 121%

- ◆ In 2021 its 119%.

Inflation rates:

- ◆ Across all regions of the world, the war in Ukraine has accelerated the increase in prices.

- ◆ Inflation is currently one of the major concerns of policymakers at the national and multilateral levels.

Figures for advanced economies:

- ◆ 2.4% year on year over the period 2020–21.

- ◆ For period 2021–22 it is expected to increase by 4.1%.

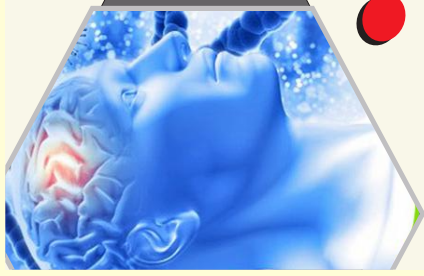
Figures for developing economies:

- ◆ The increase over the period 2021–22 is expected to be 4.0%.

- ◆ Inflation may reach 9.9% by the end of 2022.

It is defined as the total gross remuneration including regular bonuses received by employees during a specified period for time (monthly for the report) worked as well as for time not worked, such as paid annual leave and paid sick leave.

75 to 95 million people were pushed into extreme poverty during COVID-19.



Niti Aayog recently released a report named 'Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) Policy Framework and its Deployment Mechanism in India'.

The report explores into various aspects of the framework for CCUS policies in India and a viable economic model for CCUS adoption and its implementation in various industries and sectors.

- ◆ CCUS (as per IEA) can be defined as the group of technologies that capture carbon from various sources like fossil fuels, power plants etc.
- ◆ This also involves transport of captured CO₂, generally through shipping, railways etc., to sites for either utilisation or storing them permanently by injecting them into geological formation or depleted oil or gas fields.

- ◆ The first CCUS projects started in 1970s and 1980s in Texas, USA, for capturing CO₂ from natural gas processing plants to transport them to local oil producers for Enhanced Oil Recovery.
- ◆ Although, confined largely in the areas of US, the global interest in CCUS grew after Paris Climate Agreement 2015.
- ◆ It has spread into countries like UAE, Norway, Canada, Brazil, China etc.

CCUS makes following contributions for decarbonisation and transition to clean energy:

- ◆ Ensuring the sustenance of existing emitters, like industrial sectors which are essential for development.
- ◆ Decarbonizing hard to abate sectors.
- ◆ Promoting the low carbon hydrogen economy.
- ◆ Removal of the CO₂ stock from the atmosphere.

Contribution by CCUS

Why in Broadcast

About CCUS

CCUS around the globe

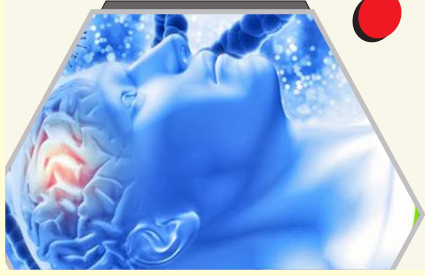
CCUS

Need of CCUS in India

Key ideas in the report

- ◆ The government needs to support and incentivize the innovation, development, transfer and adoption of CCUS technologies for rapid decarbonisation in India.
- ◆ This should be done initially through transfer, assimilation and adoption of technologies while also working towards the development of the indigenous technologies, promoting R&D and private sector participation.
- ◆ The report suggested to establish a financial framework like Carbon Capture Finance Corporation (CCFC) to support CCUS projects.

- ◆ India is the third largest emitter in the world with estimated annual emissions of almost 2.6 gigatonnes per annum.
- ◆ The industrial sector in India contributed around 60% i.e. 1600 mtpa of CO₂ emissions in 2020.
- ◆ The remaining 40% came from sources like agriculture, transport etc. which is not amenable by CCUS.
- ◆ Since India is committed to reduce its CO₂ emissions by 50% by 2050 and reach net zero by 2070, therefore it needs technologies which will abate emissions from the hard-to-abate industrial sectors.
- ◆ CCUS in India, for now is confined to certain industries and applications where CO₂ capturing is the part of the process viz., manufacturing of Urea.
- ◆ Although there are no commercial-scale dedicated CCUS projects in India.



