MALUKA IAS

TO THE POINT

Prelims 2024

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2024 -APRIL 2024

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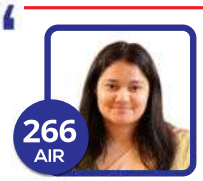
MALUKA IAS TOPPERS



MANISHA

I joined **ONLINE GS FOUNDATION BATCH** at Maluka IAS. The Guidance helped me in Prelims, Mains & Interview. I am thankful to Maluka IAS for my selection in UPSC CSE 2023.

KOSHINDER

I joined **GS FOUNDATION BATCH** at Maluka IAS which helped me in clearing Prelims, Mains and Interview. I would specially thank Maluka Sir for my selection in UPSC CSE 2023.

RAJENDRA BISHNOI

DAILY ANSWER WRITING BATCH and **CURRENT AFFAIRS BATCH** helped me a lot in getting AIR 161 in UPSC CSE 2023. Maluka Sir gave me personal guidance to help me develop my answer writing skills.

HIMANSHU JAIN

The quality of questions in **DAILY ANSWER WRITING COURSE** and feedback by Maluka IAS is excellent. I would recommend Maluka IAS for the aspirants who aspire to be Civil Servants.

SHUBHAM GUPTA

My association with **ANSWER WRITING COURSE** was very helpful. The personal attention that Maluka Sir provide is commendabe.

GARIMA AGARWAL

Pre & Post discussion of syllabus is unique aspect of **TEST SERIES** at Maluka IAS & Personalised guidance post test helped me a lot.

SUNIL

PRELIMS AND MAINS TEST SERIES of Maluka IAS helped me secure good marks in Prelims and Mains. Maluka IAS Notes helped me in covering whole syllabus comprehensively. I extend my gratitude towards Maluka IAS for providing Guidance in my Preparation.

GAGAN SINGH

Maluka IAS के निदेशक Maluka Sir ने **उत्तर लेखन** को बेहतर करने में मेरा काफी सहयोग किया, इसी कारण मैं हिंदी माध्यम में GS में सर्वाधिक Marks ला पाया।

TO THE POINT – CURRENT AFFAIRS (MARCH 2024 - APRIL 2024)

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AGRICULTURE

1. e-KISAN UPAJ NIDHI

The **Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** has launched the 'e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi'.

WAREHOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY (WDRA)

• It was constituted in 2010 under the Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007.	• It is a **Statutory Authority** under the Department of Food and Public Distribution.
• The mission of WDRA is to establish a **negotiable warehouse receipt system** in the country.	

ABOUT

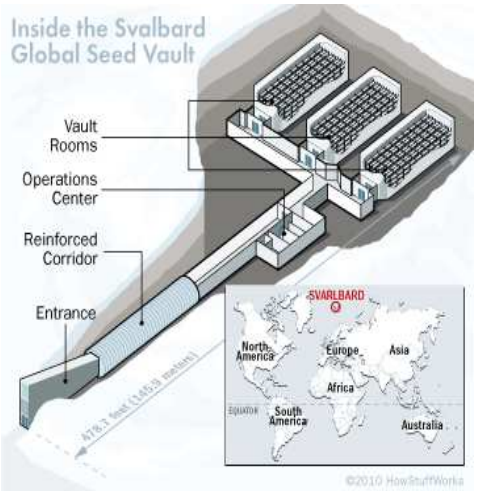
- It aims to **prevent distress sale** by farmers.
- e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi' initiative will ease the farmers' **warehousing logistics** with the help of technology and aid the farmers in **receiving fair prices** for their produce.
- Its simplified digital process can ease **the procedure of farmers' storage at any registered WDRA warehouse** for a period of 6 months at 7% interest per annum.

Source: PIB

2. SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT

Svalbard Global Seed Vault got seeds from more new contributors than ever before.

ABOUT



- The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is situated in **permafrost caverns on an island** located within the **European mainland and the North Pole**.
- It is built to **preserve global crops** from extinction.
- The facility was established 16 years ago through a partnership between the **Nordic Genetic Resource Center, the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Crop Trust**.
- It was designed to store over 2 billion seeds and guarantee their availability for future generations.
- It houses over 930,000 varieties of food crops.
- Acting as a **massive safety deposit box**, it contains the world's largest collection of agricultural biodiversity.

