



VAJIRAM & RAVI
Institute for IAS Examination

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CURRENT AFFAIRS - September 2024



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- 10 Years of Make In India
- New Flag and Insignia of Supreme Court (SC)
- Public Accounts Committee (PAC)
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10 Years of Swachh Bharat Mission

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, marks its 10th anniversary on October 2, 2024.



Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

About

Launched in 2014 to achieve an **open defecation free (ODF)** India in five years. Under this components, all villages, Gram Panchayats, Districts, States and UTs in India had to declare themselves **ODF** by 2 October 2019 - 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

This progressed the country towards **SDG 6.2**, which aims for adequate and equitable sanitation access for all, especially for women and girls.

Two parts of the mission

- » **SBM-Gramin:** managed by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- » **SBM-Urban for cities:** overseen by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Focus area

- » Building individual household toilets, Creating community and public toilets
- » Awareness and behavioral change campaigns
- » Solid waste management: Efficiently handling, collection, segregation, and disposal.

Targets of SBM (eliminating open defecation)

- » The mission focused on providing every household with individual toilets, cluster toilets for communities, and proper waste management systems for school and anganwadi toilets.
- » To support this, the government increased assistance from Rs 10,000 (under the previous Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan) to Rs 12,000 per toilet.
- » After the mission's initial five years, **SBM 2.0 was launched in 2021**, shifting the focus to **creating garbage-free cities and addressing faecal sludge, plastic waste, and greywater management for enhanced urban sanitation.**

Open Defecation Free Status	
<p>ODF: If at any point of the day, not even a single person is found defecating in the open.</p> <p>ODF+: If at any point of the day, not a single person is found defecating and/or urinating in the open, and all community and public toilets are functional and well maintained.</p> <p>ODF++: If the area is already ODF+ and the faecal sludge/septage and sewage are safely managed and treated, with no discharging or dumping of untreated faecal sludge and sewage into the open drains, water bodies or areas.</p>	
SBM Urban 2.0	SBM(G) 2.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Funding: To get funding from SBM Urban 2.0, cities are supposed to submit action plans to the MoHUA for bioremediation of their legacy landfills and then reuse of the land cleared. ● Process: Converting the waste into different categories, leading to the - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creation of refuse derived fuel (RDF) for waste-to-energy plants, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It emphasizes the sustainability of achievements under phase I and to provide adequate facilities for Solid/Liquid & plastic Waste Management (SLWM) in rural India. ● SLWM component of ODF Plus will be monitored on the basis of output-outcome indicators for 4 key areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plastic waste management, ○ Biodegradable solid waste management (including animal waste management),

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recycling of construction & demolition waste and bio-soil that can be used for road construction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Greywater (Household Wastewater) management ○ Fecal sludge management.
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Achievements of Swachh Bharat Mission

- **Toilet Construction and ODF Declarations**
 - **Toilets Built:** Over **10 crore toilets** have been constructed under the mission.
 - **ODF Villages:** On October 2, 2019, **6 lakh villages** were declared open defecation-free (ODF).
 - **Urban ODF Status:** By December 2019, urban India, except for cities in West Bengal, was also declared ODF by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- **Targets and Financial Support**
 - **Individual Toilets:** **66 lakh individual toilets** were constructed, surpassing the target of **59 lakh**.
 - **Financial Assistance:** The Centre released **Rs 57,469.22 crore** to states and UTs for SBM-Gramin from 2014-2019. The budget for SBM-Urban was **Rs 62,009 crore**.
- **ODF+ Achievements**
 - **ODF+ Declarations:** **5.54 lakh villages** and **3,913 cities** have been declared ODF+ under SBM-Gramin 2.0 and SBM-Urban 2.0 since 2020-21.
 - ODF+ status indicates these areas **also** have arrangements for liquid waste management.
- **Future Plans and Allocations**
 - **SBM-G 2.0 Budget:** **Rs 1.40 lakh crore** for SBM-Gramin 2.0 from 2020-21 to 2024-2025, with **Rs 52,497 crore** allocated from the Drinking Water and Sanitation Department.
 - **SBM-U 2.0 Approval:** Allocation of **Rs 1.41 lakh crore**.
- **Landfill Remediation Progress**
 - **Legacy Landfills:** The goal is to clear all **2,400 legacy landfills** in cities by 2025-2026.
 - So far, **30%** of the area targeted for clearing has been achieved, and **41%** of the waste remediation goal has been met.
 - **Waste Management Statistics:** According to SBM-U dashboard, **97%** of municipal wards have door-to-door waste collection, and **90%** have achieved **100% segregation at source**.

Impact of Swachh Bharat Mission on Health

- **Deaths Averted:** WHO estimated that from 2014 to October 2019, the (SBM-G) could avert approximately **3 lakh deaths** related to diarrhoea and protein-energy malnutrition.
 - Prior to SBM, **unsafe sanitation** was responsible for an estimated **199 million cases of diarrhoea annually**, a figure that has been gradually decreasing with the implementation of the mission.
- **Link to Infant Mortality Reduction:** A recent study published in **Nature** found a significant link between the SBM and a reduction in infant deaths.
 - The research indicated that the mission may have contributed to **60,000 to 70,000 fewer infant deaths** each year from 2014 to 2020.
 - Although there was a general decline in infant mortality from 2003 to 2020, the reduction accelerated after 2015, coinciding with the SBM's initiatives.
- **Toilet Access:** According to the **2011 Census**, **53.1%** of households (rural and urban) lacked any form of toilets. The extent of improvement in toilet access since then is yet to be assessed, as the **Census 2021** has been delayed.
- **Increasing the enrolment ratio of girls in schools and improving health standards.**

Criticism of SBM

- **Quality of Construction**
 - **Substandard Toilets:** Many toilets constructed under the SBM have been reported to be of poor quality, lacking proper sanitation facilities, and failing to meet the required standards.
 - **Non-Functional Toilets:** Some toilets were built but remain unused or are not functional due to maintenance issues or inadequate water supply.
- **Data Discrepancies**
 - **Inflated Numbers:** Critics have pointed out discrepancies in the reporting of ODF declarations and the actual ground situation. Some villages and cities declared as ODF may not meet the criteria.
 - **Verification Issues:** The verification process for ODF status has been questioned, with claims that local officials may have exaggerated achievements to meet targets.
- **Focus on Infrastructure Over Behavior Change**
 - **Lack of Awareness Campaigns:** While the mission emphasizes building toilets, critics argue that it has not adequately focused on creating awareness and promoting behavioral changes regarding sanitation practices.
 - **Cultural Resistance:** In many areas, social norms and cultural practices regarding sanitation persist, and merely building toilets does not change people's behavior.
- **Implementation Challenges**
 - **Insufficient Monitoring:** Calls for better monitoring and evaluation of SBM initiatives at the ground level to ensure effectiveness.
 - **Local Government Capacity:** Some local bodies may lack the capacity or resources to execute the mission effectively.
- **Exclusion of Marginalized Groups**
 - **Accessibility Issues:** Reports indicate that marginalized communities, including SCs & STs, often face barriers to accessing sanitation facilities, thus undermining the mission's objectives of inclusivity.
 - **Gender Concerns:** Not adequately addressing the specific sanitation needs of women and girls, such as menstrual hygiene management.
- **Environmental Concerns**
 - **Solid Waste Management:** Critics argue that it has not effectively dealt with solid waste management issues, which continue to pose significant environmental challenges.
 - **Sustainability Issues:** Some critics highlight that without sustainable practices, such as proper waste disposal and treatment systems, the mission's long-term success may be jeopardized.
- **Delayed Census and Lack of Data**
 - **Impact Measurement:** The delay in the Census 2021 has hindered the ability to measure the true impact of the SBM on sanitation coverage and improvements, leading to concerns over the reliability of available data.
- **Proper planning before starting the bioremediation process missing**
 - **Stopping dumping fresh waste** on the sites undergoing remediation.
 - Providing alternative locations to process fresh waste.
 - Stopping the use of the fine soil-like material generated from the sites as compost, because of the possibility of contamination due to the presence of heavy metals.

10 Years of Make In India

Launched on September 25, 2014, the "Make in India" initiative marked a pivotal shift in India's economic strategy. The 10th anniversary of the initiative in 2024 celebrates its success.

Make In India (MII)

• About

- At its core, "Make in India" sought to create a robust manufacturing ecosystem that could elevate India's economic position & provide employment to its vast workforce.
- The initiative emphasized the importance of making India a global hub for design, innovation, and manufacturing across a wide range of sectors.

• Key Sectors Under MII: The initiative focused on 27 sectors, grouped under two categories:

- **Manufacturing Sectors:** Aerospace and Defence; Automotive and Auto Components; Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices; Biotechnology; Textiles and Apparels; Chemicals and Petrochemicals; Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM); Food Processing; Gems and Jewellery; Railways, and more.
- **Service Sectors:** Information Technology (IT) and IT-enabled Services (ITeS); Tourism and Hospitality; Medical Value Travel; Transport and Logistics Services; Accounting and Finance Services; Audio Visual and Legal Services, among others.

❖ **New Processes:** The "Make in India" initiative identified 'ease of doing business' as a crucial factor for promoting entrepreneurship. Several measures were implemented to enhance the business environment, making it more conducive for startups and established enterprises alike.

❖ **New Infrastructure:** The government focused on developing industrial corridors and smart cities, integrating state-of-the-art technology and high-speed communication to create world-class infrastructure. Innovation and research were supported through streamlined registration systems and improved intellectual property rights (IPR) infrastructure. Efforts were made to identify industry skill requirements and develop the workforce accordingly.

❖ **New Sectors:** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) was significantly opened up in various sectors including Defence Production, Insurance, Medical Devices, Construction, and Railway infrastructure. This expansion also included easing FDI regulations in Insurance and Medical Devices, encouraging international investment and growth.

❖ **New Mindset:** The government embraced a role as a facilitator rather than a regulator, partnering with industry to drive the country's economic development. This shift aimed to foster a collaborative environment that supported industrial growth and innovation.

• Pillars of MII (given in fig.)

Major Initiatives Under MII

• Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes

- PLI schemes have provided a financial outlay of ₹1.97 lakh crore across 14 key sectors, including electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals, and textiles.
- As of 2024, these schemes have approved 755 applications, leading to ₹1.23 lakh crore in investment and generating employment for around 8 lakh individuals.

• Semiconductor Ecosystem Development: To reduce dependence on foreign imports and establish self-reliance in critical technologies, the government launched the Semicon India Programme with an outlay of ₹76,000 crore.

• PM GatiShakti: Introduced in 2021, PM GatiShakti is a national infrastructure plan aimed at achieving multimodal connectivity through the integration of transportation, energy, and communication networks.

- The program brings together 36 ministries and departments to enhance logistics efficiency and synchronize project implementation.
- The "seven engines" of the program—railways, roads, ports, waterways, airports, mass transport, and logistics infrastructure—drive economic growth and job creation.



- **National Logistics Policy (NLP):** Unveiled in 2022, the NLP complements the PM GatiShakti by focusing on reducing logistics costs, improving India's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) ranking, and building a sustainable logistics network.
 - It aims to streamline logistics through digital systems, standardization, and human resource development.
- **Industrialization and Urbanization:** The National Industrial Corridor Development Programme is India's largest infrastructure initiative aimed at creating "Smart Cities" and advanced industrial hubs.
 - The program promotes manufacturing growth and systematic urbanization through integrated industrial corridors with multi-modal connectivity.
 - The recent approval of 12 new projects, with an investment of ₹28,602 crore, strengthens India's position as a global manufacturing and investment destination.
- **Startup India**
 - Launched on January 2016, the Startup India initiative supports entrepreneurs and aims to build a robust startup ecosystem.
 - By September 2024, India has the third-largest startup ecosystem, with 148,931 DPIIT-recognized startups generating over 15.5 lakh jobs.
- **Tax Reforms:** The introduction of the GST on July 1, 2017, streamlined India's tax system by unifying 36 states and UTs into a common market.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** India's UPI has become a global leader in digital payments, processing 46% of the world's real-time transactions.
 - Between April and July 2024, UPI processed nearly ₹81 lakh crore (37% year-on-year growth), highlighting its robust infrastructure and growing consumer trust.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** India made remarkable progress, climbing from 142nd in 2014 to 63rd in the World Bank's Doing Business Report (DBR) 2020, published in October 2019.
 - This jump reflects the government's sustained efforts to simplify regulations, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and create a more business-friendly environment, significantly boosting investor confidence.
- **Record FDI to Boost MII** driven by simplified FDI rules.
 - FDI inflows increased from \$45.14 billion in 2014-15 to a record \$84.83 billion in 2021-22.
 - Between 2014 and 2024, India attracted \$667.41 billion in FDI, with total inflows reaching \$70.95 billion in FY 2023-24.

Key Achievements

- **Manufacturing Growth**
 - India has emerged as the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer.
 - Mobile exports surged from Rs 1,556 crore in 2014 to Rs 1.2 lakh crore by 2024.
 - The electronics sector grew to USD 155 billion in FY23, with mobile phones accounting for 43% of production.
- **Self-Reliance in Defence**
 - Highlighted by the launch of INS Vikrant, the country's first indigenous aircraft carrier.
 - Defence production has reached ₹1.27 lakh crore, with exports to over 90 countries.
 - 'Made in Bihar' boots are now part of the Russian Army's equipment.
- **Global Export Growth:** India recorded merchandise exports worth \$437.06 billion in FY 2023-24, marking its growing role in global trade.

- **Employment Creation:** The initiative has generated millions of jobs across various sectors, including 8 lakh jobs through PLI schemes alone.
- **Other achievements**
 - India not only achieved **COVID-19 vaccination** coverage in record time but also became a major exporter of much-needed life-saving vaccines to many developing and under developed countries across the world.
 - **Vande Bharat Trains**, India's first indigenous semi-high-speed trains, featuring state-of-the-art coaches. As of now, 102 Vande Bharat train services (51 trains) are operational across Indian Railways, connecting states with a Broad-Gauge electrified network.
 - Kashmir willow bats have become a global favourite.
 - Amul has expanded its presence by launching its dairy products in the US.
 - The textile industry has created a staggering 14.5 crore jobs across the country.
 - India produces an impressive 400 million toys annually, with 10 new toys being created every second.

Criticism	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experts highlights that the scheme has largely been ineffective in either increasing the share of manufacturing in GDP or attracting major investments in the country. • Even on the employment front, manufacturing jobs remain few. • The share of value addition by manufacturing sector is 15.9 percent in 2023-24 compared to 16.7 percent of GDP (in constant price) in 2013-14. • Even in terms of FDI, net FDI inflows have come down from 1.5% of GDP in 2013-14 to 0.8% in 2023-24. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ease of doing business is still a far cry from what is claimed on paper. • High incidence of taxation and high handedness in dealing with tax litigation cases. • Scarcity of skilled workers in India and competition from Vietnam and Bangladesh for low-skilled manufacturing.

Conclusion

- As "Make in India" enters its second decade, it stands as a testament to India's determination to reshape its manufacturing landscape and enhance its global standing.
- With the support of strategic reforms, such as the PLI schemes, PM GatiShakti, and the National Logistics Policy, India has emerged as a competitive and self-reliant economy.
- The success of indigenous projects like the Vande Bharat trains, the INS Vikrant, and the growing electronics sector signals a promising future for India's industrial and manufacturing sectors.



New Flag and Insignia of Supreme Court

Recently, the Indian President unveiled the flag and insignia of the Supreme Court (SC) at an event meant to mark 75 years of establishment of the top court.

About the New flag and insignia of Supreme Court (SC)

- **Colour:** The new Supreme Court flag is **blue** in colour.
- **Insignia:**
 - The flag prominently features the symbols central to India's legal and cultural heritage i.e., the **Ashoka Chakra- the Dharmachakra** or



"wheel of the law." (top), the Supreme Court building (at the center), and the Constitution of India (below).

- It also has inscribed on it- ‘**Supreme Court of India**’ and the Sanskrit shloka: ‘**Yato Dharmstato Jayah**’ (In Devnagari Script) which means “**where there is Dharma there is victory**” or “**Victory lies where Dharma (righteousness) prevails.**” This phrase encapsulates the essence of justice and righteousness that the Supreme Court strives to uphold.
 - ✓ Symbol of Ashok Chakra is inspired by the Sarnath Lion Capital, which was created by the 3rd-century BC Mauryan Emperor Ashoka.
- **Designed by:** The new flag and insignia were conceptualized and **designed by the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), Delhi.**
- **Availability:** The flag will be available in various designs, including cross table flat, single table flag, pole flag, and wooden frame, ensuring its presence in diverse settings.

About the Supreme Court of India (SCI)

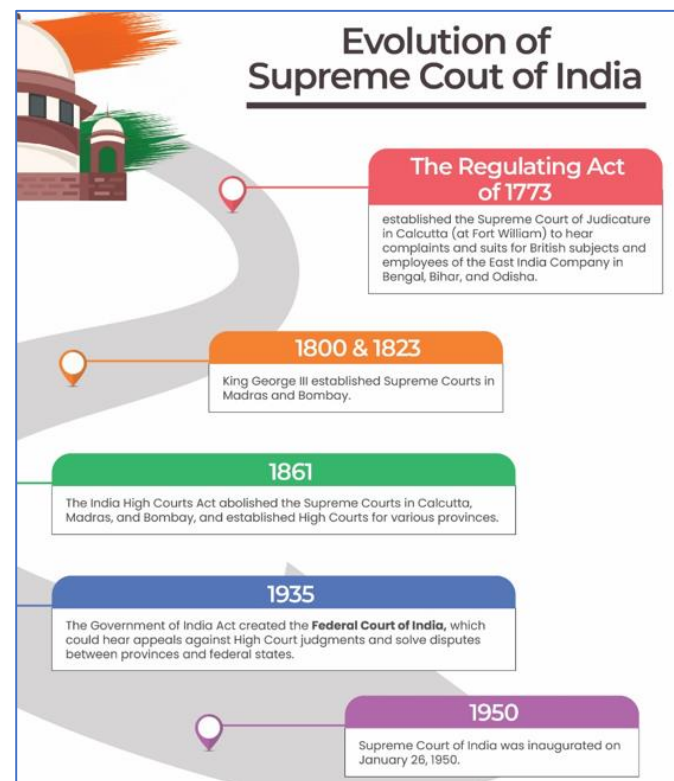
It is the highest judicial body in the country, and it serves as the final court of appeal, as well as the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution of India. Established under Article 124 of the Constitution, the SC came into existence on 26 January 1950 (By replacing the Federal Court of India) with the **coming into force of the Constitution**. It plays a central role in ensuring justice, the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental rights.

Key Aspects of SC

Constitutional Position and Powers: The SC derives its powers from Part V (Chapter IV) of the Indian Constitution (Articles 124-147) which include:

- **Original Jurisdiction:** It has the authority to resolve disputes between the central government and one or more states, or between different states under Article 131. It also has the power to hear cases related to the enforcement of **fundamental rights** under Article 32.
 - ✓ Writ Jurisdiction (Article 32): The Court can issue writs such as habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto, and certiorari to enforce fundamental rights.
- **Appellate Jurisdiction:** It hears appeals from lower courts or tribunals on civil, criminal, or constitutional matters (Articles 132-136). Appeals can come from High Courts or lower courts based on significant legal questions.
 - ✓ Article 136 provides an extraordinary appellate remedy known as the **Special Leave Petition (SLP)**.
- **Advisory Jurisdiction:** The President of India can seek the Supreme Court’s opinion on any legal or constitutional issue (Article 143). There are provisions for reference or appeal to this Court under Article 317(1) of the Constitution and other statutes.

- President may seek the Supreme Court's opinion on two types of matters.
 - Any point of law or public fact that has arisen or is likely to arise
 - Any pre-constitutional contract, agreement, covenant, engagement, or other similar instrument that gives rise to a dispute.



- In the first instance, the Supreme Court may or may not submit its opinion to the President, but in the second situation, it is obligated to do so.
- The Supreme Court's decision is advisory rather than binding in both cases. As a result, it does not bind the President; he or she is free to follow or disregard the opinion.

Election Petitions under Part III of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952 are also filed directly in the Supreme Court.

- **Judicial Review:** A critical feature of the Indian judiciary, it allows the SC to review laws and executive actions to determine if they are in accordance with the Constitution. It includes power to review legislations on the ground that they violate fundamental rights or the ground that they violate the federal distribution of powers. It also extends to the laws passed by State legislatures also.
 - ✓ The landmark case of "Indira Gandhi vs Raj Narain" (1975) established that judicial review is considered a fundamental part of the "basic structure" of the Indian Constitution.
 - ✓ **Minerva Mills vs. Union of India (1980)** case affirmed the supremacy of judicial review, striking down amendments that sought to reduce the court's power to review laws, preserving the court's authority to check governmental actions.

Significance of SC

1. **Guardian of the Constitution:** SC preserves the sanctity of the **Indian Constitution** by interpreting and ensuring that all laws and actions comply with the constitutional framework. For example, in the **Kesavananda Bharati vs. State of Kerala (1973)** case, the court introduced the **Basic Structure Doctrine**, ruling that while Parliament can amend the Constitution, it cannot alter its fundamental structure. This decision ensures that key democratic principles remain intact.
2. **Protector of Fundamental Rights:** SC protects citizens' **fundamental rights**, especially under **Article 32**, which allows individuals to directly approach the court when these rights are violated. For example, in the Maneka Gandhi vs. Union of India (1978) case, the Court held that Articles 14 (right to equality), 19 (Freedom of Speech and Expression), and 21 (Protection of Life and Personal Liberty) are interrelated and a rule called the "golden triangle" or "trinity" was established. It also held that a law depriving a person of 'personal liberty' has not only to stand the test of Article 21 but also Article 14 and Article 19.
3. **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):** The SC allows individuals or groups to seek justice on behalf of others, especially marginalized sections, thereby expanding access to justice. For example, in the M.C. Mehta vs. Union of India (1987) case, the court, through a PIL, ordered measures to control pollution around the Taj Mahal, showcasing the court's role in environmental protection. It also applied the polluter pays principle, which creates absolute liability on the polluter after environmental degradation has occurred.
4. **Ensuring Federal Balance:** SC helps maintain the balance of power between the central government and the states, preventing any overreach by either. For example, the **S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India (1994)** case limited the arbitrary use of Article 356 (imposing President's Rule in states) and strengthened federalism by ensuring that state governments cannot be easily dismissed.
5. **Judicial Activism:** The court has often been proactive in addressing social issues and upholding rights through **judicial activism**, sometimes stepping in where other branches of government fail to act. For example, in the **Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan (1997)** case, the court laid down guidelines to prevent sexual harassment in workplaces, leading to legislative reforms later, demonstrating the court's influence on social justice.
6. **Development of Constitutional Law:** Through its judgments, the Court has played a vital role in shaping the understanding and evolution of key legal doctrines in India.
 - ✓ Expanding Fundamental Rights: The Court has been instrumental in expanding the scope of fundamental rights, especially Article 21. Example: In the Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017) case, the Supreme Court declared the right to privacy as a fundamental right under Article 21.
 - ✓ Doctrine of Basic Structure: Through its judgment in the Kesavananda Bharati Case, the Court laid down the Basic Structure Doctrine, limiting the amending power of Parliament.

7. **Checks and Balances:** The Supreme Court acts as a check on the power of the executive and legislature, ensuring that the government operates within the framework of the Constitution. **Example:** The Section 66A of the IT Act was struck down by the Supreme Court in the Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015) case for violating the right to free speech.

Conclusion

The SCI is central to maintaining democratic values, protecting rights, and ensuring the rule of law, making it one of the most significant institutions in India's governance structure.



Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

Amid controversy over accusations against SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Buch, the Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has decided to review the performance of regulatory bodies established by Acts of Parliament.

- ✓ Madhabi Buch is facing allegations of conflict of interest over the SEBI investigation into the Hindenburg Research claims against the Adani Group.

What is PAC?

The PAC is one of the three key financial committees, tasked with auditing the government's revenue and expenditure. Two other financial committees are-

1. Estimates Committee which examines the estimates included in the budget presented in the parliament. It also suggests economies in public expenditure.
2. Public Undertakings Committee which examines the reports and accounts of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs).

Objective

- To check government's revenue and expenditure bill.
- To examine the audit report of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) after it is laid in Parliament.

Historical Evolution

- PAC is one of the oldest Parliamentary Committees in India. It was established in 1921 as part of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms and was chaired by the Finance Member of the Executive Council, but after India's independence in 1947, the Finance Minister took over as the chair. However, this led to limitations on criticism of the executive branch.
- In 1950, after the Constitution came into effect, the PAC became a parliamentary committee under the control of the Speaker with a non-official Chairman appointed by the Speaker from among the Members of Lok Sabha elected to the PAC. The Minister of Finance ceased to be a Member of the PAC.
- Parliamentary committees draw their authority from Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).

Constitution of the Committee

- The PAC is reconstituted annually under Rule 308 of the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure and has 22 members- 15 from the Lok Sabha and up to 7 from the Rajya Sabha.
- Members are elected according to proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.
- A Minister is not elected a member of the Committee, and if a member, after his election to the Committee, is appointed a Minister, he ceases to be a member of the Committee from the date of such appointment.
- Since 1967, the committee's chairperson has been from the opposition, which promotes neutrality in its work.

- ✓ Recently Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla constituted the PAC for 2024-25 under the chairmanship of senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal.

Scope and Functions

The functions of the Committee extend, however, “beyond, the formality of expenditure to its wisdom, faithfulness, and economy”.

1. **Examining government accounts & Ensuring Expenditure “Within the Scope of the Grant”:** i.e., how money granted by Parliament is used. Specifically, it checks that-
 - funds were spent according to legal guidelines (Money spent should not exceed amount granted);
 - expenditures were made with proper authority; and against the specific grant
 - any re-appropriations followed proper rules. (used only for purposes outlined in the detailed demand)
2. **Reviewing state corporation’s and autonomous bodies:** financial records, the audit of which may be conducted by the CAG either under the directions of the President or by a statute of Parliament.
3. **Examining CAG Report:** in cases where the President may have required him to conduct an audit of any receipts or to examine the accounts of stores and stocks.
4. **Examining Financial Irregularities:** in cases involving losses, wasteful (nugatory) expenditures and financial irregularities.
 - When negligence resulting in loss or extravagance is identified, the Committee holds the relevant ministry or department accountable, requiring them to explain the actions taken to prevent recurrence.
 - In such cases, the Committee can express disapproval or issue strictures against the ministry or department for lack of proper control.
5. **Ensuring Financial Discipline** by focusing on:
 - Detailed examination of questions involving principles and systems of financial management.
 - Ensuring that funds are managed with prudence and without waste.
6. **Point out Extravagance in Government Policies:** The Committee generally refrains from commenting on broad government policies. However, it has the jurisdiction to point out whether there has been waste or extravagance in implementing existing policies.
7. **Follow-up on Action Taken:** The PAC requires ministries to report corrective actions on all audit paragraphs, leading to the development of an online monitoring system to reduce delays. This has improved accountability, significantly reduced pending cases, and the committee now aims for zero pendency.

What If Any Money Has Been Spent By The Government On A Service In Excess Of The Amount Granted By The House For The Purpose?

- The Committee examines with reference to the facts of each case, the circumstances leading to such an excess and makes recommendations as it may deem fit.
- Such excesses are thereafter required to be brought up before the House by Government for regularization in the manner envisaged in Article 115 of the Constitution (Supplementary, additional or excess grants).
- To facilitate speedy regularization of such excess expenditure by Parliament, the Committee presents a consolidated report relating to all Ministries/Departments in advance of other reports.

How Does The PAC Examine Incorrect Estimation Of Savings?

- The Committee looks upon savings arising from incorrect estimating other defects of procedure no more leniently than it does upon excesses.
- It regards estimating on the safe side to be as faulty as estimating on the low side as it might easily lead to extravagance, waste or worse.

Significance

1. **Ensuring Financial Accountability:** PAC scrutinizes government expenditures to confirm that funds are used for their intended purposes, and in a legal and efficient manner. This accountability strengthens public trust in government financial management and ensures that the executive cannot act arbitrarily with public money.
 - ✓ In the Bofors scandal of the late 1980s, the PAC examined the irregularities reported by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). While the PAC does not have investigative powers, its scrutiny increased political pressure and public awareness of the case.
2. **Oversight of Public Expenditure:** by examining reports from CAG helps prevent financial irregularities and encourages more responsible financial practices within the government.
 - ✓ In a review of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) funds in 2011, the PAC raised concerns over the inefficient utilization of funds meant for rural healthcare.
3. **Addressing Financial Irregularities:** by holding the ministries concerned or departments accountable and asking them to explain their actions. This leads to corrective measures and helps prevent future lapses.
 - ✓ In its examination of the Commonwealth Games 2010 (CWG), the PAC identified massive irregularities in the allocation of funds. The CAG report indicated that inflated contracts were awarded, and the PAC's scrutiny brought to light the misuse of public funds.
4. **Encouraging Effective Governance:** by ensuring that government departments follow proper financial procedures. Thus, creating a culture of responsibility and prudent management of resources within public administration.
5. **Guiding Financial Reforms:** through its in-depth analysis and recommendations on financial matters. This can lead to better policies for budgeting, spending, and resource allocation.
 - ✓ In its examination of the CAG's report on railway finances, the PAC highlighted the issue of declining profits and rising operational costs within Indian Railways. The committee's recommendations led to improved budgetary practices
6. **Non-Partisan Function:** as PAC's chairperson is traditionally from the opposition, it strengthens PAC's credibility and effectiveness in holding the government accountable.
 - ✓ Since the 1967 convention of appointing an opposition leader as the chairperson of the PAC, the committee's findings have generally been seen as more credible and impartial. For instance, during the UPA government (2004-2014), the PAC played an essential role in examining the 2G spectrum case, even though the ruling party had significant political stakes.

PAC in Action: At the beginning of its term every year, PAC selects topics from the CAG's reports for in-depth investigation. It may also select one or more Suo moto subjects for in-depth examination apart from those included in C&AG Reports/Paras.

- ✓ The PAC has selected 161 subjects for examination during its 2024-25 tenure, in addition to the pending matters before the Committee from previous year.
- ✓ Among the Suo-moto subjects selected by the Committee are-
 - performance review of regulatory bodies established by Acts of Parliament;
 - reforms in banking and insurance sector;
 - review of implementation of centrally sponsored welfare schemes;
 - policy measures underway for transition in the energy sector;
 - levy and regulation of fees, tariffs, user charges on public infrastructure and other public utilities.
 - *probing the allegations against the SEBI chief.*

Action Taken on Recommendations (ATR Report by the Government)

- The government must inform the PAC of actions taken on its recommendations within six months.

- ✓ This step closes the loop between scrutiny and action, promoting a higher level of responsibility within government departments.
- The PAC reviews these responses, presents an Action Taken Report to Parliament, and ensures the government addresses previous recommendations.
 - ✓ ATRs contribute to the institutional memory of Parliament, documenting how various governments respond to fiscal mismanagement or inefficiency over time. This provides a learning mechanism for both current and future governments.
- This process promotes accountability and completes the examination of issues by the committee.
 - ✓ When citizens see that the government is addressing PAC findings seriously, it fosters greater public confidence in how taxpayer money is being managed. ATRs make the process of financial accountability more visible to the public, ensuring that corrective steps taken by government are part of public discourse.



Clause 6 of Assam Accord

The Assam Chief Minister recently initiated the process to implement 52 recommendations from the Justice Biplab Sharma Committee concerning **Clause 6 of the Assam Accord**. This move aims to address the long-standing demand to protect the rights of the indigenous people of Assam, a key issue in the state's political landscape.

What is the Assam Accord?

- The Assam Accord is a historic Memorandum of Settlement signed in 1985 between the Rajiv Gandhi-led Union government and the leadership of the Assam Movement, primarily the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU). It aimed at preserving the political, cultural, and economic rights of the Assamese people.
- The Assam Movement was a popular six-year (1979–1985) anti foreigners' agitation that demanded the identification and deportation of all illegal foreigners (particularly Bangladeshi immigrants) from the state.

What is Clause 6 of the Accord?

It provides constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. It was inserted to safeguard the socio-political rights and culture of the "indigenous people of Assam".

What is Justice Biplab Sharma Committee?

The Justice (Retd) Biplab Sharma Committee was a 14-member committee constituted by the Union Home Ministry in 2019 (following widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019) comprising of judges, retired bureaucrats, writers, AASU leaders and journalists, to explore the implementation process of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

What were the Committee Findings?

The committee submitted its report in 2020 with 60 recommendations. The key recommendations included:

1. **Definition of Assamese People:** The committee defined 'Assamese People' as all citizens of India who are residing in the Territory of Assam on or before January 1, 1951, and part of:
 - (a) Assamese community; All other citizens of India
 - (b) Any indigenous tribal community of Assam; Any other indigenous community of Assam;
 - (c) Descendants of the above categories

Why Did The Committee Set 1951 As The Cutoff Date?

The choice of 1951 as a cut-off year stems from historical records, particularly the 1951 census. The committee's report referred to the definition of 'Indigenous person of Assam' found in the 1951 census report, which was the basis for preparing the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for Assam.

2. Land:

- a. Designating specific **Revenue Circles** where only **Assamese people** are permitted to own, possess, and transfer land. The transfer of land in these areas would be restricted exclusively to Assamese individuals, ensuring protection of local land ownership.
- b. Implementing a **three-year program** to allot land titles to Assamese individuals who have occupied land for several decades without formal documentation. This will provide long-standing occupants with legal ownership rights.
- c. Conducting a comprehensive **survey of char areas** (riverine regions along the Brahmaputra). Any newly formed char lands will be classified as government land, and priority in allotment will be given to individuals displaced by river erosion.

3. Language:

- a. Maintaining **Assamese** as the official language across the state, in accordance with the **1960 Assam Official Language Act**, with provisions for the use of local languages in specific regions such as the **Barak Valley, Hill districts**, and the **Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District**.
- b. Requiring all state government acts, rules, and orders to be issued in both **Assamese** and **English**, ensuring dual-language communication in official documentation.
- c. Creating an **Autonomous Language and Literature Academy/Council of Assam** to safeguard and promote all indigenous languages spoken in the state, fostering cultural preservation.
- d. Making the **Assamese language** a compulsory subject up to **Class VIII or Class X** in all **English medium schools**, including both state board and **CBSE** institutions, to ensure the continued use and understanding of the language among younger generations.

4. Cultural Heritage:

- a. Establishing an **autonomous authority** dedicated to the development and preservation of **sattras** (neo-Vaishnavite monasteries). This body will also be responsible for providing **financial assistance** to support the maintenance and cultural activities of these important religious institutions.
- b. Constructing **multipurpose cultural complexes** in each district to promote and preserve the cultural heritage of all ethnic communities within Assam, fostering inclusivity and safeguarding diverse traditions.
- c. The **autonomous councils** in Assam's **Sixth Schedule Areas**—which include the **Bodoland Territorial Council, North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council**, and **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council**—will decide on the implementation of the 52 recommendations.
 - ✓ The Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution grants certain legislative and judicial autonomy to tribal councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.

5. Inner Line Permit (ILP): The introduction of ILP for entry into Assam, which is already in place in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Mizoram.

6. Reservations: It recommended 80-100 per cent reservation for 'Assamese people' in Parliament, state Assembly seats, local bodies, and government jobs. 70-100% reservation in state-private partnerships. There was also a proposal for an Upper House in Assam's legislature, reserved entirely for 'Assamese people'.

Recommendations Being Implemented By The State Government

The committee's recommendations were divided into three categories:

1. 40 recommendations under the state government's jurisdiction
2. 12 recommendations requiring Centre's concurrence
3. 15 recommendations exclusively within the Centre's domain (Requires Constitutional Amendment)

The 52 recommendations in the first two categories i.e. under State's jurisdiction and requiring Centre's concurrence dealing with safeguards on language, land, and cultural heritage will be implemented by April 2025, with a roadmap to be submitted to AASU by October 25, 2024.

Recommendations That Have Been Left Out By The Govt- Discussions on 15 recommendations requiring constitutional amendments are pending which include Inner Line Permit and reservations for Assamese people.

✓ Along with the **Sixth Schedule areas**, the **Barak Valley**, which is predominantly Bengali speaking, will be exempt from the implementation of these recommendations.

Implementation Challenges

- 1. Definition of "Assamese People":** Several ethnic and linguistic minorities, including Bengali-speaking communities in the **Barak Valley** and tribal populations in **Sixth Schedule Areas** (like Bodoland and Karbi Anglong), fear that the implementation of Clause 6 could lead to their marginalization. These groups have expressed concerns that giving preferential treatment to "Assamese people" could lead to political and cultural exclusion.
- 2. Land Ownership and Economic Concerns:** Restrictions on land ownership, allowing only Assamese people to own and transfer land in certain regions raises issues about how to enforce such measures without creating economic disruptions, especially for those who do not qualify as Assamese under the eventual definition. Migrants and long-settled non-Assamese communities could face challenges in owning or inheriting land, which may lead to legal disputes and economic instability.
- 3. Autonomy in Sixth Schedule Areas:** Autonomous councils in Assam's Sixth Schedule Areas, such as **Bodoland** and **Karbi Anglong**, have the right to decide whether to implement Clause 6 provisions. This decentralization complicates uniform implementation across Assam, as some councils may choose not to enforce certain aspects of the clause.
 - ✓ The tribal councils in Bodoland, Karbi Anglong, and other Sixth Schedule areas, which already enjoy a degree of autonomy, may see the imposition of Clause 6 as an encroachment on their autonomy, leading to political opposition and potentially triggering demands for more autonomy or statehood.
- 4. Balancing Linguistic Protections:** Clause 6 includes protections for the Assamese language, but implementing this alongside the linguistic rights of other communities in Assam is a sensitive issue. For example, **Barak Valley**, where Bengali is the dominant language, may resist measures that favor Assamese over Bengali, leading to potential conflicts over language policy.
 - ✓ **Cultural Dissonance:** Assam is home to several languages like Bodo, Mishing, and Karbi, apart from Assamese. Imposing linguistic protections for Assamese may risk marginalizing these smaller languages, triggering a loss of cultural identity and linguistic diversity.
- 5. Political and Bureaucratic Delays:** The process of implementing Clause 6 requires coordination between various government agencies, legal bodies, and cultural organizations. Political disagreements and bureaucratic inefficiencies have slowed down progress, with successive governments failing to fully operationalize the recommendations since the Accord was signed in 1985.
- 6. Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA):** The controversial CAA (2019) adds another layer of complexity. The Act's provisions to grant citizenship to certain non-Muslim migrants from neighboring countries may conflict with the protective measures for the Assamese people, as it could increase the immigrant population, undermining the core goals of Clause 6.
- 7. Judicial Scrutiny:** Many aspects of the implementation of Clause 6 could face legal challenges on the grounds of constitutionality. Reserving certain rights, such as land ownership and political representation, exclusively for Assamese people might be challenged as discriminatory under Articles 14 and 19 of the Constitution.

The implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord is a highly sensitive and politically complex issue. The challenges range from ethnic and linguistic diversity to land ownership, bureaucratic delays, and autonomy

concerns. Successfully navigating these challenges requires strong political will, a nuanced understanding of Assam's social fabric, and a well-defined, inclusive approach that balances the interests of various communities.



India Grapples with China Shock 2.0

Global markets are facing a surge in Chinese exports, referred to as "China Shock 2.0," which has intensified trade tensions. Major economies like the US, India, and others are responding with heightened tariffs to counter the influx of Chinese goods.

China's Increasing Share Of Global Export

• Statistics

- China's share in global export market has increased by 1-7% in the last five years. From sub 14%, it has moved beyond 15.5% in last five years.
- Between July 2023 and July 2024, the exports of China have increased by \$18.8B (6.67%) to \$301B, while imports increased by \$14.8B (7.33%) to \$216B.
- China's share of global exports has been increasing. **It is now the world's largest exporter and trading nation.**

• Factors driving the renewed wave of goods exports by China

- China's ambition to move up the export value chain to high-tech sectors such as solar equipment, electric vehicles, and semiconductors.
- Domestic demand slump, forcing China to export more aggressively.
- Other supporting factors include:
 - China's supporting industrial policies which revolve around tax incentives, subsidies and greater access to funds.
 - Increased focus on R&D also forms part of China's Industrial Policy.

• Made in China 2025 strategy

- Beijing's '**Made in China 2025**' strategy is a long-term plan to transform China into a global high-tech manufacturing leader by **2049**.
 - Introduced in 2015, this strategy is aimed at:
 - achieving 70% self-sufficiency in hi-tech industries by 2025,
 - competing with other manufacturing rivals by 2035, and
 - transforming the country into a global manufacturing powerhouse by 2049.

CHINA SHOCK

- ▶ In the 2000s, there was a debate on whether China would become a capitalist powerhouse or retain its communist ideology.
- ▶ US President Bill Clinton supported China's accession to the WTO, believing that economic integration would lead to political reform in Beijing and align it with values like economic freedom.
 - Clinton argued that China's WTO membership would not only increase imports of American products but also foster democratic principles.
- ▶ However, **the years following China's entry into the WTO (in 2001) were known as the "China Shock"**.
 - Cheap Chinese goods, driven by a large, inexpensive labor force, flooded global markets, leading to widespread manufacturing job losses internationally.
- ▶ This shock disrupted Western economies and had a detrimental impact on Indian manufacturing and trade as well.

- This involves promoting advanced sectors such as **electric vehicles, semiconductors, and renewable energy**.
 - Under this strategy, the government provides subsidies, including low-interest loans and tax breaks, to hi-tech companies.
- **Impact**
 - IMF recently highlighted concerns about **China's external surpluses**, driven by industrial policies aimed at boosting exports amidst weak domestic demand.
 - The IMF warned that this could lead to "**China Shock 2.0**", displacing workers and harming industrial activity in other countries.
 - The rise in exports threatens local industries and global trade stability, escalating international trade tensions.
 - In order to counter this surge, recently, the US has imposed significant tariff hikes on Chinese imports, aiming to curb the flood of products:
 - 100% duty on electric vehicles (EVs); 50% duty on solar cells; 25% duty on steel, aluminum, EV batteries, and certain minerals.

India – China Trade Relation

- **Statistics**
 - China was the top supplier of goods to India in 2023-24, accounting for imports valued at \$101 billion, while India exported goods worth \$16.65 billion.
 - India's imports from China grew at a much faster pace than from the rest of the world.
 - This dependence grew so much that despite many economic restrictions on Chinese businesses following the Galwan clash in June 2020, imports from China surpassed a record \$100 billion in 2023-24.
- **Impact**
 - For **India**, the impact is already evident, with **imports from China** rising by nearly **60%**—from **\$70 billion in FY19 to \$101 billion in FY24**.
 - This surge could further strain India's manufacturing sector, trade balance and ultimately hurt India's ambition to become global power.
- **Steel Industry Struggles with Chinese Influx**
 - Despite slowing exports, **Chinese steel imports** have surged globally, including India. Key statistics include:
 - India's **iron and steel exports** dropped nearly **19% year-on-year in August 2024** and **29.4%** during April-August 2024-25.
 - **Finished steel imports** from China to India hit a **seven-year high** in the first five months of FY24-25.
 - India's overall **finished steel imports** reached a **six-year high** of **3.7 million metric tons** between April and August 2024.
 - The surge in Chinese steel is eroding profits and threatening the stability of steel industries globally, particularly in Europe and India.
- **China's Dominance In Electronics**
 - India's **mobile phone exports** have surged over the past two years, driven by investments from global tech companies like **Apple**, which has expanded manufacturing in the country.
 - However, **India's reliance on Chinese imports** for electronic components remains largely unchanged.
 - In **FY24**, India imported:

- Over **\$12 billion** worth of electronic components from **China**, **\$6 billion** from **Hong Kong**, together accounting for more than half of India's total electronic component imports.
- Despite growth in **electronics manufacturing**, India's dependence on China persists.
- **Electronic components** import, valued at **\$34.4 billion**, were the **fifth-largest commodity** imported, following **crude oil, gold, petroleum products**, and **coal**, according to Ministry of Commerce data.
- **Strategy employed by India:** India is utilising both options:



imposing anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties

implementing quality control orders (QCO) to check imports of cheap items from China.

- New Delhi is also considering collaborating with other Western countries to meet the challenge of Chinese hi-tech products capturing a lion's share of the global market.
- **Counter response by China - Blocking India's access to solar equipment**
 - The Economic Survey 2023-24 warned that in response to India's anti-dumping probe against Chinese entities, China has been quietly blocking India's access to solar equipment.
 - India aims to achieve **500 GW** of renewable energy capacity by **2030**.
 - However, **80%** of India's solar cells and modules still come from **China**, which dominates the global solar supply chain.