The Government of India plans to bring in new business-friendly legislation through the introduction of the Development of Enterprises and Services Hub (DESH) Bill, 2022.

- ◆ Special economic zones will be renamed Development of the Enterprise and Service Hubs (DESH).
- ◆ Hubs no longer need to have net foreign exchange positive cumulatively in 5 years as in SEZ act.
- ◆ Hubs can easily sell in the domestic market, and duty only needs to pay on the imported inputs and raw materials, not on the final product.
- ◆ Hubs will not be benefited from direct tax incentives, and hubs will now comply with the WTO rule.
- ◆ It ends the duration of holding goods which was one year according to SEZ Act.
- ◆ Bill's decision is taken by the Department of Commerce, allowing the state to participate and send recommendations for development hubs.

Why in Broadcast

Key Provisions

Need of the Bill

DESH Bill

Steps for the Development of the Hubs

- ◆ DESH must subsume large SEZ/ industrial parks so that zones become competitive and self-contained.
- ◆ The government should focus on creating a cohesive policy for the framework of the DTA units.
- ◆ DTA units must not get lower concessions than special economic zones.
- ◆ Hubs should be treated as a powerhouse of job creators.

Significance of DESH

- ◆ **Paradigm shift:** It aims to promote domestic manufacturing and job creation beyond export.
- ◆ **States to play a greater role:** DESH is also expected to enable states to play a greater role in the integration of all existing industrial parks within states with existing SEZs across the country.
- ◆ **Tax benefits:** The new bill is expected with tax rebates, refunds, and financial subsidies.
- ◆ **Transformation:** Transformation of existing ports, airports, and inland container depots will be converted into Development hubs which will benefit the country's development.

- ◆ **Slow growth in manufacturing sector:** India's service sector continues to show appreciable growth, but the manufacturing sector is lagging.
- ◆ **Low share in exports:** The 262 operational SEZs set up over this period currently have only 5,576 operational units and account for less than 20 per cent of the country's exports.
- ◆ **Land unoccupied:** More than 1 lakh acres of land within the current SEZs is still not occupied.
- ◆ **Outdated Law:** The current legislation (SEZ Act, 2005) is over 16 years old and the legislation was framed under different circumstances and a lot has changed since then.
- ◆ **Compatibility:** Rules are complicated and there is also a need to make it World Trade Organisation (WTO) compatible.
- ◆ **Ease of doing business in SEZ:** To enable ease of doing business in SEZ units, the government will also undertake reforms in customs administration of SEZs and make it fully IT-driven and function on the Customs National Portal with a focus on higher facilitation and with only risk-based checks.

MCQs based on Preliminary Exam

1. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding the Preamble to the Indian Constitution?
 1. The Preamble is a source of power to legislature.
 2. It is a part of the Indian Constitution.
 3. It has been amended two times since its adoption.
 4. It was adopted by Interim Government of India.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only	(b) 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 only	(d) 1, 2 and 4 only

2. Consider the following statements about revoking the proclamation of 'Financial Emergency':
 1. A proclamation of Financial Emergency may be revoked by the President at any time by a subsequent proclamation.
 2. Such a proclamation does not require the parliamentary approval.
 Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

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

3. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding 74th Constitutional Amendment Act?
 1. This act gave constitutional status to the municipalities.
 2. This Act has added a new Part IX-A to the Constitution of India.
 3. The act provides for a Gram Sabha as the foundation of the Panchayati Raj System.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only	(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only	(d) 1, 2 and 3

4. Which of the following is/are the demerit(s) of the system of proportional representation?
 1. It decreases the significance of the party system.
 2. It does not give any scope for organising by-elections.
 3. It eliminates intimate contacts between voters and representatives.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only	(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only	(d) 1, 2 and 3