- Svalbard is one of the **most remote places** on Earth, located **far north** where commercial airlines reach their limits.

Source: IE

3. INDIA'S FIRST INTEGRATED OIL PALM PROCESSING UNIT BY 3F OIL PALM

India's first integrated oil palm processing unit by 3F Oil Palm started its commercial operations.

NATIONAL MISSION ON EDIBLE OILS – OIL PALM (NMEO-OP)

- Centrally sponsored scheme launched August 2021. Scheme offers **financial subsidies to farmers** for various activities related to **oil palm cultivation**.
- Targets to increase area of oil palm to 10 lakh hectares from 3.5 lakh ha during 2019-20 by 2025-26.
- Under NMEO-OP the cost will be shared as **60:40 between the Central and the State Government** for General states and **90:10 for NE states and UT**.
- **Aim & Objectives:** Increase India's **domestic production** of edible oils by promoting the cultivation of oil palm trees**, reduce dependence on imports** and enhance farmers' income and livelihood.

ABOUT

• Situated in Arunachal Pradesh's Roing, this project aligns with **Mission Palm Oil** under the NMEO-OP.	• It is a vital step in India's journey towards **self-reliance in edible oils**.

Source-TH

4. MUSHK BUDJI RICE

In a study recently published in **Nature Scientific Reports** mentioned that **altitude and temperature** play an important role in the development of **aroma of Mushk budji Rice**.

ABOUT

- It is the **indigenous aromatic rice** variety from **Kashmir**.
- It was on the **verge of extinction** owing to the prevalence of **rice blast disease**, its **low yield, and lack of profitability**. But a program launched in 2007 by **SKUAST** scientists saw the crop make a slow comeback.
- Mushk budji Rice of Anantnag District in Jammu and Kashmir received the **Geographical Indication Tag** in 2023.

Source: TH

ECOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

1. EARLY JACARANDA BLOOM

Early blooming of the **Jacaranda trees in Mexico** has sparked the debate about **climate change**.

ABOUT

- Jacaranda trees are known for their stunning **purple flowers** and are **native to South America**, particularly **Argentina and Brazil**.
- They are also found in other parts of the world, including **Australia**, where they are commonly planted as **ornamental trees**.
- These trees are prized for their vibrant **display of flowers**, which typically bloom in spring or early summer, depending on the region.

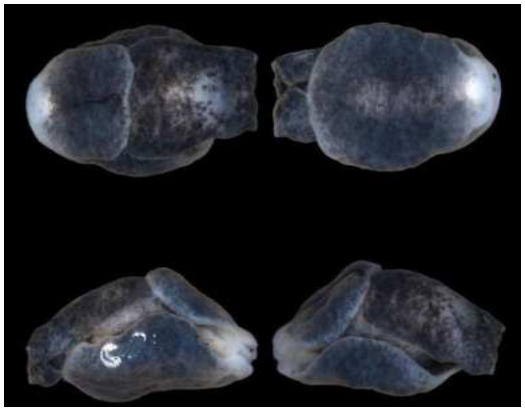
- Jacarandas are **deciduous trees**, meaning they **shed their leaves annually**, typically before flowering.
- Jacaranda trees prefer **warm climates and well-drained soil**. They are relatively **drought-tolerant** once established and can **thrive in full sun**.

Source: TH

2. SEA SLUG

The **Zoological Survey of India** named a new marine species of **head-shield sea slug** after President of India Droupadi Murmu.

SEA SLUG



- **Distribution:** They can be found from the **shallow intertidal to the deep sea** and from the polar regions to the tropics.
- **Habitat:** Sea slugs are a **group of molluscs** that live primarily in **marine habitats** and are slug-like.
- Sea slugs are **hermaphroditic**, meaning they possess both **male and female reproductive organs**. They can reproduce through both **sexual and asexual means**.
- So far, 18 species have been discovered across the globe, including o**ne tropical species from the Gulf of Thailand**.

ABOUT

• The species belonging to **Melanochlamys** genus was discovered from **Digha of West Bengal coast and Udaipur of Odisha coast**.	• **Appearance**: It is **a head-shield brownish-black sea slug** with a **ruby red spot** and a maximum length of up to seven mm named as **Melanochlamys droupadi**.

Source: TH

3. PM SURYA GHAR MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana to provide **300 units of free electricity to 1 crore families**.