PM Modi's Visit to Brunei

The PM Modi visited Brunei Darussalam on an official two-day visit. This was the first-ever bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Brunei. The historic visit of Prime Minister coincides with the 40th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Brunei.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

- **Inaugurated a new Chancery of the High Commission of India**
 - PM Modi inaugurated a new Chancery of the High Commission of India and visited the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque.
 - The mosque has a fusion of architecture from Mughal era & Italian Renaissance period.
 - The new Chancery will highly enhance the diplomatic relations between the two countries.
 - This chancery design shows Indian motifs, which embody the cultural spirit in Indian buildings and help establish Indianness in Brunei.
- **Defense Cooperation:** Joint Working Group will be established to enhance defense ties.
- **Space Cooperation Pact:** PM Modi and Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah discussed signing a space cooperation agreement, indicating a mutual interest in advancing technological collaboration in space exploration and satellite technology.
 - PM Modi expressed appreciation for Brunei's support in hosting ISRO's Telemetry Tracking and Telecommand (TTC) Station.
- **Cooperation in energy sector:** The two countries discussed the possibility of long-term cooperation in LNG supplies. This is significant as India has dropped its demand for oil from Brunei in favour of Russian oil imports in recent years.

- **Strengthening Bilateral Ties: Enhanced Partnership**

- India and Brunei elevated their bilateral relationship to an "enhanced partnership," agreeing to cooperate on key areas such as defense, trade, investment, space, health, education, and cultural exchanges.
- They also recognized the importance of regular dialogue through platforms like the Joint Trade Committee (JTC).

About Brunei

- Brunei is an independent Islamic sultanate located on the northern coast of Borneo in Southeast Asia.
 - ✓ Borneo is an island in Southeast Asia that is divided among three countries: Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei.
- It is bordered by the South China Sea to the north and surrounded by the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, which splits the country into two disconnected parts.
- The western segment, larger in size, contains the **capital, Bandar Seri Begawan.**
- Formerly a British protectorate since 1888, Brunei gained independence in 1984. It is a member of the Commonwealth and ASEAN.



Significance of Brunei for India

- **Importance in India's 'Act East' Policy**

- Brunei is an important partner in India's 'Act East' Policy and Indo-Pacific Vision.
- The ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) is the "central pillar" of India's Act East Policy. Brunei is also an ASEAN member.

- **Economic significance**

- India-Brunei trade last year was approximately \$286.20 million.
- **Brunei is one of the largest oil and gas producers in the region.**

- **Brunei's location in South China Sea:** India also has vital stakes in the South China Sea, as almost 55% of its trade passes through the disputed waters.

- **To counter China**

- Brunei claims to be part of the South China Sea, most of which Beijing says belongs to China.
- But unlike some other countries with claims in the region, Brunei has kept silent on its own claim to a relatively small area off northern Borneo, focusing on growing trade ties with China as the oil-reliant nation diversifies its economy.
- Experts believe India can capitalise on Brunei's potential to tap into its China+1 strategy.
 - The China Plus One strategy is a business strategy that encourages companies to diversify their manufacturing and supply chains by investing in countries other than China.

- **Indian diaspora**

- The first phase of Indians arriving in Brunei started with the discovery of oil in the 1920s. Currently, approximately 14,000 Indians are residing in Brunei.

- The contribution of Indian doctors and teachers to the growth and development of Brunei's healthcare and education sectors has been well acknowledged.

- **Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah's Visits to India**

- Sultan Bolkiah, one of the world's longest-reigning monarchs, has visited India four times.
- His visits have emphasized strengthening ties, with his most recent visit in 2018 as Chief Guest at India's Republic Day parade.



PM Modi's Visit to Singapore

Prime Minister Modi visited Singapore during the second leg of a two-nation trip to South-East Asia, having travelled to Brunei Darussalam in the first leg.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

- **Bilateral ties elevated to a "comprehensive strategic partnership"**
- **Four Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) signed**

Cooperation in the Field of Digital Technologies

India-Singapore Semiconductor Ecosystem Partnership

Cooperation in the Field of Health and Medicine

Educational Cooperation and Skills Development

- **Leaders called for Boost to trade and investment flows between the two countries**
 - PM Modi highlighted that Singapore with an investment of around USD 160 billion in the Indian economy, is a leading economic partner for India.
- **Discussed the outcome of 2nd India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable** held in Singapore in August 2024
 - Ministerial Roundtable is a unique mechanism where senior ministers from both sides deliberates and identifies new agendas for bilateral cooperation.
 - The roundtable had identified the six pillars of cooperation— advanced manufacturing, connectivity, digitalisation, healthcare & medicine, skills development and sustainability.
- **Boost to cultural connectivity**
 - Leaders also discussed the celebration of 60th anniversary of bilateral relations in 2025.
 - PM Modi announced that **India's first Thiruvalluvar Cultural Centre would be opened in Singapore.**

India - Singapore Relations

- **Background**

- Sir Stamford Raffles, in 1819, established a trading station in Singapore on the route of the Straits of Malacca which later became a crown colony and was governed from Kolkata till 1867.
- The colonial connection is reflected in institutions and practices, usage of English and presence of a large Indian community.
- India was one of the first countries to recognize Singapore in 1965.
- India-Singapore relations were elevated to Strategic Partnership during the visit of PM Modi to Singapore in 2015.

- **India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable (ISMR)**

- The inaugural meeting of the ISMR took place in September 2022 in New Delhi.

- The 2nd round of ISMR was held in Singapore in August 2024.
 - The Ministers reviewed the progress of *India – Singapore Strategic Partnership*, particularly under the pillars of Digitalization, Skills Development, Sustainability, Healthcare & Medicine, identified during the 1st meeting of ISMR.
 - It was decided to add two new pillars, *Advanced Manufacturing and Connectivity* for further strengthening bilateral cooperation.
- **Trade and economic cooperation**
 - Singapore is India’s largest trade partner in ASEAN. It is the leading source of FDI, among the largest sources of External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) and Foreign Portfolio Investment.
 - **Trade**
 - Bilateral trade expanded after the conclusion of CECA from USD 6.7 billion in FY 2004-05 to USD 35.6 billion in 2023-24.
 - Singapore is India’s 6th largest trade partner (2023-24) with a share of 3.2 % of India’s overall trade.
 - India’s imports from Singapore in FY 23-24 were US\$ 21.2 billion, and exports to Singapore totaled US\$ 14.4 billion.
 - **Investments**
 - In FY 2023-24 Singapore was the largest source of FDI into India.
 - FDI equity inflows in India from Singapore during 2023-24 stood at US\$ 11.774 billion.
 - The cumulative FDI inflows from Singapore to India stood at USD 159.94 billion (April 2000– March 2024) which is 24% of total FDI inflows in India.
 - The outward Indian FDI to Singapore stands at USD 4.8 billion (FY 2023-24).
 - **Fintech cooperation**
 - Commercial and technical arrangements have also been worked out for the acceptance of RuPay card in Singapore.
 - UPI-Paynow Linkage is another landmark development in the area of cross-border Fintech.
 - Singapore is the first nation with which India has begun this cross-border Person-to-Person (P2P) payment facility.
- **S&T Cooperation**
 - In the past ten years, 17 satellites of Singapore have been launched from Indian soil.
 - Singapore co-hosted inaugural ASEAN – India Women Scientists Conclave in April 2024.
 - India and Singapore held an e-workshop in the area of digital health and medical technologies in July 2024.
- **Multilateral Cooperation**
 - Singapore has joined International Solar Alliance (In June 2023) and Global Bio-fuel Alliance (September 2023).
 - Singapore was ASEAN Country Coordinator for India for period 2021-24, during which **India-ASEAN** relations were upgraded to **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
 - India and Singapore are part of multilateral groups like IORA, NAM and Commonwealth.
- **Indian Community**
 - Ethnic Indians constitute about 9.1 % or around 3.5 lakhs of the resident population of 3.9 million in Singapore.

- Tamil is one of the four official languages of Singapore. Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali and Punjabi are also offered in schools.



Visit of Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi to India

The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, visited India. This was his first visit to India as the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

Key Highlights Of The Visit Of The Crown Prince Of Abu Dhabi To India

- **MoUs/Agreements signed during the visit**
 - MoU on Nuclear Cooperation between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC)
 - It is expected to enhance cooperation in the operation and maintenance of **Barakah Nuclear Power Plant**, sourcing of nuclear goods and services from India.
 - Beginning electricity generation in March 2024, the plant is the first in the Arabian Peninsula, the second in the Persian Gulf region and the first commercial nuclear power station in the Arab World.
 - Agreement for long-term LNG supply between Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited
 - This agreement is for the supply of 1 million metric tonne per annum (MMTPA) LNG.
 - It is the third such contract signed in just over a year.
 - MoU between ADNOC and India Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL)
 - It provides for exploring ADNOC's participation in additional opportunities for crude storage in India and the renewal of their storage and management agreement on mutually acceptable terms and conditions.
 - This MoU builds on ADNOC's existing involvement in crude storage at the Mangalore Cavern of ISPRL since 2018.
 - ISPRL is under the petroleum ministry and manages 5.33 million metric tonnes (MMT) of strategic crude oil storage in three locations — Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, and Mangalore and Padur (Near Udupi) in Karnataka.
 - Production Concession Agreement for Abu Dhabi Onshore Block 1 between Urja Bharat (a JV of IOCL and Bharat Petro resources Ltd) and ADNOC.
 - Such agreement is the first one for any Indian company operating in the UAE.
 - The concession entitles Urja Bharat to bring crude oil to India, thus contributing towards the country's energy security.
 - MoU between Government of Gujarat and Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company PJSC (ADQ) on **food parks development in India.**
 - This agreement underscores the expanding scope of India-UAE cooperation, focusing not only on energy security but also on food security.
- **Other highlights**
 - A soft launch on the commencement of work on the India-UAE virtual trade corridor (VTC) and MAITRI interface to facilitate VTC.

India – UAE Bilateral Relationship

• Political relations

- o India and the UAE established diplomatic relations in 1972. Since then, their relationship has grown manifold.
- o In January 2017, India and UAE signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement.
- o The strong bilateral relations have received impetus from time-to-time with exchange of high-level visits from both sides.
 - In February 2019, UAE invited India as the "**Guest of Honour**" to address the Inaugural Plenary of 46th Session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.
 - PM Modi paid his third visit to the UAE in August 2019. He was awarded the highest civilian award of UAE called '**Order of Zayed**'.
- o The foundation stone laying ceremony for the first traditional Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi was held in April 2019.
- o In February 2022, PM Modi and Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan held a Virtual Summit.
 - Both the leaders issued a Joint Vision Statement – "**Advancing the India and UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: New Frontiers, New Milestone**".
- o **UAE was the guest country at G-20**, held under India's presidency.

• Trade Relation

- o India-UAE trade rose to USD 85 billion in 2022-23, making the **UAE India's third-largest trading partner for 2022-23** after China and US.
 - Moreover, UAE is the second largest export destination of India (after the US) with an amount of nearly US\$ 31.61 billion for the year 2022-23.

• Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between India and UAE

- o India-UAE CEPA was signed in February 2022 in New Delhi during the India-UAE Virtual Summit.
- o In March 2022, India announced the unveiling of the CEPA with the UAE.
- o It covers almost all the tariff lines dealt in by India (11,908 tariff lines) and the UAE (7581 tariff lines) respectively.

• Investment

- o Since the signing of CEPA, UAE has emerged as the **fourth largest investor** in India during 2022-23.
- o UAE has committed to invest US\$ 75 billion in India's infrastructure sector over a period of time.
- o Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, the principal Sovereign Wealth Fund of the UAE, is an anchor investor in **NIIF (National Infrastructure Investment Fund) Master Fund** through an investment of US\$ 1 billion.

• Trade settlement in local currencies

- o In July 2023, during the visit of PM Modi to Abu Dhabi, both the countries agreed to start trade settlement in local currencies.
- o In this regard, an MoU between RBI and UAE Central Bank for the establishment of a framework to promote the use of local currencies (INR - AED) for cross-border transactions was signed.
 - This MoU puts in place a Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS) to promote the use of INR and AED bilaterally.

• Linking of Fast Payment Systems of both the countries

- In July 2023, India and the UAE agreed to link the Indian UPI with the Gulf country's Instant Payment Platform (IPP).
- **IIT Delhi to open campus in Abu Dhabi**
 - In 2023, India had signed an MoU with Education and Knowledge dept of Abu Dhabi for setting up IIT Delhi campus there.
- **NRI Remittances**
 - Remittance flows to India from UAE, which account for 18% are the second largest source of India's remittances after the United States
- **Energy Cooperation**
 - In 2017, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd. (ISPRL) signed an MoU to establish a strategic crude oil reserve in the city of Mangalore (Karnataka).
 - ADNOC is also involved in exploring the possibility of storing its crude oil at ISPRL's underground oil storage facility at Padur in Karnataka.
 - A consortium led by ONGC including Indian Oil and Bharat PetroResources, has been awarded a 10 per cent stake in the Lower Zakum Concession.
- **Indian Community**
 - The Indian expatriate community of approximately 3.5 million is the largest ethnic community in UAE constituting roughly about 35% of the country's population.



Visit of PM Modi to USA

During his visit to USA, PM Modi met with the President of the USA, Joe Biden on the sidelines of the Quad Summit in Delaware. In a special gesture, President Biden hosted the meeting at his home in Wilmington.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

During the meeting, the following documents were adopted:

Joint Fact Sheet

Roadmap

● US and India Continue to Expand Comprehensive and Global Strategic Partnership

○ For U.S.-India Initiative to Build Safe and Secure Global Clean Energy Supply Chains

Joint Fact Sheet Highlights

- **India to launch national security semiconductor fabrication plant**
 - Under a transformative collaboration with the United States, India is set to launch its inaugural national security semiconductor fabrication plant.
 - This plant is designed to produce chips for military applications and critical telecommunications.
 - It will be supported by the India Semiconductor Mission and involves a strategic technology partnership between Bharat Semi, 3rdiTech, and the US Space Force.
 - Named '**Shakti**', the fab will concentrate on producing infrared, gallium nitride, and silicon carbide semiconductors.
 - This facility will not only mark India's first such plant but will also be among the world's pioneering multi-material fabs focused on national security.

- It represents a significant step, comparable to the civil nuclear agreement, as it is the first time the US military has engaged in a partnership for high-value technologies with India.
- **Establishment of the GF Kolkata Power Centre**
 - Both the leaders acknowledged efforts to build resilient and secure semiconductor supply chains, which includes establishment of **GlobalFoundries'** (GF).
 - **GF Kolkata Power Centre** will contribute to semiconductor supply chains and innovation in zero/low-emission vehicles, AI, and connected devices.
- **NASA and ISRO to conduct scientific research onboard the International Space Station (ISS)**
 - The Leaders welcomed the first joint NASA-ISRO research project aboard the ISS planned for 2025.
- **Establishment of the U.S.-India Global Challenges Institute**
 - The establishment of the U.S.-India Global Challenges Institute, mobilizing \$90+ million over five years, will support high-impact R&D partnerships between U.S. and Indian universities.
 - New awards for research in AI and quantum technology were announced through the U.S.-India Science and Technology Endowment Fund.
- **Joint Funding Initiatives in Science and Research**
 - A combined \$15 million in funding was announced to support U.S.-India joint research in next-gen telecommunications, semiconductors, AI, and sustainable technologies.
- **Next Generation Defense Partnership**
 - Both the leaders praised progress in U.S.-India defense ties, including India's procurement of 31 MQ-9B drones and co-production deals for jet engines and munitions.
 - They welcomed defense partnerships, like **Liquid Robotics' collaboration** with **Sagar Defence**, a new C-130J MRO facility, and INDUS-X innovation challenges.
 - Efforts to strengthen India's MRO (*Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul*) ecosystem and align defense procurement systems were also highlighted.
 - The Leaders applauded the recent conclusion of the **Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA)**, enhancing the mutual supply of defense goods and services.
- **Catalyzing the Clean Energy Transition**
 - Both sides celebrated U.S.-India collaboration on clean energy, launching a roadmap to expand safe energy supply chains.
 - This includes unlocking \$1 billion for renewable energy projects, U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) loans for solar manufacturing, and partnerships on hydrogen safety and critical minerals.
- **Empowering Future Generations and Promoting Global Health and Development**
 - Both sides celebrated the new U.S.-India Drug Policy Framework for the 21st Century and its accompanying MoU.
 - This will deepen collaboration to disrupt the illicit production and international trafficking of synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals, and deepen a holistic public health partnership.
 - The Leaders applauded the recently launched **Bio5 partnership** between the United States, India, ROK, Japan, and the EU, driving closer cooperation on pharmaceutical supply chains.
 - The Leaders welcomed the formal launch of the **new U.S.-India Global Digital Development Partnership**.
 - It aims to bring together U.S. and Indian private sector companies, technology and resources to deploy the responsible use of emerging digital technologies in Asia and Africa.

- The Leaders welcomed strengthened **trilateral cooperation with Tanzania** through the Triangular Development Partnership.
 - It is led by the U.S. Agency for International Development and India’s Development Partnership Administration to jointly address global development challenges and foster prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.
 - The partnership focuses on advancing renewable energy projects, including solar energy, to enhance energy infrastructure and access in Tanzania, thereby bolstering energy cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Repatriation of 297 Indian antiquities from the U.S. to India in 2024**
 - In July 2024, the U.S. and India signed a **Cultural Property Agreement** to implement the 1970 Convention on preventing the illicit import, export, and transfer of cultural property.
 - This marked the culmination of years of collaboration between the two nations. As part of this effort, 297 Indian antiquities were repatriated from the U.S. to India in 2024.

Roadmap For U.S.-India Initiative to Build Safe and Secure Global Clean Energy Supply Chains

- **Objectives of the roadmap**
 - **Job Creation:** Generate high-quality employment through clean energy initiatives.
 - **Accelerate Clean Energy Deployment:** Foster rapid global adoption of clean technologies.
 - **Global Climate Goals:** Work towards mutual climate objectives.
- **Key Initiatives**
 - **Financial Support:**
 - Unlock \$1 billion in multilateral finance via the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for clean energy projects.
 - Support manufacturing capacity expansion in solar, wind, batteries, and energy grid systems.
- **Manufacturing Focus:** Identify investment opportunities in clean energy supply chains, targeting:

Solar wafers and cells

Wind turbine components

Energy storage systems

Electric vehicle battery packs

High-efficiency cooling technologies
- **Collaboration with Private Sector:**
 - Work with industry to scope pilot projects and facilitate partnerships, particularly in Africa for solar and EV deployment.
 - Engage U.S. Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and Indian entities to finance clean energy component manufacturing.
- **Trilateral Relationships:**
 - Build partnerships with African nations committed to clean energy, focusing on project success conditions and financing models.
- **Policy Development**
 - Share insights on policies to strengthen demand for locally manufactured clean technologies.
 - Leverage existing laws like the U.S. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and India's Production Linked Incentive Schemes to enhance investment security.

PANNUN CASE: THREATENING INDIA – US RELATIONSHIP

- The alleged assassination plot against US-based pro-Khalistan separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun has been a thorny issue. Days before the Indian PM’s visit to the US,

- A US court issued summons to NSA Ajit Doval, after Pannun filed a civil suit seeking damages for the alleged assassination plot.
- A group of pro-Khalistan separatists visited the White House on the eve of the Indian PM's US visit.
- India must resolve this matter in order to allay Washington's concerns regarding New Delhi's democratic credentials. However, the two countries' strategic alignment vis-à-vis China means that such challenges are only minor wrinkles to be ironed out.



Summit of the Future

PM Modi addressed the 'Summit of the Future' at the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

About Summit of the Future

- On 22-23 September 2024, Heads of State and Government met at the UN Headquarters in New York to address *global governance challenges revealed by recent crises*.
- The Summit aims to reaffirm commitments to the SDGs and the UN Charter, strengthen cooperation, and lay the groundwork for an improved multilateral system.
- The summit emphasized the importance of international cooperation to tackle critical global challenges such as climate change, poverty, inequality, ongoing conflicts, and health crises.
- **Theme - "Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow"**
- The expected outcome of the Summit includes a **Pact for the Future**, alongside documents like the **Global Digital Compact** and **Declaration on Future Generations**.
 - The Global Digital Compact sets out the objectives, principles, commitments and actions to develop an open, free and secure digital future for all, underlying the benefits the digital technologies bring to humanity.
 - The actions include initiatives related to artificial intelligence.

Pact for the Future

- It is an action-oriented agreement that was adopted by the governments at the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024. The pact's key highlights include:
 - **Reform of the UN Security Council** - The pact aims to make the UNSC more representative and effective, particularly by addressing the under-representation of Africa and improving representation for Asia Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean.
 - **Recommits Nuclear disarmament**, which is the first multilateral progress in this area in over a decade.
 - **Promotion & Protection of human rights**, including fighting racism and xenophobia.
 - **Sustainable development**: Commitments to turbocharging the SDGs.
 - **Address Climate change**
 - **Global financing**: - Commitments to address global financing and investment gaps.
 - **Partnerships** - Commitments to build stronger partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and local and regional authorities.
 - **Youth** - Commitments to listen to young people and include them in decision-making.
 - **International Court of Justice** - Recommits the UN to support the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Declaration on Future Generation

- The Declaration on Future Generations is a UN's declaration that aims to ensure that the needs of future generations are considered by present generations.
- The declaration includes a series of commitments to address environmental challenges, invest in education, and strengthen cooperation.
 - On education, it includes a commitment to invest in quality education for all, including digital literacy, physical education, and sport.
 - On health, the declaration includes a commitment to protect the right to health through universal health coverage, equitable access to medicines, and strengthened health systems.
- It includes 11 actions to **institutionalize and monitor the implementation** of the declaration. These actions include leveraging science, moving towards long-term planning, and encouraging evidence-based decision making.
- The declaration includes a commitment to **review the implementation** of the declaration five years from now at a high-level meeting of the General Assembly.

79th UN General Assembly

- The UNGA 79, held from 10th to 30th September 2024 focuses on accelerating progress toward achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
 - During this, global leaders will address interconnected challenges and adopt the Pact for the Future, which includes a Global Digital Compact highlighting gender equality.
 - 79th session is being chaired by Cameroonian former PM Philemon Yong.
- **Theme** – *“Leaving no one behind: acting together for the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human dignity for present and future generations”*



Quad Summit 2024

PM Modi participated in the sixth Quad Leaders' Summit in Wilmington, Delaware (USA). This year's summit was hosted by US.

Key Outcomes of Quad Summit 2024

- **Quad Wilmington Declaration**
 - To take the Quad agenda forward, they adopted the Quad Wilmington Declaration.
- **Quad Cancer Moonshot**
 - It is a new initiative launched by Quad. It aims to reduce the burden of cancer in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Building on their COVID-19 collaboration, the partnership leverages collective investments, scientific expertise, and contributions from private and non-profit sectors.
 - The initiative will initially target cervical cancer, a preventable disease with a high death toll in the region, while also setting the stage to address other forms of cancer in the future.
- **Maritime Initiative For Training In Indo-Pacific**
 - The Quad leaders announced the **Maritime Initiative for Training in the Indo-Pacific (MAITRI)** to help regional partners effectively utilize tools from the **Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** and other Quad initiatives.

- IPMDA is a cooperative initiative that aims to improve maritime awareness and response capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - The initiative was announced in May 2022 by the Quad group.
- This program aims to enhance monitoring, security, law enforcement, and deter illegal activities in regional waters.
- India will host the inaugural MAITRI workshop in 2025.
- The Quad will also launch a maritime legal dialogue to support a rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific, while introducing new technology and data to enhance IPMDA capabilities over the next year.
- **Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission To Be Held in 2025**
 - The Quad nations announced plans for the first-ever Quad-at-Sea Ship Observer Mission in 2025, involving the US, Japan, Australia, and Indian Coast Guards to enhance maritime safety and interoperability.
- **Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network launched**
 - The leaders launched a Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network pilot project to share airlift capacity and leverage their collective logistics strengths.
 - This will enable faster and more efficient civilian responses to natural disasters across the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Quad Ports of the Future Partnership launched**
 - It will harness the Quad’s collective expertise to support sustainable and resilient port infrastructure development across the Indo-Pacific.
- **Semiconductor Supply Chains Contingency Network (Memorandum of Cooperation)**
 - It aims to enhance resilience of Quad’s semiconductor supply chains.
- **Other announcements**
 - Collective Quad effort to boost energy efficiency, including deployment and manufacturing of high-efficiency affordable cooling systems in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - **India’s establishment of a space-based web portal for Mauritius**, to support the concept of open science for space-based monitoring of extreme weather events and climate impact.
 - A new sub-category under the Quad STEM Fellowship, announced by India, for students of the Indo-Pacific region to pursue a 4-year bachelor’s level engineering programme at a Government of India funded technical institute.
- **Quad Leaders’ Summit 2025 to be held in India**
 - The Leaders welcomed the next hosting of the Quad Leaders’ Summit by India in 2025.

QUAD

- **About**
 - The grouping of **four democracies** –India, Australia, US and Japan– is known as the quadrilateral security dialogue or quad.
 - The aim of this grouping is to **ensure a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific**.
- **Objectives**
 - The group’s **primary objectives include**
 - maritime security,
 - combating the Covid-19 crisis, especially vis-à-vis vaccine diplomacy,

- addressing the risks of climate change,
- creating an ecosystem for investment in the region and
- boosting technological innovation.

- **Evolution of Quad**

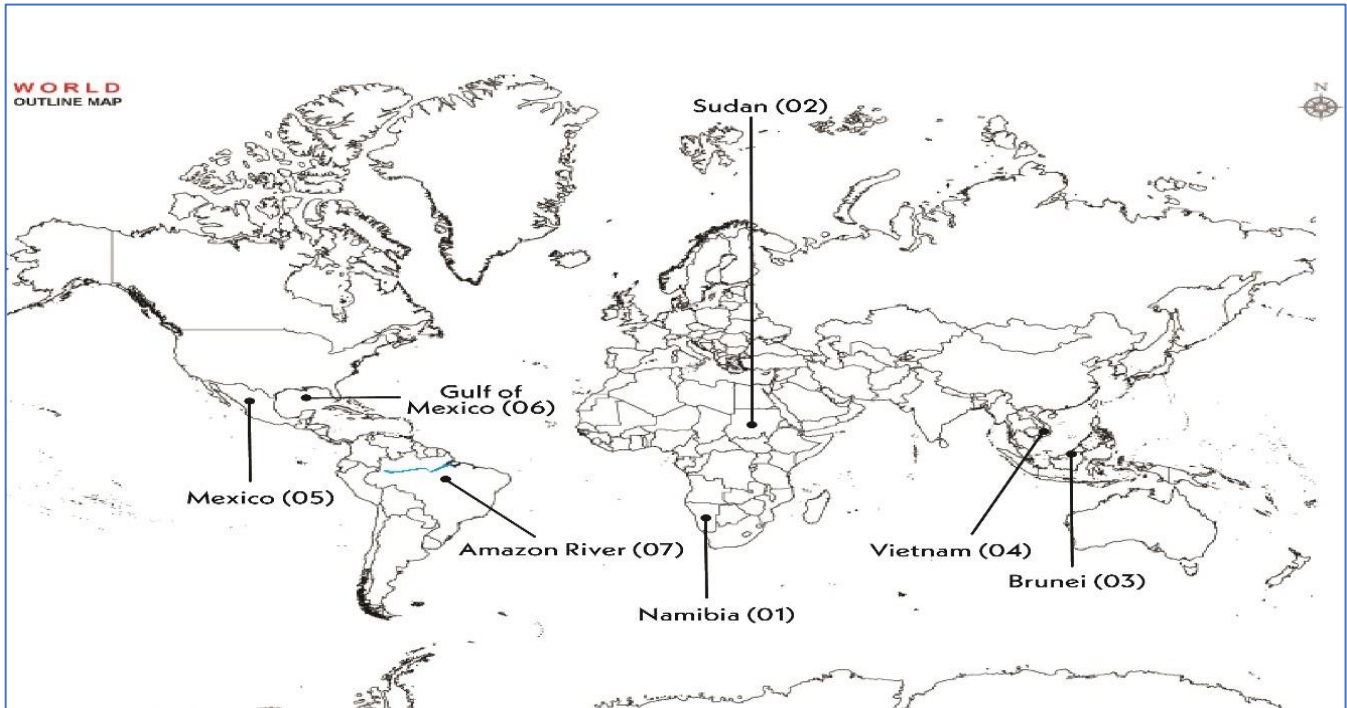
- Following the Indian Ocean tsunami, India, Japan, Australia, and the US created an **informal alliance to collaborate on disaster relief efforts**.
- Quad as a formal group was **first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007**.
 - However, due to Chinese resistance and reluctance shown by India, it could not move ahead.
- In March 2021, the **first-ever summit of QUAD leaders** took place virtually.
 - It was participated by the PMs/Presidents of all the member countries. The summit was hosted by US.
- Later, in September 2021, the first in-person meeting of Quad leaders was hosted by the US.

- **Naval Exercise**

- In November 2020, the navies of Australia, India, Japan and the United States held their biggest naval drills, known as Malabar exercise.
- It was the first time since 2007 that all members of Quad participated in a joint military drill.

MAPS: PLACES IN NEWS

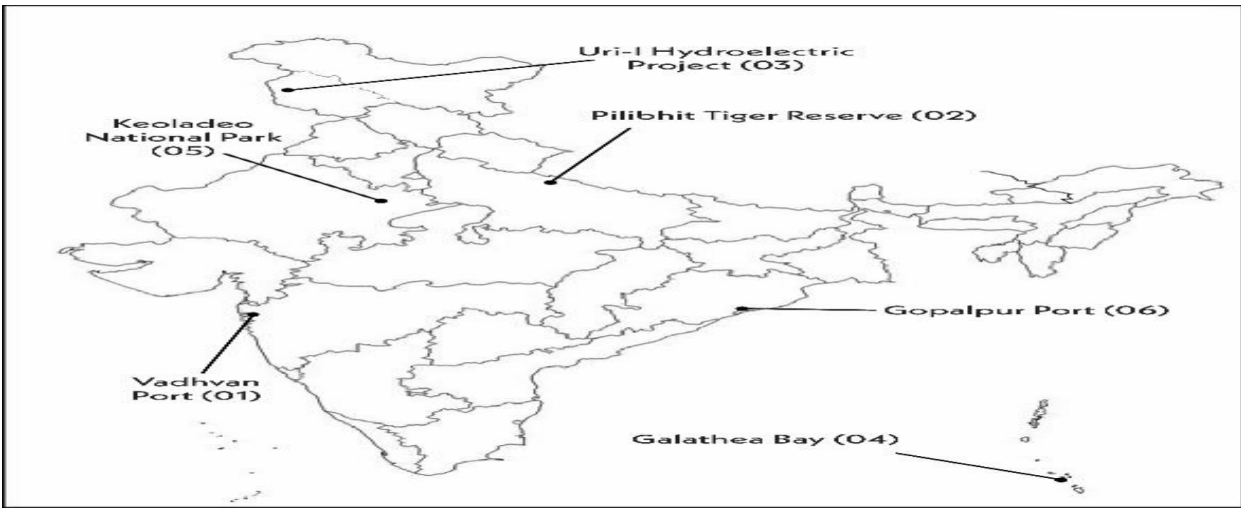
International Places in News



1	Namibia	Namibia is experiencing its worst drought in a century, exacerbated by El Niño. It is situated on the southwestern coast of Africa and borders Angola and Zambia in the north, South Africa in the south and Botswana in the east. The Namibian landscape consists generally of five geographical areas, each with characteristic abiotic conditions and vegetation with some variation within and overlap between them: the Central Plateau, the Namib Desert, the Escarpment, the Bushveld, and the Kalahari Desert.
2	Sudan	The war in Sudan is still creating havoc. Sudan is located in Northeast Africa and shares borders with several countries: Central African Republic to the southwest, Chad to the west, Egypt to the north, Eritrea to the northeast, Ethiopia to the southeast, Libya to the northwest, and South Sudan to the south. It also has a coastline along the Red Sea.
3	Brunei	It is a Southeast Asian country with two non-contiguous regions on the northern coast of Borneo Island. Its Borders are surrounded entirely by Malaysia's Sarawak state, except for its northern coastline on the South China Sea. It is a Part of the Commonwealth and ASEAN.
4	Vietnam	Typhoon Yagi has claimed 143 lives in northern Vietnam. Vietnam is located in Southeast. It shares borders with China, Laos, and Cambodia, and maritime borders with several countries in the South China Sea. Its capital is Hanoi, and its largest city is Ho Chi Minh City.
5	Mexico	Mexico reformed its judicial appointment process and became the first country to allow voters to elect judges at all levels. Mexico is located in southern part of North America, bordered by the United States to the north, Guatemala and Belize to the southeast, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea to the east.

6	Gulf of Mexico	About 42% of crude oil production and 53% of natural gas output in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico were shut last week in the wake of Hurricane Francine. It is a large ocean basin and a marginal sea of the Atlantic Ocean, bordered by the United States, Mexico, and Cuba. The Mississippi River and the Rio Grande are the primary rivers draining into the Gulf.
7	Amazon River	The Amazon River basin is experiencing an unprecedented drought, with water levels plummeting to historic lows across the region. River has its source in the Peruvian Andes. It is the largest river by volume of water and second longest river after the Nile river of Africa in the world. It represents 20% of the global riverine discharge into oceans. It drains into Atlantic Ocean on the northeastern coast of Brazil.

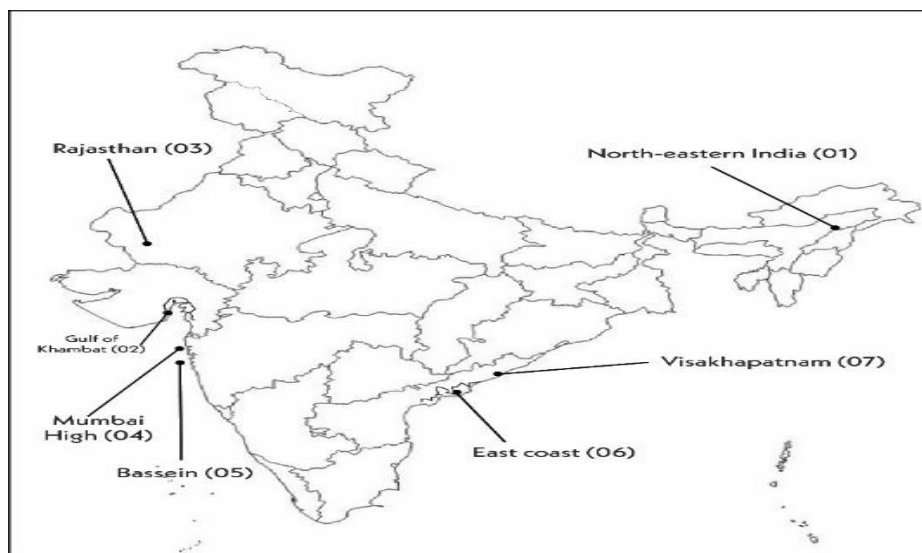
National Places in News



1	Vadhan Port	Prime Minister laid the foundation stone for the Vadhan Port project in Palghar, Maharashtra. It will be one of India's largest deep-water ports. The port will be developed based on the Landlord Port. In the landlord model, private players take over the operational aspects, while the port authority acts as a regulator and landlord.
2	Pilibhit Tiger Reserve	Incidents of poaching reported in the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve (PTR). It is located in Pilibhit District, Lakhimpur Kheri District, and Bahraich District of Uttar Pradesh. It lies along the India-Nepal border in the foothills of the Himalayas and the plains of the 'terai' in Uttar Pradesh. The river Gomti originates from the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, which is also the catchment of several others like Sharda, Chuka, and Mala Khannot.
3	Uri-I Hydroelectric Project	The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has deferred the proposal for grant of Environmental Clearance (EC) to the Stage-II of Uri-I Hydroelectric Project. It is an operating hydroelectric power plant located in the Jhelum River of Uri town in the Baramulla district of Jammu & Kashmir. It is located very near the Line of Control (LOC), the de facto border between India and Pakistan.
4	Galathea Bay	The Central government has designated Galathea Bay in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands as a Major Port. It will be India's second deep-water container transshipment terminal, following Vizhinjam International Seaport. This international transshipment hub will be developed through a public-private partnership and aims to capture cargo currently handled abroad.

5	Keoladeo National Park	India's first 'teal carbon' study, conducted at Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, focuses on using freshwater wetlands to address climate adaptation and resilience challenges. It is located in Bharatpur, Rajasthan. Due to its strategic location in the middle of Central Asian migratory flyway and presence of water, large congregations of ducks, geese, coots, pelicans and waders arrive in the winter. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most important bird-watching areas in the world.
6	Gopalpur Port	Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) has received approval from the Odisha government to acquire a 95% stake in Gopalpur Port. It is a deep-sea port located along the east coast of India in the state of Odisha, Gopalpur is the key port for handling the growing marine traffic. Situated between Paradip and Visakhapatnam port, Gopalpur offers excellent rail and road connectivity. The broad-gauge Howrah-Visakhapatnam-Chennai east coast trunk route which runs parallel to the east coastline is just 6 km away from Gopalpur port site.

Major Oilfields in India



1	North-eastern India	The major oilfields in north-eastern India are those of Brahmaputra valley of north-east India and its neighbouring areas including Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Manipur, Mizoram, and Meghalaya. The Digboi field is the oldest oil field in India. Most oil is sent to the refinery at Digboi . Oil from Naharkatiya field is sent to oil refineries at Noonamati in Assam and Barauni in Bihar through the pipeline.
2	Gulf of Khambhat	The main oil belt extends from Surat to Amreli. Kachchh, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kheda, Mehsana, etc. are the main oil producing districts. Ankleshwar, Lunej, Kalol, Nawgam, Kosamba, Kathana, Barkol, Mehsana, and Sanand are the important oilfields of these regions.
3	Rajasthan (Barmer)	One of the largest on-land oil discoveries was made in the Barmer district of Rajasthan. State-of-the-art technology with innovative geological modelling was used in discovering this oil field. Two important discoveries, viz., Sarswati and Rajeshwari, with a total 35 million tonnes of in-place oil reserves were made earlier.
4	Mumbai High	The greatest success achieved by the ONGC with respect to offshore surveys for oil was that of Mumbai High in 1974. It is located on the continental shelf off the coast of Maharashtra about 176 km northwest of Mumbai.

5	Bassein	Located to the south of Mumbai High, this is a recent discovery endowed with reserves which may prove to be higher than those of the Mumbai High. Huge reserves have been found at a depth of 1,900 metre. Production has started and is expected to pick up fast.
6	East coast	Basin and delta regions of the Godawari, the Krishna, and the Cauvery rivers hold great potential for oil and gas production, both onshore and offshore. The Narimanam and Kovilappal oilfields in the Cauvery on-shore basin are expected to produce about 4 lakh tonnes of crude oil annually. Andhra Pradesh produces less than one percent of the total crude oil of India. Oilfields have recently been discovered in the Krishna-Godavari basin.
7	Strategic Oil Reserve Visakhapatnam	India's existing underground Strategic Petroleum Reserve facilities have a combined capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) of crude oil. These storage sites are strategically positioned across two states: Andhra Pradesh (Visakhapatnam) and Karnataka (Mangaluru and Padur). The government of India is planning to set up two more such caverns at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Udupi (Karnataka) as per phase II through Public-Private Partnership. This will give an additional 6.5 million tons of the oil reserves.

The Aparajita Bill

The Aparajita Woman and Child (West Bengal Criminal Laws Amendment) Bill 2024, which mandates the death penalty in rape cases if the victim dies or is left in a permanent vegetative state, was unanimously approved by the state Assembly.

Indian Laws to Curb Sexual Assaults on Women

- **The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013** amended IPC to allow death penalty in rape cases when it led to death or left the victim in a persistent vegetative state, and in cases of repeat offenders.
- **The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Act 2018** provided for death penalty for rape and gang rape of girls below the age of 12.
- **The Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023** keeps all the old penal provisions and adds that gang rape of a woman under 18 is punishable by death.

Salient Provisions of the Aparajita Bill

- **The Bill amends** provisions of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (BNS), the Bharatiya Nyaya Suraksha Sanhita 2023 (BNSS), and the Protection of Children Against Sexual Offences Act 2012 (POCSO) in the state.
- **Provisions of BNS amended:**
 - **In cases where aggravating circumstances are present** (such as rape by a public servant, etc), the Bill adds the words “or with death” at the end of the description of the maximum punishments (imprisonment for life).
 - **In rape cases where the victim dies** or is left in a permanent vegetative state, the Bill makes the death penalty **mandatory** in such cases.
 - **In cases of gang rape**, the Bill provides for the death penalty for the gang rape of a woman **above** age 18.
 - **For repeat offenders**, the Aparajita Bill replaces the punishment of simple “imprisonment for life” with “rigorous imprisonment for life”.
 - **For disclosing the identity of a rape victim** and for publishing information relating to court proceedings in rape cases, it also increases the jail terms.
 - **In cases of acid attacks**, the Bill removes the lighter punishments (prison terms less than life and fine) with “rigorous imprisonment for life” as the only punishment.
- **Provisions of POCSO Act amended:** The Bill provides for the death penalty for penetrative sexual assault, where the highest punishment currently is life imprisonment.
- **Provisions of BNSS amended:**
 - The Bill reduces the time provided under BNSS to complete the investigation into the relevant rape and POCSO offences from two months to 21 days (which can be extended by another 15 days if necessary).
 - The Bill also reduces the time given to complete the trial after the chargesheet is filed from two months to 30 days.
- **Task Forces, Special Courts:**
 - The Aparajita Bill provides for **special institutions** (like Special Police Teams to investigate crimes against women) with the express purpose of investigating, hearing, and deciding rape cases on strict timelines.
 - **For example**, the Bill creates a **special Aparajita Task Force** in every district to investigate cases of rape.
 - The Bill also introduces **Special Courts** in every district for the purpose of expeditious completion of inquiry or trial in rape cases, and to appoint a **Special Public Prosecutor** respectively.

Other Similar State Laws to Curb Sexual Assaults on Women

- Before West Bengal, the Andhra Pradesh (**Disha Bill 2019**) and Maharashtra (**Shakti Bill 2020**) Assemblies had passed laws prescribing the death penalty for rape by amending the criminal laws in force at the time.
 - **Neither Bills has received the mandatory assent of the President yet.**
- Earlier, the **Madhya Pradesh** (in 2017) and **Arunachal Pradesh** (in 2018) Assemblies introduced the death penalty for the rape or gangrape of a woman up to 12 years of age.

Difficulties in Introducing State Laws to Curb Sexual Assaults on Women:

- The Aparajita Bill will now be presented to the Governor of West Bengal who will send it to the President, who will then decide whether to give her assent and allow the Bill to come into force.
- **Why is the President's assent crucial? (refer fig.)**
- **In Mithu versus State of Punjab case (1983)**, the Supreme Court ruled that 'mandatory' death sentence
 - **Violates fundamental rights** of equality before law (Art 14) and right to life (Art 21), and
 - Would result in "**unfair, unjust and unreasonable procedure**" that can deprive a person of his/her life.

CONCURRENT LIST in Seventh Schedule of the Constitution lists subjects on which both the Centre and states can pass laws.	enacted by Parliament.
CRIMINAL LAW and Criminal Procedure are Entries 1 and 2 in the Concurrent List.	STATE AMENDMENTS to central laws (such as BNS, BNSS and POCSO) dealing with subjects in the Concurrent List that are repugnant to the original law require the President's assent to come into force (Article 254 of the Constitution)
THE THREE BILLS , Aparajita, Disha, and Shakti, amend criminal laws in a way that makes them inconsistent or "repugnant" to the original law	WITHOUT ASSENT , laws passed by states "to the extent of the repugnancy" will be void.

New Draft Guidelines On Passive Euthanasia

The 'Draft Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients,' was released by the Union Health Ministry. Feedback and suggestions have been invited from the stakeholders on the draft by October 20. There was no formal legal framework.

Euthanasia: It is defined as the **hastening of death of a patient to prevent further sufferings**.

Types		Legality in India
Active Euthanasia	<p>It refers to the physician deliberate act, usually the administration of lethal drugs, to end an incurably or terminally ill patient's life.</p> <p>There are three types of active euthanasia, in relation to giving consent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Voluntary euthanasia – at patient request, ✓ Nonvoluntary – without patient consent, ✓ Involuntary euthanasia – patient is not in a position to give consent 	In India, active euthanasia is a crime . Only those who are brain dead can be taken off life support with the help of family members.
Passive Euthanasia	<p>Passive euthanasia refers to the intentional withholding or withdrawal of medical treatments or life-sustaining interventions, allowing a person to die naturally from their underlying condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ This can include stopping treatments like ventilators, feeding tubes, or medications that keep the patient alive. ✓ Decisions for passive euthanasia are typically made based on the patient's wishes, advance directives, or through family members and 	<p>A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court in Common Cause vs Union of India (2018) recognised a person's right to die with dignity as a fundamental right and an aspect of Article 21 (Right to Life).</p> <p>Terminally ill person can opt for passive euthanasia and execute a living will to refuse medical</p>

	healthcare proxies when the patient cannot make decisions themselves.	treatment if they slip into an incurable coma.
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Draft Guidelines On Passive Euthanasia

- **Defined terminal illness** as an irreversible or incurable condition from which death is inevitable in the foreseeable future.
- **Based on four conditions:** The guidelines for withdrawing or withholding medical treatment in terminally ill patients are based on four key conditions:

- The individual has been declared brainstem dead.
- There is a medical assessment that the patient's condition is advanced and unlikely to improve with aggressive treatment.
- The patient or their surrogate has provided informed refusal to continue life support after understanding the prognosis.
- The procedure follows the directives set by the Supreme Court.