5. With reference to the Socio-Religious Reforms during 19th century, which of the following statement/s is/are correct?
 1. The backward classes did not participate in the work of reformation.
 2. There were regional and religious manifestations of a common consciousness.
 3. Religion was the dominant ideology in that times and reforms were exclusively religious in character.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only	(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only	(d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding 'Santhal uprising'?
 1. The Santhals, who live in Daman-i-koh, rose in revolt.
 2. The Santhals proclaimed the complete 'annihilation' of the alien regime.
 3. The Santhals considered that dikus and government servants can lead their uprising.
 4. The Santhals believed in self-reliance rather than the blessings of God.
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 and 2 only	(b) 3 and 4 only
(c) 1, 2 and 4 only	(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

7. An All Parties Conference met in February 1928 and appointed a subcommittee known as 'Nehru Committee' to draft a constitution. Who among the following were not the members of this committee?
 1. Subhash Chandra Bose
 2. Tej Bahadur Sapru
 3. C. R. Das
 4. Lala Lajpat Rai
 5. Ali Imam
 Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1, 3 and 4 only	(b) 3 and 4 only
(c) 2 and 5 only	(d) 1, 2 and 5 only

8. In which of the following aspects, the Civil Disobedience Movement differed from the Non-Cooperation Movement?
 1. Its stated objective this time was complete independence.
 2. There was the massive participation of Muslim

community.

3. The methods involved violation of law from the very beginning.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

9. With reference to the Home Rule Movement, which of the following statements is not correct?

- (a) Tilak advocated a programme of passive resistance in the movement.
(b) Anglo-Indians, most of the Muslims and non-brahmins from the South did not join the movement.
(c) The Russian Revolution of 1917 proved to be an added advantage for the Home Rule movement.
(d) The Home Rule movement was condemned by Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru.

10. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct regarding Mangroves?

1. They act as a fertile breeding ground for many fish species.
2. Mangroves are proved to be dangerous for Olive Ridley Sea Turtles.
3. Mangrove roots slow down water flows and enhance sediment deposition.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

11. With reference to the 'Northern Plain', consider the following statements:

1. The Western part of the Northern Plain is referred to as the Punjab Plains.
2. The Ganga plain extends between Ghaggar and Teesta rivers.
3. The largest part of the northern plain is formed of newer alluvium.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

12. Why the Congress accepted dominion status under Mountbatten Plan despite its being against the Lahore Congress (1929) spirit?

1. To ensure peaceful and quick transfer of power
2. To become the part of Commonwealth

3. To allow continuity in the bureaucracy and the army

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

13. Consider the following statements regarding Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO):

1. It's a warm water stationary system in the Indian Ocean.
2. It happens every 3-7 years on average.
3. In India, this occurrence often results in increased monsoon rains.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1, 2 and 3 (d) None of the above

14. Consider the following statements in relation to Sangrai dance:

1. It is carried out by the Mog tribal group.
2. It is associated with a festival in Nagaland.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

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

15. During the Chola Era, which of the following metals were used in 'Panchaloha Idols' (such as those of Lord Nataraj)?

1. Gold 2. Silver
3. Copper 4. Zinc

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
(b) 1, 2 and 3 only
(c) 2, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

16. The aim of a 'Tobin tax' is to :

- (a) Discourage speculation and volatility in the foreign exchange market.
(b) Avoiding double taxation of taxpayers in neighbouring countries.
(c) Improving tax certainty in cross-border transactions.
(d) Reducing the administrative burden of multiple taxes.

17. What tribal group is associated with the remains of the recently discovered ancient rock paintings in

‘Karikiyoor’ in the Nilgiri forests?

- | | |
|-----------|-------------|
| (a) Toda | (b) Kurumba |
| (c) Irula | (d) Kota |

18. Consider the following statements with reference to the NHIDCL (National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited):

1. It is a wholly owned company of the Government of India’s Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
2. The company promotes surveys, the development of National Highways and Strategic Roads along with the international border, the design, building, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of these roads.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
Choose the correct option by using the code

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

19. Consider the following statements about Mangroves For the Future (MFF):

1. The MFF program’s field work involves coral reefs, beaches, and sea grasses.
2. This project covers all mangrove range countries from the Pacific, Atlantic, and Indian oceans.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
Choose the correct option by using the code

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

20. Consider the following statements regarding the ‘Critically Endangered Species Recovery Programme’:

1. This programme is a part of the Scheme for Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH).
2. The Asiatic Lion is not included in the above species recovery initiative.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

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

21. Consider the following statements:

1. The Supreme Court’s advice to suspend the chairman of the Union Public Service Commission is not binding on the President.
2. Except for the expenses of the UPSC chairman, the expenses of UPSC members, including wages and pensions, are subject to a vote in

Parliament.