ABOUT THE PM SURYA GHAR MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

- It aims to light up 1 crore households by providing up to 300 units of **free electricity every month**, marking a significant step towards **sustainable development and people's wellbeing**.
- It was launched with an investment of over **Rs. 75,000 crores**.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Under this scheme, households will be provided with a **subsidy to install solar panels** on their roofs.
- Households can register themselves on the PM Surya Ghar website (https://pmsuryaghar.gov.in) to avail benefits under the scheme.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- The **subsidy** will cover up to 40% of the cost of the solar panels. The remaining costs have to be borne by the **aspirant consumer**.
- The Centre will fund **60% of the cost for installing 2 kW (kilowatt) systems** and **40% of the cost for systems from 2-3 kW capacity**.
- Systems of **higher wattage** will not be eligible for **Central subsidy**.
- At current benchmark prices, this will mean ₹30,000 subsidy for 1 kW system, ₹60,000 for 2 kW systems and ₹78,000 for 3 kW systems or higher.

OTHER FEATURES OF THE SCHEME

- A **Model Solar Village** will be developed in each district of the country to act as a role model for adoption of rooftop solar in rural areas.
- **Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions** shall also benefit from incentives for promoting RTS installations in their areas.
- The scheme provides a component for **payment security** for **renewable energy service company (RESCO)** based models as well as a fund for innovative projects in RTS.

It is estimated that the scheme will create around 17 lakh direct jobs in manufacturing, logistics, supply chain, sales, installation and other services

Benefits

- It includes free electricity for households, reduced electricity costs for the government, increased use of renewable energy, and reduced carbon emissions
- It is a significant step towards promoting the use of renewable energy in India

Source: LM

4. BELGIUM RECOGNISES ECOCIDE AS A CRIME

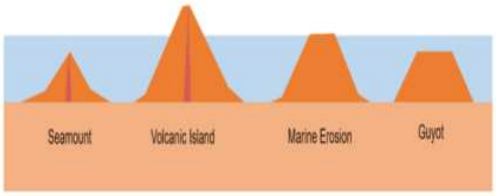
The **Federal Parliament of Belgium** has made history by becoming the first country in the European Continent to recognise '**ecocide**' as a **national as well as an international crime**.
The law targets individuals in positions of decision-making power and corporations, aiming to prevent and **punish severe environmental degradation** such as extensive oil spills.

GEOGRAPHY

1. SEAMOUNTS

Schmidt Ocean Institute has discovered Four new Seamount while traveling from **Costa Rica to Chile.**

SEAMOUNT

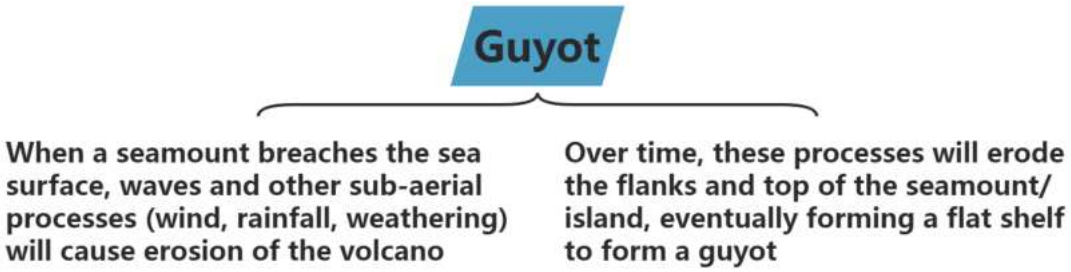


- A seamount is an **underwater mountain with steep sides** rising from the seafloor.
- When volcanoes form on the seafloor, they build up over time as they **erupt volcanic lava that cools to become basalt**.
- If a volcano grows in height and volume enough to reach the ocean's surface, it becomes a volcanic island.

- If a volcano grows in **height and volume** enough to reach the ocean's surface, it becomes a **volcanic island**.
  Example: **Islands of Hawaii**

SIGNIFICANCE OF SEAMOUNTS

• The seamounts provide a **hard substrate for marine organisms** such as **deep-sea corals and sponges** to attach.	• It also provides vital habitat for marine invertebrates like **brittle stars and squat lobsters** to live on and act as **nurseries for deep-sea fish**.
• The seamounts also influence the **flow of deeper waters**, which results in the upwelling of **nutrient-rich waters** towards the sea surface.	