- **Provisions related to advance medical directives**

- The guidelines also mention advance medical directives, where individuals document their treatment preferences in case they lose decision-making capacity.
- The physician, upon deeming life-sustaining treatments inappropriate, will refer the case to a **primary medical board** for review.
- If the board agrees, a shared decision is made with the family, and a **secondary medical board's** approval is required before withdrawing support.

SC Strengthening Law Against Child Pornography in India

Marking a significant move in the fight against child exploitation, the Supreme Court of India emphasised that the consumption of sexually explicit content involving minors is a severe criminal offence under the **POCSO Act**.

The top court **overruled a controversial judgement by the Madras HC**, which held that passive consumption of child pornography did not constitute an offence under the POSCO Act or the Information Technology (IT) Act.

Examining the SC's Decision to Tighten the Law on Child Pornography

- The Bench (led by the CJI) expanded the interpretation of **Section 15** of the POCSO Act.
- **Section 15 of the POCSO Act:**
 - It punishes any person, who **stores /possesses** pornographic material in any form involving a child,
 - With an intention to share or transmit child pornography;
 - For commercial purposes, etc.


Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act:

About:

- ⊗ It is the first comprehensive law in the country enacted in 2012 for dealing specifically with sexual abuse of children.
- ⊗ Administered by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the law is intended to
 - Protect children from sexual assault, sexual harassment and pornographic violations.
 - Establish Special Courts for such trials.
- ⊗ In 2019, the Act was amended to strengthen the penalties for specified offences

Key provisions:

- ⊗ **Gender-neutral legislation:** The Act defines a child as "any person" under the age of 18.
- ⊗ **Non-reporting is a crime:** Any person in charge of an institution (excluding children) who fails to report the commission of a sexual offence involving a subordinate faces punishment.
- ⊗ **No time limit for reporting abuse:** A victim may report an offence at any time, even years after the abuse has occurred.
- ⊗ **Keeping victim's identity confidential:** The Act forbids the disclosure of the victim's identity in any form of media unless authorised by the special courts



Concerns:

Such abuse is on the rise: Particularly since the Covid-19 outbreak, when new forms of cybercrime have emerged.

Lack of awareness or knowledge:

On the part of minor girls, boys, parents and society as a whole.

- With a three-to-five-year jail sentence.
- **SC's Verdict:**
 - Section 15 is not limited to punishing the sharing or transmitting of child pornographic material, and **could even be used to punish the "intent"** to commit such an act.
 - **For instance**, the court held that a failure to "delete or destroy or report" child pornography would allow the court to "indirectly" infer that the concerned individual intended to share or distribute it under Section 15.
 - Overturning the Madras HC judgement, **the SC expanded the definition of "possession"** in child pornography cases to include cases -
 - Where the individual may not have physical possession of child pornographic material.
 - But they have the power to control the material in question and the knowledge of exercise of such control.
 - The court termed this "**constructive possession**" and held that "viewing, distributing or displaying" such material would still amount to it being in the accused's "possession" under Section 15.

SC's Recommendations to the Centre to Address the Issue of Child Pornography

- **Amend the POCSO Act:** To replace the term "child pornography" with "child sexual exploitative and abuse material" (**CSEAM**) to better reflect the nature of the crime.
- **Help victims to heal and reintegrate into society:** By providing psychological counselling, therapeutic interventions and educational support to victims.
- **Introducing cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programmes:** To help address the cognitive distortions that fuel such behaviour among offenders.
- **Promoting coordinated effort:** Among educators, health care providers, law enforcement and child welfare services to identify individuals with problematic sexual behaviours early and implement intervention strategies.
- **Raising awareness:** Public campaigns should aim to destigmatise reporting and encourage vigilance within the community.
- **Formation of an expert committee:** To devise comprehensive programmes for health and **sex education** and increasing awareness of POCSO among children from an early age.

Ayushman Bharat Health Insurance For Senior Citizens

The Union Cabinet has cleared the **expansion** of the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (**AB PM-JAY**) to provide health coverage to all senior citizens aged 70 years and above irrespective of their income, public healthcare.

Currently, the scheme is income-based and provides Rs 5 lakh shared annual coverage to all members of eligible families, irrespective of their age. In its current form, the scheme is estimated to comprise the bottom 40% of the population economically.

- **Coverage under new plan**
 - Senior citizens aged 70 and above, and belonging to families already covered under AB PM-JAY, will get an additional (shared) top-up cover up to Rs 5 lakh per year for themselves.
 - Shared top-up coverage - If there are two senior citizens (70 years+) in a family, then the Rs 5 lakh coverage will be shared between them.
 - This expansion is expected to benefit an additional **6 crore elderly people** from **4.5 crore families**.

- Those benefiting from other public health insurance schemes like **CGHS, ECHS, or Ayushman CAPF** can either continue with their current schemes or opt for AB PM-JAY.
- Additionally, senior citizens under **private health insurance policies** or the **Employees' State Insurance Scheme** will also be eligible to avail the benefits of AB PM-JAY.
- Each beneficiary aged 70 and above will receive a new health card, ensuring streamlined access to healthcare benefits.

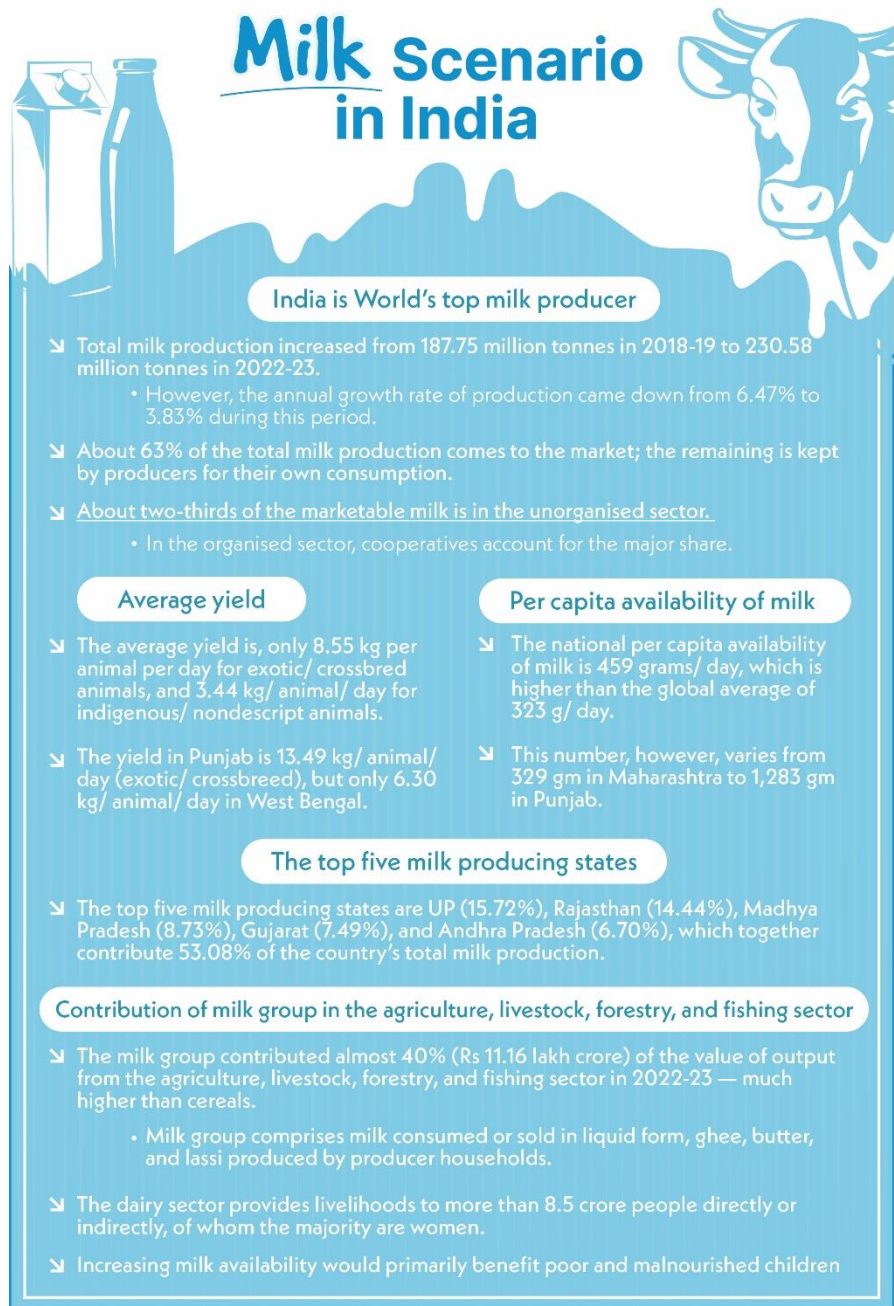
{For more about AB-PMJAY, refer The Recitals-Aug 24; April -24

White Revolution 2.0

Operation Flood, launched in 1970, ushered in the White Revolution (Spearheaded by **Dr. Verghese Kurien**) and transformed the dairy sector in India. In order to give further boost to this sector, the government has announced plans for “White Revolution 2.0”.

White Revolution 2.0

- It aims to boost milk procurement by dairy cooperatives from 660 lakh kg per day in 2023-24 to 1,007 lakh kg/day by 2028-29.
- The Ministry of Cooperation's strategy focuses on expanding **cooperative reach** to new areas and increasing their share in the organized dairy sector.
 - This initiative, building on the legacy of Operation Flood, will enhance **market access** for dairy farmers in uncovered areas, generate employment, and empower women.
- **Target:** Increase milk procurement of dairy cooperatives by 50%, over the next five years.
- **NDDB's Action Plan for White Revolution 2.0**
 - National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) plans to establish 56,000 new multipurpose **dairy cooperative societies (DCSs)** over the next five years and strengthen 46,000 existing ones.
 - The strengthening will be done by providing more advanced milk procurement and testing infrastructure.
 - Key states for new DCSs include Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Funding**
 - The National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD) 2.0 will provide the bulk of the funding for White Revolution 2.0.



- The scheme will offer financial aid to set up milk procurement systems, chilling facilities, and capacity-building programs at the village level.
- Additionally, Rs 40,000 will be provided to 1,000 Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Cooperative Societies (MPACSs) to support the infrastructure of dairy cooperatives.
- **Pilot project**
 - In February 2023, NDDDB launched a Rs 3.8 crore pilot project to set up dairy cooperatives in uncovered gram panchayats in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka.
 - The 79 DCSs established through this pilot now procure 15,000 liters of milk per day from around 2,500 farmers.

Status of Dairy Cooperatives in India

- Currently, dairy cooperatives cover around 70% of India's districts, with about 1.7 lakh cooperative societies operating in 2 lakh villages (30% of the total number of villages in the country).
- These cooperative societies procure about 10% of country's milk production and 16% of marketable surplus.
- However, **regional disparities exist**, with higher coverage in states like Gujarat, Kerala, and Sikkim, while regions such as West Bengal and the Northeast lag behind with less than 10% coverage.
- The government aims to bridge these gaps to expand dairy cooperative networks across India.

Rs 6,000-crore Scheme To Boost Precision Farming

The Centre is planning to earmark Rs 6,000 crore to promote precision farming. In this regard, a **Smart Precision Horticulture Programme** will be launched by the Union Ministry of Agriculture under the existing Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) scheme.

Precision Farming

- **About**

- Also known as precision agriculture, it is a modern agricultural practice that uses advanced technology like GPS, sensors, data analytics, drones, and remote sensing to monitor and manage crop production with high accuracy and real time data.
- The goal is to optimize inputs (like water, fertilizers, and pesticides) based on site-specific conditions to maximize yield, minimize waste, and reduce environmental impact.

- **Benefits**



- **Challenges**



Precision Farming (PF) in India

- **Context**

- As a modern approach to farming, precision agriculture focuses on all aspects of resources (soil, water, nutrients) required for farming. However, in India, the practice is so far developed for nutrient-use efficiency (NUE) and water-use efficiency (WUE).
- PF in the Indian landscape is yet to become an integral part of mainstream farming.

- **Steps Taken**

- The **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)** and **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)**, which focus on water-use efficiency and soil health monitoring.

- The government has also promoted the use of **drones, soil health cards, and satellite-based monitoring**.
- The government has also announced a **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** for agriculture that will provide farmers with access to technology and information.
- PF technology is being developed and disseminated through the **22 Precision Farming Development Centres** in the country.
- The **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)**, launched during Covid-19, has provisions for financing infrastructure projects for smart and precision agriculture.
- Also, funds are released to states/UTs for projects involving use of AI and machine learning, under schemes like the **National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture**.
- **Area Under Precision Farming**
 - Precision farming in India is still at a nascent stage, with a limited area under coverage, mostly in states like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, and Andhra Pradesh.
 - The technology has been mainly adopted in large commercial farms and regions with advanced irrigation facilities.
- **Challenges in India**
 - **Fragmented Land Holdings:** Hampers large-scale implementation of precision farming.
 - **Cost and Awareness**
 - **Infrastructure Gaps:** Lack of robust digital infrastructure in rural India limits its reach

Proposal to Launch Scheme to Boost Precision Farming

- **Scheme to promote precision farming**
 - Allocation of Rs 6,000 crore to promote precision farming.
 - It will utilize smart technologies like IoT, AI, drones, and data analytics to enhance productivity and resource efficiency while reducing environmental impacts.
- **Coverage:** The scheme will cover 15,000 acres of land in five years from 2024-25 to 2028-29 and is expected to benefit about 60,000 farmers.
- **Role of Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) in promoting precision farming**
 - Currently, the AIF has provisions for financing infrastructure projects for smart and precision agriculture.
 - Under AIF, individual farmers as well as farmers' communities such as Farmer Producer Organization, Primary Agricultural Credit Societies and SHGs are eligible for loans with interest subvention of 3% for using technological solutions in farm practices.
 - These practices include:
 - farm/ harvest automation;
 - purchase of drones, putting up specialised sensors on field;
 - use of blockchain and AI in agriculture;
 - remote sensing and Internet of Things (IoT).
- **Collaboration with other countries to promote precision farming in India**
 - Govt. is also collaborating with countries like the **Netherlands** and **Israel** for advanced farming solutions, with a plan to establish **100 Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** in five years.
 - Already, **32 Indo-Israel CoEs** have been set up in 14 states.

AgriSURE Fund

- The Ministry for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched the AgriSURE Fund.
- AgriSURE - *Agri Fund for Start-ups & Rural Enterprises* is an innovative fund toward revolutionizing the agricultural landscape in India.
- It is designed to fuel growth and innovation in the agricultural and rural start-up ecosystem by providing **both equity and debt capital**. Its focus is on **technology-driven, high-risk, high-impact ventures**.

Objective

- Provide liquidity to existing Agri & agri-tech start-ups that are unable to upscale their business due to lack of finance.
- Provide a boost to forward and backward linkage systems in the rural space that help make the farm produce value chain system stronger.
- Create additional employment opportunities for the technically qualified rural and urban youth.
- Retain the existing rural youth in agriculture and encourage the younger generation to take to agriculture by providing newer technologies, techniques and equipments at their doorsteps.

Fund Details

- The **total corpus** of the Fund is **₹750 crore**. Of this, ₹250 crore each is contributed by the Union Government and NABARD respectively and ₹250 crore is to be mobilised from other institutions including private investors.
- The fund is registered as a **Category-II Alternative Investment Fund** with SEBI.
- **NABVENTURES Ltd.**, a wholly owned subsidiary of NABARD is the **Investment Manager to the fund**.
- The fund has **two schemes**:
 - **AgriSURE – FoF scheme (450 crore)**: It is designed to provide funding support to Category I and Category II Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) that make onward investments in start-ups in preferred sectors of the fund.
 - **AgriSURE – Direct Scheme (350 crore)**: It involves direct equity investments in start-ups. It is designed to invest in early-stage start-ups recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) and are incorporated in India.

International Cooperative Alliance General Assembly

- The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) General Assembly and the Global Cooperative Conference (GCC) 2024 is scheduled to take place in India in the month of November.
- It will be for the first time in the 130 years long history of ICA, that the ICA General Assembly and GCC will be hosted by India.
- The theme for this year's conference is **Cooperatives Build Prosperity for All**, which is aligned with the Prime Minister's vision of **Sahkar se Samriddhi**.
- The Conference will also mark the official launch of the **UN International Year of Cooperatives – 2025**.
- The Conference will be used to showcase Indian Cooperatives' products and services in the 'Haat' setup with the theme of Indian Villages.
- **India has around 8 lakh cooperative societies out of 30 lakh globally** and the co-operative sector in India has played a major role in the growth of agriculture and allied sectors.

International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)

- The ICA is a **non-governmental cooperative organization** founded in **1895** to unite, represent and serve cooperatives worldwide. India is one of the co-founders of the ICA.

- It is the **apex body** representing cooperatives, providing a global voice and forum for knowledge, expertise and co-ordinated action for cooperatives. More than 306 organisations from 105 countries are its members
- The ICA's members are international and national cooperative organisations from all sectors of the economy, namely agriculture, banking, consumer, fisheries, health, housing, insurance, and industry & services.
- The **General Assembly is the highest authority** of the ICA. The General Assembly meets every year and the **Global Conference** is held every two years.

Krishi Nivesh Portal

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has launched the **Krishi Nivesh portal** to boost agriculture investment in the country.
- It is an **integrated, centralized one stop portal** & will cater to diverse stakeholders, including farmers, entrepreneurs, and industries, by providing easy access to information regarding various Central and State government schemes.
- The portal addresses longstanding challenges in the agriculture sector, like fragmented information, siloed operations across departments, and slow progress in loan disbursement and scheme applications.
- Empower women in agriculture through special provisions and training programs
- By bridging the information gap and facilitating seamless coordination between different departments, the portal will boost agri-investments and empower stakeholders to make informed decisions.

Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority

- The Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) has launched a new toll-free number as part of its ongoing efforts to enhance claimant support services.
- The number is designed to provide users with access to an upgraded, multi-language Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) and an enhanced call centre.
- IEPFA was established in **2016, under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs**.
 - It is responsible for managing the IEPF which focuses on safeguarding investor interests by facilitating the refund of shares, unclaimed dividends, and matured deposits/debentures.
- Through its initiatives, the IEPFA aims to ensure transparency, protect investors' rights, and promote financial literacy across the country.

Investor Education and Protection Fund (IEPF)

- It is established under provision of the Companies Act, 2013.
- The amounts such as dividends, applications money, matured deposits etc, which have remained unpaid or unclaimed for a period of 7 years are transferred to IEPF.
- The Fund is also utilized for distribution of any disgorged amount among eligible applicants who have suffered losses due to wrong actions by any person, in accordance with the orders made by the Court.
 - When a person or entity in the securities market makes a profit by fraudulent means, a 'disgorgement' order is issued to repay those gains to affected investors with interest.
- Amounts credited to IEPF are maintained under Consolidated Fund of India (Article 266 of the Constitution).

MSCI EM IMI Index

- India has **surpassed China to become the top weight nation** in the MSCI *Emerging Market (EM) Investable Market Index (IMI)* for the first time.
 - However, China still leads the MSCI Emerging Market **Standard Index**.

- Indian equities together carry a weight of 22.27% in the index, moving ahead of Chinese stocks, whose combined weight now has fallen to 21.58%
- This shift comes despite China's market capitalisation of \$8.14 trillion being over 60 per cent greater than India's \$5.03 trillion.



India's Rise In The Index

- The rebalancing reflects broader market trends. While Chinese markets have struggled with economic troubles and regulatory crackdowns, India's markets have benefitted from favourable market conditions.
- India has posted a much superior equity market performance, driven by strong macroeconomic fundamentals of Indian economy as well as robust performance by Indian corporates.
- Key factors contributing to this positive trend include a 47% increase in FDI, in the early part of 2024, decreasing Brent crude prices, and substantial FPI in Indian debt markets.

Significance

- MSCI indexes are widely tracked by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), hedge funds and other sovereign wealth funds which allocate funds to various markets like India depending on the overall weightage and direction given by these indexes.
- If India and its top listed companies get good weightage in MSCI indexes, foreign investors invest more funds on that basis and vice versa.

Mega Oil Plantation Drive

- A Mega Oil Plantation Drive was recently conducted under National Mission on Edible Oil-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP).
- Under the drive, over **17 lakh oil palm saplings**, covering more than 12,000 hectares across 15 states, benefitting over 10,000 farmers were planted.
- It demonstrates the collective effort of the Union Government, State Governments and oil palm processing companies towards expanding oil palm cultivation in the country.

Status of Edible Oil Production And Consumption


- Palm oil is currently the world's most produced, consumed & traded vegetable oil. It is also used extensively in the **production of detergents, plastics, cosmetics, and biofuels.** Top consumers of palm oil are India, China, and the European Union (EU).

NATIONAL EDIBLE OIL MISSION- OIL PALM (NMEO-OP)

- » Launched in 2021, NMEO-OP is a **centrally sponsored scheme**, that aims to expand oil palm cultivation and boost Crude Palm Oil (CPO) production by setting up a value chain ecosystem for development of oil palm sector.
- » It plans to invest more than **Rs 11,000 crore**, in the cooking oil ecosystem over a **five-year period**.
- » It aims to raise the domestic production of palm oil by three times to **11 lakh tonnes by 2025-26** and 28 lakh tonnes by 2028-29.
- » This will involve raising the area under oil palm cultivation to **10 lakh hectares, by 2025-26** and **16.7 lakh hectares by 2029-30**.
- » Oil palm farmers get **financial assistance** and remuneration under a price and viability formula. They also get other facilities, from **quality seeds to technology**.

BENEFITS OF NMEO-OP

- » Along with promoting the cultivation of oil palm, the mission will also expand the cultivation of country's *other traditional oilseed crops*.
- » This will help the country to become **self-reliant** in edible oil production and **reduce dependence on imports**.
- » Farmers would benefit from oil palm cultivation with **higher yields** and **better returns** and consumers will be able to get quality cooking oils at a **cheaper rate**.
- » Moreover, it would benefit processors and the entire value chain, thereby **creating job opportunities**.



- In India, around **94%** of palm oil is used in food products, especially for cooking purposes. This makes palm oil extremely critical to India's edible oils economy.
- India has become self-sufficient in the production of rice, wheat and sugar, but it is dependent on huge imports of edible oils.
- India is the world's second-largest consumer and number one importer of vegetable oil.
- India's **annual domestic consumption of edible oil is around 25 million tonne of which 9 million is palm oil.**
- **India imports 58% of its annual edible oil demand**, with palm oil having 59% share in total edible oil imports.

Edible Oil Scenario In India

The Ministry of Finance issued a notification to increase import duty on edible oils from 0% to 20%. This will take the total effective duty on edible oils to 27.5% (after adding other components) - an attempt by the world's biggest edible oil importer to support local oilseed farmers.

This comes days after the Centre allowed soybean (leading source of edible oils) procurement at Minimum Support Price (MSP) in 4 states - Maharashtra, MP, Karnataka and Telangana.

Edible Oil Scenario in India

- **Edible oils are mainly vegetable oils** that are subjected to several **refining processes** (such as neutralisation, bleaching and deodorisation) to remove undesirable constituents.
 - Regarding consumption as a food product, **vegetable oils are considered the healthier alternative** as they contain more unsaturated fatty acids than animal fats.
- **Overall scenario of edible oil availability in India:**

Edible Oil Availability (5 Years Average)



- **India contributes about 5-6% of the world oilseeds production**, accounting for the estimated production of 41.35 million tons (MT) of nine cultivated oilseeds during the year 2022-23 (November-October).

- **Export** of oil meals, oilseeds and minor oils was about 3.46 MT in the financial year 2022-23 valued at Rs 14,609 crores.

- **Area and production of oil seeds in India (given in fig.).**

Report on 'Pathways and Strategies for Accelerating Growth in Edible Oils Towards Atmanirbharta'

- **About the report:** It was released by the **NITI Aayog** to comprehensively explore the current state of the country's edible oil sector and its future potential.

- **Highlights of the report:**

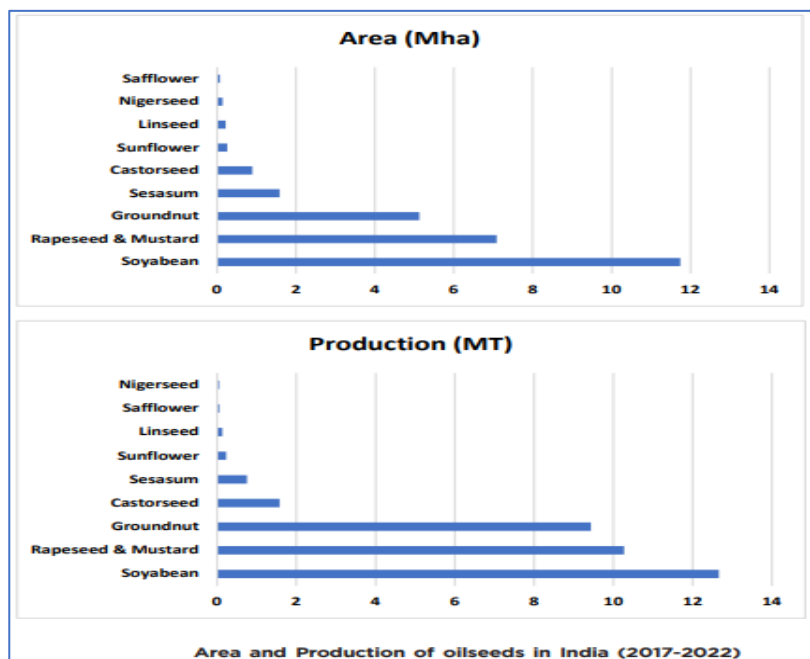
- Over the past decades, **per capita consumption of edible oil** in the country has seen a **dramatic rise**, reaching 19.7 kg/year.
- This surge in demand has significantly **outpaced domestic production**, leading to a **heavy reliance on imports** to meet both domestic and industrial needs.
- In 2022-23, **India imported 16.5 MT** of edible oils, with domestic production fulfilling only 40-45% of the country's requirements.
- This situation presents a **substantial challenge** to the country's goal of achieving **self-sufficiency** in edible oils.

- **Roadmap to address existing challenges:**

- The report focuses on bridging the demand-supply gap and developing new approaches to attain self-sufficiency.
- The proposed strategic interventions could achieve projected edible oil supplies of 36.2 MT and 70.2 MT, by 2030 and 2047 respectively.

- **Strategic interventions to achieve self-sufficiency in this sector:**

- **Crop retention and diversification.**
- **Horizontal expansion:** This strategy seeks to bring more land under cultivation for specific oilseeds.
- **Vertical expansion:** It focuses on enhancing the yield of existing oilseed cultivation. This can be achieved through improved farming practices, better-quality seeds, and advanced production technologies.
- Developing a **dynamic trade policy** for balanced growth.
- Broadening the scope of the **National Mission on Edible Oils**, etc.



District Agro-Meteorology Units

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is planning to revive District Agro-Meteorology Units (DAMUs) under the Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme.
- The IMD established 199 DAMUs in 2018 in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

- The aim was to use weather data by IMD to prepare and communicate sub-district level agricultural advisories.
- In March 2024 DAMUs were shut down following an order issued by the IMD.

Importance of Agro-Met Units

- **DAMUs located in Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)** used weather data provided by the IMD like rainfall, temperature and wind speeds to prepare agricultural advisories related to sowing and harvesting, usage of fertilizers and pesticides, irrigation etc.
- These advisories were sent to millions of farmers across the country twice a week free-of-cost. The advisories were prepared at the block-level across districts and then communicated to farmers in **local languages**.
- They were shared via text messages, WhatsApp groups, newspapers and also through in-person communication from DAMU staff and KVK officers.
- Since these advisories provided weather information in advance, they helped farmers plan activities like irrigation. They also served as early warnings for extreme events like droughts and heavy rainfall.

Gramin Krishi Mausam Sewa (GKMS) scheme

- IMD runs an operational Agrometeorological Advisory Services (AAS) viz., GKMS scheme for the benefit of farming community in the country
- Under the scheme, medium range weather forecasts at **district and block** level for next five days is generated.
- Based on these forecasts, 130 Agromet Field Units (AMFUs), prepare Agrometeorological Advisories on every Tuesday and Friday for the districts under their jurisdiction and for the blocks of those districts.

Shutdown of DAMUs

- According to reports, NITI Aayog misrepresented the role of DAMUs and also sought privatisation.
- NITI Aayog falsely claimed that agro-met data was automated, thereby undermining the role of DAMU staff. In reality, the DAMU staff played a huge role in preparing agricultural advisories based on weather data by the IMD.
- NITI Aayog also sought monetisation of such services as opposed to the current scheme where agro-met information was provided free-of-cost.
- A study in the Kalyana-Karnataka region, showed that by providing localised and accessible advisories, DAMUs have enhanced farmers' ability to respond to climatic variations effectively, enabling higher yields and higher incomes.
- Thus, the decision to discontinue the DAMUs should be reconsidered and avenues for enhancing and strengthening their presence and impact must be explored.

Technical Textiles Export to Cross \$10 billion

The Ministry of Textiles shared that the annual export of technical textiles will cross \$10 billion by 2030.

Technical Textiles

- Technical textiles are textile materials and products **manufactured primarily for technical performance and functional properties** rather than aesthetic characteristics.
- They have **application** in several sectors including infrastructure, water, health and hygiene, defence, security, automobiles, aviation, etc.
- Till now, India has primarily focused on cotton textiles. However, two-thirds of the international trade market is of man-made fibre (MMF) fabric and technical textiles.
- The global trade in technical textiles is around \$300 billion, while India's domestic market size is **\$25 billion** and annual exports are worth \$2.6 billion.
 - MMFs are made from various chemicals or are **regenerated** from plant fibres. Examples include viscose, polyester, acrylics etc.

- The domestic MMF industry mainly comprises of two components i.e., polyester and viscose, which together account for about 94% volume.
- To address this, the government has launched the **National Technical Textiles Mission** and PLI Scheme for MMF, Apparel and Technical Textiles and has sanctioned 156 research projects under the Mission.
- Further, several state governments have taken initiatives to promote investments, including Foreign Direct Investment in technical textiles.

National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM)

- NTTM was approved in 2020, with an outlay of Rs 1480 crores. Its aim is to position India as a global leader in Technical Textiles.
- It has a target to take domestic market size of technical textile sector to **\$ 40-50 billion by the year 2024** with an average growth rate of 15-20% per annum.
- It also supports the Make in India initiative promoting domestic manufacturing of related machinery and equipment.
- The mission includes the following **four components**:



Central Financial Assistance for Hydro Electric Projects in NER

The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for providing Central Financial Assistance (CFA) to the State Governments of North East Region (NER) towards their equity participation for development of *Hydro Electric Projects (HEP)* in the region.

Scheme Details

- The Scheme formulated by the **Ministry of Power** provides for formation of a Joint Venture (JV) company for all the projects of a Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSU) with the State Government.
- The scheme has an outlay of **Rs. 4136 crore** and will be implemented from **FY 2024-25 to FY 2031-32**. A cumulative hydro capacity of about **15000 MW** would be supported under the scheme.
- The scheme would be funded through **10% Gross Budgetary Support (GBS) for NER** from the total outlay of the Ministry of Power.
- The grant towards equity portion of the state government of NER would be capped at 24% of the total project equity subject to a maximum of Rs.750 crore per project.
- The cap of Rs.750 crore for each project would be revisited, if required, on a case-to-case basis.
- The equity ratio of the CPSU and state government in the JV will be maintained at the time of disbursing of the grant. CFA would be limited to only viable HEP.
- States would be required to waive or stagger free power and/or reimburse SGST to make the project viable.

Significance of the Scheme

- Participation of state governments in the hydro development shall be encouraged and risk and responsibilities will be shared in a more equitable manner.
- Issues such as land acquisition, rehabilitation & resettlement and local law & order issues would be reduced with state governments becoming stakeholders. This would **avoid time and cost over-run** of the projects.
- It would bring huge investment in NER and would provide large number of direct employment to the local people along with indirect employment/entrepreneurial opportunities through transportation, tourism and small-scale business.

- Development of hydroelectric projects will also contribute towards realization of India’s Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of establishing 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- It would help integration of Renewable Energy sources in the grid thus enhancing flexibility, security and reliability of the national grid.

Hydro Power Potential in NER

- NER has enormous hydropower potential estimated to be around **62000 MW** which is about 40% of the total hydropower potential identified in the country i.e. 145320 MW.
- Majority of hydropower potential in NER i.e. 80% lies in Arunachal Pradesh alone.
- However, growth of hydropower in NER has remained very slow. As compared to the overall exploited hydropower potential of about 28% in the country, the percentage of exploitation of Hydropower potential in the NER is only 6.9 %.

State	Exploitable Potential (MW)	Developed (MW)
Arunachal Pradesh	50,064	1115
Meghalaya	2,298	322
Mizoram	2,131	60
Manipur	1,761	105
Nagaland	1,452	75
Assam	650	350
Sikkim	4,248	2,282
Total	62,604	4,309

Challenges in Hydropower Development in NER

- **Land acquisition:** One of the prominent reasons leading to delays in completion of land acquisition has been the non-availability of proper land records.
- **Environmental Change:** Hydropower development often results in change in the local environment, including forest, land use, etc.
 - Non availability of land for Compensatory Afforestation /creation of land banks for mitigation of environmental change is a major challenge.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure:** The infrastructure in the region is very limited, and often transportation of heavy, large sized equipment & machinery to the project site is difficult.
- **Rehabilitation and resettlement:** Hydropower development often results in displacement of families, loss of livelihood, etc. which in turn leads to local agitation/law & order problems.
- **Power evacuation issues:** Power demand of the NER region is low and most of the hydro power generated is required to be evacuated to other regions. At present there are constraints in the transmission system.

Other Initiatives For Hydropower Development

To promote the hydro power sector and to make it viable in the country, the Union Government has taken several policy initiatives:

- Declaring large hydro power projects as Renewable Energy sources in 2019.
- Hydro Power Purchase Obligation, which is requirement for entities to buy electricity from large hydro power projects.
- Tariff rationalization measures through escalating tariff.
- Budgetary support for flood moderation/storage of Hydro Electric Power.
- Budgetary support for the cost of enabling infrastructure, i.e., construction of roads and bridges.

Scheme Modification - Budgetary Support for Hydro Electric Projects

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal of the **Ministry of Power** for modification of the scheme of budgetary support for the cost of Enabling Infrastructure for Hydro Electric Projects (HEP).
- The scheme has a **total outlay of Rs. 12,461 crore** for cumulative generation capacity of about **31350 MW** to be implemented from FY 2024-25 to FY 2031-32.
- The projects whose Letter of Award of first major package is issued upto June 2028 would be considered under this scheme.

Modifications In the Scheme

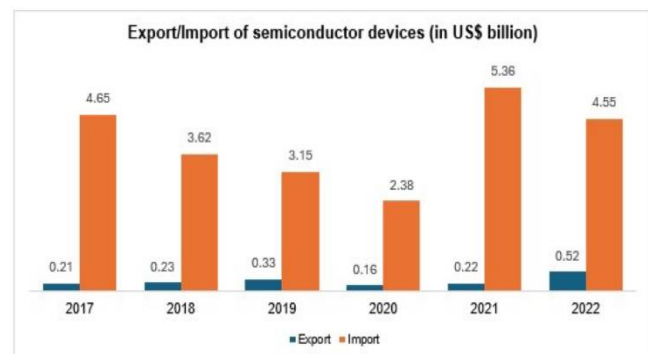
- The scope of Budgetary Support has been widened by including **four more items** apart from construction of roads and bridges i.e., the cost incurred for the construction of:
 - *Transmission line; Ropeways; Railway siding, and Communication infrastructure.*
- The strengthening of existing roads/bridges leading to the project will also be eligible for central assistance under the scheme.
- The scheme will be applicable to **all Hydro Power Projects** of more than 25 MW capacity including the private sector projects which have been allotted on a transparent basis.
- The scheme will also be applicable to all Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) including Captive/Merchant PSPs. A cumulative PSP capacity of about 15,000 MW would be supported under the scheme.
- Budgetary Support limit has been rationalized to Rs. 1 crore/MW for projects up to 200 MW and Rs. 200 crore + Rs. 0.75 crore/ MW exceeding 200 MW, for projects above 200 MW.
 - For exceptional cases the limit of budgetary support may go upto Rs.1.5 Crore/MW.

India Plans \$15 Billion Investment In Semiconductors

- The Union Government announced that it will invest \$15 billion in the second phase of its chip manufacturing incentive policy (India Semiconductor Mission). It has already committed \$10 billion in the first phase of the incentive policy.
- India has ambitions to become a major chip hub on the lines of the United States, Taiwan and South Korea, and has been trying to attract foreign companies to set up operations in the country.
- In 2022, the Indian semiconductor market was valued at **US\$ 26.3 billion** and is projected to expand at a CAGR of 26.3% to US\$ 271.9 billion by 2032.
- Tata is building India's first commercial fabrication plant along with its Taiwanese partner Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (PSMC) for a cost of more than Rs 91,000 crore.
- Govt. has also approved three assembly and testing plants, which are called **ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging)** and **OSAT (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test)** in chip parlance.
- The assembly and testing plants are less complex than the semiconductor fabrication plant.
- The four projects will together cost more than Rs 1.48 lakh crore, and the central government will spend almost Rs 59,000 crore in capex subsidies

India US Partnership

- India has announced a new partnership with US to explore semiconductor supply chain opportunities, which will include a comprehensive assessment of India's existing semiconductor ecosystem, regulatory framework, workforce and infrastructure needs.
- This comes days after India signed a semiconductor ecosystem partnership with Singapore.
- The US Department of State will partner with the India Semiconductor Mission, to explore opportunities to diversify the global semiconductor ecosystem under the *International Technology Security and Innovation (ITSI) Fund*, created by the CHIPS Act of 2022.
 - The Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors (CHIPS) and Science Act is intended to attract microchip manufacturing back to the US after decades of companies offshoring the technology.



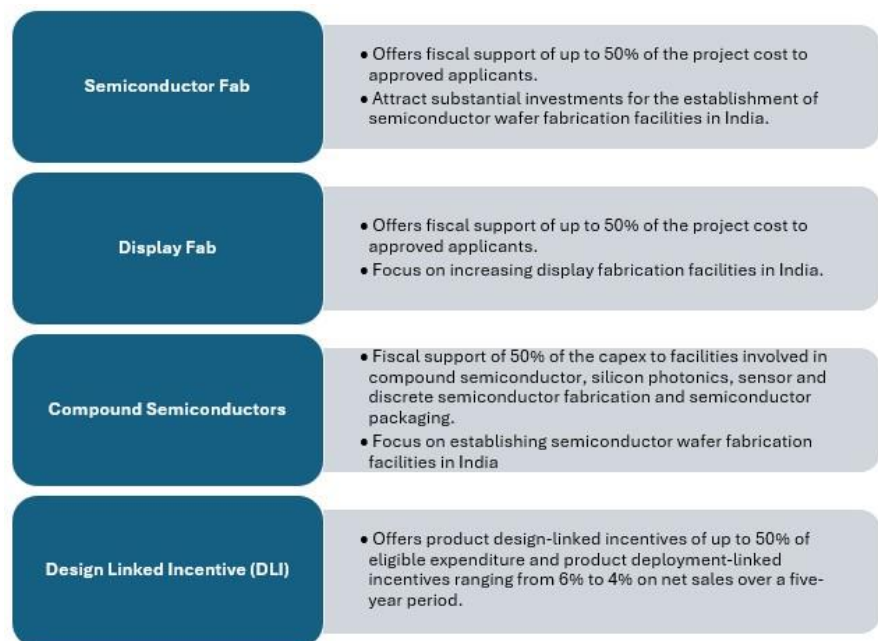
- The ITSI Fund, provides the US Department of State with \$500 million (\$100 million per year over five years, starting 2023), to promote the development and adoption of secure and trusted telecommunications technologies and secure semiconductor supply chains.
- Although the country produced close to 40 per cent of the world’s semiconductor supply in 1990, that statistic has slipped to just 12 per cent.
- Taiwan, on the other hand, produces more than 60 per cent of the world’s supply of semiconductors and more than 90 per cent of the most advanced chips.
- Given the critical importance of semiconductor chips in almost everything, from missiles to mobile phones and cars to computers, the *partnerships with Singapore and US have geo-strategic and geo-economic importance*.
- Supply disruptions during the Covid-19 pandemic and the geopolitical tensions arising out of China’s aggressive moves in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea have brought urgency to India’s efforts to develop its own semiconductor ecosystem.

Factors Favouring India

- **Skilled workforce:** India leads the world with record number of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) graduates, offering the much-needed skilled workforce required in semiconductor manufacturing, design, research, and development.
- **Labour Cost:** Compared to developed countries, labour costs in India are lower. This translates to decreased production expense particularly in labour-intensive processes such as assembly and testing.
- **Supply chain efficiency:** India’s proximity to key semiconductor markets in Asia, Europe and Middle East facilitates efficient supply chain management.
 - Reduced transport expenses and shortened lead times can play a crucial role in generating cost savings for semiconductor manufacturers operating in India.
- **Emerging ecosystem:** India’s semiconductor ecosystem is strengthening with investment in R&D, infrastructure upgradation and skill enhancement programmes.
- **Global supply chain diversification:** The semiconductor industry is traditionally concentrated in the US and its allies (South Korea, the Netherlands, Japan, and Taiwan), as well as China.
- Pandemic-related disruptions and rising labour costs, have prompted global producers to diversify the supply chain to reduce concentration risks in the future.
- India has become a preferred destination for back-end assembly and testing operations amidst this industry relocation, with potential for future front-end manufacturing.
- India’s stable political environment and vast domestic market, are appealing factors for technology companies seeking expansion opportunities

ISM

- The India Semiconductor Mission was launched in 2021, with a Rs 76,000 crore chip incentive scheme, under the



aegis of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), to build a vibrant semiconductor and display ecosystem in the country.

- ISM has been setup as an Independent Business Division within Digital India Corporation. There are several schemes under ISM (*given in figure*).
- It serves as a central authority for executing the Programme for Development of Semiconductor and Display Ecosystem, ensuring coordinated implementation, in collaboration with government ministries, industry and academia.

PM E-DRIVE

- The Union Cabinet has approved a new scheme PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) for the promotion of electric vehicles (EV) & establishment of essential charging infrastructure in India.
- PM E-DRIVE will replace an earlier flagship scheme Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India Phase II (FAME India Phase II).

Scheme Details

- The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) will implement the new scheme with a **total outlay of Rs 10,900 crore over a period of two years**.
- It **offers subsidies/demand incentives** worth Rs 3,679 crore to incentivise adoption of electric two-wheelers, electric three-wheelers, e-ambulances, e-trucks and other emerging EVs.
- It will support 24.79 lakh electric two-wheelers, 3.16 lakh e-three wheelers, and 14,028 e-buses.
- For **e-ambulances**, a total of **Rs 500 crore** has been allocated. In addition, Rs 4,391 crore has been provided for the procurement of 14,028 e-buses by state transport units and public transport agencies.
- To implement this, demand aggregation will be done by Convenience Energy Services Limited (CESL) in nine cities with a population of more than 40 lakh - Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bengaluru, Pune, and Hyderabad.
- Intercity and interstate e-buses will also be supported in consultation with states.
- Trucks are a major contributor to air pollution. Thus, the scheme will promote the deployment of e-trucks in the country, by allocating Rs.500 crore as incentives for e-trucks.

e-vouchers

- **For availing benefits** under the scheme, the ministry will introduce **e-vouchers** for EV buyers.
- At the time of purchase, the scheme portal will generate an Aadhaar authenticated e-voucher, which needs to be signed by the buyer and submitted to the dealer.
- Subsequently, the e-voucher will also be signed by the dealer and uploaded on the PM E-DRIVE portal.
- The signed e-voucher will be sent to the buyer and dealer via SMS, and will be essential for the OEM (original equipment manufacturer) to claim reimbursement of demand incentives under the scheme.