3. If a member of the UPSC resigns from his or her role, he or she is eligible for election as chairman of the UPSC.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?
Choose the correct option by using the code

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| (a) 1 and 2 only | (b) 3 only |
| (c) 1 and 3 only | (d) 1, 2 and 3 |

22. Which of the following occurred as a result of the publication of the ‘Treaty of Sevres’?

- (a) Non-Cooperation Movement
- (b) Civil Disobedience Movement
- (c) Individual Satyagraha
- (d) Quit India Movement

23. Which of the following functional committees work under the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)?

1. Expert Committee on Normally Traded Commodities.
2. Expert Committee on Agro- Biodiversity.
3. Expert Committee on Medicinal Plants.
4. Expert Committee to examine Biological Diversity Rules

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| (a) 1, 2 and 4 only | (b) 2 and 4 only |
| (c) 2, 3 and 4 only | (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4 |

24. Which of the following provision/s may be amended by a simple majority of the two Houses of Parliament?

1. State legislative councils are abolished or established.
2. Lists listed in the Seventh Schedule
3. Constituency delimitation

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| (a) 1 only | (b) 1 and 3 only |
| (c) 1, 2 and 3 | (d) None of the above. |

25. Which of the following was/were NOT consequence/s of the 1920 Congress Nagpur Session?

1. A 15-member congress working committee was formed to oversee day-to-day operations.
2. It dedicated the Congress to an extra-constitutional programme of mass struggle.
3. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru resigned as president and secretary of the Congress, respectively.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 2 and 3 only

26. Consider the following statements in relation to the 'Bharat QR Code':

1. It supports payments through RuPay, Visa, MasterCard and American Express and BHIM-UPI.
2. It's a two-dimensional code made up of black and white squares that can be read by machines.
3. It necessitates the use of a Point of Sale (POS) machine to validate account information.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

27. Which of the following is/are recombinant DNA technology's application/s?

1. The use of DNA fingerprinting
2. The use of bioremediation
3. New Vaccine research and development
4. Cardiovascular disease treatment

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

28. Consider the following statements about Ramjet and Scramjet engines:

1. A ramjet is a type of air-breathing jet engine that compresses incoming air for combustion using the vehicle's forward motion.
2. Ramjets work most efficiently at hypersonic speeds.
3. The Scramjet engine uses oxygen from atmospheric air as an oxidizer.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

29. Which of the following factors will NOT be considered as negative contributors to India's current account?

1. An Indian company based in Bangalore buys stock in a British corporation.
2. An Indian company purchases capital goods

from Russia, such as trucks and bulldozers.

3. The hiring of a logistic company based in Singapore to transport Indian goods to South Asian countries.
4. The purchase of drilling rights in Russian fields by ONGC.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) 1 and 4 only (d) 1, 2 and 4 only

30. Consider the following statements:

1. Near-field Communication (NFC) is a form of contact-based communication that occurs between devices such as smartphones and tablets.
2. Bluetooth is a short-range wireless communication system that enables devices to send and receive data over short distances wirelessly.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

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

31. Consider the following statements regarding the report titled Best Practices in the Performance of District Hospitals:

1. This report is an outcome of the collaboration of NITI Aayog with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and WHO India.
2. NITI Aayog conducted the on-ground data validation for this report.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

32. Consider the following statements regarding SACRED Portal:

1. It is an IT portal to be developed to bring the employment seekers women and employment providers on one platform.
2. The aim is to devise ways to ensure women live healthy, happy, empowered, dignified and self-reliant life.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

33. Consider the following statements:

1. Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) was

- approved to serve as a marketing arm of ISRO.
2. New Space India Limited (NSIL) was approved to provide a level playing field for private companies to use Indian space infrastructure.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

34. Consider the following statements regarding Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):

1. It was launched in June 2016.
2. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) is the nodal ministry for this mission.
3. AMRUT 2.0 aims to provide 100% coverage of water supply to all households in around 4,700 ULBs (Urban Local Bodies).

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

35. Consider the following statements regarding seabed classification under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):

1. The Internal Waters (IW) are on the landward side of the baseline.
2. The Territorial Sea (TS) extends outwards to 12 nautical miles from the baseline.
3. The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends outwards to 200 nautical miles from the baseline.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

36. Consider the following statements regarding the Heliborne Geophysical Survey:

1. It has been developed by IIT-Delhi.
2. It will provide information about the level, quality and quantity of groundwater.
3. The main advantages of the Heliborne geophysical survey are that it is fast, highly data-dense, precise and economical.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

37. Consider the following statements regarding Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U):

1. SBM-U 1.0 was launched on 15th August 2014

aiming at making urban India Open Defecation Free (ODF) and achieving 100% scientific management of municipal solid waste.

2. SBM-U 2.0 was announced in Budget 2022-23.
- Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

38. Consider the following statements regarding DigiSaksham:

1. It has been launched by the Union Labour Ministry and Microsoft India jointly.
2. It aims to enhance youth employability.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

39. Consider the following statements regarding Jal Jeevan Mission:

1. It looks to create a 'Jan Andolan' for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
2. It was launched in 2015.
3. It comes under Jal Shakti Ministry.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only (b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only (d) 1, 2 and 3

40. Consider the following statements regarding Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

1. It was launched for the integrated development of 'theme-based tourist circuits' in the country.
2. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

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

41. Which of the following statement/s is /are correct regarding 'Gupta sculpture'?

1. Gupta sculpture is the logical outcome of the early classical sculpture of Amravati and Mathura.
2. The red sandstone sculpture of the Buddha from Mathura is considered as initial and less developed Gupta workmanship.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

42. Which of the following statement/s is/are correct

regarding 'Quit India Movement'?

1. The Quit India Movement leave the working class completely untouched due to the Communist indifference or opposition.
2. After the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Communists followed a policy of industrial peace with workers.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

43. With reference to 'Speaker of Lok Sabha', consider the following statements:

1. The Speaker can be elected by the Lok Sabha either from amongst its members or from outside its members.
2. The date of election of the Speaker is fixed by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Which of the statement(s) given above is / are correct?

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

44. Consider the following events:

1. Dharasana Satyagraha
2. Vaikom Satyagraha
3. Bardoli Satyagraha
4. Mahad Satyagraha

Which of the following is the correct chronological sequence of the above events?

- (a) 4-2-3-1 (b) 2-3-1-4
(c) 4-2-1-3 (d) 2-4-3-1

45. Consider the following statements regarding 'The District Judge':

1. The district judge is the highest judicial authority in the district.
2. He possesses appellate jurisdiction in civil matters only.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

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

46. Consider the following statements in relation with 'Climate Neutral Now' initiative:

1. It uses carbon credits as a compensation mechanism in order to achieve global climate neutrality.
2. It is an initiative of the UNFCCC for private

sector participation and governments are not part of this initiative.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

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

47. Consider the following statements:

1. Parliament may pass a law on a state subject if the Rajya Sabha passes a resolution to that effect, which must be approved by an absolute majority of the house.
2. A law passed by Parliament during the President's rule can be repealed by the State Legislature until the President's Rule is no longer in effect.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

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

48. Consider the following statements in relation to the Indian Constitution's Emergency Provisions:

1. If a National Emergency is declared due to armed rebellion, the six Constitutional Rights enshrined in Article 19 are suspended.
2. National Emergency was declared for the first time in India in 1975.

Which of the statement/s given above is/are correct?

Choose the correct option by using the code

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

49. 'Ranitidine', a drug, was recently in the news for which of the following reasons?