Charging and Testing infrastructure

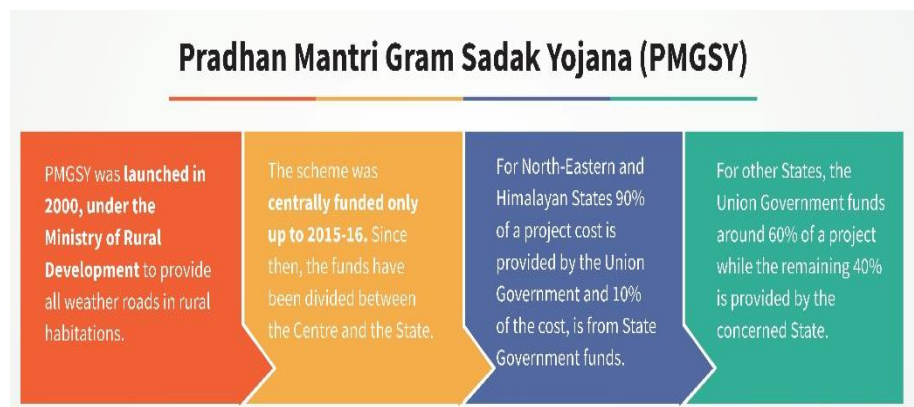
- The scheme addresses range anxiety of EV buyers by promoting the installation of electric vehicle public charging stations (EVPCS).
- These EVPCS shall be installed in the selected cities with high EV penetration and also on selected highways.
- Due to growing EV ecosystem in the country, the test agencies of MHI will be modernized to deal with the new and emerging technologies to promote green mobility. For upgradation of testing agencies, an outlay of Rs 780 crore has been approved.

Significance

- The scheme promotes an efficient, competitive and resilient EV manufacturing industry thereby promoting Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- This will be achieved by incorporating phased manufacturing programme (PMP) which encourages domestic manufacturing and strengthening of EV supply chain.
- Address concerns regarding environmental pollution and fuel security and make significant progress in promoting sustainable transportation solutions.
- Scheme along with its PMP, will boost investment in EV sector & associated supply chain.
- It will create significant employment opportunities along the value chain.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV)

- The Union Cabinet has approved the implementation of the fourth phase of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-IV).
- Under this scheme **62,500 Km of all-weather roads** will be provided to unconnected habitations. Construction of required bridges along the alignment of the all-weather road will also be provided.
- The fourth phase has been approved from **FY 2024-25 to FY 2028-29**, with a **total outlay of Rs 70,125 crore**. The **central share is Rs 49,087.50 crore** and the **state share is Rs 21,037.50 crore**.
- Under the scheme **25,000 unconnected habitations** will be covered with the following population size (as per Census 2011):
 - 500+ in plains;
 - 250+ in North-East & Hill States/UTs, special category areas (Tribal Schedule V, Aspirational Districts/Blocks, Desert areas); and
 - 100+ in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts.
- PMGSY-IV road alignment planning will be undertaken through the PM Gati Shakti portal. The planning tool on the portal will also assist in Detailed Project Report (DPR) preparation.



Benefits

- All-weather roads will play the role of catalysts for the required socio-economic development and transformation of the remote rural areas.
- While connecting habitations, the nearby government educational, health, market, growth centers will be connected, as far as feasible, for the benefit of the local people.

National Test House to Certify Drones

- The Quality Control of India (QCI) has provisionally approved the National Test House (NTH), Ghaziabad as the certifying body for drones.
- This significant milestone aligns with the government's push towards promoting a robust and globally competitive drone ecosystem under the Drone Rules 2021.

- NTH is the only government agency authorised by the DGCA (*Directorate General of Civil Aviation*) for certification of drone models which were earlier done only by multinational companies.
- NTH is offering its drone certification services at a highly competitive fee of Rs 1.5 lakh for the certification process, which is the lowest in the industry.

National Test House (HQ: Kolkata)

- NTH is a premier testing and quality assurance institution under the **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution**.
- **Established in 1912**, NTH has expanded its services across multiple sectors, providing crucial testing, calibration, and quality evaluation services for both public and private industries, as per international and national standards.
- NTH also provides assistance to the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) in accrediting testing and calibration laboratories across the country.
- It has branches in **Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Ghaziabad, Jaipur, Guwahati and Varanasi**.



Quality Council of India (QCI)

- QCI was established in **1997** jointly by the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, and the Indian industry.
- It was established under the **Societies Registration Act**, to provide accreditation services in various sectors for product, services and processes.
It is operated through the constituent Boards of QCI, primarily the **National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB)**, and the **NABL**.
NABCB provides accreditation to the certification, inspection, and validation / verification bodies.
NABL provides accreditation to the testing, calibration and medical laboratories.
- Both, NABCB and NABL are signatories to the Multilateral Recognition Arrangements of the international bodies, the International Accreditation Forum (IAF), and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC).
The government, regulators, industry and conformity assessment bodies (CABs) increasingly rely on the NABCB and NABL accreditation for conformity assessment in India.

PM Kisan Maandhan Yojana Completes 5 Years

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojna (PM-KMY) has completed five years of implementation.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme, administered by the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, **Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare**, to improve the life of **small and marginal farmers** of the country.

Scheme Details

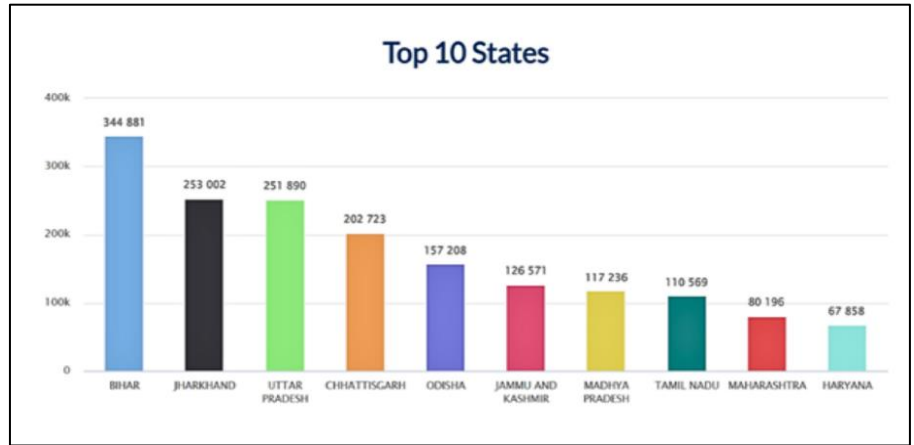
- It is a **voluntary and contributory scheme** for farmers, in which a monthly **pension of Rs. 3000/month** will be provided to them on attaining the age of 60 years.
- The farmers aged between 18 and 40 years will have to make a **monthly contribution of Rs.55 to Rs.200**, in the Pension Fund till they reach the age of 60 years.
- The Central Government will also make an equal contribution of the same amount in the pension fund.
- The **spouse is also eligible** to get a separate pension of Rs.3000 upon making separate contributions to the Fund.
- In case of death of the farmer before retirement date, the spouse may continue in the scheme by paying the remaining contributions till the remaining age of the deceased farmer.
- If the farmer dies after the retirement date, the spouse will receive 50% of the pension as Family Pension.
- **The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is the Pension Fund Manager** and shall be responsible for Pension pay out.
- The beneficiary registration is facilitated through Common Service Centres (CSC) and State Governments.

Eligible Farmers

Unlike PM KISAN scheme that is now open for all farmers irrespective of land holdings, the **pension scheme is for farmers owning less than two hectares land.**

Current Status

- As of August 2024, a **total of 23.38 lakh farmers have joined** the scheme. **Bihar leads with over 3.4 lakh registrations**, while Jharkhand ranks second.
- Further, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha have over 2.5 lakh, 2 lakh, and 1.5 lakh farmer registrations, respectively.
- By securing a pension for their retirement years, the scheme has addressed a significant gap in social security for the rural population.



BHASKAR Platform

- The DPIIT recently launched the **Bharat Startup Knowledge Access Registry (BHASKAR)** initiative under the **Startup India program**.
 - DPIIT is a central government department under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- Bhaskar is a **one-stop digital platform** designed to centralize, streamline, and enhance collaboration among key stakeholders within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including startups, investors, mentors, service providers, and government bodies.
- This initiative aligns with the government's vision to transform India into a global leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, reinforcing the country's commitment to the startup movement.

Key Features

- Networking and collaboration:** BHASKAR will bridge the gap between startups, investors, mentors, and other stakeholders, allowing for seamless interaction across sectors.
- Centralized access to resources:** By consolidating resources, the platform will provide startups with immediate access to critical tools and knowledge, enabling faster decision-making and more efficient scaling.
- Personalized identification:** Every stakeholder will be assigned a unique BHASKAR ID, ensuring personalized interactions and tailored experiences across the platform.
- Enhancing discoverability:** Through powerful *search features*, users can easily locate relevant resources, collaborators, and opportunities.
- Global branding:** BHASKAR will serve as a vehicle for promoting India's global reputation as a hub for innovation, making cross-border collaborations more accessible to startups and investors alike.

Significance

- The launch of BHASKAR marks a significant step forward in the government's ongoing efforts to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation.
- The platform will be pivotal in creating a more resilient, inclusive, and innovation-driven economy, laying the foundation for a prosperous future.

CREATE Setup

- The Ministry of MSME has inaugurated the **Centre for Rural Enterprise Acceleration through Technology (CREATE)** setup at Leh.
- CREATE will provide a **Pashmina wool roving facility**.
- It will also provide training for development of production facility for essential oil extraction from roses and other flowers and training for development of production facility for bio-processing of available fruits and other raw materials.
- In doing so, it aims to enhance local productivity, product quality, economic potential and improve livelihoods for the local communities.
- It will also help to advance rural industrialization and promote enterprise creation, to retain the traditional artisans particularly in regions like Ladakh, where challenging geographical and climatic conditions necessitate deeper economic engagement.

Saarthi App

- Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) has launched the **Saarthi app co-developed with Bhashini**.
- It is a reference application designed to assist businesses in creating their own customised buyer-side apps.
- It supports network participants in **building buyer apps with multilingual features**. The app initially supports Hindi, English, Marathi, Bangla and Tamil, with plans to scale up to all 22 languages provided by Bhashini.
- The multilingual features of Saarthi, including real-time translation, transliteration, and voice recognition allow businesses to expand market reach, enabling companies to tap into new regions and increase customer acquisition.
- The localised experience can also lead to higher conversion rates and reduced support costs, streamlining operations and boosting revenue.
- These features are particularly beneficial for reaching underserved regions and communities where language barriers have historically limited e-commerce adoption.

Significance

- It will lead to a more inclusive digital commerce landscape, by breaking down language barriers and by opening new avenues for engagement and growth.
- It will democratise access to e-commerce, by ensuring that businesses of all sizes can connect with customers across India's diverse linguistic spectrum.



Rangeen Machhli App

- The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has launched the Rangeen Machhli mobile app.
- The app is developed by *Indian Council of Agricultural Research--Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA)* with support from the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**.
- It is designed to meet the growing needs of the **ornamental fisheries sector**, providing crucial knowledge resources for hobbyists, aquarium shop owners, and fish farmers on **care, breeding and maintenance practices**.
- The app provides multilingual information on popular ornamental fish species in eight Indian languages.

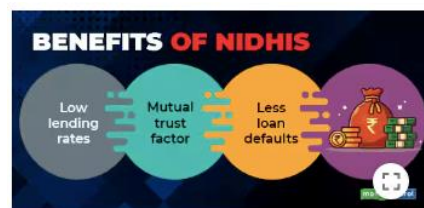
- One of its key features is the "**Find Aquarium Shops**" tool, which allows users to locate nearby aquarium shops through a dynamic directory updated by shop owners.
 - This will help to promote local businesses and connect users with reliable sources for ornamental fish and aquarium-related products.
- In addition, the app includes educational modules for both newcomers and professionals in the ornamental fish industry.

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)

- Headquartered in **New Delhi**, ICAR is an autonomous organisation under the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)**, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- Formerly known as Imperial Council of Agricultural Research, it was **established in 1929** as a registered society under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- It is the apex body for co-ordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country

Nidhi Companies

- The Registrar of Companies (RoC) under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs has recently penalised over two dozen Nidhi companies for alleged violations of Companies Act provisions.
- A Nidhi company is a type of Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) recognised under the Companies Act 2013.
- It is formed to borrow and lend money to its members. It inculcates the habit of saving among its members and works on the principle of mutual benefit.
- They are regulated by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs** and aren't required to receive license from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Minimum of seven members is required to start a Nidhi Company out of which three members must be the directors of the company.
- A minimum of 5 lakh rupees, is required as the equity share capital to start a Nidhi Company.



Activities Prohibited

- » Nidhi Companies can't deal with chit funds, hire-purchase finance, leasing finance, insurance or securities business.
- » They are prohibited from accepting deposits from or lending funds to, any other person except their members. Also, it can't advertise itself to ask for any deposits.
- » They are not allowed to issue preference shares, debentures, or any other debt instrument in any name or form.
- » They are not allowed to open Current Account with their members.

Within 1 year of its registration, Conditions to be fulfilled for getting 'Nidhi' status

- » Nidhi Company should have minimum 200 members
- » Also, the net owned funds should be 10 lakh rupees or more. Net owned funds = Equity share capital + free reserves (-) accumulated losses (-) intangible assets
- » Unencumbered term deposits must be 10% or higher of the outstanding deposits
- » The ratio of net owned funds to deposits shouldn't be more than 1:20

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises

- Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) has approved Rs 1 lakh crore guarantees in 172 days as of September 2024.
- In FY24, the scheme had approved Rs 2 lakh crore guarantees, the highest ever in a single FY in comparison to Rs 1.04 lakh crore in FY23 and Rs 56,172 crore in FY22.
- CGTMSE is jointly set up by **Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME)** and **Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)**.

- It was launched to strengthen credit delivery system and to facilitate flow of credit to the Micro & Small Enterprises (MSEs), create access to finance for unserved, under-served and underprivileged.
- Thus, making availability of finance from conventional lenders to new generation entrepreneurs.
- Collateral free loan up to a limit of Rs. 5 crore to MSEs, with a guarantee coverage up to 85 % for various categories of loan is provided under the scheme.

US FED Rate Cut

- Recently, the US Federal Reserve cut its benchmark interest rates by 50 basis points, or half a percentage point, its first interest rate cut since the early days of the Covid-19 outbreak.
- A cut in interest rate typically incentivises economic activity, promotes growth, and increases job creation by making it cheaper for people to borrow money.
- Conversely, a hike in interest rates or persistently high interest rates tend to drag down economic growth and employment generation.

Impact Of The Rate Cut

- When interest rates go down in an economy, it becomes cheaper to borrow; so households are more inclined to buy more goods and services.
- Furthermore, businesses have an incentive to borrow funds to expand operations, buy equipment or to invest in new projects.
- Improved demand for goods and services ends up pushing up wages, and gives a boost to the growth cycle.
- Even though the linkages of monetary policy to inflation and employment are not direct or immediate, monetary policy is a key factor in curbing runaway prices or stoking the growth impetus.

Impact on India

- Lower interest rates in the US will incentivise global investors to borrow in the US and invest in India — be it in stocks, debt, or in the form of FDI.
- Repeated lowering of interest rates in the US will also lead to some weakening in the US dollar's exchange rate with other currencies such as the Indian rupee.
- In other words, the rupee could see its exchange rate strengthen against the dollar. This, in turn, will impact India's exports (adversely) and imports (positively).

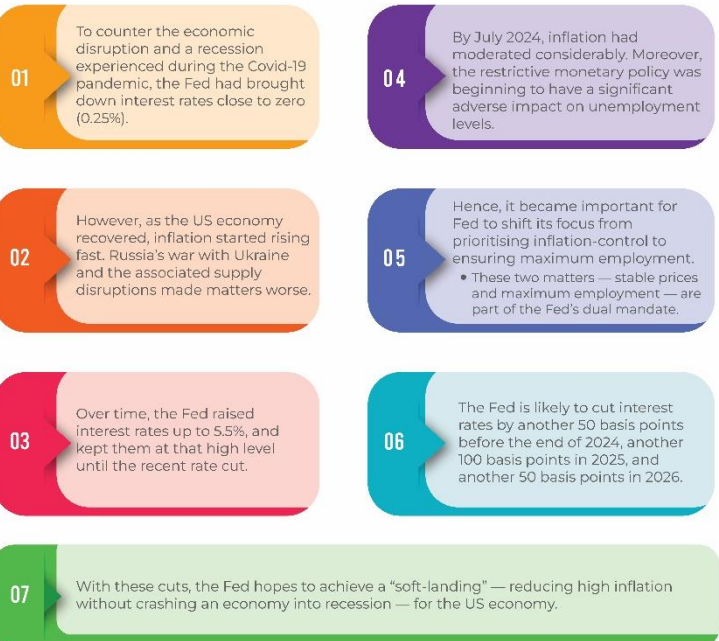
Central Silk Board

The Ministry of Textiles recently unveiled a commemorative coin, celebrating the Platinum Jubilee (75th year) of the Central Silk Board (CSB).

Central Silk Board (CSB)

- CSB as a **statutory body under the Ministry of Textiles**, was established under CSB Act 1948.

Background



- CSB was set up on the recommendations of Silk Panel by Imperial Govt. in 1945
- Headquartered in Bengaluru, CSB is the sole organisation for comprehensive **sericulture** R&D and it coordinates development programs across the country.
- Through the transformative initiatives of CSB, India has made impressive progress in the silk industry.
- India is the only country in the world which produces all the four major varieties of silk i.e. **Mulberry, Eri, Tassar, and Muga**.
- India now ranks as the **second-largest silk producer** worldwide, with its share of global production jumping from 6% in 1949 to 42% in 2023.
- Raw silk production has increased to 38,913 metric tonnes in 2023-24.
- Furthermore, silk exports have experienced remarkable growth, and reaching over 80 countries.

Vivad se Vishwas 2.0

- The Central Board of Direct taxes notified October 1, 2024 as the starting date for the direct tax dispute resolution scheme Vivad Se Vishwas 2.0.
- The main objective of the VSV 2.0 scheme is to **offer a cost-effective solution for resolving disputed tax matters**, reducing the litigation burden on both taxpayers and the judicial system.
- It aims to settle disputes aggregating approximately Rs 35 lakh crore, riding on the success of the first edition of the VSV scheme, which saw declarations totalling Rs 98,328 crore.

Vivad Se Vishwas Scheme (VSV 2.0)

- The scheme was initially introduced in 2020 to facilitate the resolution of pending direct tax appeals.
- The VSV 2.0 scheme aims to reduce ongoing income tax litigations by offering a simplified appeals process for taxpayers and the Income Tax Department.
- It can be availed by taxpayers who have disputes/appeals, including writs and special leave petitions (appeals), filed by the taxpayer or the tax authorities, pending as of July 22, 2024 before the Supreme Court, high courts, Income Tax Appellate Tribunal, Commissioner/Joint Commissioner (Appeals).
- It would also include cases pending before the Dispute Resolution Panel (DRP) and revision petitions pending before the Commissioner of Income Tax.
- Upon timely payment, taxpayers will be granted immunity from further prosecution, penalties, or interest related to the settled tax disputes.
- Disputes involving undisclosed foreign income or assets, cases based on information from foreign jurisdictions, and disputes where taxpayers are convicted under laws like the Money Laundering Act or the Benami Property Transactions Act, are excluded.

Food Import Rejection Alert Portal

- The Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) launched the **Food Import Rejection Alert (FIRA)** portal at the second edition of the **Global Food Regulators Summit 2024**.
- The portal is designed to notify the public and relevant food safety authorities about food import rejections at Indian border.
- It will generate alerts on food consignments rejected by India due to poor safety standards.
- It will facilitate rapid exchange of information among authorities worldwide on food safety and health risks originating from rejected food.

- It will also enable relevant food authorities to take immediate action for prevention and control of risks before it causes harm.
- It has an *online interactive interface* to ensure enhanced traceability and transparency.
- It also serves as a valuable database for tracking rejected food products and for further strengthening of the risk management system.

India's Trade Deficit Widens

- India's goods trade deficit widened to a 10-month high of \$29.7 billion in August as imports hit a record high of \$64.4 billion on doubling on gold inflows and exports contracted for the second month in a row to \$34.7 billion.
- Petroleum products, which have more than 17 per cent share in total exports, contracted 37.5 per cent in August at \$5.95 billion.
- Apart from petroleum, gems and jewellery saw massive contraction of 23 per cent at 1.9 billion in August.
- Non-petroleum and non-gems and jewellery exports, an indication of a clearer parameter of exports' health, grew 2.4 per cent at \$26.76 billion.
- Sectors that saw growth were engineering goods (4.36 per cent), electronic goods (7.85 per cent), drugs and pharmaceuticals (4.67 per cent), and textiles (11.88 per cent).
- Apart from gold, other items that saw high imports include coal (8.88 per cent), electronic goods (12.78 per cent), and non-ferrous metals (22 per cent).
- On the other hand, imports of petroleum and crude products contracted by nearly a third to \$11 billion in August. Petroleum exports have been affected due to the decline in oil prices, even as this benefits imports.

Reasons For Widening Trade Deficit

- **Rise in Gold Imports:** The biggest factor driving the deficit is gold. Gold imports shot up to over \$10 billion, which is three times the monthly average earlier this year.
 - This spike happened because of a recent cut in import duties on gold from 15% to 6%. Moreover, traders are stocking up on gold while prices are low, for the upcoming festive season.
- **China's Economic Slowdown:** China's economy is struggling, which means its domestic consumption has slowed down a lot. As a result, China is exporting more goods at very low prices, flooding global markets.
 - These cheap Chinese goods make it tough for Indian manufacturers to compete, putting pressure on India's exports.
- **Global Supply Chain Disruptions:** Disruptions in global supply chains have pushed up freight costs, especially because of problems around the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. Normally, this route is a shortcut between Asia, Europe, and the US. But with these disruptions, ships are taking longer routes around Africa, which adds time and costs, affecting Indian exporters.



Impact

- According to experts, there is no significant risk to the economy at this point. India is growing faster than the world, so its demand for global products will be more than the world's demand for its exports.
- Moreover, there are no foreign exchange issues. India's foreign exchange reserves had reached a record high of \$675 billion in August 2024, which is sufficient to cover 11.6 months of imports.

Future Outlook

- Global trade is expected to grow faster in FY 2024 than 2023, but for now, demand remains low in most developed markets.
- The continuing geopolitical risks and conflicts aside, the upcoming election in the U.S. and its tariff hikes on Chinese goods can create issues for countries like India. While China's demand for imports slips, it is more likely to dump its products in non-U.S. markets at throwaway prices.
- Moreover, these factors are expected to keep oil prices low, hurting India's oil exports.

Measures to Address The Deficit

- **Boost domestic production:** Its the best long-term solution to tackle the trade deficit.
- **Utilise services surplus:** India's strength in services, can help balance out our merchandise deficits. Increasing service exports is a great way to bring more money into the country and manage the overall trade balance better.
- **Attract more foreign investment:** As many countries and investors are looking for alternatives to China, India can tap into this opportunity to increase foreign investments in the country.

Relative Economic Performance of Indian States

- The Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has released a paper titled **Relative Economic Performance of Indian States: 1960-61 to 2023-24**.
- It examines the relative economic performance of states over the past six and a half decades using two indicators- **Share in India's GDP & Relative per capita income**.
 - The state's share in India's GDP is calculated by dividing the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) of the state by the sum of GSDP of all states.
 - Relative per capita income is calculated as the ratio of the per capita Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) of the state as a percentage of the all-India per capita Net National Product.
 - ✓ However, the per capita NSDP means that it **does not include remittances** which may be important for states like Kerala, Bihar and UP.

Key Findings

Southern States

- Before 1991, southern States did not show exceptional performance. However, since the economic liberalization of 1991, southern States have emerged as the leading performers.
- Five southern states — **Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu** — accounted for over 30 per cent of India's GDP in 2023-24.
- Karnataka and Telangana emerged as economic powerhouses in the post-liberalisation period.
- Karnataka's share in India's GDP increased to 8.2 per cent in 2023-24, from around 6.2 per cent in 2000-01. It was 5.4 per cent in 1960-61 and remained almost the same until 1990-91.
- Undivided Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Pradesh plus Telangana) now accounts for 9.7 per cent of the GDP, an increase of 2.1 percentage points since 1990-91, mostly accounted for by Telangana.
- In addition, per capita income of all southern states became higher than the national average after 1991.
- For instance, the relative per capita income in Telangana is now 193.6 percent of the national average, while Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala have per capita incomes 181 percent, 171 percent, and 152.5 percent of the national average, respectively

Western States

- **Maharashtra & Gujarat** have consistently performed well throughout the study period.
- Maharashtra has maintained the highest share of India's GDP for almost all of the period.
- Gujarat's share remained at broadly the same levels until 2000-01, before beginning to increase rapidly from 6.4 percent in 2000-01 to 8.1 percent in 2022-23.
- **Goa** has excelled in per capita income terms, with its relative per capita income doubling since 1970-71. In 2022-23, the per capita income of Goa was nearly three times the national average. *With this, it is second in terms of per capita income after Sikkim.*

Northern States

- **Delhi & Haryana** have performed notably well, while **Punjab's** economy has deteriorated after 1991.
- Despite its small size, Delhi saw its share of India's GDP increase from 1.4 percent to 3.6 percent during this period.
- Punjab's GDP share grew during the 1960s, mainly due to the Green Revolution, but then plateaued at around 4.3 percent until 1990-91. It began to decline thereafter, finally reaching 2.4 percent in 2023-24.
- Haryana's share of India's GDP now exceeds that of Punjab, and its relative per capita income has reached 176.8 percent, compared to Punjab's 106.7 percent in 2023-24.

Eastern States

- **West Bengal**, which held the third-largest share of national GDP at 10.5 percent in 1960-61, now accounts for only 5.6 percent in 2023-24.
- West Bengal's per capita income was above the national average in 1960-61 at 127.5 percent, but its growth failed to keep pace with national trends.
- As a result, its relative per capita income declined to 83.7 percent in 2023-24, falling below that of even traditionally laggard states like Rajasthan and Odisha.
- The relative per capita income of **undivided Bihar** was 70.3 percent in 1960-61. It started declining thereafter and bottomed out at 31 percent in 2000-01 for the bifurcated state of Bihar. After that, it has been roughly flat at around 33 percent.
- **Odisha** which was also seeing a consistent decline in terms of relative per capita income from 1960s to 1990-91 (70.9 percent to 54.3 percent), has seen a significant turnaround since then.
- Its relative per capita income increased from 54.3 percent in 1990-91 to 88.5 percent in 2023-24.

Central States

- In the 1960s, undivided **Uttar Pradesh** was the largest economic powerhouse in the country, with a share of 14.4 percent in India's GDP in 1960-61.
- However, its share started to decline which continued even after bifurcation. Share of UP (bifurcated) in national GDP flattened out at around 8.2 percent in 2020-21, before increasing marginally to become 8.4 percent in 2023-24.
- A similar pattern is observed in its performance in terms of relative per capita income. **Madhya Pradesh** has experienced a notable turnaround in its relative per capita income since 2010, following a five-decade period of decline (82.4 percent in 1960-61 to 60.1 percent in 2010-11).
- Its relative per capita income increased from 60.1 percent in 2010-11 to 77.4 percent in 2023-24.

North-Eastern States

- In 1980-81, **Sikkim's** per capita income was below the national average. However, it has achieved remarkable growth, especially over the last two decades.

- Its per capita income rose from around 100 percent of the national average in 2000-01 to 320 percent in 2023-24.
- **Assam**, which initially had a per capita income slightly above the national average (103 percent in 1960-61), experienced a decline in its relative per capita income and reached 61.2 percent in 2010-11.
- Since then, Assam's relative per capita income has been on the rise, reaching 73.7 percent in 2023- 24.

Summary

- Overall, the western and southern regions of the country are outperforming others, with notable success also observed in parts of the north.
- The eastern part of the country continues to be a concern.
- The maritime states have clearly outperformed the other states, with the exception of West Bengal.
- Even the coastal state of Odisha which was traditionally a laggard state has seen improved performance in the last two decades.

Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)

- EAC-PM is a **non-constitutional, non-permanent and independent body** constituted to give economic advice to the Union Government specifically the Prime Minister.
- It has been constituted several times since the independence of India. Currently chairman of EAC-PM is **Dr. Bibek Debroy**.
- The council serves to highlight key economic issues facing the country to the government from a neutral viewpoint. It advises the Prime Minister on economic issues like inflation, microfinance and industrial output.

12 Industrial Smart Cities

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the setting up of **12 industrial smart cities** under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (**NICDP**) with an investment of Rs. 28,602 crore.
- The project spans across 10 states and is strategically planned along six major corridors.
- These **industrial areas** will be located in *Khurpia in Uttarakhand, Rajpura-Patiala in Punjab, Dighi in, Maharashtra, Palakkad in Kerala, Agra and Prayagraj in UP, Gaya in Bihar, Zaheerabad in Telangana, Orvakal and Koppurthy in Andhra Pradesh and Jodhpur-Pali in Rajasthan.*

THE PROJECTS

► 5 along Amritsar-Kolkata industrial corridor

- Rajpura-Patiala (Punjab)
- Khurpia (Uttarakhand)
- Agra (Uttar Pradesh)
- Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh)
- Gaya (Bihar)

► 2 along Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor

- Jodhpur-Pali (Rajasthan)
- Dighi (Maharashtra)

► 1 each along industrial corridors of Vizag-Chennai; Hyderabad-Bengaluru; Hyderabad-Nagpur; and Chennai-Bengaluru

- Koppurthy (Andhra Pradesh)
- Orvakal (Andhra Pradesh)
- Zaheerabad (Telangana)
- Palakkad (Kerala)

► The name of one city was not revealed as the 'Model Code of Conduct' is in force in poll-bound states

Key Highlights

- **Strategic Investments:** NICDP is designed to encourage a vibrant industrial ecosystem by facilitating investments from both large anchor industries and MSMEs.
- These industrial nodes will act as catalysts for achieving \$2 trillion in exports by 2030, reflecting the government's vision of a self-reliant and globally competitive India.
- **Smart Cities and Modern Infrastructure:** The new industrial cities will be developed as greenfield smart cities of global standards, built "ahead of demand" on the 'plug-n-play' and 'walk-to-work' concepts.
- **Area Approach on PM GatiShakti:** Aligned with the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan, the projects will feature multi-modal connectivity infrastructure, ensuring seamless movement of people, goods, and services.
- **Vision for a 'Viksit Bharat':** The approval of these projects is a step forward in realizing the vision of 'Viksit Bharat' - a developed India.

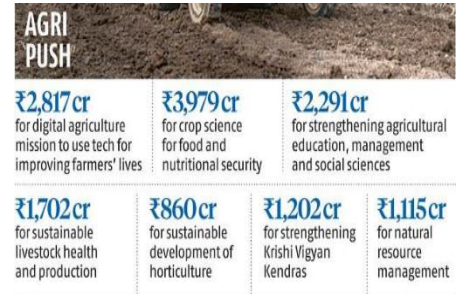
- By positioning India as a strong player in the Global Value Chains (GVC), the NICDP will provide developed land parcels ready for immediate allotment, making it easier for domestic and international investors to set up manufacturing units in India.
- **Economic Impact and Employment Generation:** NICDP is expected to generate significant employment opportunities, with an estimated 1 million direct jobs and upto 3 million indirect jobs being created through planned industrialization.
- **Commitment to Sustainable Development:** The projects are designed with a focus on sustainability, incorporating ICT-enabled utilities and green technologies to minimize environmental impact.

7 Schemes to Boost Farmers' Income

The Union Cabinet has approved seven schemes to improve farmers' lives and increase their incomes at a total outlay of Rs 14,235 crore.

Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM)

- It is based on the structure of Digital Public Infrastructure and will use technology for improving farmers' lives.
- DAM has two foundation pillars of **Agri Stack and Krishi Decision Support System**.



Agri Stack: *Farmers registry; Village land maps registry; Crop Sown Registry*

Krishi Decision Support System: *Geospatial data; Drought/flood monitoring; Weather/satellite data; Groundwater/water availability data; Modelling for crop yield and insurance*

Crop Science for Food and Nutritional Security

The initiative will prepare farmers for climate resilience and provide for food security by 2047. It has the following pillars:

- Research and education;
- Plant genetic resource management;
- Genetic improvement for food and fodder crop;
- Pulse and oilseed crop improvement;
- Improvement of commercial crops;
- Research on insects, microbes, pollinators etc.

Strengthening Agricultural Education, Management and Social Sciences

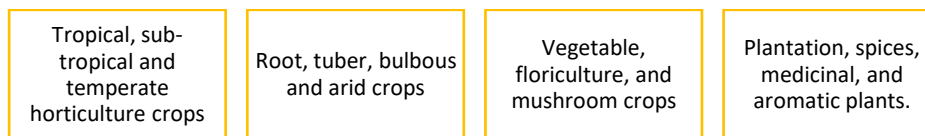
- This programme will be under Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- The aim is to modernise agri-research and education in line with New Education Policy 2020. The use of latest technology like Digital DPI, AI, big data, remote, etc. will be promoted and the programme includes natural farming and climate resilience.

Sustainable Livestock Health and Production

- The scheme aims to increase farmers' income from livestock and dairy. Under this scheme, the focus will be on:
 - Animal health management and veterinary education;
 - Dairy production and technology development;
 - Animal genetic resource management, production and improvement;
 - Animal nutrition and small ruminant production and development.

Sustainable Development of Horticulture

- It is aimed at increasing farmers' income from horticulture plants. It comprises the following:



The Cabinet also gave approval to scheme for **strengthening of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs)** & scheme for **Natural Resource Management**.

PM-AASHA

- The Union Cabinet has approved the continuation of schemes of Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA).
- The total financial outgo will be Rs. 35,000 crore during 15th Finance Commission Cycle upto 2025-26.
- The Government has merged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) & Price Stabilization Fund-(PSF) schemes in PM AASHA to serve the farmers and consumers more efficiently.
 - ✓ PM-AASHA will now have the components of **Price Support scheme (PSS)** ,**Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)** , **Price Deficit Payment Scheme (PDPS)** and **Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)**.

PSS	Implemented by the agriculture ministry, is operationalised only when the prices of farm produce fall below the minimum support price (MSP).
PSF	It is under the food and consumer affairs ministry. The fund is used for procuring commodities at market prices and releasing those to consumers when prices are volatile.
PDPS	PDPS aims to ensure remunerative prices to producer of oilseeds whose <i>MSP are notified</i> by the government. It provides direct payment of the difference between the MSP and the market price to the farmers selling their produce in the notified Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) yard through a transparent auction process.
MIS	It is implemented for procurement of agricultural and horticultural commodities which are perishable in nature and are not covered under PSS.

The Integrated scheme of PM-AASHA will bring-in more effectiveness in the implementation. It would not only help in providing remunerative prices to farmers for their produce but also control the price volatility of essential commodities by ensuring their availability at affordable prices to consumers.

SPICED Scheme

- The Ministry of Commerce approved the ***Sustainability in Spice Sector through Progressive, Innovative and Collaborative Interventions for Export Development (SPICED)*** scheme, an initiative of the Spices Board.
- The scheme is aimed at significantly enhancing the export of spices and value added spice products as well as improving the productivity of cardamoms and upgrading the post-harvest quality of spices across India for export.
- It will be implemented during the remaining period of the 15th Finance Commission cycle, until FY 2025-26, with a total approved outlay of Rs. 422.30 crore.
- This will be done by introducing **new sub-components/programs** like the Mission Value Addition, Mission Clean and Safe Spices, Promotion of GI (Geographical Indication) spices, and Support for entrepreneurship through Spice Incubation Centres.

- Major components are improving productivity, post-harvest quality upgradation, market expansion efforts, trade promotion, technology interventions, research and capacity building, and skill development.
- The programs for cardamom, focuses on increasing the productivity of both small and large cardamom through replanting efforts, production of quality planting material, developing water sources, adopting micro-irrigation systems, etc.
- The scheme will focus on farmers' groups, FPOs (Farmer Producer Organizations), farmer clusters identified under ODOP (One District One Product) and DEH (District Export Hub), as well as SC/ST communities, exporters from the NE region, and SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises).
- Exporters with a valid *Certificate of Registration as Exporter of Spices (CRES)* are eligible for assistance under these programs, with preference given to first-time applicants and SMEs.
- Scheme activities will be geo-tagged, and information on fund availability, application status, and beneficiary lists will be published on the Board's website for better transparency.

Spices Board India

- Spices Board under the **Ministry of Commerce** is a **statutory body** constituted in 1987 under the **Spice Board Act, 1986**.
- **Headquartered in Kochi, Kerala**, it is responsible for the overall development of cardamom industry and export promotion of 52 spices.

Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari Initiative

The Prime Minister recently unveiled the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari Initiative in Surat, Gujarat.

What is Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari Initiative?

The 'Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari' initiative has been launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, in collaboration with the Gujarat State Government to enhance rainwater harvesting and ensure water sustainability through public involvement, recognizing water as not just a policy issue but a social and cultural responsibility.

Are there any Jan Bhagidari Initiatives launched by other States?

- Yes, In February 2023, Ministry of Jal Shakti & Brahma Kumaris organization (spiritual Institution based in Mount Abu) launched the '**Jal-Jan Abhiyan**' in **Rajasthan**. The Jal Jan Abhiyan is a campaign that seeks to promote the conservation of water by Government & Public Partnership.
- In **Maharashtra**, **Paani Foundation** is a non-profit organization addressing the water crisis in rural areas of the state. The foundation focuses on creating sustainable water management solutions and promoting water conservation practices **through community participation**.

Objective: To conserve water by mobilizing citizens, local bodies, industries and other stakeholders for a water-secure future. (Adoption of the mantra of 'Reduce, Reuse, Recharge, and Recycle')

Key Features

- **Strong Emphasis on Community Partnership and Ownership:** It is driven by a whole-of-society and a whole-of-government approach.
- **Rainwater Harvesting Structures:** Approximately 24,800 rainwater harvesting structures are being built across Gujarat to enhance rainwater collection and recharge groundwater resources.
- **Cultural and Traditional Alignment:** The initiative integrates India's traditional reverence for water, where water and nature conservation are part of the cultural consciousness.
- **Promotion of Water-Efficient Agriculture:** through drip irrigation, cultivation of water-efficient crops, and "Per drop more crops" campaigns.

Significance: The initiative reflects the cultural and social significance of water conservation in India, transforming water management into a public movement with collective responsibility across all sectors.

Benefits

- **Long-term Water Sustainability:** By constructing rainwater harvesting structures, the initiative ensures better groundwater recharge and a sustainable water supply.
- **Improved Water Accessibility:** especially in drought-prone regions, reducing dependence on external water sources.
- **Health Benefits:** with clean water particularly by prevention from waterborne diseases.
- **Environmental Conservation:** by reducing water wastage and promoting water reuse and recycling.
- **Increased Agricultural Efficiency:** by using water-efficient farming practices as agriculture uses 80% of India's water resources and help in improving crop yields.

Extra Mile: Water Conservation Initiatives by the Government

Water is a state subject, and the Central Government supplements the efforts of the States through technical and financial support. Major Steps taken by the Government for conservation of water in the country are as follows:

1. **Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater, 2020:** It is a macro level plan prepared by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) in consultation with States/UTs envisaging construction of about 1.42 crore rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge structures in the country to harness 185 billion Cubic Metre (BCM) of monsoon rainfall.
2. **Jal Shakti Abhiyan (JSA)** is being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti since 2019 on an annual basis. Its 4th phase- “Catch the Rain 2023” was implemented in all the districts (rural as well as urban) of the country from March 2023 to November 2023.
3. **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** is being implemented since 2015-16 to enhance physical access of water on farm and expand cultivable area under assured irrigation, improve on farm water use efficiency (Principle of ‘Per drop more crop’), introduce sustainable water conservation practices etc.
4. **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)** was launched in 2019 to improve the management of ground water resources including rainwater harvesting in water stressed areas through community participation in identified priority areas in 7 states viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UP.
5. **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** includes water conservation and water harvesting structures as one of the activities under its natural resource management (NRM) component.
6. **Unified Building Bye Laws (UBBL) of Delhi, 2016, Model Building Bye Laws (MBBL), 2016 and Urban and Regional Development Plan Formulation and Implementation (URDPFI) Guidelines, 2014:** has been formulated by the Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs has formulated guidelines for the States to adopt measures suitable to local conditions with adequate focus on requirement of rainwater harvesting and water conservation measures.
7. **Financial assistance under 15th Commission** was given to various States for rainwater harvesting.
8. **National Water Mission (NWM):** to conserve water, minimize wastage, and ensure equitable distribution of water across various sectors by focusing on promoting water use efficiency, groundwater recharge, and sustainable development of water resources.
9. **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):** was launched in 2019 to provide piped water supply to all rural households by 2024 (Har Ghar Nal se Jal) through decentralized water management, community participation, and leveraging technology.
10. **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT):** was launched in 2015 for development of basic urban infrastructure in the Mission cities in the sectors of water supply, sewerage & septage management, storm water drainage, green spaces & parks and non-motorized urban transport.
11. **Namami Gange Programme:** was launched in 2014 to rejuvenate the River Ganga and its tributaries by addressing pollution, promoting sustainable wastewater management, and restoring the ecological health of the river basin.
12. **Interlinking of Rivers (ILR):** is being done by the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) under the National Perspective Plan (NPP). It has two components, viz., Himalayan Rivers Development Component and Peninsular Rivers Development Component.

New Notary Portal

The Minister of State, Ministry of Law & Justice launched the new Notary Portal (<https://notary.gov.in>) in a function organized by the Department of Law & Justice in New Delhi recently.

About the Notary Portal

Need for the Notary Portal

- **Digitalization of Processes & Alignment with Digital India Initiative:** A move towards a paperless and faceless system aligned with the Digital India initiative.

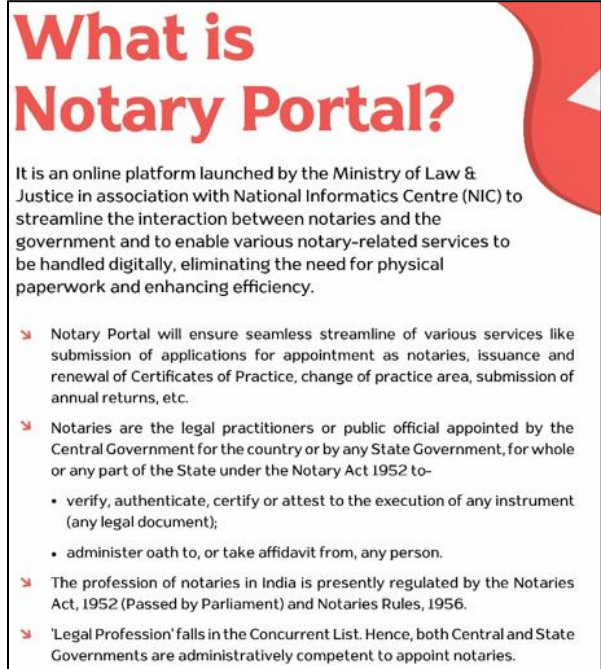
- **Efficiency in Administration & Avoidance of Delays and Miscommunication:** To make the selection, appointment, and management of notaries faster, more efficient, and transparent.
- **Reduction of Malpractices:** Digital records of notarial work help in maintaining a transparent database, curbing issues such as document forgery and unauthorized practices.
- **Centralized Record Keeping:** To create a digital storage facility for all notary-related records, ensuring easy access and monitoring for Audit Trails.

Key Features

- **Online Submission:** for appointments and renewals could be done by notaries.
- **Digital Certificates:** of Practice are issued and stored digitally will be accessible through Digi Locker.
- **Tracking and Monitoring:** of applications by Notaries will be possible in real-time.
- **Phased Rollout:** Module relating to issue of Certificate of Practice to the provisionally selected Notaries has been launched.
 - ✓ Modules relating to renewal of Certificate of Practice and submission of Annual Returns will be launched later.

Benefits

- **Ease of Application:** with respect to appointments and renewal applications for notaries.
- **Transparency and Efficiency:** as applications can be submitted and tracked online.
- **Digital Certification:** as Notaries can download digitally signed Certificates of Practice from their DigiLocker accounts, simplifying certification management.
- **Country-wide access and enhanced user experience.**



What is Notary Portal?

It is an online platform launched by the Ministry of Law & Justice in association with National Informatics Centre (NIC) to streamline the interaction between notaries and the government and to enable various notary-related services to be handled digitally, eliminating the need for physical paperwork and enhancing efficiency.

- Notary Portal will ensure seamless streamline of various services like submission of applications for appointment as notaries, issuance and renewal of Certificates of Practice, change of practice area, submission of annual returns, etc.
- Notaries are the legal practitioners or public official appointed by the Central Government for the country or by any State Government, for whole or any part of the State under the Notary Act 1952 to-
 - verify, authenticate, certify or attest to the execution of any instrument (any legal document);
 - administer oath to, or take affidavit from, any person.
- The profession of notaries in India is presently regulated by the Notaries Act, 1952 (Passed by Parliament) and Notaries Rules, 1956.
- 'Legal Profession' falls in the Concurrent List. Hence, both Central and State Governments are administratively competent to appoint notaries.

Vishvasya-Blockchain Technology Stack

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the Vishvasya-Blockchain Technology Stack to offer **Blockchain-as-a-Service (BaaS)** with a geographically distributed infrastructure designed to support various permissioned Blockchain based applications along with the **NBFLite**, **Praamaanik** and **National Blockchain Portal**.

About the Newly Launched Blockchain Technologies

Vishvasya-Blockchain Technology Stack

Vishvasya stack hosted across NIC Data Centers in Bhubaneswar, Pune, and Hyderabad will offer 'blockchain-as-a-service' (**BaaS**) through a geographically distributed infrastructure designed to support various permissioned blockchain-based applications.

- ✓ BaaS provides an organization with access to a blockchain network without the organization needing to develop its own blockchain.
- ✓ Permissioned blockchains are distributed ledgers that only allow access to users who have been granted access.

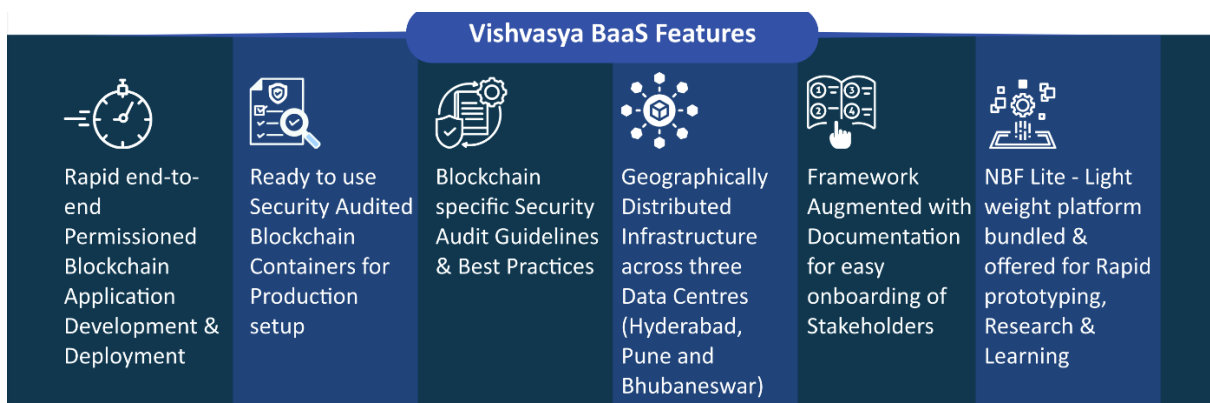
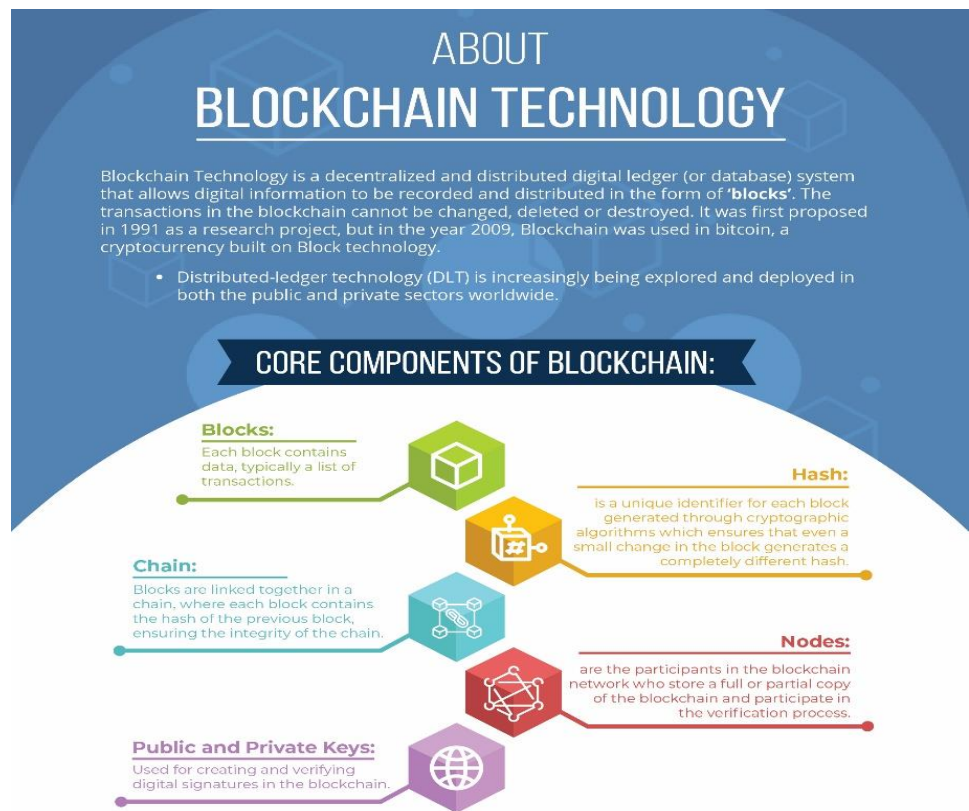
Objective: To address the challenges of blockchain adoption across various stakeholders, including infrastructure providers, smart-contract developers and application developers.

Benefits

- **Enables Trust among Stakeholders:** by developing new types of distributed software architectures, capable of finding consensus on their shared states and providing a single source of truth.
- **Security Assurance:** of various Blockchain components across the stack through its Blockchain as a Service (BaaS) model while reducing the need for skilled human resources;
- **Technological Support:** to organizations in developing and deploying Blockchain applications.

Vishwasya Stack based Applications in India

- e-Stamps Solution, Judiciary Application, IPS officers service level training record management, Forensic Application, Inspection system for Child Care Institutions
- Praamaanik-verification of mobile app authenticity, Consent Management Framework, IoT Device Security Management



- Domicile Certificate Chain, Document Chain (Caste Certificate Chain, Property Chain, Education Certificate Chain)
- Tracking of Agriculture Produce: Cotton bale identification and tracking (A system that uses a unique number and barcode to track a bale of cotton from the gin to the textile mill.)

NBFLite

- NBFLite, a Blockchain sandbox platform, is developed especially for startups/academia for rapid prototyping of applications, carrying out research and capacity building.
- These technologies have been developed by collaborating efforts of C-DAC, NIC, IDRBT Hyderabad, IIT Hyderabad, IIIT Hyderabad and SETS Chennai under the MeitY support.

Praamaanik powered by the National Blockchain Framework will help citizens verify **mobile app origins**.

Working

1. Registration and Verification (App Owners):

- **Mobile App Owners** (financial apps, banking apps, government apps, etc.) start by registering on the Praamaanik platform through <https://appverify.cdacchain.in>.
- After registration, there is an **App Ownership Verification** process to confirm the identity and ownership of the app. Once verification is successful, the user (app owner) is enabled for further steps.

2. Fingerprint Registration on Blockchain:

- After being verified, app owners upload their **APK (Android Package)** file to Praamaanik (only one-time upload required).
- The platform then registers the **app's fingerprint** (a cryptographic hash representing the app's identity) onto the **blockchain**. This creates an immutable record using a **smart contract** to secure the app's fingerprint.

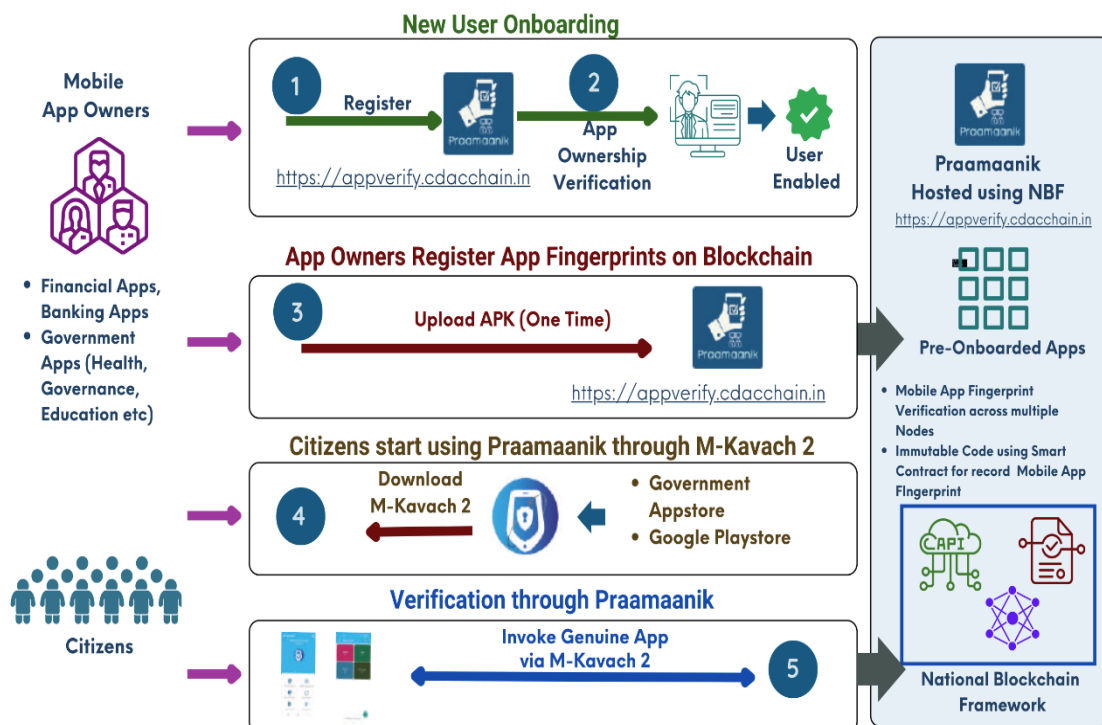
3. Citizens Using Praamaanik via M-Kavach 2:

- Citizens download the **M-Kavach 2** application, which can be obtained from either the **Government Appstore** or **Google Playstore**.
- Once M-Kavach 2 is installed, citizens can start using it to interact with apps registered through Praamaanik.

4. Verification through Praamaanik:

- When a citizen tries to open or use an app via M-Kavach 2, the system invokes **Praamaanik** to verify the app's authenticity.
- Praamaanik verifies the app by comparing its fingerprint against the one stored on the **National Blockchain Framework (NBF)**, which contains multiple nodes ensuring security and immutability.

- 5. **Secure Verification:** Once the app is verified as genuine, citizens can safely use the app through M-Kavach 2. This prevents malicious or tampered apps from being used and ensures the app's integrity.



National Blockchain Portal

- It has been developed based on the theme of **Content Management System** to manage the contents related to the National Blockchain Framework initiative.
- It contains information related to the current Blockchain News, latest Articles, Events, Conferences, Education & Training, Success Stories thereby providing the viewers with the latest updates on Blockchain trends.
- The NBF is built on a distributed infrastructure and includes key components such as Distributed Infrastructure, Core Framework Functionality, Smart Contracts & API Gateway, and Security, Privacy & Interoperability.
- ✓ An API gateway (Application Programming Interface) is software that acts as an intermediary between a user's application and a collection of backend services.

Features

- **Integrated AI Chatbot:** for quick search on the queries related to the portal contents.
- **Crowdsourced Content:** Facilitating the Users to "Contribute Content".
- **Managed Content:** Using various roles such as "User", "Reviewer" and "Admin" role.
- **Subscription:** for providing regular updates about the latest portal content.

International Day of Democracy

- Karnataka on September 15th marked the 'International Day of Democracy' by forming a 'historic' 2,500-km-long human chain as a symbol of equality, unity, fraternity, and participative governance.
- **Theme for 2024: 'Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for Good Governance',**

The Role of UNESCO:

- **UNESCO plays a significant role in supporting the development and strengthening of democratic institutions, particularly during transitions.**
- The organization commemorates this day to uphold the democratic ideal & promote values of **dignity, equality & mutual respect** along with **tolerance, pluralism, and human rights.**
- **UNESCO's work focuses on promoting freedom of expression, education, youth empowerment, and the right to scientific progress.**

Significance of International Day of Democracy

1. **Strengthening Democracy:** It serves as an opportunity to assess the **state of democracy** around the world by encouraging Governments, civil society, and citizens to reflect on their democratic processes and take action

Inception:

- Each year on **September 15**, people worldwide observe the **International Day of Democracy**, established by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** in 2007 to promote and strengthen democratic values.
 - The date, September 15, was chosen by the UNGA in 2007 as it marks the anniversary of the Geneva based adoption of the Universal Declaration on Democracy by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)** in 1997, which outlines the core principles of democracy such as freedom, human rights, political rights and the rule of law.
 - IPU is the international organization of Parliaments. It was established in 1889 in Paris to promote representative democracy and world peace. The IPU moved its headquarters to Geneva in 1921. (Slogan of IPU : "For democracy. For everyone")
- A wide range of events, such as photo contests, children's workshops, live debates, and meetings with civil society organizations, are organized globally to mark this important day, demonstrating creativity and enthusiasm.

History:

- The roots of this day trace back to the **International Conferences on New and Restored Democracies (ICNRD)**, an initiative started in 1988 by President Corazon C. Aquino of the Philippines, aimed at supporting emerging and reestablished democracies.
- The **sixth ICNRD** conference, held in **Doha, Qatar** in 2006, reinforced the role of governments, parliaments, and civil society in promoting democracy.
- Following this, Qatar spearheaded efforts to establish the **International Day of Democracy**, with September 15 chosen as the date to coincide with the anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy. The UN General Assembly officially adopted the day on **November 8, 2007.**

to strengthen them. This is crucial in the face of global challenges such as **authoritarianism, disinformation, and shrinking civic space.**

- 2. Encouraging Citizen Participation (Consultative Approach):** It promotes inclusiveness and urges people to engage in **political processes** such as elections, public debates, and governance initiatives to shape their societies.
- 3. Addressing Contemporary Issues:** Each year, it highlights a **theme** that addresses pressing global issues. Recent themes have included the role of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in governance and the importance of democracy in achieving the **UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs- especially SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).**
- 4. Promoting Peace and Stability:** Democratic systems are closely linked to **peaceful governance.** The day underscores how democracy helps maintain stability by ensuring the **rule of law,** preventing conflicts, and promoting **inclusive decision-making** processes.
- 5. Global Cooperation:** The observance fosters **international cooperation** by encouraging countries to work together in promoting democratic ideals. It acknowledges that democracy is not a one-size-fits-all system. It promotes discussion of contemporary challenges, such as digital governance, environmental democracy, and the role of social media in political discourse.

Extra Mile: Democracy and its Challenges

What is Democracy?

- It is a system of government where power is vested in the people, who exercise it either directly or through elected representatives.
- **Abraham Lincoln** defined democracy as "**a government of the people, by the people, and for the people**". It ensures that everyone, regardless of background, has a voice in shaping the future of their country.
- It empowers individuals by giving them the power to choose their leaders and hold them accountable. It is based on the principle of popular sovereignty, meaning that the ultimate authority rests with the people.
- It is based on principles like political equality, freedom of expression, the rule of law, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and periodic free and fair elections.

Challenges Faced by Democracy Worldwide

- 1. Erosion of Democratic Institutions:** In many countries, democratic institutions like independent courts, free press, and political opposition are under threat as their leaders attempt to consolidate power, weakening the checks and balances that are vital for democratic functioning. For example, in Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has been accused of undermining democratic institutions by restricting media freedom and weakening judicial independence.
- 2. Misinformation and Fake News:** spread through social media, undermines public trust in democratic processes and institutions. It can distort election results by misinforming voters or eroding confidence in the electoral system. For example, during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, false information spread widely across social media platforms, potentially affecting voters' decisions and increasing political polarization.
- 3. Political Polarization:** makes it difficult for democratic governments to function effectively. When political parties or factions refuse to compromise, it can lead to government gridlock, weakening the legitimacy of democratic systems. For example, the United States has experienced significant political polarization, especially between Democrats and Republicans resulting in policy gridlock and a divided electorate, making consensus difficult on key issues.
- 4. Authoritarianism and Backsliding:** Some countries that previously embraced democracy have experienced "democratic backsliding," where elected leaders or parties gradually dismantle democratic institutions or norms while maintaining the appearance of democracy. For example, in Turkey, President Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan has been accused of undermining democratic institutions by centralizing power, weakening the independence of the judiciary, and suppressing political opposition and the media.

5. **Weak Civil Society:** A robust civil society is essential for a healthy democracy. In countries where civil society is weak, citizens may lack the means to hold the government accountable or engage in meaningful political participation. For example, in Russia, the government has restricted the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups, making it harder for citizens to mobilize against government actions or demand reforms.
6. **External Interference:** Foreign interference in domestic political processes is a growing challenge for democracies. Cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and other forms of interference can undermine electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy. For example, allegations of Russian interference in elections in various Western democracies, including the U.S. and several European countries, have raised concerns about the impact of external actors on domestic democratic processes.
7. **Corruption:** When leaders misuse public resources for personal gain, it undermines the core democratic principle of serving the people. For example, South Africa has faced significant challenges with corruption, particularly during the presidency of Jacob Zuma, where scandals related to state capture and misuse of public funds severely damaged public trust in government.
8. **Emergence of Digital Authoritarianism:** While technology has the potential to strengthen democracy, it can also be used by authoritarian regimes to suppress dissent and control citizens through digital surveillance and censorship. Example: China's use of facial recognition technology, mass surveillance, and the "Great Firewall" to control the internet has become a model of digital authoritarianism, which some other countries have started to emulate.
9. **Ethnic and Religious Conflict:** Ethnic and religious divisions can exacerbate tensions in democratic societies, particularly when these conflicts are exploited by political leaders for personal or political gain. Example: Countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka have experienced ethnic and religious conflicts that have challenged the ability of democratic institutions to maintain peace and inclusivity.
10. **Global Challenges: Climate Change and Migration:** Global issues like climate change and mass migration are increasingly posing challenges for democracies. Example: In Europe, the influx of migrants and refugees has sparked political debates and fueled the rise of populist and anti-immigration parties.

National Instructional Media Institute (NIMI)

In a significant move to make vocational education more accessible, the National Instructional Media Institute (NIMI), under the Directorate General of Training (DGT) and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), launched a series of YouTube channels recently.

- ✓ This initiative aligns with India's National Skill Development Mission (NSDM) and the goals of the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020.
- ✓ The National Skill Development Mission (NSDM), launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), aims to streamline skill training across sectors and states. It focuses on rapidly scaling skilling efforts and creating a sustainable livelihood framework that aligns with employer demands.
- ✓ The New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to overhaul the structure, content, and delivery of education at all levels, from primary to higher education.

About National Instructional Media Institute (NIMI- Got Autonomous status on 1st April 1999)

- It is a premier Indian institution dedicated to developing and providing instructional materials and media for vocational training.
- Established in December 1986 as the Central Instructional Media Institute (CIMI) and renamed NIMI in 2003, it operates under the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

- **Vision:** To achieve global standards in vocational education by serving as the leading organization for curriculum development, instructional media packages, and test item creation for vocational courses in India.

Functions of NIMI

1. Development of Instructional Media Packages (IMPs):

- It creates instructional media packages, including digital content and Question Banks, tailored to various vocational courses.
- Content development is based on thorough assessments of student requirements and understanding levels, aligned with the curriculum provided by DGT.

2. Support for Facilities and Infrastructure:

It provides services related to the design, development, production, and dissemination of instructional media for both long-term and short-term courses.

3. Mock Test Application:

Developing a mock test application featuring performance assessment analytics, is considered one of its flagship activities to facilitate practice and evaluation.

4. Content Translation and E-Content Development:

- It translates instructional content and Question Banks into Hindi and other regional languages to enhance accessibility.
- It develops e-content to accommodate new-age learners and keep pace with technological advancements.
- NIMI also provides its e-content through **Bharat Skill portal** which is made readily available to the student with free download provision.

5. Innovation in Learning Techniques for Skill Development and Outreach:

by introducing innovative techniques such as blended learning, e-learning materials, QR codes, and 2D/3D models to modernize the learning experience and align with Industry 4.0.

6. Regional Language Content Development:

It creates content in various regional languages to address the needs of diverse populations and improve understanding and dissemination of vocational knowledge, particularly in remote areas.

Enemy Property Act

A parcel of land in Uttar Pradesh, previously belonging to the family of former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, is set to be auctioned under The Enemy Property Act (EPA) which allows the Indian government to take control of “enemy property”.

What is Enemy Property

- After Partition in 1947 and during the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, people migrated from India to Pakistan. Under the Defence of India Rules (1962), the Indian government took over properties and companies of those who acquired Pakistani nationality, designating them as “enemy properties.”

• Types of Enemy Properties:

1. Moveable Properties: This includes bank accounts, shares, or jewellery etc left behind.
2. Immovable Properties: This primarily refers to land, buildings, or other real estate properties.

- The Custodian of Enemy Property for India (CEPI) was vested with these properties, as well as those left by migrants to China after the 1962 Sino-Indian War.

✓The **Custodian of Enemy Property for India (CEPI-under the Ministry of Home Affairs)** is a government authority responsible for managing enemy properties and assets.

✓The custodian's office is located in Delhi with a branch office in Mumbai, Calcutta and Lucknow.

- The Tashkent Declaration of 1966 included a clause that India and Pakistan would discuss the return of the property and assets taken over by either side in connection with the conflict. But Pakistan disposed of such assets in 1971.

- The **Tashkent Declaration of 1966** was a peace agreement signed by India and Pakistan following the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965.
- The declaration aimed to restore economic and diplomatic relations between the two countries and resolve the aftermath of the war.
- It was mediated by the Soviet Union, with Prime Minister **Lal Bahadur Shastri** of India and President **Ayub Khan** of Pakistan signing the agreement in **Tashkent**, which was then part of the Soviet Union (now in Uzbekistan).

How Did India Deal with Enemy Property

- The EPA 1968 was enacted to provide for the vesting of enemy properties in the Custodian.
- Parliament passed an amendment in 2017- the Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017 that amended the EPA, 1968 and the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorized Occupants) Act, 1971. The amended act:
 - Expanded the definition of “enemy subject” and “enemy firm”.
 - Ensured that enemy properties would remain with the Custodian, even after the death or nationality change of the enemy.
 - Allowed the government to direct the Custodian to dispose of the properties.

Need for Amendments

- To prevent claims of succession or transfer by heirs of individuals who migrated to Pakistan or China.
- To empower the custodian as some court rulings had undermined it’s authority, making it difficult for the government to retain control over enemy properties.

What was the Case Which Undermined the Authority of CEPI?

- **Background:** The **Raja of Mahmudabad** in Uttar Pradesh owned large properties in Hazratganj, Sitapur, and Nainital. After **Partition**, the Raja left for Pakistan in 1957 and took its citizenship, while his wife and son remained in India as citizens.
- **Declaration of Enemy Property and Claim:** The Raja’s estate was declared **enemy property** under the **Enemy Property Act of 1968**. After the Raja’s death, his son claimed ownership of the properties.
- **Supreme Court Judgement:** In 2005, the court ruled in favor of the son, opening the door for more claims on enemy properties by relatives of those who migrated to Pakistan.
- **2010 Ordinance:** An **Ordinance** was issued by the central government for preventing courts from ordering the return of enemy properties from the Custodian, effectively nullifying the 2005 Supreme Court ruling. A Bill was also introduced in 2010 but lapsed during the 15th Lok Sabha.
- **Enemy Property (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2017** was enacted to prevent claims of succession.

About the Enemy Property Act

Feature	Enemy Property Act, 1968	Enemy Property (Amendment & Validation) Act, 2017
‘Enemy’ Definition	Country and citizens committing external aggression.	Expanded to include legal heirs, successors, and firms, even if the heirs were Indian citizens or nationals of non-enemy countries.
Vesting of Property	Vesting of property with the Custodian after conflicts with Pakistan & China.	Prohibits Indian citizens who are legal heirs of enemies from inheriting enemy property

Divestment	Allowed divestment and return of property by the government.	Return allowed only after government review; property must not be enemy property.
Transfers by Enemies	Prohibited if against public interest or to avoid vesting.	Prohibits all transfers, past or future, making them void.
Jurisdiction of Courts	Allowed Civil courts to entertain cases related to enemy property.	Bars Civil courts from entertaining cases related to enemy property.
Powers of Custodian	Allowed custodian to preserve property and maintain enemies in India.	Permits custodian to sell, lease, mortgage, and collect rent or evict occupants.

Present Status of Enemy Properties in India:

- There are at least 12,611 assets, or enemy property located in India of which 12,485 belong to Pakistani nationals and 126 belong to Chinese citizens. The government estimates the value of these properties at approximately Rs 1 lakh crore. Most of these properties are in Uttar Pradesh, followed by West Bengal and Delhi.
- In 2023, the Central government earned over ₹3,400 crore from the disposal of movable 'enemy properties', like shares and gold.

How are the Enemy Properties Disposed?

- **For Properties Valued Below ₹1 crore:** the custodian must offer the occupant the choice of purchase. If they refuse, the property will be e-auctioned.
- **For Properties Valued Over ₹1 crore:** but less than ₹100 crore, the CEPI can dispose them through e-auction or through a rate determined by the Enemy Property Disposal Committee, unless the Central government chooses to retain it.
- **Platform for Auction:** All auctions take place through the Metal Scrap Trade Corporation Limited, a Central public sector undertaking.

Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT)

The Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) has launched a website "Shabd" offering technical terms in all 22 Scheduled Indian languages for various educational subjects.

Background

- The government in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, has introduced technical education, including engineering and medicine, in Indian languages to enhance understanding and learning outcomes.
 - ✓ The NEP 2020 lays down the key principles of ensuring equity, promoting quality education, and lifelong learning for all by prioritizing curriculum reform, experiential learning promotion, skill acquisition strengthening, teacher professional development improvement, technology integration, and research and innovation support.
- The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has launched the "AICTE Technical Book Writing and Translation" initiative in 12 scheduled languages.
- The government is also working with technical education departments to provide one set of these books to libraries in degree and diploma-level institutions.
- Therefore, going with the government's efforts to make education more feasible and easier to understand for students from different backgrounds, the CSTT has launched *Shabd*.

About CSTT

Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology was established in 1961 under Article 344 with the objective to evolve technical terminology in all Indian Languages. Presently, CSTT is functioning under Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, with its headquarters at New Delhi.

Primary Function: To evolve standard terminology, propagate its use and distribute it widely.

Functions

1. **Development of Scientific and Technical Terminology:** Define and evolve scientific and technical terms in Hindi and Indian languages. (Identification of Pan Indian Terms)
2. Providing necessary terminology to the **National Translation Mission**.
3. **Dissemination:** Ensure terms and definitions reach students, teachers, scholars, scientists, and officers.
4. **Feedback and Improvement:** Obtain feedback through workshops, training, and seminars for updates and corrections.
5. **Encouragement of Technical Writing:** Promote technical writing in Hindi and other Indian languages by sponsoring seminars and conferences.
6. **Coordination with States:** and agencies to ensure uniformity of terminology across Hindi and Indian languages.
7. **Publication Support:** Encourage the publication of books, magazines, and journals to popularize standardized terminology.

Publications

- **Glossaries and Dictionaries:** CSTT regularly publishes bilingual, trilingual, and multilingual glossaries, as well as definitional dictionaries and monographs.
- **Journals:** It publishes two quarterly journals: *Vigyan Garima Sindhu* and *Gyan Garima Sindhu*.
- **University Textbooks:** CSTT also publishes university-level textbooks through Granth Academies, textbook boards, and publication cells across India.
- **Administrative Glossaries:** CSTT publishes glossaries for government departments, institutions, research laboratories, autonomous organizations, and public sector units.

Other Initiatives: It organizes workshops, seminars, symposiums, conferences, orientation, and training programs to promote the use of standardized terminology in Hindi and other Indian languages.

Achievements: Till date, CSTT has standardized the terminology of about Nine lakhs technical terms in different subjects and in different languages and has published large number of Definitional Dictionaries, Glossaries, Text-Books, Reference Materials and Monographs, Quarterly Journals and many more works of similar nature.

About Shabd (launched in March 2024)

- Shabd is the CSTT's glossary search website, available at <https://shabd.education.gov.in>.
- It serves as a central digital repository of CSTT's glossaries, **searchable** in multiple Indian languages.
- **Content:** It contains words taken from various definitional dictionaries, glossaries, and reference materials that have been published by the CSTT over the years.

Features

- **Search by Language:** Users can search for scientific and technical terms by language, subject, dictionary type, and language pairs.
- **Feedback:** The platform allows feedback on existing terms and hosts works from other institutions.

What Was The Process Of Collating The Words?

- The CSTT prepares the terminologies through the Expert Advisory Committees consisting of subject and language experts, along with linguists, who are focused on finding out the equivalent terms in the specific subject areas and language.
- The terminology prepared by CSTT is used by Granth Academies, textbook boards, and publication cells for textbook preparation and is also used by institutions such as NTA, NCERT, NTM, AICTE, and so on.

Future Plans: CSTT aims to use AI and digital technologies to further enhance the platform's capabilities.

Extra Mile: Government Initiatives to Boost Understanding by Introducing Education in Indian Languages

India, with over 1.4 million schools and 414 million students, plays a key role in promoting educational accessibility and global investment in education. In the 2024-25 Interim Budget, India increased its education sector allocation by 10%, reaching ₹1,24,638 crore (US\$ 15 billion)

- 1. Promotion of Classical and Tribal Languages:** Education in non-scheduled Indian languages was introduced recently by the Centre especially for early childhood, which includes 17 tribal languages. In this major push for education in mother tongue, school students from different parts of the country will now be getting access to education in their native language.
- 2. Mother Tongue Instruction:** NEP 2020 emphasizes teaching in the mother tongue or regional language at least until Grade 5, and preferably until Grade 8. This aims to improve comprehension and cognitive skills by enabling students to learn in their native languages.
- 3. E-content in Indian Languages:** The government promotes the development of digital content, textbooks, and study materials in multiple Indian languages. Platforms like DIKSHA (NCERT Platform) and SWAYAM offer online courses and learning resources in regional languages.
- 4. Three-Language Formula:** This policy is aimed at promoting multilingualism and linguistic diversity by encouraging students to learn three languages: the regional language, Hindi (in non-Hindi states), or English, along with another modern Indian or foreign language.
 - ✓ The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) mandates teaching of 3 languages (including 2 Indian languages) in classes 9-10 & 2 languages (including 1 Indian language) in class 11-12.
- 5. Bharatvani Project:** by Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) offers digitization and web hosting of pedagogical resources including books and dictionaries for numerous languages.
- 6. The National Translation Mission (NTM)** is a government initiative to make knowledge accessible to all through translation into the 22 languages of India. The NTM is implemented by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in Mysore.
- 7. The National Testing Service–** India housed in CIIL developed testing & evaluation facility for various Indian languages and provided training to school teachers.
- 8. Bhasha Sangam Initiative:** It will allow the students of class 10 and 12 of CBSE board to explore the various languages under the Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India.
 - ✓ **Bhartiya Bhasha Summit** organized as part of Bharatiya Bhasha Utsav, is jointly organized by the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), set the course for a technologically enriched future for Bharatiya languages in education.
- 9. The BharatGPT group** — led by IIT Bombay along with seven other elite Indian engineering institutes announced 'Hanooman' (a series of large language models (LLMs) that can respond in 22 Indian languages for Education translation)
- 10. NCERT Textbooks in Regional Languages:** NCERT translates its textbooks into various Indian languages to ensure that students from different linguistic backgrounds have access to standard study materials in their mother tongues.
- 11. SUVAS (Supreme Court VidhikAnuvaad Software)-** developed with technical support from MeitY and deployed by the Supreme Court. SUVAS is an AI machine-assisted translation tool to promote regional languages in judicial Education & procedure.

Right to Disconnect

With the recent death of an Ernst & Young (E&Y) affiliated company employee allegedly due to overwhelming work stress, the *Right to Disconnect* is in discussion again.

- ✓ A recent survey conducted by **Indeed**, the global job matching and hiring platform, also reveals that 79 per cent of Indian employers believe that implementing a “right to disconnect” policy at work would be a positive step forward.

What is the Right to Disconnect (RtD)?

- The Right to Disconnect (RtD) refers to an employee's right to disengage from work-related communications, such as emails, calls, or messages, during non-working hours.
- This ensures that employees are not obligated to be available outside of their contractual work hours, promoting a balance between personal and professional life (Work-Life Balance).
- With the rise of digital technology and the proliferation of smartphones, employees are increasingly expected to remain connected to work even outside their formal hours.
- This often leads to "**digital presenteeism**," where employees feel compelled to respond to work communications at all times.

The Right to Disconnect helps to counteract this pressure and re-establish boundaries in a hyper-connected world.

Need for Right to Disconnect (RtD)

- **Mental Health:** Highly connected work environments in today's world where the boundaries between work and home life are blurred leads to stress, burnout, and mental health issues like anxiety and sleep disorders.
- **Work-Life Balance:** With the technology enabling work from home, many people no longer have definite working hours and are overburdened with work responsibilities 24/7. RtD can help employees reclaim personal time and maintain healthier relationships outside of work.
 - ✓ Employees with clear work boundaries are more likely to engage in restorative activities such as exercise, hobbies, or socializing, which contribute to long-term emotional well-being.
- **Increased Productivity:** Overworking often leads to diminished productivity. A 2014 Stanford University study found that after 50 hours of work, productivity starts to level off, and by 60 hours, it even declines. RtD can help increase productivity and focus of employees by allowing them time to learn new skills and engage in recreational activities.
 - ✓ Microsoft Japan experimented with a four-day workweek and saw a productivity increase of 40%, highlighting that well-rested employees tend to work more efficiently when boundaries between work and personal time are well-defined.
- **Protection Against Exploitation:** The increasing flexibility in work arrangements, such as **gig economy** and remote work, has created an expectation of constant availability. Employees might feel pressured to be available around the clock, which can lead to exploitation. The right to disconnect safeguards workers from unreasonable demands on their time.
- **Physical Health:** Continuous work-related engagement, especially after hours, has been associated with poor sleep quality and a sedentary lifestyle, leading to physical health problems like cardiovascular diseases and sleep disorders.
 - ✓ The American Psychological Association (APA) points out that work-related stress is a leading cause of physical health issues in the workplace, which cost companies billions in lost productivity and healthcare expenses annually.

Global Status of the Right to Disconnect

- **France:** France was the first country to enact the right to disconnect in 2017.
- **Australia:** In 2024, Australia passed the legislation ensuring that employees are not penalized for not being available outside work hours.
- **Germany:** While there isn't a law, several companies, like Volkswagen and Daimler, voluntarily have adopted internal policies to limit after-hours emails and communication.

- **Spain and Italy:** These countries have also implemented laws protecting workers' rights to disconnect from digital work platforms during non-working hours.
- **India:** In India, the **Right to Disconnect is not yet legally recognized**. Member of Parliament (MP) Supriya Sule drafted a Private Member's Bill for such a right, through the Right to Disconnect Bill of 2018, which was never taken up for discussion in the House. It proposed that every registered company and society should form Employees' Welfare Committees consisting of its employees to assist employees in the negotiation of terms and conditions of out-of-work hours with employers.

Arguments Against RtD

- **Reduced Flexibility:** In some industries, especially where global clients are involved, flexibility and availability across different time zones are critical, and the right to disconnect may limit this.
- **Challenges in Enforcement:** It may be difficult to monitor and enforce disconnection, especially in cases where employees willingly engage in work outside hours due to personal ambition or company culture.
- **Cultural Resistance:** In some organizations, especially in highly competitive environments, the culture of "always being available" is deeply ingrained. Overcoming this cultural resistance can be difficult.
- **Impact on Team Dynamics:** In certain high-pressure environments or crisis situations, immediate responses may be necessary. A rigid RtD could potentially slow down urgent workflows.
- **Client Relationship Management:** In industries like consulting or customer support, client satisfaction often hinges on timely responses. RtD might negatively impact client trust if immediate assistance is not available when needed. This could especially affect businesses that deal with international clients, where communication across time zones is expected.
- **Competitiveness Concerns:** Limiting work hours could harm a company's competitiveness in the global market where round-the-clock availability is expected in certain sectors.
- **Lack of Customization for Varied Job Roles:** RtD might not be appropriate across all job roles. Some positions may require a higher level of connectivity, while others may not. A one-size-fits-all policy could create unnecessary friction in companies where different roles have varying demands for responsiveness.
 - ✓ Project managers overseeing global operations may need to stay connected during critical phases, while other roles might not need such availability. Imposing RtD across all functions could hamper project timelines and accountability.

In India, as the workplace becomes increasingly digitalized and employees are expected to be "always on," RtD can help to safeguard employees' mental health, promote work-life balance, and ensure more sustainable work practices. However, while its benefits are significant, it also faces practical challenges related to flexibility, enforcement, and the need for immediate responsiveness in some sectors. Balancing these factors is crucial for successfully implementing this right.

Port Blair Renamed as Sri Vijaya Puram

Port Blair, the capital city of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has been officially renamed to 'Sri Vijaya Puram'. This move is aimed at shedding the colonial legacy associated with Port Blair and to recognize the contribution of Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the freedom struggle of India.

- ✓ In 2018, three islands were renamed from the Union Territory- **Ross Island** was rechristened as **Subhash Chandra Bose Dweep (island)**, **Neil Island** was renamed **Shaheed Dweep** and **Havelock Island** as **Swaraj Dweep**.

Process of Renaming a City or Town in India

1. **The Proposal:** A **Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)** proposes a **resolution** requesting the change of the name of a particular city or place within the state.
 - ✓ Changes to the name of a **road** requires the **authorization of the local municipal body**.

2. **Discussion of the Resolution:** The proposed resolution is then discussed in the **state legislature**. During the discussion, the **reasons** for the name change and the **possible consequences** (cultural, administrative, and public impact) are debated by the members.
3. **Voting on the Resolution:** After the discussion, a **formal vote** is conducted in the state legislative assembly. A **simple majority** is required for the resolution to pass. If the majority votes in favor, the resolution is considered **passed**.
4. **Submission to the Ministry of Home Affairs:** Once passed, the resolution is submitted to the **Ministry of Home Affairs** at the central government level which examines the proposal and consults with other **central agencies** for approvals like **Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Tourism, Intelligence Bureau (IB), Department of Posts (DoP), Survey of India (Sol) and Registrar General of India (RGI)**.
 - ✓ The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) may be consulted if the renaming has any diplomatic or international implications.
5. **No Objection Certificate (NOC):** After consulting these agencies, if all approvals are obtained, the Ministry of Home Affairs issues a **No Objection Certificate (NOC)** for the name change.
6. **Official Gazette Notification:** Once the NOC is received, the **State Government** issues an **official notification** in the **State Gazette**. The notification includes the **details of the name change** and officially makes the new name valid for administrative and public use. After the gazette notification, various departments and agencies update their records:
 - ✓ The Survey of India updates maps and geographical data.
 - ✓ The Railways, Postal Department, and other government institutions make changes to their official documents, signs, and communication systems.
7. **Public Communication:** The local administration and state government ensure public communication of the change. Public signage, railway stations, official documentation (such as government IDs, ration cards), and school textbooks are updated to reflect the new name.

Guidelines to be Followed for Name Changes

These guidelines were first issued in 1953 by Sardar Fateh Singh, the then Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs and were amended later in 2005. The guidelines lay five broad principles to guide the State Government when considering a name change:

1. **Compelling Reason Required:** No change is desirable unless there is a compelling reason for it. People generally get used to existing names, and changes may not be well-received.
2. **Preservation of Historical Significance:** The names of places that are historically important or connected to the area's history should be avoided from being changed.
 - ✓ **Restoring Ancient Names:** The guidelines also emphasized the need to **restore ancient names** of historically significant places. For example, the village now called **Gandhawal** in Madhya Pradesh, built on the ruins of the ancient town **Gandharvapuri**, could be renamed to restore its **historical identity**.
3. **Avoiding Patriotic or Linguistic Changes:** Name changes solely for **patriotic** or **linguistic reasons** should be avoided. An exception can be made for adding the name of a **martyr**, but only if the martyr's role is of **national recognition**.
4. **Avoiding Duplication of Names:** To prevent confusion, care should be taken that **neighboring places do not share the same name**.
5. **Providing Detailed Reasons:** The **State Government** must provide a **detailed reason** for proposing the name change.

The Parliament has the power to change the name of a state. The Constitution of India gives the parliament power to alter the name of a state under Article 3 which explicitly lays down a procedure to alter the area, boundaries, or name of a state.

**In August 2023, The Kerala Assembly passed a resolution unanimously urging the Centre to rename its state as “Keralam” in the Constitution and all office records.

Colonial Background of Port Blair

• Origins of Port Blair: Named After Lieutenant Archibald Blair

- In **December 1778**, Blair set sail from Calcutta on a survey of the Andaman Islands aboard two ships, *Elizabeth* and *Viper*. He explored the islands' west and east coasts, discovering a natural harbour.
- Initially named **Port Cornwallis** in honour of **Lord William Cornwallis**, the harbour was later renamed **Port Blair** to commemorate Blair's contributions.

• Establishment of a Penal Colony (1789)

- In **1789**, the **Government of Bengal** founded a penal colony on **Chatham Island** in the southeast bay of the Great Andaman, naming it after Blair.
- However, the colony was abandoned by **1796** due to rampant disease.

• Re-establishment as a Penal Colony (1857)

- After the **Revolt of 1857**, the British decided to renovate and resettle **Port Blair** as a penal colony to house the large number of prisoners. The first group of **200 prisoners** arrived in **March 1858**.

• The Cellular Jail (Kala Pani)

- The British constructed the infamous **Cellular Jail**, also known as **Kala Pani** (Black Waters), to imprison Indian convicts, primarily political prisoners, in solitary confinement.
- With the rise of the **Indian Independence Movement** in the late 19th century, the jail expanded, and by **1906**, it had become a massive structure.

Standing Committee on Statistics

Recently, the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) dissolved the 14-member Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS) headed by eminent economist and former chief statistician of the country Pronab Sen.

About SCoS

The SCoS was earlier known as the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) which was formed in 2019 to advise on all surveys as and when required by MoSPI. It was renamed to SCoS in 2023. Its functions included:

- 1. Review of Survey Framework and Methodology:** and address issues related to survey subjects, results, and methodology as raised by the MoSPI.
- 2. Advising on Survey Methodology:** by providing recommendations on **sampling frame, design, and instruments**, and finalizing the **tabulation plan** of surveys.
- 3. Finalization of Survey Results.**
- 4. Guidance for Pilot Surveys:** and pre-testing before finalizing data collection schedules.
- 5. Exploration of Administrative Statistics:** related to surveys.
- 6. Addressing Data Gaps:** and suggest strategies for improvement.
- 7. Technical Guidance:** to **central and state agencies** involved in surveys.

Why was the SCoS Dissolved?

The SCoS was dissolved for two reasons:

- 1. Delay in conducting Census 2021:** There were complaints regarding delays in economic census and the decennial census which maps the population of the country. India's last census was conducted in 2011, and it

has already overshoot the stipulated timeline for the next round due in 2021 due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**, and there has been no roadmap for the next census, even three years later.

2. **Worsening credibility of India’s statistical framework:** The Centre claimed that-
- The data provided by the EPFO, ESIC on its enrolments and Reserve Bank of India’s KLEMS (K: Capital, L: Labour, E: Energy, M: Materials and S: Services) database gave a rosy picture about the employment scenario in the country.
 - Chances of manipulating the administration data set were also high as government agencies generated that data and such data has limitations of analytical rigour.
 - Surveys results of the first Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) in 2019 showed unemployment had hit a 45-year high in 2017-18. It could not provide State or district-level data and allegedly had an urban bias.

Role of the New Steering Committee

- Composition and Tenure-** The new **Steering Committee** consists of **17 members** and one non-member secretary. Four experts from the SCoS were retained. Unlike the SCoS, the new committee has more **official members**, leading to a shift in the composition towards government representation. The tenure of the new committee will be for **two years**.
- Terms of Reference (ToR):** The **Steering Committee's mandate** is similar to that of the SCoS, including reviewing subject results, methodology questionnaires, sampling frames, sampling design, concepts, definitions, survey instruments, etc. related to all National Sample Surveys. It will also advise the Ministry on survey methodology and finalize the tabulation plan of surveys.