- (a) The expiration of its patent licence.
- (b) The presence of carcinogenic compounds in it.
- (c) It is causing biomagnification in certain avian animals.
- (d) Its widespread use as a recreational drug by children.

50. Which of the following statements about 'Goldschmidtite' is correct?

- (a) It is a modern non-corrosive gold alloy.
- (b) It is a newly discovered mineral contained inside a diamond.
- (c) It is a discovered exoplanet orbiting Pluto.
- (d) It is a new plant species from which gold can be extracted.

ANSWER

1.	(c)	11.	(b)	21.	(b)	31.	(a)	41.	(a)
2.	(c)	12.	(b)	22.	(a)	32.	(d)	42.	(b)
3.	(b)	13.	(d)	23.	(d)	33.	(d)	43.	(d)
4.	(c)	14.	(a)	24.	(b)	34.	(b)	44.	(d)
5.	(b)	15.	(d)	25.	(c)	35.	(d)	45.	(a)
6.	(a)	16.	(a)	26.	(a)	36.	(b)	46.	(a)
7.	(b)	17.	(c)	27.	(d)	37.	(d)	47.	(b)
8.	(b)	18.	(c)	28.	(b)	38.	(c)	48.	(d)
9.	(d)	19.	(a)	29.	(c)	39.	(c)	49.	(b)
10.	(b)	20.	(a)	30.	(b)	40.	(a)	50.	(b)

MCQs Based on Current Affairs

1. What does it mean if a particular plant species is placed under Schedule VI of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972?

- A. License is required for the cultivation of that plant.
- B. Such plant cannot be cultivated under any circumstances.
- C. It is a genetically modified crop plant.
- D. Such plant is invasive and harmful to the ecosystem.

Answer- A

2. OpenAI's ChatGPT is a

- A. AI messenger
- B. Robot
- C. Chatbot
- D. Malware

Answer- C

3. 'Sindhuja-I' was seen in news recently is

- A. Nuclear powered submarine
- B. Torpedo Launch and Recovery Vessel
- C. Amphibious warfare ship
- D. None of the above

Answer- D

4. Consider the following statements

- 1. Borpukhan was a post equivalent to the Governor General created in the Ahom kingdom.
- 2. The Battle of Saraighat was a naval battle fought on the Brahmaputra River between the Mughal Empire and the Ahom Kingdom.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer- C

5. Consider the following statements regarding the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) scheme.

- 1. MGNREGA is a supply-driven scheme, which guarantees at least 100 days of unskilled work to any rural household.
- 2. If work is not provided within 15 days, the applicants are entitled to unemployment allowance.
- 3. In the last two years, more than half of the States/UTs have underutilized the funds allocated under MGNREGA.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer- B

6. In which of the following states is Kanger Valley National Park located?

- A. Chhattisgarh
- B. Kerala
- C. Odisha
- D. Karnataka

Answer- A

7. Consider the following statements:

1. The United Nations Security Council is charged with maintaining international peace and security.
2. UN General Assembly resolutions have political significance but are not legally binding.
3. The permanent members of the Security Council have veto power in the General Assembly.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 only B. 1 and 2 only
C. 2 and 3 only D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer- B

8. Consider the following statements about Great Indian Hornbill:

1. The Great Hornbill is the state bird of Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It was listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

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

Answer- C

9. Millets-Smart Nutritive Food Conclave is being organized by-

- A. Ministry of Agriculture
B. Ministry of Commerce
C. Ministry of Rural Development
D. Ministry of Railways

Answer- B

10. International Conference on Emerging Trends in Biosciences and Chemical Technology-2022 was held in-

- A. Jammu B. Hyderabad
C. Udaipur D. Lucknow

Answer- A

11. Consider the following statements related to United Nations Wildlife Conference – COP19

1. The 19th World Wildlife Conference has concluded in Russia.
2. In this conference, 46 out of 52 proposals of CITES have been approved.
3. The proposal to reopen the ivory trade was rejected in this conference.
4. For the first time the World Wildlife Trade

Report has been published.