Extra Mile: About the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)	
Establishment and Structure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Founded on October 15, 1999, MoSPI was formed by merging the Department of Statistics and the Department of Programme Implementation. The ministry has two key wings: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistics Wing (NSO): Consisting of the Central Statistical Office (CSO), Computer Center, and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). 2. Programme Implementation Wing: Comprising three divisions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Twenty Point Programme (ii) Infrastructure Monitoring and Project Monitoring (iii) Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) National Statistical Commission (NSC) and Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) (an autonomous institute of national importance) are also part of MoSPI. 	
Responsibilities of the Statistics Wing (NSO) 1. Nodal Agency for Statistical Development <ol style="list-style-type: none"> NSO is responsible for planning and developing the statistical system of India. It sets norms for data collection, processing, and dissemination and coordinates between central and state agencies. International Comparison Program (ICP): NSO actively contributes to the ICP, which helps in comparing India's price levels, purchasing power parity (PPP), and other economic indicators with other nations. 	Responsibilities of Programme Implementation Wing 1. Twenty Point Programme Monitoring: Monitors the progress of the Twenty Point Programme (TPP) , aimed at improving living standards and reducing poverty. 2. Infrastructure Monitoring: Tracks

- 2. National Accounts and Economic Data:** It compiles data such as **national accounts, GDP, consumption, savings, and capital formation**, providing comprehensive economic indicators for policymaking.
- 3. International Liaison:** The NSO maintains links with international bodies like the **UN, IMF, ILO, FAO, and ADB**, participating in global efforts to enhance statistical standards.
- 4. Industrial and Economic Surveys:** NSO conducts **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** reports, **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)**, and **periodic all-India economic censuses** to monitor the manufacturing and industrial sectors.
- 5. Socio-Economic Data Collection:** Large-scale sample surveys cover areas like **employment, literacy, health, and consumer expenditure**. These surveys inform government policies on socio-economic development.
 - ✓ **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP):** Through this policy, NSO encourages open access to government data, enabling citizens, researchers, and businesses to leverage data for various purposes.
- 6. Data Dissemination:** The NSO disseminates statistical information through publications and provides data to national and international organizations, including the **UN, ESCAP, and ILO**.
- 7. Grants to Research Institutions:** It offers grants to **NGOs and research institutions** for studies, statistical reports, seminars, and workshops.
- 8. National Statistical Training Institute (NSTI):** NSO supports NSTI, which conducts workshops and seminars for statistical professionals, helping them stay updated with best practices.

performance in **11 key infrastructure sectors** like power, coal, steel, telecommunications, and civil aviation.

- 3. Project Monitoring:** Monitors all **Central Sector Projects** costing Rs. 150 crore and above.

The Wing has been instrumental in identifying cost overruns and delays in key infrastructure projects. Through its regular reviews, it suggests timely course corrections to reduce time and budget overruns.

- 4. Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS):** Ensures the effective implementation of the MPLADS scheme, facilitating development works in parliamentary constituencies.

Administration Division

- 1. Cadre Management:** It manages the **Indian Statistical Service and Subordinate Statistical Service**, handling aspects like training, career planning, and manpower management.
- 2. Nodal Ministry for ISI:** Ensures the functioning of the **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)** under the provisions of the **ISI Act, 1959**.

International Role and Quality Standards

- MoSPI plays a significant role in maintaining **quality standards** in statistical data, adhering to international frameworks like the **IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standards (SDDS)**.
- The ministry also conducts regular technical meetings to address **data gaps** and improve the **quality of released statistics**.
- MoSPI's officials contribute to international initiatives on methodologies in areas like **national accounts, informal sector statistics, service sector statistics, and environmental statistics**.

Challenges Faced by MoSPI

- 1. Delay in Census and Surveys:** and other critical national surveys. The last census was conducted in 2011, and the planned 2021 census was postponed due to the **COVID-19 pandemic**. The lack of updated census data affects accurate policymaking and resource allocation.
- 2. Data Gaps and Accuracy Concerns:** in various socio-economic sectors. The ministry often receives criticism regarding the **accuracy and reliability** of data, especially from **administrative sources** like the Employees'

Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) and the Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). These datasets can be threshold-based and may not provide a comprehensive picture of the labor market.

✓ The data on employment and unemployment reported by different government agencies, such as the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) by MoSPI and the data collected by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, often differ. These discrepancies make it difficult to assess the real employment situation in the country.

3. Lack of Coordination with Other Ministries and State Bureaus: to maintain consistent data quality and methodology poses challenges. Differences in approaches and capacities across states can lead to **discrepancies in data collection and interpretation.**

4. Quality Control of Statistical Data: collected through surveys and administrative sources is another significant challenge. The ministry needs to constantly **oversee and update methodological frameworks** to ensure data accuracy, which requires extensive scrutiny and technical expertise.

5. Technological Upgradation and Infrastructure: The increasing demand for **real-time data** and the need for **advanced data processing tools** create pressure for technological upgradation. MoSPI needs to continuously invest in improving its **data collection and processing infrastructure** to keep pace with global standards.

✓ The manual methods of collecting data, which are time-consuming and prone to errors, still dominate many surveys, such as household consumption surveys. This delay in adopting digital technologies has led to a lag in data availability.

6. Shortage of Trained Personnel: within the statistical services. Managing a vast network of surveys and data collection with limited skilled manpower can affect the quality and timeliness of the data.

7. Deficit of Public Trust and Transparency: The ministry often faces **criticism from experts and policymakers** regarding the **transparency** of data. Discrepancies in employment, poverty, and economic indicators have led to skepticism about the accuracy of official data. **Building public trust** in government-released statistics remains a persistent challenge

8. Handling Data on Informal Sectors: India's large informal economy poses a major challenge for MoSPI. The lack of formal records and the fluid nature of employment in informal sectors make it difficult to gather reliable data on informal workers, informal enterprises, and their contributions to the economy.

✓ MoSPI has struggled to accurately estimate the size of India's informal sector, which accounts for a large portion of employment but is difficult to capture through traditional surveys. This results in underestimations or misreporting of the true size and impact of the informal economy on GDP.

9. Global Comparability of Data: MoSPI faces challenges in aligning its methods with those used globally, especially in areas like environmental statistics, gender data, and sustainable development indicators.

✓ **Global Hunger Index Discrepancy:** India's ranking on the Global Hunger Index has been subject to controversy, with the government questioning the methodology used by international organizations.

Legality of Deception Detection (Lie Detector) Tests

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recently conducted polygraph tests on seven people, in connection with the rape and murder of a resident doctor at the R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

Deception Detection Tests (DDTs)

Deception detection tests are scientific procedures used during interrogations to detect probable deception. These tests include **polygraph tests**, **narco-analysis**, and **brain mapping**.

Aspect	Polygraph Test	Narco-Analysis	Brain Mapping (P300 Test)
What is it?	A test that measures physiological responses	A drug-induced technique where a subject is	A neuropsychological test that measures electrical activity in the

	(heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and skin conductivity) when the subject answers questions to detect deception.	administered a "truth serum" (e.g., Sodium Pentothal) to lower inhibitions and reveal hidden information.	brain when the subject is exposed to stimuli, like images or sounds, to determine familiarity with the information.
Invasiveness	Non-invasive; monitors external physiological signals.	Invasive; involves injecting drugs into the subject's body to induce a semi-conscious state.	Non-invasive; measures brain activity via electrodes placed on the scalp.
Subject's Control	The subject can consciously try to control physiological responses, though this is difficult to do effectively.	The subject loses conscious control due to the drug, which lowers inhibitions, but the information may still not be fully accurate.	The subject may not be able to control brainwave recognition, making it harder to manipulate the test results.
Time Required	A typical polygraph test lasts 1–3 hours, including preparation and questioning.	Narco-analysis sessions typically last several hours, depending on the dosage of the drug and the responsiveness of the subject.	The brain mapping procedure takes about 1–2 hours, including preparation and testing.
Criticism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Susceptible to false positives (e.g., innocent people displaying signs of stress). - Unreliable due to subjective interpretations. - Not foolproof against individuals trained to control their physiological responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethically questioned as it involves drugging the subject. - Lacks scientific reliability, and memory distortion may lead to inaccurate information. - Violates individual autonomy and the right to silence. - Coercive nature of the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited in scope as it only indicates recognition of information, not actual involvement or intent. - Cannot definitively prove guilt or innocence. - Potential privacy concerns due to reading brain activity.
Court Rulings	Supreme Court of India has ruled that results cannot be used as conclusive proof.	The 2010 Supreme Court ruling (Selvi vs. Karnataka) stated that no individual should be subjected to narco-analysis without consent.	Like polygraph and narco-analysis, not admissible as primary evidence and can only be done with voluntary consent.

Constitutionality and Legality of DDTs in India

- **Pre-2010 Precedents:** Before 2010, Indian courts were largely in favor of using deception detection tests such as narco-analysis and polygraph tests, even when administered without the accused's consent. The same has been highlighted in the following cases:
 - **Rojo George v. Deputy Superintendent of Police (2006):** In this case, the Kerala High Court (HC) highlighted the necessity of scientific tests due to the increasingly sophisticated nature of crimes. The court ruled that conducting such tests under expert supervision did not violate fundamental rights.

- **Dinesh Dalmia v. State (2006):** The Madras HC ruled that reliance on these tests did not amount to "testimonial compulsion" and were a better alternative to custodial violence.
- **Sh. Shailender Sharma v. State & Another (2008):** The Delhi HC emphasized the importance of these tests in thorough investigations and ruled that narco-analysis did not infringe constitutional rights.
- **Judicial Turn-around (The Selvi Case, 2010):** In a landmark judgment, the **Supreme Court of India (SCI)** in **Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010)** ruled that no DDTs should be administered without the **consent of the accused**. The judgment emphasized that-
 - forcing individuals to undergo such tests would violate their fundamental right
 - against self-incrimination under **Article 20(3)** of the Constitution which protects an individual from being forced to testify against themselves in a criminal case.
 - to make a statement or remain silent, which is a part of their **Right to Privacy** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.
 - on the lack of empirical evidence supporting the reliability of these tests and ruled that their results could not be treated as **confessions**.
 - information or material discovered based on voluntarily administered test results can be admitted in court (e.g., locating a weapon based on the accused's statement during a test).
 - The Court mandated strict procedural safeguards:
 - **Consent must be voluntary** and recorded before a judicial magistrate.
 - Individuals undergoing tests must have **access to a lawyer**.
 - The **guidelines set out by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 2000** for administering these tests should be strictly adhered to. The guidelines are:
 - No Lie Detector Test should be administered without the consent of the accused.
 - An option should be given to the accused as to whether he wishes to avail the test.
 - If the accused volunteers for the tests, he should be given access to a lawyer.
 - The police and the lawyer should explain the physical, emotional and legal implication of such a test to him.
 - The consent should be recorded before a Judicial Magistrate.
 - During the hearing before the Magistrate, the accused should be duly represented by a lawyer.
 - At the hearing, the person should also be told in clear terms that the statement that is made shall not be a 'confessional' statement to the Magistrate but will have the status of a statement made to the police.
 - The Magistrate shall consider all factors relating to the detention including the length of detention and the nature of interrogation.
 - The actual recording of the Lie Detector Test shall be done in an independent agency (such as a hospital) and conducted in the presence of a lawyer.
 - A full medical and factual narration of the manner of information received must be taken on record.

- **No law in India regulates DDTs.** Globally, the use of DDTs has been significantly curtailed in favor of more reliable and scientifically validated investigative techniques.
- Countries like the United States, Canada, and many European nations have largely moved away from such tests, focusing on DNA analysis, digital forensics, and advanced behavioral analysis as more effective and credible alternatives.
- India, too, is witnessing an increasing shift towards modern forensic methods, though DDTs continue to hold a place in its investigative framework due to legacy practices and the pressures of high-profile cases.

Existing Concerns Related to DDTs

- Despite the SCIs cautionary stance, the use of deception detection tests remains prevalent in India, even as their appeal diminishes globally.
- These tests have been used in several **high-profile cases** like the 2020 **Hathras gang rape**, the 2012 **Sheena Bora disappearance**, and the 2022 **Shraddha Walker murder case**. In such cases, law enforcement agencies have often relied on these techniques when conventional investigative methods failed to yield conclusive evidence.
 - ✓ However, the use of these tests raises questions about the ethical and legal implications, particularly regarding the reliability of evidence derived from these procedures.
- **Jinee Lokaneeta**, in her book *The Truth Machines: Policing, Violence, and Scientific Interrogations in India*, questioned whether **informed consent** can truly be obtained in **police custody**, where coercion is common. She also documented cases where narco-analysis was forcibly administered, often leading to **false confessions**.
 - ✓ This coerced consent raises serious concerns about the violation of constitutional rights, particularly the right against self-incrimination under Article 20(3) of the Constitution.
- **Senior advocate Rebecca Johan** highlighted that the prosecution sometimes uses an individual's refusal to undergo these tests to question their **character** in court, suggesting wrongdoing despite the accused exercising their constitutional rights.
 - ✓ This unfairly places individuals in a position where the exercise of their legal rights is perceived as incriminating, thus undermining the fundamental principles of justice.

The legal status of DDTs in India has evolved significantly. While courts previously supported their use, the 2010 **Selvi judgment** imposed strict limitations, ensuring that these tests can only be conducted with the accused's **voluntary consent**. However, concerns regarding the tests' effectiveness, ethical implications, and potential for misuse remain prevalent.

How Do Emergency Provisions Under President Rule Impact Centre-State Relations?

The recent spate of renewed violence in Manipur has once again triggered the discussion around Centre-State relations and the use of emergency provisions by the Centre.

- ✓ The emergency provisions in the Indian Constitution under Articles 355 and 356 allow the Central government to intervene in the affairs of a State under specific circumstances, altering the balance of power in India's federal setup.

What are the Emergency Provisions?

Articles 355 and 356 in Part XVIII of the Constitution focus on Centre-State relations during emergencies:

- **Article 355** duty bounds the Centre to protect States from external aggression and internal disturbances, ensuring that States operate according to constitutional provisions.
- **Article 356** allows the President's Rule to be imposed if the State government is unable to function as per the Constitution. This effectively removes the State government and transfers control to the Centre.
- ✓ While the U.S. and Australia also have federal systems, their constitutions do not allow for the removal of State governments.

Is there any Obligation Imposed by the Constitution on the Centre before exercising Article 356?

Yes, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Chairman of the Drafting Committee) designed **Article 355** as a safeguard to prevent arbitrary use of **Article 356** and said that the Centre can only interfere in State governance under **Article 356** if constitutionally obliged to do so, providing a framework for measured intervention.

- ✓ This provision serves as the constitutional basis for any action under Article 356. It implies that the Centre's intervention must be a **last resort**, only when a state government is unable to carry out its duties in accordance with constitutional provisions.
- ✓ The Centre, before exercising Article 356, is bound by **constitutional morality** to ensure that it does not disrupt the federal balance unnecessarily. This principle, articulated by Dr. Ambedkar

Judicial Oversight and Abuse of Article 356

- **Article 356** has historically been misused to dismiss democratically elected State governments, often for political reasons varying from loss in Lok Sabha elections to deterioration of law and order in the States.
 - ✓ State emergency was used for the first time in the state of Punjab in 1951.
- The **Supreme Court's ruling in S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India (1994)** restricted such misuse. The Court ruled that **Article 356** should be used only in cases of constitutional breakdown, not merely for a law-and-order situation.
 - ✓ **Floor Test Requirement:** Before dismissing a state government, the Centre must exhaust all possible avenues, including ordering a floor test in the assembly to ascertain whether the government has lost the majority. This is to prevent the misuse of Article 356 for political gains.
 - ✓ The Court also subjected the imposition of President's Rule to **judicial review**. Courts can strike down any proclamation made under Article 356 if it is found to be based on malafide or irrelevant reasons.

Evolving Interpretation of Article 355

- Initially, **Article 355** was narrowly interpreted, allowing its use only to justify **Article 356**. However, subsequent Supreme Court rulings expanded its scope.
 - ✓ The broadened interpretation of Article 355 has evolved in line with the principles of cooperative federalism, where the Centre's role is not to override state authority but to assist and support states in maintaining peace, security, and governance in accordance with the Constitution.
- **Checks on Arbitrary Use:** Although the scope of Article 355 has expanded, judicial oversight continues to act as a safeguard against arbitrary use of this power. The courts have maintained that any action under Article 355 must be proportional and should not result in undue interference with the autonomy of the state governments unless absolutely necessary.
 - ✓ For example, deploying central forces under Article 355 must be justified as a last resort after exhausting other means of state-level governance.
- Cases such as **Naga People's Movement of Human Rights vs. Union of India (1998) (in the context of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).)** and **Sarbananda Sonowal vs. Union of India (2005)** broadened the powers of the Centre under **Article 355**, to permit all statutorily and constitutionally available actions by the Union to discharge its duties of protecting the State and ensuring that its governance is in accordance with the Constitution.
 - ✓ The Court held that the Union's duty under Article 355 to protect states against internal disturbances could justify the deployment of armed forces and other central actions, even in the absence of Article 356.
 - ✓ This ruling emphasized that the Centre could use statutory powers (like AFSPA) to ensure peace and constitutional governance without automatically resorting to President's Rule.

Recommendations on the Use of Emergency Provisions in Centre-State Relations

Various commissions, such as the **Sarkaria Commission (1987)**, the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002)**, and the **Punchhi Commission (2010)**, have suggested that-

- Article 355 not only imposes a duty on the Union but also grants it the power to take necessary actions for the effective performance of that duty. Therefore, the Centre must exercise its powers under **Article 355** responsibly.

- **Article 356** should be a last resort in cases of extreme emergencies, such as a complete breakdown of constitutional machinery.
- **The Punchhi Commission** recommended that the role of the Governor in such situations should be depoliticized, and the Governor should act as a neutral representative of the Centre. The report also suggested that the Governor's reports should be made public, subject to parliamentary scrutiny, to enhance transparency.
- **Zonal Councils and Inter-State Councils:** Before resorting to Article 356, the Centre could use mechanisms like the Inter-State Council or Zonal Councils to resolve conflicts or governance crises. These forums promote dialogue between the Union and states, providing a platform to address state-specific issues without escalating to President's Rule.

Current Relevance

- The violence in Manipur highlights the relevance of these emergency provisions. Despite severe internal disturbances, **Article 356** has not been invoked, likely due to political reasons (the same party in power at both Centre and State).
- However, the Centre continues to discharge its duties under **Article 355** by issuing necessary instructions and taking actions to restore normalcy.

Emergency provisions such as Articles 355 and 356 significantly alter Centre-State relations by giving the Centre the power to intervene in State affairs during crises. However, judicial oversight and evolving legal interpretations have placed safeguards against their misuse, preserving the federal balance in India.

National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)

Recently, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) declined to give State Bank of India (SBI) more time to make submissions on its plea seeking transfer outside Tamil Nadu of a consumer complaint filed against it by Madras HC judge.

About the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)

The **National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC)** is a quasi-judicial body established in 1988 under the **Consumer Protection Act of 1986** to protect consumer rights in India and provide a mechanism for resolving disputes effectively.

- ✓ The Act has since been replaced by the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which enhanced the powers of the NCDRC and adapted to the evolving needs of consumer protection, especially in the era of e-commerce.

Mandate: The NCDRC is tasked with providing **inexpensive, speedy, and summary redressal** of consumer disputes. It aims to ensure that consumers can seek justice without excessive financial burden or delay. The NCDRC plays a crucial role in protecting consumer rights by adjudicating cases and ensuring that consumers are not exploited by manufacturers, service providers, or sellers.

Organizational Structure: The commission is headed by a **sitting or retired Judge of the Supreme Court** or a **sitting or retired Chief Justice of a High Court**. This ensures that the commission has the necessary judicial expertise and authority to handle disputes effectively.

Jurisdiction

- **Original Jurisdiction & Scope:** The NCDRC has the jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of goods or services exceeds **₹2 crores** (approximately \$240,000).
- **Appellate and Revisional Jurisdiction:** It also has the authority to hear appeals from decisions made by **State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions** and **District Consumer Fora**, providing a hierarchical structure for dispute resolution.

Coverage: The provisions of the Consumer Protection Act cover both **goods** and **services**, ensuring a wide range of consumer issues can be addressed.

Who Can File a Complaint? A complaint can be filed by:

1. **Consumers:** Individuals who purchase goods or services for personal use.
2. **Voluntary Consumer Associations:** Registered associations under the **Companies Act, 1956**, which can represent consumer interests collectively.
3. **Government:** The **Central Government** or any **State Government** can file complaints on behalf of consumers.
4. **Multiple Consumers:** A complaint can also be filed by one or more consumers if the issues affect numerous consumers collectively.

Appeals: Any person aggrieved by an order of the NCDRC has the right to appeal to the **Supreme Court of India (SCI)** within **30 days** from the date of the order. This provides an additional layer of oversight and protection for consumer rights.

Significance

The NCDRC plays a crucial role in the consumer protection landscape in India, offering a platform for redressal of grievances and ensuring that consumer rights are upheld against unfair trade practices and exploitation. The Commission's judgments have helped shape consumer law in India by setting important legal precedents for lower courts and consumer forums.

Recent Developments

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019, introduced several reforms aimed at strengthening the consumer grievance redressal system in India. These reforms have a direct impact on the **NCDRC's functioning**.

- **E-filing:** Consumers can file complaints online, simplifying the process & ensuring greater accessibility.
- **Mediation:** The new Act introduced mediation as a mode of dispute resolution, offering an alternative to litigation and promoting faster settlement of disputes.
- **Product Liability:** The Act has strengthened the **NCDRC's authority** by introducing the concept of product liability, making manufacturers and service providers accountable for defects in goods and deficiencies in services.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)

The Centre recently relaxed the "automatic exclusion" criteria under PMAY-G scheme.

About the PMAY-G Scheme

- To achieve the objective of "Housing for All" in rural areas, the Ministry of Rural Development had launched the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana -Gramin (PMAY-G) in 2016 as a centrally sponsored scheme with a target of construction of 2.95 crore houses with basic amenities to be achieved in phases till March 2024. The scheme has been extended till 2028-29.
- **Objective:** To provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all houseless households and households living in kutcha and dilapidated houses in rural areas.
- The remaining 35 lakh houses were not completed till 31.03.2024 of previous phase along with two crores more houses will be constructed from FY 2024-2029 to address housing need arisen over the years.
- The minimum size of the house is 25 sq.mt with a hygienic cooking space.
- In convergence for piped drinking water, electricity connection, LPG gas connection, etc., different government programmes are also to be attempted.
 - ✓ In convergence with MGNREGA, the beneficiary is entitled to employment as unskilled labor (Rural Mason Training) at ₹ 90.95 per day for 95 days.
 - ✓ In convergence with Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, one LPG connection per house is provided.

- In PMAY-G, programme implementation and monitoring are to be carried out through an end-to-end e-Governance model - using **AwaasSoft and Awaas App**.
 - ✓ Awas Bandhu (PMAY-G Local Motivators) are effectively speeding up progress in places like West Bengal and Odisha.
- Also, the programme implementation is to be monitored through community participation (Social Audit), Member of Parliament (DISHA Committee), etc.
- The scheme has further incorporated the use of IT and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for efficient fund disbursement, the implementation of region-specific housing designs, and evidence-based monitoring through geo-tagged photos at various construction stages.

Eligibility Criteria

Criteria for Automatic/Compulsory Inclusion	Criteria for Inclusion Based on Socio-Economic Conditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households without shelter • Destitute/ living on alms • Manual scavengers • Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) • Legally released bonded laborer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households with no adult members between ages 16 to 59. • Female-headed households with no adult male member between ages 16 to 59. • Households with no literate adult above 25 years. • Households with any disabled member and no able-bodied adult member. • Landless Households deriving the major part of their income from manual casual labor.

*** To ensure that assistance is targeted at those who are genuinely deprived, and that the selection is objective and verifiable, the housing deprivation parameters in the SECC (Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011) data are used for identifying households and then verified by the Gram Sabhas.*

*** Selection of Beneficiaries: Through a three-stage validation - Socio-Economic Caste Census 2011, Gram Sabha, and geo-tagging.*

Prioritization- There will be multilayered prioritization within the universe of eligible PMAY-G beneficiaries. Priority will first be assigned based on parameters reflecting housing deprivation in each category viz., SC/ST, Minorities, and Others.

Earmarking of Targets

- 60% of the target allocated to each State/ UT should be earmarked for SC/STs.
- 15% of the total fund would be earmarked for Minorities at the National Level for households.
- 3% of beneficiaries at the State Level should be from among persons with disabilities.

Budget, Financial Assistance & Cost Sharing

- Total budget outlay will be Rs.3,06,137 crore for FY 2024-25 to 2028-29 including Central Share of Rs.2,05,856 crore and State Matching Share of Rs.1,00,281 crore.
- Each eligible beneficiary receives up to: (The amount is transferred directly to the Aadhaar-Linked Bank Account / Post-Office Account of the beneficiary.)
 - ₹1.2 lakh in plains areas.
 - ₹1.3 lakh in hilly states, difficult regions, and tribal or backward districts under the **Integrated Action Plan (IAP)**.
 - A willing beneficiary can avail themselves of institutional finance (loan) of up to ₹ 70,000 at 3% lower interest rate, to build a permanent house. The maximum principal amount for which subsidy can be sought is ₹ 2,00,000.

- **Cost Sharing:**

- The Centre and states share expenses in a **60:40 ratio** for plain areas.
- In **Northeastern states, two Himalayan states (Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh), and Jammu & Kashmir**, the sharing ratio is **90:10**.
- For Union Territories (UTs) like Ladakh, the Centre bears **100% of the cost**.

Progress: As of now, **2.65 crore houses** have already been constructed under the scheme.

Revised Exclusion Parameters: Households owning items like **two-wheelers, motorized fishing boats, refrigerators, landline phones**, and families earning up to **₹15,000 per month** are now eligible for the scheme.

Parameters for Automatic Exclusion (Still in Effect): Certain conditions still lead to automatic exclusion, such as:

- Ownership of **motorized three or four-wheelers**, or **mechanized agricultural equipment**.
- Having a **Kisan Credit Card** with a credit limit of ₹50,000 or more.
- Any household member being a **government employee**.
- Households with **non-agricultural enterprises** registered with the government.
- Any household member paying **income tax** or **professional tax**.
- **Land ownership** of more than **2.5 acres of irrigated land**.
- Households living in a **pucca house** (house with a permanent roof and/or wall) or with **more than two rooms**.

Significance of the Revision

The relaxation of exclusion criteria is expected to make more rural households eligible for the scheme. This revision aligns with the Centre's goal to **expand access** to housing for rural communities, addressing housing shortages in economically weaker sections while streamlining eligibility.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

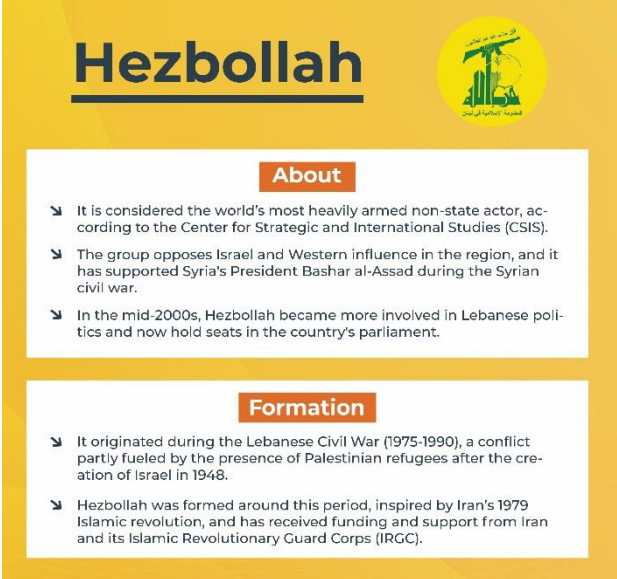
Exploding Pagers in Lebanon

- Tensions in West Asia have intensified following two days of coordinated attacks in Lebanon and parts of Syria, where explosive devices such as pagers and hand-held radios were used.
 - Initially, pagers exploded, followed by hand-held radios a day later.
- These attacks resulted in the deaths of at least 37 people and left over 3,500 injured.
- The cause of the attack remains unclear, but it appears to have been highly sophisticated. Hezbollah has blamed Israel for the incident, though Israeli officials have not yet commented on the matter.

Analysis

Israel-Hezbollah conflict heating up

- On October 8, 2023, Hezbollah began exchanging fire with Israel, a day after Hamas launched attacks in southern Israel, igniting the Israel-Gaza conflict.
 - Throughout this period, Hezbollah has engaged Israel through shelling and rocket fire along its northern border, leading to the displacement of 63,439 Israelis from their homes close to the border.
- As a Hamas ally, Hezbollah claims its attacks are in support of Palestinians under Israeli bombardment in Gaza.
- The conflict has drawn in Iran-backed militants across the region, with Hezbollah being the strongest member of the "**Axis of Resistance.**"
 - Axis of Resistance — Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.



Hezbollah

About

- It is considered the world's most heavily armed non-state actor, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).
- The group opposes Israel and Western influence in the region, and it has supported Syria's President Bashar al-Assad during the Syrian civil war.
- In the mid-2000s, Hezbollah became more involved in Lebanese politics and now hold seats in the country's parliament.

Formation

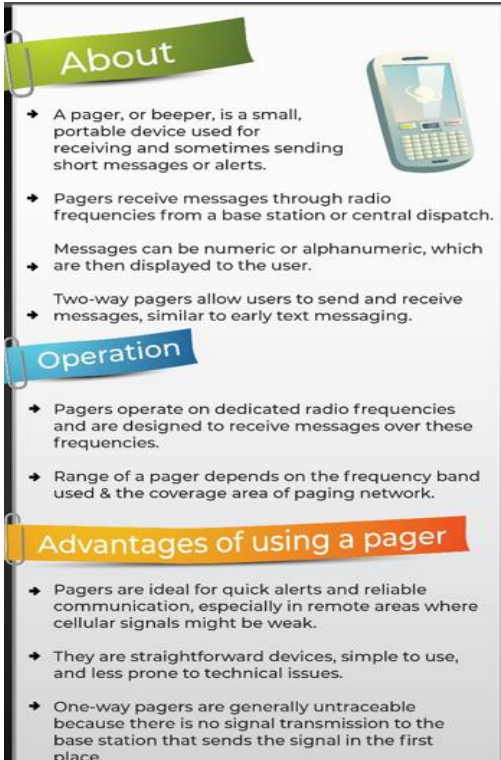
- It originated during the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), a conflict partly fueled by the presence of Palestinian refugees after the creation of Israel in 1948.
- Hezbollah was formed around this period, inspired by Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution, and has received funding and support from Iran and its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

Exploding pagers: an indication of Supply chain infiltration

- Cybersecurity experts described the event as potentially one of the largest physical supply chain attacks in history.
- Following warnings from Hezbollah to avoid mobile phones over fears of Israeli tampering, the group had switched to using pagers.
- A new batch of pagers was recently delivered, and **experts suspect that Israel may have infiltrated the supply chain, possibly planting military-grade explosives inside the devices.**
- Experts suggested the pagers could have been armed via an electronic signal, such as an alphanumeric message.

Pivot to north

- Israel's military claims to have significantly weakened Hamas in Gaza by destroying its missile factories, tunnels, and killing around 15,000 fighters.



About

- A pager, or beeper, is a small, portable device used for receiving and sometimes sending short messages or alerts.
- Pagers receive messages through radio frequencies from a base station or central dispatch. Messages can be numeric or alphanumeric, which are then displayed to the user.
- Two-way pagers allow users to send and receive messages, similar to early text messaging.

Operation

- Pagers operate on dedicated radio frequencies and are designed to receive messages over these frequencies.
- Range of a pager depends on the frequency band used & the coverage area of paging network.

Advantages of using a pager

- Pagers are ideal for quick alerts and reliable communication, especially in remote areas where cellular signals might be weak.
- They are straightforward devices, simple to use, and less prone to technical issues.
- One-way pagers are generally untraceable because there is no signal transmission to the base station that sends the signal in the first place.

- Israel believes Hamas no longer poses a serious threat and is shifting focus to Hezbollah in Lebanon.
- Recent attacks targeting Hezbollah's communication devices are aimed at crippling its command structure and sending a warning to Iran, Hezbollah's main supporter.
- **Impact on India**
 - India faces serious concerns amid rising tensions between Israel and Hezbollah, which could involve Iran and potentially draw in the U.S., complicating New Delhi's diplomatic stance.
 - With 9 million Indians living in the region and depending on it for remittances, their safety is a key concern.
 - Additionally, two-thirds of India's crude oil and natural gas come from West Asia, making energy security vulnerable to disruption.
 - India, which has so far stayed neutral, expressed concern over hostilities but has yet to comment on the latest situation. India's influence in this escalating conflict remains uncertain.

Keffiyeh Ban

- Jhumpa Lahiri, a renowned Indian-American author, declined an award from New York City's Noguchi Museum after it fired three employees for wearing keffiyeh scarves, which are associated with Palestinian solidarity.
 - The museum had banned clothing or accessories with political messages.
- The keffiyeh, a traditional Middle Eastern cotton scarf, historically served as a practical head covering for the working class and Bedouins.
- Over time, it became a symbol of Palestinian nationhood, especially during British rule in the 1930s and after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.
 - Yasser Arafat popularized it in the 1970s, and figures like Nelson Mandela wore it in solidarity with the Palestinian cause.
- In the West, wearing the keffiyeh has been seen as registering opposition to Israel.
 - Following the Hamas attack on Israel, the ongoing Israeli military offensive on the Gaza Strip has led to the killings of more than 40,000 people.
 - The protests against Israeli action have seen people wear the scarf.

Iran Lists India As Place Where Muslims Suffer

- Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, recently included India alongside Gaza and Myanmar as places where Muslims are suffering.
- This prompted India to strongly reject and criticize his comments as "misinformed" and "unacceptable."
 - Ministry of External Affairs responded swiftly, urging Iran to examine its own record before commenting on other countries.
- This is not the first time Khamenei has criticized India over its treatment of Muslims.
 - In March 2020, he condemned the northeast Delhi riots, calling them a “massacre of Muslims” and urging India to confront extremist Hindus to avoid isolation from the Muslim world.
 - Similarly, after Article 370 was revoked in August 2019, he expressed concern about Muslims in Kashmir, calling for justice and an end to their oppression.

Hezbollah Chief Nasrallah Killed In Israeli Strikes

- The Israel Defense Forces killed Hassan Nasrallah, the longtime leader of Hezbollah — the Iran-backed armed group and political party that controls much of southern Lebanon.
- Nasrallah remained in charge of Hezbollah for more than 32 years.
- The assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah marks the peak of Israel's campaign against the group's leadership, which began with the killing of Fuad Shukr in July.
- Israel has also eliminated Hamas's political head, Ismail Haniyeh, and the military commander behind the October 7 attacks, Mohammed Deif, leaving only Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar alive.

9th Edition of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)

The **ninth edition of FOCAC** was held in Beijing. More than **50 African leaders** and UN Secretary General **Antonio Guterres** attended the summit.

Key Highlights

- **Financial support**
 - During the summit, Chinese President **Xi Jinping** announced over **\$50 billion in financial support for Africa over the next three years.**
 - The funds will be allocated for **infrastructure, agriculture, mining, trade, and energy**, with over half provided as credit and \$11 billion in assistance.
 - Additionally, **\$10 billion** will come from Chinese firms investing in Africa. Xi also pledged to help create **one million jobs** for the continent.
- **Military Assistance and Training**
 - China committed **\$141 million** in military grants for Africa, alongside the training of **6,000 military personnel** and **1,000 police officers.**
- **China's Strategic Shift**
 - Analysts note that China's economic troubles at home may be leading to a recalibration of its financial commitments to Africa.
 - However, geopolitical competition, particularly with the United States, is increasingly influencing Beijing's policy towards the continent.
 - China remains Africa's largest trading partner, driven by its demand for natural resources like copper, gold, lithium, and rare earth minerals, while continuing to finance critical infrastructure across the region.

China's Role in African Debt

- China's involvement in African debt is complex, with **\$170 billion in loans** provided between **2000-2022.**
- However, **Chinese lenders account for only ~12%** of Africa's total public and private debt.
- Despite criticisms of **Chinese 'debt trap diplomacy,'** many of these claims are disputed.
- Studies reveal that a significant portion of Chinese loans is not disclosed in sovereign debt records, leading to concerns about **lack of transparency.**
- China is unlikely to offer debt forgiveness but might write off small, interest-free loans.

India's Critical Mineral Mission and role of Africa

- In the Union Budget 2024-25, India announced the Critical Mineral Mission, with three key aims: expanding domestic production, prioritizing recycling of critical minerals, and incentivizing overseas acquisition of assets.

- **Overseas Partnerships**
 - Khanij Bidesh India Limited (KABIL), founded in 2019, plays a crucial role in securing overseas mineral assets.
 - Its first major agreement for lithium mining in Argentina was signed in January 2024.
 - However, India's capacity for exploration and processing is limited, with insufficient manufacturing capacity for end-use components and a lack of skilled labor.
- **Africa's Role in India's Supply Chain**
 - Africa, home to 30% of the world's critical mineral reserves, offers significant opportunities for India's Critical Mineral Mission.
 - India shares strong economic ties with Africa, with \$43 billion of the \$98 billion bilateral trade (2022-23) linked to mining.
 - India also sources 15% of its oil and various other resources from Africa.
 - African governments are working on policies to move beyond the "**pit-to-port**" model, presenting India with a chance to support Africa's minerals-based industrialization.
- **China's Influence**
 - China's dominance in critical mineral value chains, particularly in cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo, poses economic and security risks for India.
 - China's extensive control, including a \$7 billion minerals-for-infrastructure deal, heightens competition in the region.
- **Opportunities for Collaboration**
 - India has advantages in Africa, with a history of completed infrastructure projects.
 - Collaborating with countries like Zambia and Zimbabwe in areas such as geological mapping and capacity building will be crucial.
 - Indian technology startups also offer innovative mining tools and value-added services that can support African governments in responsible mineral development.

China test-fires Intercontinental Ballistic Missile Into Pacific Ocean

- China test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) into the Pacific Ocean, raising regional security concerns amidst Beijing's territorial disputes and rivalry with the U.S.
- Such long-range missile tests by China are **rare**, with the last recorded test occurring in **1980**. This recent launch marks a significant event, highlighting China's nuclear capabilities and its desire to be seen as a **major nuclear power**.
- Experts note that the unusual test, involving international waters, mirrors **U.S. ballistic missile testing** and signals China's assertiveness in global arms competition.

Chamran-1 Research Satellite

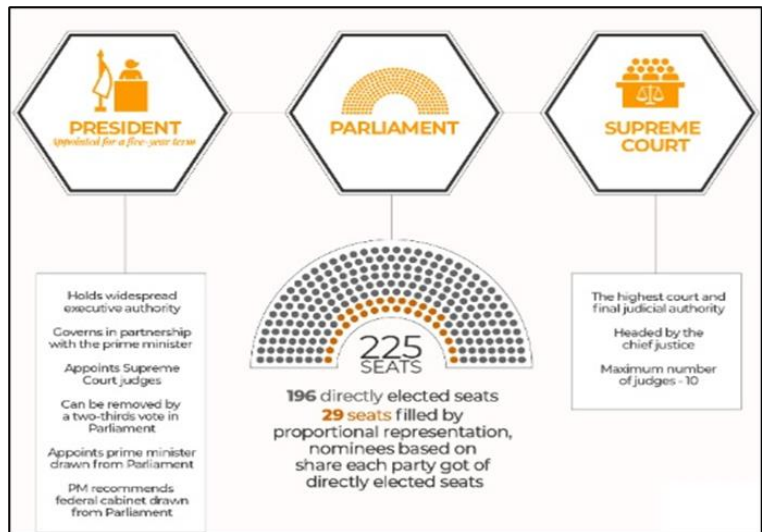
- Iran successfully launched the **Chamran-1 research satellite** into orbit, using the **Qaem-100 satellite-carrier rocket** developed by the **Revolutionary Guard's aerospace division**.
- The satellite, weighing **60 kg**, reached an orbit of **550 km** and transmitted signals back to land stations. Its mission is to test space hardware and software.

Anura Dissanayake Wins Sri Lanka's Presidential Election

- Sri Lanka's left-leaning leader, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, won the presidential election for the debt-ridden island nation.
- Dissanayake had clinched 39.5% of the votes in the first round. However, a second round of counting was ordered after no candidate secured over 50 per cent votes needed to be declared the winner.

Government Structure in Sri Lanka

- Sri Lanka follows the semi-presidential system wherein both the PM and President enjoy executive power.
- Though the President of Sri Lanka is directly elected at the end of the term of five years, the process is different when a vacancy arises.



New Sri Lanka PM, Harini Amarasuriya

- Sri Lankan President Dissanayake appointed Harini Amarasuriya as the next PM of the country.
 - The prime minister is appointed by the president as a member of the cabinet of ministers.
- The new PM has been appointed as part of a four-member cabinet under President's leadership framing policy till the parliamentary election, which would take place on November 14.

Shigeru Ishiba: Japan's New Prime Minister

- Shigeru Ishiba has been elected as the new Prime Minister of Japan. He will succeed former PM Fumio Kishida as the chief of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).
 - Mr. Kishida took office in 2021. He resigned so his party can have a fresh leader after his government was dogged by scandals.
- He is an advocate of an Asian version of NATO to control and deter China in the region, while also demanding for Japan's more balanced and equal relationship with the United States.

India Sends Assistance to flood-hit Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam

- India launched **Operation Sadbhav** to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) to Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam that have been hit by severe flooding caused by **Typhoon Yagi**.
- India has committed \$1mn worth of flood relief assistance to Vietnam and \$1,00,000 worth of assistance to Laos.
- India has been among the first responders in providing HADR (*Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief*) to the region.
- This Operation is part of India's broader effort to contribute to HADR within the ASEAN region, in line with its longstanding Act East Policy.

India Wants Review & Modification of Indus Waters Treaty

- India has sent a new formal notice to Pakistan seeking the "review and modification" of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), following a similar request in January 2023.

- This latest notice, issued under **Article XII (3) of the IWT**, is significant as the inclusion of "review" suggests India's intention to potentially revoke and renegotiate the 64-year-old treaty.
 - Article XII (3) allows for modifications of the treaty through a duly ratified agreement between the two governments.

Reasons Behind India's Demand to Renegotiate The Treaty

- India's latest notice to Pakistan on IWT cites "fundamental and unforeseen changes in circumstances" as reasons for reassessment.
- Concerns include changes in population demographics, environmental issues, the need for clean energy development to meet emission targets, and the impact of cross-border terrorism.
- The notifications come amid controversy over two Indian hydel power projects in Jammu & Kashmir — **Kishanganga and Ratle** — which Pakistan alleges violate the IWT.
 - These projects are "run-of-the-river" & generate electricity without obstructing river flow.

Reason Behind The Notice in January 2023

- India's latest notice to Pakistan regarding the IWT follows Islamabad's objections to two Indian hydel projects.
- Pakistan initially sought a "Neutral Expert" to address its concerns but later proposed the **Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA)** for adjudication.
- India objected, citing this as a breach of the treaty's sequential dispute resolution mechanism, which starts with the Indus Commissioners, then a Neutral Expert, and finally the PCA if needed.
- The World Bank halted the dual processes in 2016, urging both countries to resolve the issue amicably.
- Despite attempts by India, Pakistan did not engage in discussions between 2017 and 2022.
- In 2022, the World Bank decided to proceed with both the Neutral Expert and PCA processes, leading to India's January 2023 notice, the first in over 60 years.

Indus Water Treaty (IWT)

- **About**
 - The Treaty is a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan, brokered by the World Bank.
 - According to this treaty, **three rivers: Ravi, Sutlej and Beas were given to India** and the other three: Sindh, Jhelum and Chenab were given to Pakistan.
- **Rights & obligations under this treaty**
 - India is under obligation to let the waters of the western rivers flow, except for certain consumptive use.
 - The treaty allocates Pakistan approx. 80% of the entire water of the six-river Indus system and reserved for India just remaining 19.48% of the total waters.



Dispute redressal mechanism under the Treaty

Article IX of the Treaty is a dispute resolution mechanism - graded at three levels to resolve a difference or a dispute related to projects on the Indus waters.



First level

- ▶ Either party has to inform the other side if they are planning projects on the Indus river with all the information that is required or asked for by the other party.
- ▶ This process is done at the level of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), created to implement and manage the goals of the IWT.
- ▶ If PIC is unable to solve the question in contention, the question becomes difference and goes to second level.

Second level

- ▶ World Bank appointing a neutral expert to resolve the differences.
- ▶ If a neutral expert cannot resolve the issue, the difference becomes a dispute and goes to third level.

Third level

- ▶ Matter goes to a Court of Arbitration (CoA) whose chair is appointed by the World Bank.

- India can construct storage facilities on western rivers of up to 3.6-million-acre feet, which it has not done so far.
- The **IWT permits run of the river projects** on the western rivers, subject to specific design and operation criteria.
 - India is required to provide Pakistan with prior notification, including design information, of any new project.

PM Modi Meets Palestinian PM Abbas in New York

- PM Modi met the President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on the sidelines of the Summit of the Future in New York.
- The meeting occurred shortly after India abstained from voting on a UNGA resolution demanding that Israel end its "unlawful presence" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
 - The UNGA adopted a resolution calling for Israel to end its occupation within 12 months.
 - India, along with countries like Australia, UK, Germany, and Canada, abstained from voting on the resolution.

PM Modi's Meeting with Palestinian PM - India's Balancing Approach on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

- PM Modi's meeting with Abbas follows a phone call from October 2023, where he expressed condolences for civilian casualties in Gaza and reaffirmed India's position on the Israel-Palestine issue.
 - In October 2023, in his first phone conversation with Palestinian President Abbas since the Hamas attack on Israel, PM Modi had reiterated India's long-standing principled position on the Israel-Palestine issue.
 - Later, India sent humanitarian aid for the beleaguered residents of Gaza via Egypt.
- India has consistently sought to balance its stance on the conflict, with PM Modi also expressing solidarity with Israel after the **October 7 Hamas attacks**, which he labeled as **terror attacks**.
- For Delhi, the diplomatic challenge was to balance between the many sides in West Asia where India has deep strategic ties with Israel on the one hand, and Saudi, UAE, Qatar, Iran and Egypt – to name a few – on the other hand.