Select the correct answer using the code given below :

- A. 1 and 2 B. 1 and 4
C. 2, 3 and 4 D. 1 only

Answer : C

12. Which among the following organizations issue Good Trade Barometer?

- A. World Bank
B. World Economic Forum
C. OPEC
D. WTO

Answer- D

13. Which of the following sectors has the highest weightage in the Index of Eight Core Industries?

- A. Cement B. Electricity
C. Fertilizers D. Refinery Products

Answer- D

14. Consider the following statements.

1. Unique Identification number (UIN) and registration for drone is mandatory.
2. No approval is required for the operation of drone in green zone.

Choose the correct option-

- A. Only 1 B. Only 2
C. Both 1 and 2 D. None of the above

Answer- C

15. Treaty of Yandabu is related to-

- A. Beginning of British rule in Assam
B. Tibet Campaign
C. Anglo-Nepal war
D. Anglo-Afghan War

Answer-A

16. After whom the city of Mamallapuram was named-

- A. Narasimhavarman I
B. Narasimhavarman II
C. Rajasimha
D. Simha Vishnu

Answer – A

17. The term 'transcriptome', refers to

- A. A range of enzymes used in genome editing
B. The full range of mRNA molecules expressed by an organism
C. The description of the mechanism of gene

expression

- D. A mechanism of genetic mutations taking place in cells

Answer-B

18. With reference to Central Zoo Authority (CZA), consider the following statements:

1. The Central Zoo Authority is a statutory body whose primary goal is to enforce minimum standards and norms for animal maintenance and health care in zoos in India.
2. Zoos are governed by the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act of 1972 and the National Zoo Policy of 1992.
3. In 1991, the Wildlife Protection Act was amended to create the Central Zoo Authority.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only B. 2 and 3 only
C. 1 and 3 only D. 1, 2 and 3

Answer-D

19. Consider the following statements about International Maritime Organization (IMO):

1. IMO was established following agreement at a UN conference held in Geneva in 1948 and the IMO came into existence in 1959.
2. International Maritime Organization (IMO), as a United Nations specialized agency, is to promote safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer-C

20. Consider the following statements about Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)

1. The CSC was formed in 2011 as a trilateral maritime security grouping of India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.
2. Mauritius was joined as fourth member in the fifth meeting of the National Security Advisors.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer-C

21. Consider the following statements about Sylhet-Silchar Festival?

1. The two-day festival was jointly organized by the India Foundation (which comes under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Culture) and the Bangladesh Foundation for Regional Studies.

2. The event celebrated the 75th anniversary of India's independence and the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's liberation from Pakistan.

Which of the given above statements is/are not correct about

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer-D

22. Consider the following statements about Wassenaar Arrangement?

1. Wassenaar Arrangement was established in 1996.
2. It is a group of 42 countries that seeks to advance security and stability in the sale and transfer of materials and technologies that could be used to make nuclear and conventional weapons.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct about

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer-C

23. The G7 is an organization of the world's seven largest so-called "advanced" economies was formed in 1975, which dominate global trade and the international financial system. They are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States.

Consider the following statements G7 about?

1. The G7 is an organization of the world's seven largest so-called "advanced" economies was formed in 1975, which dominate global trade and the international financial system.

2. G7 members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States.

Which of the given above statements is/are not correct about

- A. 1 only B. 2 only
C. Both 1 and 2 D. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer-D

Personality



Henri Vivian Derozio

Henri Vivian Derozio was born on April 18, 1809, in Kolkata who was one of the pioneers of the religious-political renaissance movement in India, especially in Bengal. He was a strong pillar of free-thinking of the nationalist sentiments.

Derozio was such a person who is also known as the first nationalist poet of modern India. He began teaching as a faculty in 1826 at the Hindu College at the age of 17 but he was accused of corrupting, misleading and making youth anti-British in Bengal. Derozio criticized the social stereotypes, customs and traditions through his logical thinking till his death.

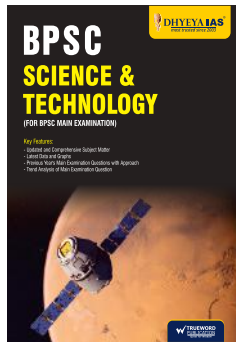
Henry William Derozio was an Anglo-Indian. His father was of Portuguese descent and mother was an English woman. He taught the youth of Bengal to think freely and to question all the ruling establishments. He made debate and discussion a movement among the youth of Bengal. The youth of Bengal became quite rational on the issues of literature, history and philosophy. In this way, he played an important role in bringing about an intellectual revolution in Bengal. Derozio strongly advocated women's rights and worked among the Bengali youth to make women empowerment a strong issue.

In 1828, Raja Rammohan Roy founded the Brahmo Samaj and strongly opposed idol worship. His free thinking was very similar to the free thinking of Derozio. At the same time he was appointed to the Hindu College. His great contribution is that he provided the spark to the youth to fight for the values of liberty, equality and fraternity during the renaissance movement in Bengal. He was greatly influenced by the Great Revolution of France.

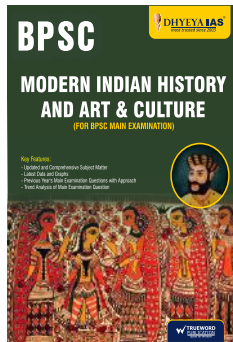
The Young Bengal Movement in West Bengal was started by him and his followers were called Derojians. The main objective of the Young Bengal Movement, founded by him in 1828, was freedom of the press, protection of farmers from the atrocities committed by the landlords and getting Indian people under high pay scales in government jobs.

He established 'Academic Association' and 'Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge' for social reform. Apart from this, Derozio also formed 'Anglo-Indian Hindu Association', 'Banghit Sabha' and 'Debating Club'.

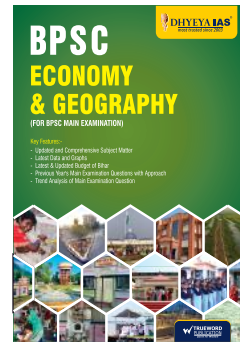
He also edited the newspaper 'East India'. His main disciples were Krishnamohan Banerjee, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Maheshchandra Ghosh. Derozio, along with his followers, disciples, had made an unprecedented contribution in creating the environment of a cultural social revolution in Bengal. He died on 26 December 1831.



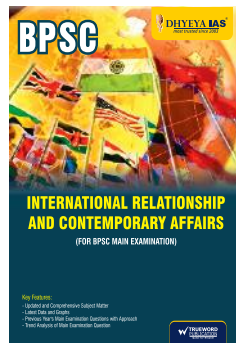
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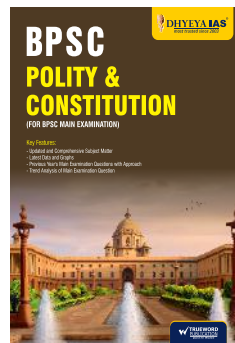
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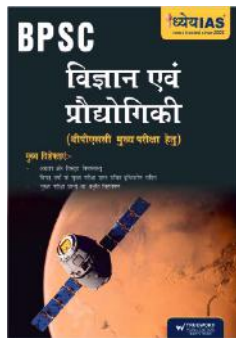
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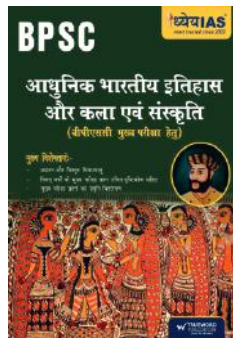
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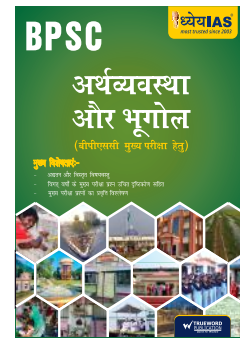
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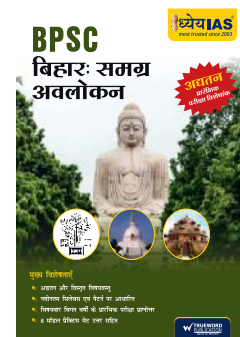
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