India – Palestine Relation

Important Bilateral Visits and Political Interactions

PM Modi paid a historic visit to Palestine in February 2018, the **first for an Indian Prime Minister**.

Developmental Cooperation

- India has provided various forms of developmental cooperation assistance to Palestine over the years. amounting to ~US\$ 141 million.
- India has also provided a total of **US\$ 39 million of budgetary support** to the Palestinian Authority.
- In July 2021, India offered a Line of Credit worth USD 50 Million to Palestine for implementing developmental and sustainable projects.
- The major development assistance projects executed successfully by India include:
 - Palestine-India Techno-Park
 - Construction of Jawaharlal Nehru Library at the Al Azhar University in Gaza city
 - The Mahatma Gandhi Library-cum-Student Activity Centre at the Palestine Technical College at Deir Al Balah in the Gaza Strip, etc.
- Currently, eight developmental projects are in progress, the details of some of which are as follows:
 - Palestinian Institute of Higher Diplomacy in Ramallah;

- National Printing Press at Ramallah;
- Construction of Super-specialty hospital in Ramallah;
- Turathi - Women Empowerment Centres at Ramallah and Gaza; etc.

● **Quick Impact Projects (QIPs):** In 2021-22 India implemented four QIPs:

- Rehabilitation of Yasser Arafat Square in Ramallah City,
- Integration of Technology into Education with the Young Scientists Club (Al Muntada),
- Establishing Beitunia Municipality Nursery, and
- Construction of Aqraba Children Park.

Background:

Evolution of relationship

- » India's support for the Palestinian cause is an integral part of the nation's foreign policy.
- » In 1974, India became the first **Non-Arab State** to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.
- » In 1988, India became one of the first countries to recognize the Palestinian State.
- » In 1996, India opened its Representative Office in Gaza, which was later shifted to Ramallah in 2003.

Support at multilateral fora

- » India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral fora.
- » India has consistently supported, co-sponsored, and voted in favour of UN General Assembly Resolutions:
 - securing the right to self-determination of Palestinians,
 - urging Israel's compliance with legal obligations, and
 - its status as a non-member State at the UN.
- » In 2011, India also voted in favour of Palestine becoming a full member of UNESCO.

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)

- » India supports Palestine and Palestinian refugees through its contributions to UNRWA.
- » India is a member of its Advisory Commission since 2020. Since 2002, India has contributed a total of US\$ 36.5 million to UNRWA till 2022-23.

IBSA Cooperation

- » India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA) Fund has also funded four projects in Palestine worth US\$ 5 mn approximately.

India, Uzbekistan Sign Investment Treaty To Boost Investor Confidence

- India and Uzbekistan signed a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) to enhance investor confidence and strengthen economic ties. The treaty ensures protection for investors from both countries, aligning with international standards.
- It guarantees fair treatment, non-discrimination, transparency, and compensation for losses, while providing a forum for dispute resolution through arbitration.
- The BIT balances investor protection with the state's right to regulate.

SUMMITS AND ORGANISATIONS

National Conference of the District Judiciary

- PM Modi inaugurated the National Conference of District Judiciary on 31st August, 2024 at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.
- On the occasion, Prime Minister also unveiled the stamp and coin commemorating 75 years of the establishment of the Supreme Court of India.
- The two-day Conference was organised by the Supreme Court of India. It deliberated on the issues related to District Judiciary such as Infrastructure and Human Resources, Inclusive Courtrooms for all, Judicial Security and Judicial Wellness, Case Management and Judicial Training.

Key Highlights of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud's Speech

- **Promotion of Legal Education in Regional Languages**
 - CJI Chandrachud emphasized the need for legal education in regional languages to make legal knowledge accessible to citizens in the language they understand.
 - This would produce new bands of lawyers well-equipped to argue in their mother tongues.
- **District Judiciary as the "Backbone of the Judiciary"**
 - The CJI underscored the importance of the district judiciary, describing it as the "**backbone of the judiciary**" and a crucial component of the rule of law.
 - He advocated for ending the practice of referring to the district judiciary as "subordinate judiciary," calling it a relic of the colonial era that should be discarded 75 years after Independence.
- **Challenges Faced by the District Judiciary**
 - The district judiciary is facing challenges such as citizens' inability to afford legal representation, lack of awareness about statutory rights, and geographical difficulties in accessing courts.
- **Adoption of Technology in the Judiciary**
 - The CJI highlighted significant advancements in the adoption of technology within the judiciary, including the digitization of court records, the functioning of e-sewa kendras, and the use of video conferencing for case hearings.
 - He emphasized that technology should be fully utilized to ensure that courts remain citizen-centric and accessible to all.
- **Increasing Participation of Women in the Judiciary**
 - CJI Chandrachud noted the increasing number of women joining the district judiciary, highlighting that in states like Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Kerala, women have made up a significant percentage of recent judicial appointments.
 - He pointed to this trend as a sign of a promising future for the judiciary, with a young and technologically savvy demographic.
- **Translation of Supreme Court Judgments**
 - CJI mentioned that Supreme Court judgments are being translated into all languages recognized by the Constitution.

India-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar visited Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, to attend the **1st India-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Foreign Ministers' Meeting**.

Key Highlights

- During the meeting, EAM highlighted that GCC as a collective entity has vital significance for India and constitutes the "extended" neighborhood of India.
- The meeting adopted a **Joint Action Plan 2024-2028** for undertaking various joint activities in diverse areas including health, trade, security, agriculture and food security, etc.

About Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- It is a political and economic alliance of six countries in the Arabian Peninsula.
- These **six countries** are: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- Established in 1981, the GCC promotes economic, security, cultural and social cooperation between the six states. It holds a summit every year to discuss cooperation and regional affairs.

India and GCC Relation

- **Geostrategic:** GCC countries sit across the Persian Gulf, which is an important sea lane for global trade.
- **Political Dialogue**
 - The first-ever India-GCC Political Dialogue was held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in 2003.
 - India and GCC signed an MoU on the Mechanisms of Consultations in September 2022.
 - The MoU creates a framework for annual dialogue between **EAM and the GCC-Troika** (GCC-Secretary General, Foreign Minister of the country holding current GCC presidency, and Foreign Minister of the country that will hold next GCC presidency), and any other Foreign Minister(s)/Senior Officials from the GCC countries.
- **Economic and Commercial Relations**
 - Currently, the region is expanding beyond the energy sector into other fields, such as tourism, construction and finance. This opens up the opportunities for trade and investments for countries like India.
 - During FY 2023-24, India-GCC bilateral trade stood at USD 161.59 billion.
 - India's exports were USD 56.3 billion in FY 2023-24, India's imports were USD 105.3 billion in FY 2023-24.
 - India's economic linkages with the GCC have increased steadily, especially due to growth in oil imports.
 - These have increased significantly in FY22 due to rising oil prices in the wake of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as well as due to the resumption of demand following the COVID-19 disruption.
- **India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**
 - India and the GCC signed a Framework Agreement for enhancing and developing economic cooperation between the two sides in New Delhi in August 2004.
 - The India-GCC FTA is under negotiation and may benefit from some renewed momentum following the **India-UAE FTA.**
- **Energy cooperation**
 - GCC contributes to 35% of India's oil imports and 70% of gas imports.
 - India is executing the second phase of its Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR). Several GCC countries have expressed their interest in the same.

- **Indian Diaspora and remittances**

- There are approximately 8.9 million Indian expats residing in GCC countries which is approximately 66% of non-resident Indians.
- According to the RBI Remittances Survey 2021, the share of remittances from the GCC region in India's inward remittances is estimated to have declined from more than 50% in 2016-17 to about 30% in 2020-21.
 - This still represents a major component of India's total inward remittances.

India Joins US-led Mineral Security Network

India has formally joined **the Minerals Security Finance Network (MSFN)**, a US-led initiative focused on enhancing cooperation among members to secure supply chains for critical minerals.

- The MSFN is an extension of the **Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)**, launched by the US in 2022. India had already joined the MSP in June 2023.

About MSFN

- **Background: Need for MSFN**

- The creation of the MSFN reflects a growing need to reduce dependence on countries like China for critical resources, particularly rare earth minerals.
- Signatory nations emphasized that meeting the global demand for these minerals to support the clean energy transition requires collaboration between the public and private sectors.

- **About**

- The network aims to bring together institutions from the Indo-Pacific region and Europe, promoting cooperation, information exchange, and co-financing.
- Under this, development finance institutions (DFIs) and export credit agencies (ECAs) from member nations will work together to enhance production capacity and resilience in mineral supply chains.

- **Countries that are part of this initiative**

- The partnership includes 14 countries and the European Commission.
- These are the USA, Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, **India**, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the EU.

- **India's participation**

- India's participation in this initiative is aimed at diversifying and securing its supply of critical minerals from nations like Argentina, Chile, Australia, and select African countries.
 - Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, is also being explored as a potential source for India's mineral requirements.
- China dominates rare earth production, controlling about 70% of global output, while **India seeks to establish itself in the lithium value chain**.
 - New Delhi is heavily dependent on the imports of critical minerals such as lithium, nickel, cobalt and copper, which resulted in an import cost of around ₹34,000 crore in FY23.
 - It is estimated that India's hunger for minerals will only grow, and so will the import cost, further increasing India's vulnerability.
- This partnership with the US-led network marks a critical step forward for India in its quest to reduce reliance on China for these minerals and build a robust, self-sustaining supply chain for its green energy initiatives.

Minerals Security Partnership (MSP)

- **About**
 - In August 2022, US and 10 other nations agreed for this alliance known as MSP.
 - It focuses on critical minerals and metals that are essential for clean energy technologies, such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, manganese, graphite, rare earth elements, and copper.
- **Goals**
 - **Sustainable supply chains:** The MSP works to create diverse, sustainable, and responsible supply chains for critical minerals.
 - **Economic development:** The MSP aims to ensure that the production, processing, and recycling of critical minerals supports economic development.
 - **Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards:** The MSP's members commit to high ESG standards.
 - **Shared prosperity:** The MSP's members work to promote shared prosperity.
- **Current Members**
 - Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States, and European Union.

India Signs US-led IPEF Bloc's Clean, Fair Economy Agreements

- India signed and exchanged the first-of-its-kind agreements focused on **Clean Economy (Pillar-III)**, Fair Economy (Pillar-IV), and the IPEF Overarching arrangement.
 - The Overarching Agreement under the IPEF establishes a high-level Ministerial oversight mechanism to guide the implementation of various IPEF agreements.
- The agreements were signed during PM Modi's visit to the US. These are aimed at facilitating development, access, and deployment of clean energy and climate-friendly technologies.

Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)

- **Background: Origin**
 - US President Biden first spoke about the IPEF at the October 2021 East Asia Summit.
 - At this summit, he said that the United States will explore with partners the development of an Indo-Pacific economic framework.
 - This framework will define our shared objectives around:
 - trade facilitation, standards for the digital economy and technology, supply chain resiliency, decarbonization and clean energy, infrastructure, worker standards, and other areas of shared interest.
 - The IPEF will not include market access commitments such as lowering tariff barriers, as the agreement is more of an administrative arrangement.
- **About**
 - Launched in Tokyo, in May 2022, IPEF aims to strengthen economic engagement among the member countries to advance growth, peace and prosperity in the region.
 - According to an insight paper on IPEF put out by the US Congressional Research Service, the **IPEF is not a traditional trade agreement**.
 - Rather, it would include different modules (**four pillars**) covering various aspects.

- **Four Pillars of IPEF**
 - Pillar I - Fair and resilient trade,
 - Pillar II - Supply chain resilience,
 - Pillar III – Clean economy (infrastructure and decarbonization), and
 - Pillar IV – Fair Economy (tax and anticorruption).
 - Countries would have to **sign up to all of the components within a module (pillar), but do not have to participate in all modules.**
 - **Members:** The IPEF has **14 partner countries** including Australia, Brunei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the US.
- **Significance**
 - The 14-nation IPEF bloc is seen as crucial as it accounts for about 40 per cent of the world's GDP and 28 per cent of the world's trade in goods and services.
 - It is seen as an economic and trade strategy backed by the US to counter China's economic influence in the region.
- **India and IPEF**
 - In September 2022, India joined **three pillars of the IPEF.**
 - These are the supply chain, clean economy, and fair economy pillars of the IPEF.
 - However, it had decided to remain out of the trade pillar. India has an **observer status on the trade pillar negotiations.**

ILO Study Links AI To Dip In Labour Income

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in its **World Employment and Social Outlook: September 2024 Update**, highlighted rising global inequality as labour income stagnates and youth unemployment remains high.
- The report notes that technological innovations, particularly **artificial intelligence (AI)** and automation, have boosted labour productivity but contributed to a decline in the share of income earned by workers.
- Without stronger policy responses, this trend could worsen, further reducing labour income share.
- The report also pointed out that the **COVID-19 pandemic** exacerbated inequalities, with 40% of the decline in labour income share occurring between 2020 and 2022.
 - The pandemic accelerated the concentration of capital among the wealthiest, impeding progress on **Sustainable Development Goal 10 (reducing inequality).**
- It called for equitable policies, including **freedom of association, collective bargaining**, and effective labour administration, to ensure the benefits of technological progress are more widely distributed and to support sustainable, inclusive growth.

3rd Edition of World Food India 2024

- While addressing the 3rd edition of World Food India 2024, the Indian PM said the government has undertaken many reforms in the past 10 years for the growth of the food processing sector.
- The 1st edition of the WFI was launched by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) in 2017, with the objective of:
 - Introducing the world to rich Indian food culture.

- As well as promoting investments in the diverse food processing sector of the country.
- In view of celebrating 2023 as the International Year of Millets and to bring the global food processing industry together, the MoFPI organised the 2nd edition WFI in 2023.

India Elected to GlobE Steering Committee

- India was elected to the 15-member **GlobE Steering Committee** during a plenary session in Beijing after a multistage voting process.
 - The Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities - GlobE Network.
- As a key member, India will contribute to shaping the global anti-corruption agenda and asset recovery efforts.
- The network facilitates international cooperation and strengthens efforts against cross-border financial crimes and corruption.
- **Overview of the GlobE Network**
 - The GlobE Network was initiated by the G-20 with India's support in 2020 and was officially launched in June 2021, at a UN General Assembly session.
 - With 121 member countries and 219 member authorities, it serves as a platform for agencies worldwide to share best practices, strategies, and criminal intelligence.
 - India's participation will be overseen by the Ministry of Home Affairs, while the CBI and Enforcement Directorate serve as its member authorities.
- **Leadership and India's G-20 Presidency**
 - The Steering Committee, which provides leadership to the GlobE Network, includes one chair, one vice-chair, and 13 other members.
 - During India's G-20 Presidency in 2023, two key principles for combatting corruption were adopted, focusing on leveraging the GlobE Network for international cooperation in anti-corruption efforts.

L69, G4 Countries Seek Urgent Reform of UNSC

- On the sidelines of 79th UN General Assembly, the G4 nations and groupings such as L69 and C-10 called for urgent reforms to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- **L69 grouping**
 - It is a coalition of 42 developing countries that advocates for reform of the UNSC.
 - It was formed in 2007 and is named after the draft resolution (L.69) that was submitted to the UN General Assembly.
 - The grouping includes countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific.
- **G4 grouping**
 - G4 stands for Group of Four, a coalition of four countries that support each other's bid for permanent seats on the UNSC.
 - These countries are – Brazil; Germany; India; Japan.
- **Committee of Ten (C-10)**
 - The C-10 was created during a meeting of Ministers and Central bank Governors in Tunis in November 2008.
 - The members of the C-10 are the following countries and institutions: Algeria, Botswana, Cameroon, Egypt, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, the Central Bank of West African States (CBWAS), and the Central Bank of Central African States (CBCAS).

DEFENSE AND SECURITY

Foundation Day Program of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah addressed the *first Foundation Day program* of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) as the Chief Guest.
- During the event, he launched key initiatives for prevention of cyber crime. He also announced that the govt is also planning to train and prepare 5,000 cyber commandos over the next five years.

Four Major Cyber Platforms of I4C Launched During the Program

1. Cyber Fraud Mitigation Centre (CFMC):

- CFMC has been established at I4C in New Delhi with representatives of major banks, Financial Intermediaries, Payment Aggregators, Telecom Service Providers, IT Intermediaries and States/UTs Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs).
- They will work together for immediate action and seamless cooperation to tackle online financial crimes.
- CFMC will serve as an example of "Cooperative Federalism" in law enforcement.

2. Samanvay Platform (Joint Cybercrime Investigation Facilitation System):

- The platform is a web-based module that will act as a one stop portal for data repository of cybercrime, data sharing, crime mapping, data analytics.
- It will also act as a cooperation and coordination platform for LEAs across the country.

3. Cyber Commandos Program:

- Under this program a special wing of trained 'Cyber Commandos' in States/UTs and Central Police Organizations (CPOs) will be established.
- These Commandos will assist States/UTs and Central Agencies in securing the digital space.

About I4C

- I4C is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs to deal with cyber crime in the country in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.
- I4C focuses on tackling all the issues related to Cybercrime for the citizens, which includes:
 - improving coordination between various LEAs and the stakeholders, driving change in India's overall capability to tackle Cybercrime.
- The I4C was dedicated to the Nation in January 2020.

Objectives of I4C

- To act as a nodal point to curb Cybercrime in the country.
- To strengthen the fight against Cybercrime committed against women and children.
- Facilitate easy filing Cybercrime related complaints and identifying Cybercrime trends and patterns.
- To act as an early warning system for LEAs for proactive Cybercrime prevention and detection.
- Awareness creation among public about preventing Cybercrime.

Major initiatives of I4C

- Launched www.cybercrime.gov.in - the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) which allows 24X7 reporting of all types of Cybercrime
- **Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System** has been launched for immediate reporting of financial cyber frauds
- National Toll-free Helpline number '1930' has been operationalized to provide citizen assistance in lodging online cyber complaints.
- The **National Cyber Forensic Laboratory (NCFL)**, a 'State of the Art' facility has been set up to **train and assist the State/UT Investigation Officers**
- **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC)** platform called 'CyTrain' portal "<https://cytrain.ncrb.gov.in>" has been developed.
 - CyTrain portal helps in the capacity building of Police Officers/Judicial Officers through online courses on critical aspects of Cybercrime investigation, forensics and prosecution and also gives completion certificates.
- Launched **CyberDost** handle on various social media platforms to generate **cyber awareness** among citizens
- Seven **Joint Cyber Coordination Teams (JCCTs)** have been constituted for Mewar, Jamtara, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Vishakhapatnam, and Guwahati under I4C covering the whole country based upon **cyber crime hotspots** having multi jurisdictional issues by on boarding States/UTs to enhance the coordination framework among the LEAs of the States/UTs. Seven workshops were organized for JCCTs at Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Vishakhapatnam, Lucknow, Ranchi and Chandigarh in 2023.

4. Suspect Registry:

- As part of this initiative a Suspect Registry of various identifiers is being created based on National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP).
- It will be created in collaboration with banks and financial intermediaries for strengthening fraud risk management capabilities of financial ecosystem.

Increased Use Of Digital Medium

- The number of internet users in the country was ~95 crore on March 31, 2024.
 - In 2014, only 600 panchayats of the country were connected to the Internet, whereas 2,13,000 panchayats are connected with the Internet today.
- Due to the Digital India initiative, many facilities have become **online** in the country.
 - 35 crore Jan Dhan accounts, 36 crore Rupay debit cards.
 - 46% of the world's digital transaction volume is taking place in India today.
- The **increase in downloading speed and reduction in cost**, data consumption has also increased a lot.
 - Earlier the average usage was 0.26 GB which has increased by almost 78 times to 20.27 GB today.
- In this context, the need for protection from digital fraud also increases a lot.

Centre Doubles Funding for Road Connectivity in LWE Areas

- The Centre has doubled the allocation of funds under the **Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas (RCPLWEA)** for financial year 2024-25.
 - The scheme is expected to boost socio-economic development and support security needs in these regions.
 - Since its inception, 1,347 road projects covering over 12,227 km have been sanctioned, with nearly 9,259 km of roads completed.
- This is significant as Union Home Minister Amit Shah had earlier announced that Left Wing Extremism (LWE) will be completely eradicated in the country before March 2026.

About Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas

- The Union Government's Road Connectivity Project for **Left Wing Extremism (LWE) Affected Areas** aims to **improve infrastructure in regions impacted by insurgency and extremism.**
- Launched as part of a broader strategy to foster development and peace, the project focuses on constructing and upgrading roads in the most affected areas.
- As a separate vertical under the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**, it is aimed at **providing all-weather road connectivity with culverts and cross-drainage structures in 44 worst-affected LWE districts and adjoining districts in 9 states.**
- Under the scheme, the **Centre and states share the expenditure in 60:40 ratio** — same as under PMGSY.
- Recently, the **Ministry of Rural Development**, the nodal ministry for the scheme, said the revised “indicative allocation” of funds — the central share — has been kept at **₹1,000 crore for financial year 2024-25.**
 - This is double the amount allocated earlier.

WhatsApp Impersonation

- Over the past three years, high-profile WhatsApp impersonation cases have targeted former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, Union Ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Kiren Rijiju, and Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud, among others.

- Investigations revealed the involvement of IP addresses from Pakistan, Hong Kong, and Nigeria.
- Suspects create fake WhatsApp accounts using target photos from the Internet. They obtain OTPs via SMS forwarding apps or Telegram groups and use a malicious app, "Thermal Camera," for SMS bombing to disrupt the target's phone and extract OTPs.
- The fake accounts are then used to message the target's contacts, asking them to buy e-gift cards, which the suspect resells.
- Investigations show SIM cards from various Indian states were used, and no VPN or proxy was involved in these cybercrimes.

Changes In the Armed Forces are Considering To Shed Colonial Influences

The Indian Armed Forces are undergoing reforms to remove colonial legacies from military traditions and practices.

- ✓ The reforms aim to "Indianise" the military by shedding colonial influences and aligning the Armed Forces with Indian traditions and values.
- ✓ PM Modi emphasized this during the Combined Commanders Conference in 2021, advocating for indigenization across national security systems, including doctrines, procedures, and customs.

Key Changes Being Considered

- **Incorporating Indian Military over Western military Thinkers in Career Courses**
 - College of Defence Management (CDM) in Secunderabad is collaborating with Gujarat University's Indic Studies department to include Indian historical figures and campaigns in the syllabus.
 - Key topics may cover land campaigns by the Marathas, Sikhs, and the Indian National Army (INA), as well as maritime strategies by rulers like Raja Raja Chola I, Rajendra Chola, and King Marthand Varma.
- **Consolidating Service Acts**
 - Work is in progress to draft a tri-service Act, which would replace the separate Army, Navy, and Air Force Acts. This consolidation aims to streamline processes and reduce redundancies between the services.
- **Reducing Scottish-Origin Pipe Bands**
 - The Army is considering reducing the number of Scottish-origin pipe bands, which currently exist in many units, limiting them to ceremonial purposes at regional command headquarters.
- **Creating a Pan-India Character in Infantry Regiments**
 - The Army is exploring whether regiments such as the Jat and Bihar regiments can be given a more pan-Indian character, similar to the artillery and armored divisions, rather than being region-specific.

Previous Reforms Implemented

- **Phasing Out Colonial-Era Traditions**
 - This includes changing Army unit crests, replacing the naval ensign with an indigenous design, and renaming military platforms and seminar halls to reflect Indian names.
- **Indian Music and Symbols in Ceremonies**
 - Indian tunes and instruments have become more prominent in national ceremonies like the Republic Day parade and Beating Retreat.
 - Notably, the hymn "Abide With Me" was replaced with the patriotic song "Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon" in 2022.
- **Cultural Attire in Naval Messes**

- In a symbolic change, the Indian Navy now allows traditional Indian attire, such as kurta-pyjama, in naval messes.
- **Promoting Indigenous Ethics and Concepts**
 - Professional military education institutes are hosting seminars by Indology experts to promote indigenous ideas in ethics, law, and warfare.
- **Giving out Indian names to military platforms and weapon systems.**

BrahMos Aerospace Notifies Reservation for Agniveers

- BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited has announced a reservation policy for recruiting Agniveers.
- It will reserve at least 15% of technical and general administration vacancies across its work centers and 50% of security and administrative roles where tasks are outsourced.
- The company highlighted that Agniveers, trained under the Agnipath scheme, bring valuable skills, discipline, and motivation, making them assets to the organization.

Navika Sagar Parikrama II

- On October 2, two Indian Navy officers, Roopa A and Dilna K, will embark on a challenging global circumnavigation expedition aboard INSV Tarini.
- This eight-month journey, under the **Navika Sagar Parikrama II**, will see them covering 21,600 nautical miles (around 40,000 km) in double-handed mode, relying solely on wind power with no external assistance.
 - The Indian Navy had launched its first Navika Sagar Parikrama in 2017.
 - It was manned by six female crew members, to circumnavigate the globe on board the Indian Naval Sailing Vessel Tarini, **or INSV Tarini.**
 - Lt Commander Vartika Joshi commanded the **first Navika Sagar Parikrama.**
- If successful, they will become the first Indian duo to complete such a feat.
- This voyage will take them around three great capes—Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn, and the Cape of Good Hope.
 - **Cape Leeuwin** - It is located in Leeuwin, Western Australia, at the most south-westerly point of the Australian mainland. It is where the Southern and Indian Oceans meet, and is known for its turbulent waters.
 - **Cape Horn** – It is located on Hornos Island in the Tierra del Fuego archipelago of southern Chile. It is known for connecting the Atlantic, Pacific, and Southern oceans.
 - **Cape of Good Hope** - It is located at the **southern tip of the Cape Peninsula**, which is also home to Cape Town, the legislative capital of South Africa.
 - At the Cape, the warm Mozambique-**Agulhas** current of the Indian Ocean and the cool **Benguela** current of the South Atlantic Ocean meet.
- The expedition is a continuation of the Navy’s commitment to empowering women and promoting India’s maritime heritage.

Tripura CM Declares State Insurgency-Free

- Tripura CM has declared the state as “insurgency-free” after 584 militants had laid down their weapons before him at a surrender ceremony.
- The rebels were from the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

- This development came after the Centre and the Tripura government had signed a Memorandum of Settlement with insurgent groups on September 4 in the presence of Union Home Minister.

Insurgency in Tripura

- **Background**

- **Tribal Composition:** Tripura has 19 indigenous tribes, including the Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Kaipeng, Naotia, Koloi, Halam, Hrangkhal, Mog, and Bangcher.
- **Languages:** Kok Borok along with other Tibeto-Burmese dialects.
- **Journey towards Statehood**

- Tripura was a princely state that acceded to the Indian Union on October 15, 1949.
- It became a Union Territory on November 1, 1956 and a full-fledged State on January 21, 1972.

- **Causes of Insurgency**

- **Demographic Shift:** The massive influx of Bengali refugees from East Pakistan led to the indigenous population decreasing from 95% in 1931 to 31% by 1991.
- **Discontent Among Tribals:** Tribals became a minority, losing control over land, trade, government jobs, and business, sparking grievances.
- **Other factors:** Tripura, like other North-Eastern states, experienced insurgency due to geographical isolation, socio-economic backwardness, dysfunctional governance, rampant corruption, and tribal land alienation.

- **Strategic Response to Insurgency**

- **Counter-insurgency operations**

- The approach involved **counter-insurgency operations (C.I. Ops)** that were swift and focused on area domination, without involving the Army.
- Central paramilitary and State police forces, including **Special Police Officers** (tribals included), were key players.

- **Psychological operations**

- These operations were launched to correct the negative perception of the state among tribals.
- This included highlighting the hypocritical behavior of insurgents and their exploitation of the tribal population.

- **Confidence-Building Measures**

- Confidence-building exercises and rehabilitation packages were provided for insurgents.
- The Governor and Chief Minister publicly urged insurgents to return to the mainstream, leading to several surrenders.

- **Civic and Developmental Interventions**

- **Developmental initiatives** were swiftly rolled out, including healthcare, rural connectivity, drinking water, and job generation.
- Security forces also conducted **civic action programs**, providing medical aid, educational materials, and vocational training, presenting a pro-citizen, development-oriented image of the state.

- **Political and Governance Reforms**

- **Peace marches** were organized in insurgency-affected areas to instill confidence in the people.
- **Local governance institutions** like autonomous development councils, gram panchayats, and village councils were strengthened, ensuring tribal participation in the development process.

Air Marshal Amar Preet Singh as new Indian Air Force Chief

- Air Marshal Amar Preet Singh took over as the new Indian Air Force chief.
- He succeeded Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari who is superannuating after completing his tenure of three years.

Crackdown on Organised Crime

- **Database of organized criminals**
 - The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is creating a comprehensive database of organized criminals to strengthen the national information network against gang activities, especially those run from jails.
 - This database will include updated details of gangsters, their social media accounts, financial networks, associates, and operational areas.
 - States like Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar will contribute and access this database.
 - It will feature photographs, biometric data, interrogation reports, logistics providers, weapon suppliers, and harborers.
- **Challenges faced by law enforcement agencies**
 - During a recent meeting at Delhi Police headquarters, the importance of targeting the financial channels, weapon suppliers, social media managers, and other enablers of these gangs was emphasized.
 - Police officers discussed challenges such as the use of encrypted apps, VPNs, and “**dabba calls**” by overseas-based gangsters to carry out extortions.
 - Dabba calling is an extortion technique, used by international gangsters. It involves a three-step process.
 - First, an extortion call is placed via the internet.
 - Then, the gang leader is dialled on a second phone.
 - Finally, both phones are placed side by side on speaker mode, allowing the kingpin to do the talking while evading detection.
 - Some officers highlighted difficulties in obtaining information from service providers and suggested booking gang members under stringent laws like the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

FATF Praises India's PMLA, Terror Financing

- Global anti-money laundering and terror financing body FATF has launched its mutual evaluation report on India.
- The report commended the country's systems to tackle the menace of money laundering (ML) and terror financing (TF). It also urged India to expedite its prosecutions in financial fraud cases.

Key Highlights Of The FATF's Mutual Evaluation Report On India

- **India in the regular follow-up category**
 - FATF placed India in the “**regular follow-up**” category for its compliance with anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terror financing (CTF) recommendations.
 - This category signifies a high level of compliance in combating ML and TF, though some non-financial sectors require improvement in supervision and preventive measures.

- This classification is shared by only four other G20 countries [UK, France, Italy and Russia (now suspended from FATF)].
- Most of the developing countries are in the **enhanced follow-up** category, which requires submission of reports on an annual basis, as against once in three years in the “regular follow-up” category.
- India complied/largely complied with **37 of 40** recommendations and all of the **“Big-Five”**.
- **Lauds India’s PMLA, terror financing**
 - India is taking steps to address the **fast-tracking of trials** in TF and ML cases, which was identified as a priority.
- **Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile Initiative & GST**
 - FATF praised India’s Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) initiative for boosting financial inclusion and reducing the cash-based economy.
 - The implementation of GST, requiring e-invoices and e-bills, was recognized for increasing transparency in the supply chain.
- **Key Compliance Measures**
 - India's Cybercrime Coordination Centre, beneficial ownership registry by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, and Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCR) were highlighted as positive steps.
 - The establishment of task forces and high-level committees to combat corruption, black money, drug trafficking, and fake currency was commended.
- **Enforcement Achievements**
 - The ED was recognized for confiscating assets worth ₹16,537 crore and securing restitution of ₹141.3 billion in the Vijay Mallya case.
 - ED's success in pursuing complex, large-scale, cross-border money laundering cases and “hawala” operations was noted.
- **Shell Companies Task Force**
 - The report highlighted the removal of 3,82,875 shell companies and the disqualification of over 3 lakh directors who failed to file financial statements.
- **International Cooperation and Asset Recovery**
 - India’s strong coordination on illicit financial flows, financial intelligence, and international cooperation was appreciated.
 - The FATF also noted India’s ability to implement targeted financial sanctions.

Areas for Improvement

- **Limited Prosecutions and Convictions:** India has seen a limited number of prosecutions and convictions in ML and TF cases.
 - It flagged delays in the prosecution of terror financing cases due to challenges in the constitutionality of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) between 2014-2022.
 - Though the Enforcement Directorate (ED) increased investigations, the number of prosecutions and concluded trials has not shown a proportionate increase.
- **Risk-Profiling:** Customer risk-profiling in financial institutions requires improvement.
- **MCA Registry Monitoring:** Accurate ownership information in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) registry needs better oversight.
- **Human Trafficking Link:** Greater focus is required on the connection between ML & TF
- **Terrorism Threats in India**

- India faces a “disparate range” of terrorism threats, including regional insurgencies in the Northeast and North, Left-Wing Extremist groups, and Islamic State or al-Qaeda-linked threats in Jammu and Kashmir.
- The largest money laundering risks stem from fraud, corruption, and drug trafficking.
- **Non-Profit Sector Oversight**
 - India needs to ensure that non-profit organizations (NPOs) are safeguarded against misuse for terror financing.
 - The FATF recommended more focused, coordinated outreach to help NPOs understand these risks better.
- **Targeted Financial Sanctions**
 - The FATF urged India to improve the framework for implementing targeted financial sanctions to ensure the prompt freezing of funds and assets.
 - The current process needs streamlining for better communication.
- **Definition of Domestic Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs)**
 - The report highlighted the absence of a definition for domestic PEPs under anti-money laundering laws.
 - Foreign PEPs have already been defined, but domestic PEPs require proper identification and risk-based enhanced measures.

FATF’s Mutual Evaluation Process

- Mutual Evaluation Process is a comprehensive and rigorous assessment conducted **to evaluate a country’s compliance with international standards for combating ML and TF.**
- **India and FATF’s mutual evaluation report**
 - In its previous evaluation in **June 2010**, India was placed in the “**regular follow-up**” category, which was removed in **June 2013**.
 - India's next assessment is set for 2031.

CDS Releases Joint Doctrine For Amphibious Operations

- Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has released the **Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations** in New Delhi. This doctrine is intended to guide commanders on how to conduct amphibious operations in a complex military environment.
 - Amphibious operations are attacks launched from the sea by naval and landing forces, involving a landing on a hostile shore.
- It is expected to improve cooperation and coordination *between the armed forces*, and enhance their ability to carry out operations in the Indian Ocean Region.
- The Joint Doctrine for Amphibious Operations is the second joint doctrine released in 2024, following the **Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations**.

Two anti-submarine Warfare Vessels for Indian Navy Launched

- Two anti-submarine warfare vessels, named **INS Malpe** and **INS Mulki**, were recently launched at the Cochin Shipyard for the Indian Navy.
- This marked the fourth and fifth ships in a series of eight such vessels designed for coastal anti-submarine operations.
- This project is part of India's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative to boost domestic defense production.

GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENT

Animal Culling due to Food Security Issue in Namibia

Amid severe drought, Namibia plans to cull wild animals for meat to provide food security.

More About it

- **Adverse Impact of Climate Change:** Namibia declared a national emergency due to a severe drought that started in October 2023, affecting countries like Botswana, Angola, and Zimbabwe.
- **Repercussions of the drought** led to crop failures and livestock deaths, impacting 1.2 million people. El Niño has also exacerbated the situation.
- **The Namibian government's solution for Climate Emergency:** is considering culling wild animals, not just for meat, but to prevent them from migrating in search of food and water, which could lead to conflicts with humans.

About Namibia (located on the southwestern coast of Africa)

- **Borders:** Bordered by Angola to the north, Zambia to the northeast, Botswana to the east, South Africa to the southeast and south, and the Atlantic Ocean to the west.
- **Deserts & Grasslands:** Known for its diverse landscapes, including the Namib Desert along the coast, the Kalahari Desert in the east, and savannas and mountains.
- **Major Rivers:** include the Orange River (border with South Africa) & the Okavango River.

India-Namibia Relations in the Field of Geography and Environment

- Namibia is rich in uranium, diamonds, and other minerals. While India, particularly Surat, is a global hub for diamond cutting and polishing. India has shown interest in Namibia's mining sector, particularly in uranium for its nuclear energy program.
- **Cheetah Reintroduction Program:** In a landmark initiative, India has partnered with Namibia for the reintroduction of cheetahs into the wild. In 2022, Namibia agreed to send eight cheetahs to India as part of India's project to reintroduce the species in the Kuno National Park.
- **Renewable Energy:** Namibia (vast solar potential) is exploring partnerships with India in the field of solar power. India, through the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

Indian Ocean Biodiversity Information System (IndOBIS)

The Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) conducted a national-level workshop on the Indian Ocean Biodiversity Information System (IndOBIS)

About IndOBIS : It collects data of taxonomically resolved marine species occurrence records from the Indian Ocean and contributes to the OBIS as one of the 30 regional nodes of OBIS

OBIS (Ocean Biodiversity Information System)

- It is one of the largest global repositories of information on marine species, containing millions of records from thousands of datasets contributed by researchers, governments, and organisations worldwide.
- It has been set up by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO for promoting marine science, conservation, and sustainable development.

Plastic Pollution – India

India tops plastic pollution rankings.

Key Findings

- India releases 9.3 Mn tonnes of such waste into the environment annually, a fifth of global plastic waste.
- The amount of plastic waste generated in India is three times more than the next four biggest polluters – Nigeria, Indonesia, China and Pakistan.
- Littering is the largest source of plastic pollution in the Global North, whereas uncollected waste is the dominant source in the Global South. Almost two-thirds of this pollution originates from uncollected and ill-disposed waste.

FRAME Methodology

According to methodology termed as **Food Recovery to Avoid Methane Emissions (FRAME)** each food bank reduces the same volume of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by removing 900 gasoline-powered cars from the road for a year.

Teal Carbon

India's first study on 'teal carbon', undertaken at Keoladeo National Park (KNP) in Rajasthan.

- ✓ Currently, Keoladeo National Park and Loktak Lake (Manipur) are in the Montreux Record of Ramsar Convention.

About FRAME (Developed by The Global Food Banking Network (GFN) in partnership with the Global Methane Hub and the Carbon Trust)

Key objectives: Reduce food waste, divert food waste from landfills, mitigate methane emissions, Promote sustainable food systems

FRAME Initiatives: Food Donation, Food Recovery Programs, Composting, Food Waste Reduction Campaigns

It initially began as a pilot project in Mexico and Ecuador, where six community-led food banks were analysed.

Global Methane Hub: It is a philanthropic organization dedicated to reducing methane emissions globally and significantly boosting philanthropic resources allocated specifically to methane reduction.

Global Food Banking Network (GFN) is a global alliance of food banks and food recovery organizations dedicated to addressing food insecurity and hunger worldwide.

About Teal Carbon

- **Teal Carbon is concept that** extends beyond the more commonly known terms like **blue carbon** (carbon stored in coastal & marine ecosystem) and **green carbon** (carbon stored in forests & vegetation).
- Teal carbon **focuses on carbon storage in inland waters such as rivers, lakes, wetlands, and floodplains.** These ecosystems play a crucial role in carbon sequestration, though they are often overlooked in carbon accounting.
 - ✓ **Wetlands**, including marshes, swamps, and peatlands, are some of the most important teal carbon ecosystems, often surpassing forests in terms of carbon density per hectare.
- The name "teal" comes from the blending of **blue (water-related ecosystems)** and **green (land-based ecosystems)**, symbolizing the unique nature of inland waters.
 - ✓ **Example:** The Sundarbans mangroves in India & Bangladesh not only serve as blue carbon ecosystems but also contribute to teal carbon storage via their connected freshwater wetlands.
 - ✓ Lake Tanganyika, one of the largest freshwater lakes in Africa, stores a significant amount of carbon in its deep sediments.
- **Threats:** Though these wetlands play a crucial role in regulating greenhouse gases, they are vulnerable to degradation from pollution, land use changes, water extraction, and landscape modifications.

Working & Benefits of Teal Carbon

- **Carbon Sequestration:** These ecosystems have a natural ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They do this through photosynthesis, where they use sunlight to convert carbon dioxide into organic matter.

- **Carbon Transport:** Rivers and wetlands act as conduits for carbon transport, moving carbon between terrestrial ecosystems and the ocean.

Myristica Swamps

Myristica swamp forest has been discovered in Kumbhalgarh, Maharashtra which is protected by the local community.

About Myristica Swamps

- These are tropical evergreen forests characterized by the dominance of trees belonging to the genus *Myristica*
 - ✓ A swamp is a type of wetland characterized by the presence of water-saturated soil & an abundance of vegetation. It is typically found in low-lying areas where water accumulates & drains slowly.
- **Geographical spread:** Southeast Asia, particularly in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In India, these unique habitats occur in the Western Ghats, and a smaller distribution exists in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Meghalaya.
- These forests are often waterlogged due to poor drainage, leading to the formation of peat deposits. They are also denoted as living fossils due to the primitive nature of *Myristica* plants.

Adaptations of Myristica Swamp Species

- **Buttressed Roots:** These forests are characterized by trees with large protruding roots jutting out of waterlogged soil, which remains inundated throughout the year.
- **Pneumatophores:** Some species in the *Myristica* swamp forests develop pneumatophores (specialized aerial roots) that stick out above the water's surface.
- **Seed Dispersal:** Many trees in these swamps have adapted to water-based (hydrochory) seed dispersal mechanisms.

Ecological Importance of Myristica Swamp Forests

- **Water Conservation:** Typically, *Myristica* swamps are seen next to rivers and help in retaining water and act as a sponge, ensuring perennial water availability.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** Their waterlogged conditions help in the preservation of organic matter, preventing the rapid decomposition that releases carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere.
- **Biodiversity Hotspot:** They bear aromatic fruits that are often used as spices or perfumes. Dancing Frog is endemic to the Western Ghats and can be found in High altitude shola forests, wet evergreen forests, *Myristica* swamps, and secondary forests.

Salt Pans

Government approved the transfer of 256 acres of salt pan land in Mumbai to the Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL).

Salt Pans (Also known as salt flats or salt crystallizer pans or salterns)

- Salt pans are large flat areas where salt is extracted from seawater or other sources of salt-rich water. These areas are formed through the natural evaporation of water, leaving behind salt crystals.
- Salt pans are essential for salt production. They're found in: Coastal areas, Estuaries, Deltaic regions, Salt lakes.
- **Characteristics:** Shallow water (typically <1m deep); High salinity (often 2-3 times higher than seawater); Variable water levels; Limited vegetation

- **Ecosystem Components & Significance:** Microalgae (primary producers); Benthic organisms (e.g., brine shrimp, plankton); Avifauna (waterbirds, shorebirds); Small fish and invertebrates. Salt pans, which, along with the mangroves, stop the city from flooding
- According to the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), the ecologically sensitive salt pans fall under CRZ-1B category, where no economic activity is allowed with the exception of salt extraction and natural gas exploration.
- Nationally, some 60,000 acres have been demarcated as salt pan lands, spread across Maharashtra, Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Gujarat, and Karnataka. Andhra Pradesh boasts the largest expanse of such land.
- **Andhra Pradesh**, with 20,716 acres, holds the largest area of such land, followed by **Tamil Nadu** with 17,095 acres and **Maharashtra** with 12,662 acres.
- **Cultural Significance:** Salt pans played a crucial role in India's civil disobedience movement, particularly during Mahatma Gandhi's Salt March from Dandi (1930), a protest against British colonial salt taxes.

Mission Mausam

The government has approved 'Mission Mausam' with an outlay of Rs.2,000 crore over two years to create a more weather-ready and climate-smart Bharat.

About Mission Mausam

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), and the National Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF) —institutions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences—will be responsible for the mission's implementation.
- The mission aims to modernize India's weather forecasting and climate modeling infrastructure, improve disaster management, and contribute to global weather research. It seeks to make India 'Weather Ready' and 'Climate Smart'.
- The mission will integrate advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and high-performance computing to improve the accuracy of weather predictions
- Benefits: Improved Disaster Management, Enhanced Agricultural Productivity, Sustainable Development, Public Safety
- It includes deploying next-generation radars and satellite systems with advanced sensors and high-performance supercomputers, developing improved Earth system models, and developing a GIS-based automated Decision-Support System for real-time data dissemination.

Artificial Reefs

Odisha's first artificial reef is launched in Chilika lake to restore aquatic ecosystems under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY).

About Artificial Reefs (ARs)

- These are human-made underwater structures designed to mimic natural reefs, providing habitat for marine life, promoting biodiversity, and supporting ecosystem services.
 - ✓ These are structures built by humans through **biorock technology** and placed on the seabed in freshwater or saltwater environments.
- Like natural reefs, ARs are used for aggregating fish & provide a home for fish to grow, reduce wave damage on coasts, helps regeneration of marine ecosystem & act as a carbon sink.
- ~~Types~~—Examples of Artificial Reefs structures: Shipwrecks, Oil rigs, Concrete modules, Reef balls, Artificial reef towers. Submerged shipwrecks are the most common form of artificial reef.

- Artificial Reefs in India : Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Central Marine Fisheries Institute (ICAR-CMFRI) conducted the earliest experiments in Lakshadweep and Tuticorin.
- Steps by Government: PMMSY includes plans to introduce artificial reefs in 3,477 coastal villages, The Blue Economy 2.0 scheme encompasses measures such as the deployment of artificial reefs for both adaptation and mitigation purposes.
 - ✓ **PMMSY** was launched in May 2020 with the highest ever investment of Rs. 20,050 crores to bring about the Blue Revolution via sustainable & responsible development of the fisheries.

Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas

The Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) has launched the “Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas” for India’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

Key features of Integrated Ocean Energy Atlas

- Marine Energy Sources: The first-of-its-kind atlas covers various Blue Renewable energy sources, including solar, wind, waves, tides, ocean currents, and thermal gradients.
 - ✓ The atlas highlights key areas suitable for different energy sources, like tidal waves in Gujarat and West Bengal, and salinity gradients in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.
- Energy Estimates: INCOIS estimates around 9.2 lakh TWh (Terawatt hours) of integrated ocean energy per year in India’s EEZ
 - ✓ The concept of EEZ was adopted through the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is an area of the ocean extending up to 200 nautical miles (370 km) immediately offshore from a country’s land coast in which that country retains exclusive rights to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources.
 - ✓ India has a vast coastline of over 7,000 km that offers ample scope for energy generation.
- Mapping Methodology: The atlas provides annual, monthly, and daily energy estimates through a WebGIS interface
- This will enable the country to harness its rich ocean energy resources, promoting sustainable development and energy security.
- INCOIS plans to collaborate with industrial partners and public sector companies to develop marine energy projects in high-energy zones
 - ✓ The atlas has also factored in the **fishing zones, shipping lines, cyclone-prone zones, eco-sensitive zones, ports, and harbours**- all of these are vital for industries ahead of planning their infrastructure for energy generation.

{For more Information about INCOIS; Kindly refer The Recitals (June 2024), Page 108}

First CO₂-to-Methanol Pilot Plant

India’s first CO₂-to-methanol pilot plant will be operational at Thermax Limited in Pune, Maharashtra.

- ✓ The pilot plant will have indigenous Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU) cutting-edge technologies.

Carbon Capture and Utilization (CCU)

- **CCU** refers to the process of capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) from industrial or atmospheric sources and using it for various applications rather than storing it underground.
 - ✓ This method differs from Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), where the captured CO₂ is stored underground (typically in geological formations) without further use.

- CCU transforms CO₂ into valuable products like fuels, chemicals, building materials, and even food additives. **Example:** Audi's e-gas plant in Germany uses CO₂ from biogas plants and hydrogen to produce synthetic methane (e-gas), which can be used as a fuel for vehicles.
- This concept aligns with the circular carbon economy, where CO₂ is continuously reused and recycled instead of being released into the atmosphere.

Pheromone Dispenser

Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR) and ICAR have developed a sustainable pheromone dispenser to aid farmers in controlling pests

About Pheromone dispenser

- Pheromone dispensers are devices used to release synthetic pheromones in a controlled manner, primarily for agricultural purposes such as pest management.
 - ✓ Pheromones are naturally occurring chemical signals that animals and insects emit to communicate with members of the same species for signaling danger, marking territory, attracting mates, or coordinating social behaviors.

Pheromone Dispensers: Purpose and Function

- **Mating Disruption:** By flooding the environment with synthetic sex pheromones, dispensers confuse male insects, preventing them from locating females and disrupting their mating cycle.
- **Mass Trapping:** Pheromone dispensers attract pests to traps, where they are captured and removed from the crop area.
- **Monitoring Pest Populations:** By attracting insects, pheromone traps help monitor pest populations and allow farmers to assess the effectiveness of pest control strategies.
 - ✓ In agriculture, pheromone dispensers are widely used in Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies to control insect populations without relying on harmful chemical pesticides.

Applications of Pheromone Dispensers

Pheromone dispensers are used in various sectors, but their most prominent application is in agriculture. Below are some specific examples:

- **Fruit and Vegetable Crops:** In crops like apples, grapes, and tomatoes, pheromone dispensers are used to control pests such as codling moths, fruit flies, and tomato leafminers. These pests cause significant damage by feeding on the fruits and vegetables or laying eggs inside them.
- **Forestry:** Pheromone dispensers are also used in forest management to control pests like bark beetles, which can devastate trees and disrupt ecosystems.
- **Stored Products and Warehouses:** Pheromone dispensers are employed in warehouses and storage facilities to control pests like moths & beetles that infest stored grains & other products.

Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH) Scheme



Government of India has approved continuation of the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme for the 15th Finance Commission cycle.



More About DWH Scheme (Centrally Sponsored Scheme)

- It is a flagship program launched by the union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to promote the conservation & sustainable development of wildlife habitats in country.
- Aim: to address the growing threats to wildlife and their habitats, such as habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict.

- **Components of IDWH:**
 1. Support to protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves, and community reserves).
 2. Protection of wildlife outside protected areas.
 3. Recovery programs for saving critically endangered species and habitats.
 - ✓ So far, 22 species have been identified under the Species recovery program.
- The scheme supports key initiatives like Project Tiger, Project Elephant, Project Cheetah, and the Development of Wildlife Habitat. Under this scheme 55 tiger reserves, 33 elephant reserves and 718 protected areas and their zones of influence stand to benefit.
- The initiative focuses on boosting technological interventions, like the use of AI, camera traps, and conservation genetics for wildlife monitoring.

Species in News

<p>Cannibal Spiders</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new spider species, Mimetus spinatus and Mimetus parvulus, have been discovered in the Western Ghats, specifically in Karnataka's Mookambika Wildlife Sanctuary and Kerala's Ernakulam district. • These spiders, part of the Mimetidae family (commonly known as pirate or cannibal spiders), infiltrate other spiders' webs, mimicking vibrations to deceive and capture their hosts. • Mimetus spinatus is characterised by its medium size, pale yellow head, and dull grey-white abdomen, with scattered light green mottling. It possesses long, black, flattened spine-like hairs on the dorsal head, which inspired its name. • In contrast, Mimetus parvulus is distinguished by its pale creamy-rose head with dense grey-black mottling and a triangular-shaped, dull grey-white abdomen.
<p>Phrynarachne Decipiens</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoologists in Assam have added a species of spider Phrynarachne decipiens to India's list of arachnids. • It is a fascinating species of crab spider known for its remarkable ability to mimic flowers. • These spiders are often found lurking on flowers, blending seamlessly with their surroundings to ambush unsuspecting prey. • As their name suggests, these spiders have a crab-like stance, with their legs spread wide apart. This stance helps them move sideways and backwards, making them agile predators. • Phrynarachne decipiens is widely distributed across many parts of the world, including North America, Europe, and Asia.

<p>Carrhotus</p>  <p>Piperus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a new jumping spider species which was found on pepper (<i>Piper nigrum</i>) plants, about two metres above the ground. • It has been identified in the lower Palani Hills of Tamil Nadu. • The spider is distinguishable from its closely-related species by its unique prolateral protrusion and beak-shaped embolus, setting it apart from other members of its genus.
<p>Elongated Tortoise</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was spotted in Haryana's Damdama area during a research survey in the Aravallis. • The tortoise is medium-sized with a yellowish brown or olive shell and distinct black blotches at the center of each scute. • Also referred to as the Sal Forest Tortoise, it inhabits open deciduous forest patches, including Sal and evergreen forest habitats, dry thorn forests, and savannah grasslands. • The species is widely distributed across northeast India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia. • IUCN Status: Critically Endangered

Acetanilide

Five people were seriously affected due to Acetanilide in Visakhapatnam.

About Acetanilide (N-phenylacetamide/ molecular formula C_8H_9NO)

- It is synthetic organic compound, a white, odorless solid that is slightly soluble in water.
- Acetanilide was discovered to have antipyretic (fever-reducing) and analgesic (pain-relieving) properties. It was marketed under the trade name Antifebrin. but it was eventually replaced by aspirin and acetaminophen (paracetamol) due to its potential side effects.
- **Toxicity:** Acetanilide is toxic if ingested in large quantities. It can cause methemoglobinemia, a condition in which the hemoglobin in the blood is unable to carry oxygen effectively
- **Applications:** Today, acetanilide is primarily used as an intermediate in the synthesis of other chemicals, such as dyes, rubber accelerators, and pharmaceuticals.

Zombie Fungus

Wildlife researchers have found tarantula infected by zombie fungus.

About Zombie fungus (*Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*- genus of fungi)

- It primarily attacks invertebrates & mainly infects insects such as ants or spiders. The fungus is largely pantropical and primarily infects carpenter ants.
- It drains its host entirely of nutrients. It also fills the host body with spores, allowing the fungus to reproduce.

About Tarantulas (A type of large, hairy spider belonging to the family Theraphosidae).

- There are over 900 species of tarantulas found all over the world, except for Antarctica.
- They are accomplished nocturnal predators.

Dedicated Enzyme Manufacturing Facility

The Department of Biotechnology plans to establish first enzyme-manufacturing facilities in Manesar, Haryana to boost ethanol production, against the backdrop of the BioE3 policy.

- ✓ The BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment & Employment) policy in India aims to set up biomanufacturing hubs across India where industry partners can produce bio-based products.

Role of Enzyme-Manufacturing Facilities:

- The goal is to reduce India's dependence on imported enzymes, which are used to convert rice stubble into ethanol.
 - ✓ Enzymes are crucial for breaking down complex carbohydrates in feedstocks into simple sugars, which can then be fermented into ethanol.
- Dedicated enzyme-manufacturing facilities can provide a reliable and efficient supply of high-quality enzymes, supporting the expansion of ethanol production.
 - ✓ According to the NITI Ayog estimates, India will need about 13.5 billion litres of ethanol annually by 2025–26 towards meeting the fuel-blending mandate of E20 (20% of Ethanol Blending in Petrol by 2025)

Benefits of this Initiative: (essential for turning stubble into ethanol)

- **Increased ethanol production & Green Growth:** A robust supply of enzymes will enable the ethanol industry to scale up production, meeting the growing demand for biofuels.
- **Reduced dependence on fossil fuels & promotes circular bioeconomy:** Ethanol is a cleaner alternative to gasoline and diesel, contributing to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Rural development:** Ethanol production can create job opportunities and boost rural economies, particularly in regions with agricultural resources.

Drug Repurposing

Researchers have found the repurpose potential of an antidepressant drug for cancer management.

What is Drug Repurposing or Drug Repositioning?

- It is a strategy that involves identifying new therapeutic uses for existing drugs
- Instead of developing entirely new drugs, researchers explore the potential therapeutic applications of approved medications for treating different diseases.
- Repurposing drugs is a promising and cost-effective alternative to traditional drug development.

Advantages of Drug Repurposing

- **Accelerated Drug Development & Addressing Unmet Medical Needs:** Repurposing existing drugs can significantly reduce the time and cost associated with traditional drug discovery (ranging from \$1 billion to \$2.6 billion) and development processes.
- **Reduced Risk:** Drugs that have already been approved for safety and efficacy in humans have a lower risk profile compared to new, unproven compounds.
- **Leveraging Existing Knowledge:** Repurposing leverages existing knowledge about the drug's pharmacology, safety, and efficacy, reducing the need for extensive preclinical & clinical testing.

Examples of Successful Drug Repurposing

- **Remdesivir:** Initially developed for Ebola, remdesivir was repurposed as an antiviral treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic after showing efficacy against SARS-CoV-2 in early studies.
- **Sildenafil:** Originally developed as a treatment for angina, sildenafil was later found to be effective for erectile dysfunction and is now marketed as Viagra.
- **Thalidomide:** Initially used as a sedative and anti-nausea medication, thalidomide was later discovered to have anti-inflammatory properties and is now used to treat certain types of cancer.
- **Aspirin:** Originally developed as an analgesic and anti-inflammatory drug, aspirin is now widely used for its anti-platelet effects to prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Third Energy field of Earth

Endurance Mission (NASA) data confirmed the existence of a weak electric energy field called 'Polar wind', which has existed alongside the other two energy fields—gravity and magnetic.

About Polar Wind (Newly discovered energy field is as crucial as gravity & magnetic fields to Earth.)

- Polar wind refers to the outflow of charged particles (mainly electrons and ions) from Earth's polar regions, where the planet's magnetic field is open to space.
- These charged particles escape from the ionosphere (the upper atmosphere) into the magnetosphere and eventually into space.

- Polar wind is a component of the solar wind interaction with Earth's magnetic field, playing a significant role in space weather phenomena.
- Generation: By the interaction between the Solar Wind and the Earth's magnetic field, which accelerates charged particles towards the poles.
- Characteristics:
 1. Comprises electrons, protons, and heavier ions
 2. Flows at high velocities (up to 1,000 km/s)
 3. Carries energy and momentum away from the Earth
 4. Influences the Earth's magnetosphere and upper atmosphere
 5. Plays a role in auroral activity and space weather
- **Ambipolar:** It works in both directions. Ions pull the electrons down with them as they sink with gravity. At the same time, electrons lift ions against gravity, causing atmospheric escape.
- This new discovery opens new avenues for exploration, especially how energy fields on various planets with atmospheres such as Venus & Mars have influenced the evolution of Earth's atmosphere.

Extra Mile: Differences Between Polar Wind and Solar Wind

Feature	Polar Wind	Solar Wind
Origin	Earth's ionosphere and polar regions	The Sun's corona
Source of Energy	Solar radiation ionizing Earth's upper atmosphere (UV, X-rays)	The Sun's magnetic field and coronal heating
Primary Composition	Oxygen ions (O ⁺), Hydrogen ions (H ⁺), Helium ions (He ⁺), Electrons	Protons (H ⁺), Electrons, Alpha particles (He ²⁺)
Role in Space Weather	Contributes to the magnetosphere & affects auroral phenomena	Major driver of space weather, including solar storms and geomagnetic storms

Quantum Gravity

Quantum gravity is under research aiming to **unify** classical gravitation and quantum mechanics.

About Quantum Gravity

- Quantum gravity (QG) is a field of theoretical physics that attempts to reconcile the two major pillars of modern physics:
 1. Quantum mechanics (describes the behavior of particles at the atomic and subatomic level)
 2. General relativity (which explains the gravitational interaction on a cosmic scale developed by Einstein.)
- It deals with environments in which neither gravitational nor quantum effects can be ignored, such as in the vicinity of black holes or similar compact astrophysical objects, such as neutron stars.
- Researchers are studying the signatures of quantum gravity in terrestrial systems to advance towards a complete quantum theory of gravity.
- Quantum Gravity Aims to:
 1. Reconcile GR's smooth, continuous spacetime with QM's discrete, grainy nature
 2. Describe gravity in terms of quantum particles and forces
 3. Resolve long-standing issues, such as: Black hole singularities, Cosmological singularities (e.g., Big Bang), Unification of fundamental forces

The Need for Quantum Gravity

- General relativity and quantum mechanics work remarkably well within their respective domains. General relativity describes the force of gravity on a macroscopic scale, such as stars, galaxies, and black holes.
- Quantum mechanics governs the microscopic world, such as particles like electrons and photons.
- However, they are incompatible in certain extreme conditions, particularly at the Planck scale, where the effects of gravity become significant in the quantum realm.

Current Status and Future Directions

4. While general relativity and quantum mechanics are both successful in their respective domains, their reconciliation remains elusive.
5. Theoretical approaches such as string theory, loop quantum gravity, and the holographic principle offer potential solutions, but experimental evidence is currently lacking.
6. Achieving a quantum theory of gravity would revolutionize our understanding of the universe, particularly in extreme environments such as black holes and the early universe.

First Legally Binding AI Treaty

The first international legally binding AI treaty will be open for signing by countries including European Union members, the U.S. and Britain.

More About Treaty

- It will be officially known as the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.
- It aims to Prioritize human rights in regulating AI systems. It emphasizes a risk-based approach to designing, developing, using, and decommissioning AI systems.
- It encompasses AI use in the public and private sectors and will be applicable across geographies.
- Other efforts in this direction: G7 AI pact, Europe's AI Act, and the Bletchley Declaration.
- The treaty has a few exemptions, including national security and R&D.

BepiColombo

BepiColombo spacecraft gave the first clear view of Mercury's south pole.

About BepiColombo (joint mission between the European and Japanese space agencies)

Launched in 2018 (By Ariane 5 rocket), Traveling over 7.2 billion kilometers to Mercury. Will arrive at Mercury in 2025 and orbit the planet for at least one year.

Objectives:

1. Study Mercury's magnetosphere, geology, and composition.
2. Investigate the planet's extremely close proximity to the Sun.
3. Understand Mercury's formation and evolution.
4. Measuring the precise orbit of Mercury to test Einstein's theory of general relativity, particularly the precession of Mercury's orbit.

Spacecraft Components

1. The European Space Agency (ESA) will observe Mercury Planetary Orbiter (MPO) which focuses on surface and composition studies.

2. Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA)'s Mercury Magnetospheric Orbiter (MMO) explores Mercury's magnetic field, solar wind.

Mercury (closest planet to the Sun, and the smallest planet in solar system)

1. Only slightly larger than Earth's Moon. Along with Venus, Earth, and Mars, Mercury is one of the rocky planets (Terrestrial planets). Mercury doesn't have any moons.
2. Despite its proximity to the Sun, Mercury is not the hottest planet in the solar system – it is Venus.
3. Mercury has an extremely thin atmosphere, known as an exosphere. It is not thick enough to provide any significant protection from solar radiation or space impacts
4. Mercury's exosphere is composed mostly of oxygen, sodium, hydrogen, helium, and potassium.

Missions on Mercury till Date

- Two missions (NASA's Mariner 10 & MESSENGER) have studied Mercury up close in the past.
- **Mariner 10:** It flew by Mercury three times between 1974 and 1975, capturing the first close-up images of the planet.
- **MESSENGER** discovered Mercury's core makes up 85% of the planet's volume—much more than Earth's, which is just 15%. It provided extensive data on Mercury's geology, magnetic field, and surface composition.

Silicon Carbide (SiC)

India's first silicon carbide manufacturing facility will be established in Odisha by RIR Power Electronics Limited.

About (SiC) (also known as carborundum - melting point of about 2,730°C)

- It's a compound of silicon and carbon, known for its exceptional properties that make it a valuable material in various industries.
- SiC is transparent to wavelengths ranging from near-ultraviolet to infrared, depending on the polytype and impurities.
- SiC's role in future technologies, especially in energy-efficient systems and power electronics, is expected to grow as manufacturing processes become more refined and cost-effective.

Properties	Concerned Applications
Hardness: Hardest known materials, second only to diamond. This makes it highly resistant to wear, abrasion and Heat.	1) In grinding wheels, cutting tools, and sandpaper 2) In furnace linings, crucibles
Chemical Stability: It is resistant to most chemicals, including acids and bases	In various ceramic products, such as tableware, tiles, and industrial components
Electrical Properties & efficient Thermal Conductivity: can exhibit semiconductor properties, making it a valuable material for electronic devices.	in power electronics devices like transistors and diodes, offering advantages such as higher efficiency and lower power losses compared to traditional silicon-based devices.
high strength-to-weight ratio and resistance to wear and corrosion	Used in aerospace, automotive, and other industries

Neuromorphic Computing Technology

Scientists at the IISc are reporting a momentous breakthrough in neuromorphic, or brain-inspired, computing technology.

About Neuromorphic Computing Technology

- It is a field of computer science that seeks to mimic the structure and function of the human brain. This technology integrates aspects of neuroscience, electrical engineering, and computer science to build hardware and software systems that replicate the brain's neural architecture.
 - ✓ A neuromorphic computer/chip consists of Artificial Neural Networks comprised of millions of artificial neurons made from silicon.
- It is inspired by the intricate Organic Neural Networks found in biological brains, neuromorphic systems aim to create more efficient and powerful computing devices.
 - ✓ A neuron, also known as a nerve cell, is a specialized cell in the nervous system that is responsible for transmitting information through electrical and chemical signals.
 - ✓ These signals travel via a network of connection points called synapses, allowing neurons to communicate with each other.

Key Characteristics

- **Parallel Processing:** Neuromorphic systems can handle multiple tasks simultaneously, similar to how the brain processes information.
- **Spiking Neurons:** Neuromorphic systems use artificial neurons that communicate through electrical spikes, mimicking the way biological neurons transmit information.
- **Synaptic Plasticity:** These systems incorporate synaptic plasticity, allowing them to learn and adapt over time, just as biological brains do.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Neuromorphic computing often offers improved energy efficiency compared to traditional non-Neumann architectures.

Potential Applications

- **Artificial Intelligence:** Neuromorphic systems could revolutionize AI by enabling more complex and human-like learning and problem-solving capabilities.
- **Robotics:** Autonomous robots equipped with neuromorphic hardware could exhibit more natural and adaptable behaviors.
- **Image and Speech Recognition with Neuroscience:** Neuromorphic systems could excel in tasks that require real-time processing of sensory data, such as image and speech recognition.
- **Edge Computing:** Neuromorphic technology is particularly promising for edge computing applications, where energy-efficient and real-time processing is crucial.

Phosphoric Acid

The diversion of phosphoric acid, a key fertilizer ingredient, for making electric vehicle batteries can become a source of worry for Indian agriculture.

About Phosphoric Acid (H_3PO_4) weak acid)

- It's the key ingredient in di-ammonium phosphate (DAP). DAP is India's second most consumed fertilizer after urea.
- It is a non-combustible, colorless, odorless phosphorus-containing inorganic acid.
- Phosphoric acid is not directly found in nature. It can be obtained from phosphate rock deposits.
 - ✓ Phosphate rocks are majorly produced only from two States in India, namely Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.
- India primarily imports phosphoric acid from Jordan, Morocco, Senegal, and Tunisia.

Applications of Phosphoric Acid

- It is used in food additives, fertilizers, and metal treatment. It can remove rust and protect metals from corrosion. It is also used in lithium-iron-phosphate (LFP) batteries.
- Phosphoric acid is commonly added to soft drinks and processed foods as an acidulant to regulate acidity and give a tangy taste. It is especially prominent in cola beverages.
- It is also used in water treatment to control the pH levels in water and prevent the formation of calcium carbonate scale in water systems.

Concerns of using Phosphoric Acid

- **Environmental Impact:** Large-scale industrial use of phosphoric acid, particularly in fertilizers, can lead to environmental issues like eutrophication.
 - ✓ When phosphate-rich fertilizers run off into water bodies, they can stimulate excessive growth of algae, leading to depletion of oxygen and harming aquatic ecosystems.
- **Corrosiveness:** Phosphoric acid can be corrosive, especially in its concentrated form. It can cause irritation or burns upon contact with skin, eyes, or respiratory systems.
 - ✓ Appropriate safety gear is required when handling concentrated phosphoric acid.

Minimoon

Phenomenon, known as a “mini-moon will occur soon by temporarily capturing a small asteroid named 2024 PT5

About Minimoon: 2024 PT5 (much smaller than the Earth’s Moon)

- Though rarely, it occurs when asteroids get caught in Earth’s gravity & orbit the planet for a short time. Such occurrences provide scientists with valuable inputs to study near-Earth objects.
 - ✓ Asteroids, sometimes called minor planets, are rocky remnants left over from the early formation of our solar system about 4.6 billion years ago.
- 2024 PT5, discovered by NASA’s Asteroid Terrestrial-impact Last Alert System (ATLAS), is about 33 feet long and came from the Arjuna asteroid belt.
 - ✓ Only four mini-moons have ever been discovered, and none are still orbiting Earth.
- Unlike the Moon’s stable orbit, minimoons follow irregular paths around the Earth due to their smaller size and sensitivity to gravitational perturbations from the Earth, the Moon, and the Sun.
- Studying asteroids like 2024 PT5 helps researchers understand the nature of asteroids that pass close to Earth, potentially informing future space exploration and resource extraction efforts.
- **Space Debris vs. Minimoon:** Space debris refers to defunct satellites, rocket parts, and other man-made objects in orbit around Earth. Minimoons, on the other hand, are natural objects from space, usually asteroids, that are temporarily captured by Earth's gravity.

Indian Institute for Immersive Creators (IIIC)

Central government approves an establishment of National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) called Indian Institute for Immersive Creators (IIIC) at Mumbai.

More About IIIC

- It is modeled after IITs and IIMs, offering specialized training, foster research and development, and support startups in the AVGC-XR sector, enhancing India’s soft power and attracting foreign investments.
- It aims to position India as a global content hub.

- Focus: India's IP (Intellectual Protection) creation, cultural content, and employment opportunities, contributing to the Atmanirbhar Bharat

Bio-RIDE Scheme

The Union Cabinet approved the Bio-RIDE (**Biotechnology Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development**) scheme, merging two existing Department of Biotechnology schemes.

About Bio-RIDE

- **Aim:** To foster innovation, bio-entrepreneurship, and sustainable biomanufacturing.
- **Focus:** To encourage industry-academia collaboration, supports extramural funding for research, and aims to make India a global leader in biotechnology, contributing to the goal of a \$300 billion bioeconomy by 2030.
- **Key Features:**
 1. **Biotechnology Research & Development (R&D):** To support cutting-edge research in fields like synthetic biology and bioenergy.
 2. **Industrial & Entrepreneurship Development (I&ED):** To promote bio-entrepreneurship through funding, incubation, and mentorship.
 3. **Biomanufacturing and Biofoundry:** Focuses on sustainable practices and circular bioeconomy to address healthcare, agriculture, and climate challenges.

Bhartiya Antariksh Station (BAS)

The Union Cabinet approved the development of the first module of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station (BAS-1) by expanding the scope of the Gaganyaan programme.

About BAS (will play a key role in long-duration human space missions)

Objectives: Enhance space research and exploration, Develop indigenous space technology, Expand space-based services, Foster international cooperation

Features

- Orbit: 400-500 km altitude, Low Earth Orbit (LEO) (weighing up to 20 tonnes)
- The first module of BAS will be launched in 2028 and by 2035 (Under Indian Space Policy 2023) the fully operational indigenous space station will be created.
- Crew capacity: 3-4 astronauts (might stay for up to 15-20 days)

Scientific Goals

- Microgravity research; Space astronomy; Earth observation; Space weather monitoring; Technology demonstrations

Currently operating two Space stations : International Space Station (ISS - the largest man-made object in space launched in 1988), developed in cooperation by the United States, Russia, Japan, Europe and Canada; and China's Tiangong Space Station (TSS).

Global Cybersecurity Index 2024

India has achieved Tier 1 status in the Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2024 with countries like the US, Japan and Australia.

About GCI 2024

- It is launched in 2015 and published by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
- GCI measures the comprehensive development & commitment to cybersecurity at a global level.
- It assesses based on five pillars—legal, technical, organizational, capacity development, and cooperation—using a detailed questionnaire covering 83 questions and 20 indicators.
- GCI 2024 evaluated 194 countries and highlighted threats such as ransomware attacks, breaches in critical industries, system outages, and privacy violations.

GCI & India

- India's success is driven by robust cybercrime laws, sector-specific Computer Incident Response Teams (CSIRTs), education initiatives, and international collaborations.
- With a remarkable score of 98.49 out of 100, India joins the ranks of 'role-modelling' countries, demonstrating a strong commitment to cybersecurity practices across the globe.
- This is an improvement from 97.5 in the 2020 edition due to its robust legal framework like the Information Technology Act (2000), the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023).

ITU (Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland)

- It is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies. It was established in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union.
- It has a membership of 193 countries and more than 1000 companies, universities and international and regional organizations.
- India has been an active member of the ITU since 1869 and has been a regular member of the ITU Council since 1952.
- It allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits, develops the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect, and strives to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide.

Project 200

Bengaluru-based space startup Bellatrix Aerospace recently unveiled Project 200.

About Project 200

- Aimed at launching a satellite into an ultra-low Earth orbit (ULO) at an altitude of 180-250 kilometers. This is lower than the traditional orbit of satellites, which is usually above 450 km.
 - ✓ Satellites in a 200 km orbit can have reduced communication latency by half and improved image resolution by three times.
- **Objectives:**
 1. Breakthrough Technology: To demonstrate a new propulsion system that can enable satellites to operate in ultra-low Earth orbit, which is a challenging environment due to the high atmospheric drag.
 2. Enhanced Communication Capabilities: Satellites in ULO can offer improved communication, Earth observation, and scientific research capabilities compared to traditional satellites that orbit at higher altitudes.
- The cost of the satellite is also less when compared to spacecraft placed in 450 km orbits.

Nanozymes

A CSIR-CLRI (Central Leather Research Institute) study has shown that nanozymes can ensure collagen's integrity and enhance resistance to enzymatic degradation.

About Nanozymes (A class of nanomaterials that exhibit enzyme-like catalytic properties)

- Nanozymes are nanomaterials that exhibit enzyme-like catalytic activity. These synthetic materials mimic the behavior of natural enzymes but offer advantages.
- They are typically inorganic materials, such as metal oxides or metal-organic frameworks, that have been engineered to possess catalytic activities similar to biological enzymes.
- **Advantages:** They offer various advantages over conventional enzymes because of high stability, low cost, durability, ease of mass production, controllability and better recovery rates.
- **Applications:** Used in biosensors, drug delivery, and as diagnostic tools, Potential for bioremediation and pollutant degradation, In catalysis for chemical synthesis and food processing.
- **Enzymes:** Enzymes are biological catalysts that accelerate chemical reactions in living organisms. They are typically proteins, although some RNA molecules can also function as enzymes (these are known as ribozymes).
 - ✓ All living things have enzymes. Our bodies naturally produce enzymes. But enzymes are also in manufactured products and food.

Women in Space Leadership Programme

A Women in Space Leadership Programme (WiSLP) launched by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in collaboration with the British Council.

About WiSLP

- It was launched as part of the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI).
 - ✓ UKIERI is UK and India's flagship bilateral collaboration programme on education and research founded in 2006.
 - ✓ UKIERI has been implemented in three phases from 2006 to 2022. The fourth phase of UKIERI was launched in 2023.
- It focuses on supporting institutions in strengthening gender-inclusive practices to foster women's leadership in space sciences by developing a strategic leadership framework.
- The programme will aid 250 early career researchers to become better equipped to take up leadership roles and navigate gender biases and associated barriers.
- **Key Features:**
 1. Intersectionality: Understanding of women's identities in different aspects
 2. Leadership theory from STEM and social science: Applying leadership principles to promote women's leadership
 3. Collaborative culturally sensitive approaches: Fostering interdisciplinary collaboration

CULTURE

Jivitputrika Festival

- Around 46 people, including 37 children drowned while participating in the Jivitputrika festival in Bihar.
- Jivitputrika, or Jitiya Vrat, is a Hindu festival observed primarily in the northern and eastern parts of India, including Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Nepal.
- It is a fast observed by mothers for the safety, long life and prosperity of their children. It falls on **the Ashtami Tithi of Krishna Paksha of Ashwin month**.
- The festival is rooted in Hindu mythology, particularly the story of **King Jimutavahana**, whose sacrifice for the welfare of others is commemorated during this time.
- The festival spans three days, with the main ritual involving a strict **nirjala fast**, meaning **no water is consumed during the fast**.
- The celebration begins with **Nahai-Khai**, where mothers take a purifying bath and eat a nourishing meal.
- The second day is **Khur-Jitiya** marked by the rigorous fasting ritual, and the festival concludes on the third day with **Paaran**, where the fast is broken with a meal.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya

- Antyodaya Diwas was recently observed to commemorate the birth anniversary of Indian leader Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya.
- He was born in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, on September 25, 1916.
- Antyodaya Diwas was first observed in 2014, when the Government decided to mark the birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay as a day to honor his contributions to the upliftment of the marginalized.
 - Additionally, the same year, the Ministry of Rural Development re-established Aajeevika Skills, a skill development initiative run by the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). It came to be known as Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (NRLM) in November 2015.
 - In 2018, the Mughalsarai Junction railway station was renamed Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Junction to honour him, as Pandit Deendayal passed away near Mughalsarai in 1968.
- He was the co-founder of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), the forerunner of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).
- He started a monthly magazine "Rashtra Dharma", a weekly 'Panchajanya', and a daily 'Swadesh'.
- His philosophy of 'Antyodaya', **meaning the upliftment of the last person**, was centered on addressing the needs of the underprivileged sections of society.
- His **Integral Humanism philosophy** advocated for a balanced approach between the individual and collective welfare, social justice, economic equality, and self-reliance.

Veer Abdul Hameed

- Recently, a poem titled **National War Memorial** and chapter titled **Veer Abdul Hameed** have been included in the NCERT curriculum of Class VI.
- The objective of this initiative, jointly undertaken by the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Education, is to inculcate the values of patriotism, devotion to duty and courage & sacrifice among the school children and participation of youth in nation building.

- Born on July 1, 1933, Abdul Hameed laid his life down while fighting Pakistan Army's Patton tanks in the **Battle of Asal Uttar** — one of the largest tank battles fought during the 1965 India-Pakistan War.
- Hameed was awarded **Param Vir Chakra India's highest gallantry award** — posthumously.

National War Memorial

- The National War Memorial, which is around 400 meters from **India Gate** was inaugurated in 2019.
- It was built to commemorate all the soldiers who have laid down their lives in the various battles, wars, operations and conflicts of Independent India.
- There are many independent memorials for such soldiers, but no memorial existed commemorating them all at the national level.
- The architecture of the memorial is based on four concentric circles:



Pulikali

- A large show of Pulikali dance was recently organised on the festival of Onam, in Thrissur city. Pulikali (Tiger Dance) is one of the **folk art forms of Kerala**.
- On the **fourth day of Onam festival**, artists paint their bodies like tigers with stripes of yellow, red and black and dance to the rhythm of traditional percussion instruments such as thakil, udukku and chenda.
- The **main theme** of this folk art is **tiger hunting** with participants playing the role of tiger and hunter.
- It was introduced two centuries ago, by the former ruler of Cochin, **Maharaja Rama Varma SakthanThampuran**.

Onam

- Onam is one of the most important festivals of Kerala that **celebrates rice harvest**.
- The 10-day-long Onam festivities, also known as Thiru-Onam or Thiruvonam, are also celebrated to pay homage to legendary **King Mahabali's homecoming**.
- The sequence begins with Atham, followed by Chodhi, Vishakam, Anizham, Thriketa, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradam, culminating on the 10th day, known as Thiruvonam.
- Onam is celebrated in the **Chingam month**, which marks the beginning of the Malayalam calendar.
- People also enjoy other cultural activities, including Onakalikal (various games played during the festival), Vallamkali (boat race).
- **Kaikotti kali** and **ThumbiThullal** are two graceful dances performed by women on Onam.

Karma Festival

- Tribal populations in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Assam, and Odisha celebrated the harvest festival of Karma or Karam Parv.
- At the heart of the Karma festival is the **Karam tree, traditionally seen as a symbol of Karam Devta or Karamsani**, the god of strength, youth, and vitality, and the object from which the festival takes its name.
- The origin of the festival can be traced to the beginning of agriculture by tribal communities.
- The festival is popular especially among the **Munda, Ho, Oraon, Baiga, Kharia, and Santhal tribes**.
- It is traditionally celebrated on the Ekadashi tithi (eleventh day) of the lunar fortnight in the month of Bhado/ Bhadra, which corresponds to August-September in the Gregorian calendar.

- About a week before the festival starts, young women bring clear sand from the river, in which they sow seven types of grains. On the day of the festival, a branch of the Karam tree is planted in the courtyard or 'akhra'.
- Devotees come with **jawa (hibiscus) flowers, and the pahan (priest)** worships the Karam Raja.
- The festival concludes with the immersion of the Karam branch in a river or pond, and the jawa is distributed among the devotees.
- Towards the end of the Karam festival, branches from sal or bhelua trees are often planted in the fields with the hope that the Karam Raja/ Devta will protect their crops.

Na Anka Famine

- The Union Education Minister said that the name of the prestigious 156 year old Ravenshaw University in Cuttack should be changed, as the Na Anka famine occurred during Ravenshaw's tenure.
- The catastrophic famine of 1866 in Orissa (now Odisha) was preceded by a severe drought in eastern India.
- It is also known as the **Na Anka Durbhikshya** because it occurred during **Gajapati Divyasinghdeva's** ninth regnal year.
- The famine hit Orissa the hardest, wiping out about a third of the region's population.
- Efforts to ship food to the isolated province were hampered by bad weather, and when some shipments did reach the coast of Odisha, they could still not be moved inland.

Ravenshaw and the University

- Thomas Edward Ravenshaw served as the Commissioner of the Orissa Division from 1865 to 1878.
- He played a pivotal role in the establishment of educational institutes in the region and in gaining support from the local administrators to promote education among Odia students.
- Founded in 1868, the Ravenshaw University initially operated as a small school. However, it was elevated to a full-fledged first-grade college in 1876 and was commonly known as Cuttack College until it was renamed Ravenshaw College.
- Ravenshaw also advocated for women's education in Odisha after he observed that no one was ready to send their daughters to school.

Battle of Saragarhi

- September 12 marks the **127th anniversary of the Battle of Saragarhi**, regarded today as one of the finest last stands in global military history.
- In 2017, the Punjab government decided to observe Saragarhi Day on September 12.
- On this day in 1897, 21 soldiers fought against over 8,000 Afridi and Orakzai tribal militants and managed to hold down the fort for seven hours.
- Though heavily outnumbered, the soldiers of 36th Sikhs (now 4 Sikh) regiment, **led by Havildar Ishar Singh**, fought till their last breath, killing 200 militants and injuring 600.
- Saragarhi was the **communication tower between Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan**, which housed a large number of British troops.
- The two forts in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), now in Pakistan were built by **Maharaja Ranjit Singh** but renamed by the British.
- Making a departure from the tradition of not giving gallantry medals posthumously, Queen Victoria awarded the 21 dead soldiers of the 36th Sikh the Indian Order of Merit (comparable with the Victoria Cross).

Sanchi Stupa

India's External Affairs Minister visited the replica of the East Gate of Sanchi's Great Stupa standing in front of **Humboldt Forum** museum in Berlin.

- A stupa is a Buddhist commemorative monument usually **containing sacred relics of the Buddha or other respected saints**.
- A stupa is generally a hemispherical structure, whose origins can be traced to pre-Buddhist burial mounds found in India.

The Great Stupa of Sanchi

- Sanchi Stupa is a Buddhist complex, famous for its Great Stupa, on a hilltop at Sanchi Town in **Raisen District, Madhya Pradesh**.
- Commissioned in the **third century BCE by Emperor Ashoka**, the **Great Stupa of Sanchi** is the largest and oldest structure in a complex of Buddhist monuments comprising numerous other stupas, temples, and monasteries.
- Its construction was overseen by **Ashoka's wife Devi**, who was from the nearby trading town of Vidisha.
- The Great Stupa is one of the oldest standing stone structures in India, believed to have been built over the Buddha's relics.
- The main body of the stupa symbolises the cosmic mountain. It is topped by a '**harmika**' to hold the triple umbrella, or '**chhatravali**', which represents the **three jewels of Buddhism – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha**.
- The **four gateways or toranas** constructed in the **first century BCE**, during the reign of **Satvahana dynasty** are the highlights of the structure.
- They have a series of detailed carvings showing stories from the **Jataka tales, Buddhist symbols** and important historical and religious scenes.
- Interestingly, **Buddha is always shown in these carvings as a symbol and not as a human**. He is represented on the gateways as a horse without a rider, an umbrella above an empty throne, the Bodhi tree, or as footprints.

The East Gate and its Replica

- In Europe, the East Gate is the most famous of the Sanchi toranas. There is a historical reason behind this.
- The Sanchi complex was in complete ruins when it was discovered by British officer **Henry Taylor in 1818**.
- **Alexander Cunningham**, who later founded the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), led the first formal survey and excavations at Sanchi in 1851.
- The site was restored to its present condition by ASI director-general **John Marshall** in the 1910s with funding from the begums of nearby Bhopal.
- The East Gate was cast in plaster by **Lieutenant Henry Hardy Cole** for the Victoria and Albert Museum in the late 1860s. Multiple copies of this cast were later made, and displayed across Europe.

PERSONALITIES IN NEWS/AWARDS

Ramon Magsaysay Award

- Japanese filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, considered one of the greatest animators and directors, has won the 2024 Ramon Magsaysay Award.
- Miyazaki founded **Studio Ghibli** in 1985 under the publishing company Tokuma Shoten.
- His most famous film is **Spirited Away** (2001). It was the first non-English film to win the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature.
- **Established in 1957**, the Award was founded to preserve former Phillippine President Ramon Magsaysay's example of integrity in governance and idealism in a democratic society.
- The prize was funded by the trustees of the **Rockefeller Brothers Fund** based in New York City.
- The award is internationally recognized as the Nobel Prize of Asia. It is the highest award given to Asian individuals and organizations.
- The award is presented in a formal ceremony in Manila, the capital of the Philippines.

National Florence Nightingale Awards

- The President of India recently presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards for the year 2024 to nursing professionals.
- In all, 15 nurses were conferred the award in recognition of their outstanding commitment to duty and service to the community.
- The award was **instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the year 1973** as a mark of recognition for the meritorious services of the nursing professionals to the society.
- The award is given to outstanding nursing personnel employed in Central, State/UTs and Voluntary Organizations
- Each award consists of a certificate of merit, cash award of Rs. 1,00,000 and a medal.

Anubhav Awards

- The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW) recently awarded the 7th Anubhav Awards.
- The **Anubhav portal** was **launched in 2015 by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW)** as a platform to highlight and recognise the contributions of retiring government officials.
- The portal encourages retiring civil servants to document their experiences and insights gained during their years of service.
- The **primary aim** is to create a rich repository of knowledge and wisdom that can serve as a foundation stone for future administrative reforms and good governance practices.
- To further motivate retiring government employees to share their experiences, an annual **Anubhav Awards** **was started in 2016**. It consists of 5 Anubhav Awards and 10 Jury Certificates.
- The award includes the following **categories**: Administrative Work, Good Governance, Research, Simplification of Procedures, Accounts, Field Work Contributions, and Constructive Feedback for Work Improvement.

India Wins Gold At Chess Olympiad

- India recently won **gold medals** in both the Open and Women's event of the 45th Chess Olympiad, in Budapest.
- **In 2022, India had won the bronze** in both the Open and the women's event at the Olympiad held at Mamallapuram, near Chennai.
- The Men's event, also known as the Open event, included **Gukesh Dommaraju, Rameshbabu Pragganandhaa, Arjun Erigaisi, Vidit Gujrathi and Pentala Harikrishna**.
- The Women's event included **Harika Dronavalli, Vaishali Rameshbabu, Divya Deshmukh, Vantika Agrawal, and Tania Sachdev**.
- In addition to winning the team championships, India also won four individual gold medals.
- Gukesh Dommaraju, Arjun Erigaisi, Divya Deshmukh and Vantika Agrawal bagged individual gold medals.

Chess Olympiad

- The Chess Olympiad is a biennial chess tournament in which teams representing nations of the world compete. FIDE organises the tournament and selects the host nation.
- The first unofficial Chess Olympiad was held in Paris in 1924. FIDE organised the **first official Chess Olympiad in 1927 in London**.

FIDE

- The **International Chess Federation** or **World Chess Federation** is commonly referred to by its French acronym **FIDE** (*Fédération Internationale des Échecs*).
- Founded in 1924, it is an international organization based in Switzerland that connects the various national chess federations and acts as the governing body of international chess competition.
- In 1999, FIDE was recognised by the International Olympic Committee.

Paralympic Games 2024

- India recently concluded its most successful Paralympic campaign at the 2024 Paris Games, where **Indian athletes won 29 medals - 7 gold, 9 silver and 13 bronze**.
- The **Paralympic Games** also known as the **Games of the Paralympiad**, is a periodic series of international multisport events involving athletes with a range of disabilities. All Paralympic Games are governed by the **International Paralympic Committee (IPC)**.
- The origins of the Paralympics go back to, 1948, when **Dr. Ludwig Guttmann** organized the **Stoke Mandeville Games** a groundbreaking event for wheelchair athletes.
- This modest competition set the stage for what would eventually become the Paralympic Games, creating a platform for athletes with disabilities to showcase their abilities on a global scale. Later, the **first official Paralympic Games was held in 1960 in Rome**.
- In 1976 the first Winter Games in Paralympics history were held in Sweden, and as with the Summer Games, have taken place every four years.
- Since the Summer Games of Seoul, Korea in 1988 and the Winter Games in Albertville, France in 1992 the Games have also taken part in the same cities and venues as the Olympics due to an agreement between the IPC and International Olympic Committee (IOC).

International Paralympic Committee (IPC)

- IPC is an international non-profit organisation and the global governing body for the Paralympic Movement.
- Founded in 1989 in Düsseldorf, West Germany, its mission is to enable Paralympic athletes. IPC's headquarters is located in **Bonn, Germany**.