ABOUT

- The mountains discovered range in size from around 1,591 meters high to around 2,681 meters.

Source: TH

2. SHANKARACHARYA HILL

Prime Minister of India recently paid **obeisance to Shankaracharya Hill** during his visit to **Jammu and Kashmi**r.

ABOUT SHANKARACHARYA HILLS

- The ancient Shankaracharya Temple, constructed with **grey stones**, stands on Shankaracharya Hill, on the **Zabarwan Range in Srinagar**, Jammu and Kashmir.
- Initially known as **Takht-i-Sulaiman**, which means **Throne of Solomon**, it was later renamed after a saint who preached enlightenment here in AD 750.

- The temple, dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, is situated at a height of 1000 feet and can be reached in 10-15 minutes via stairs.
- This ancient temple holds significance as the place where the renowned **seer Adi Shakaracharya attained enlightenment**.

Source: ET

3. DARIEN GAP

Darien Gap had become a **major route for the illegal migration to US.**

DARIEN GAP

- The Darien Gap is **a stretch of densely forested jungle** across **northern Colombia** located in **South America and southern Panama** located in North America.
- Roughly 60 miles (97 kilometres) across, the terrain is **muddy, wet and unstable**.
- The challenging **topography of humid, swampy rainforest as well as criminal gangs** who control the area, make the route an extremely challenging and deadly one.

Source: DTE

4. PANDAVULA GUTTA DESIGNATED AS A GEO-HERITAGE SITE

Pandavula Gutta, a geological **marvel older than the Himalayan hills**, has been officially recognized as the **sole Geo-heritage site in Telangana**.

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (GSI)

GSI

The Geological Survey of India (GSI) is a scientific agency of India. It was founded in 1851, under the Ministry of Mines

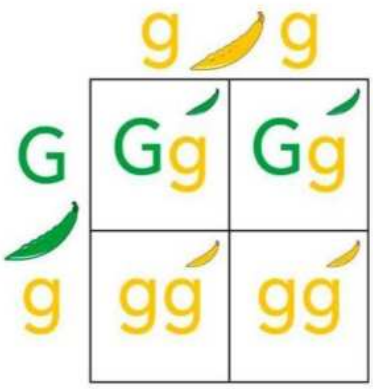
It is responsible for conducting geological surveys and the updation of national geoscientific information and mineral resource assessment

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1. PUNNETT SQUARE

Punnett squares are a way to **predict the possible genetic outcomes of the offspring** when two individuals with **known genotypes are crossed**.

ABOUT



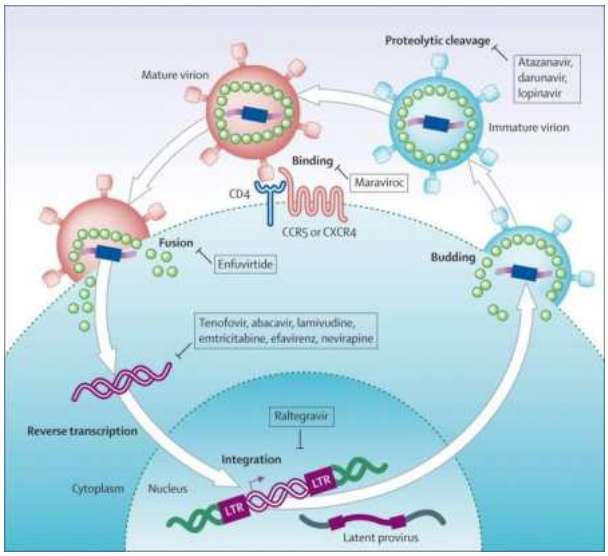
- The Punnett Square is named after **British geneticist Reginald Punnett**.
- Along the **top and side** of the grid, the possible genetic traits of **one parent on one side** and the **other parent on the other side** are listed. Then these squares are filled by **combining the traits** from each parent.
- Each square effectively represents a possible combination of **traits that their offspring could inherit**. It's a simple way to **visualize the probabilities** of different traits showing up in the offspring.
- A Punnett Square is a useful tool that helps **predict the variations and probabilities** resulting from cross-breeding.

Source-TH IE

2. ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART) INITIATIVE

Twenty years of Free Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) initiative have been completed recently.

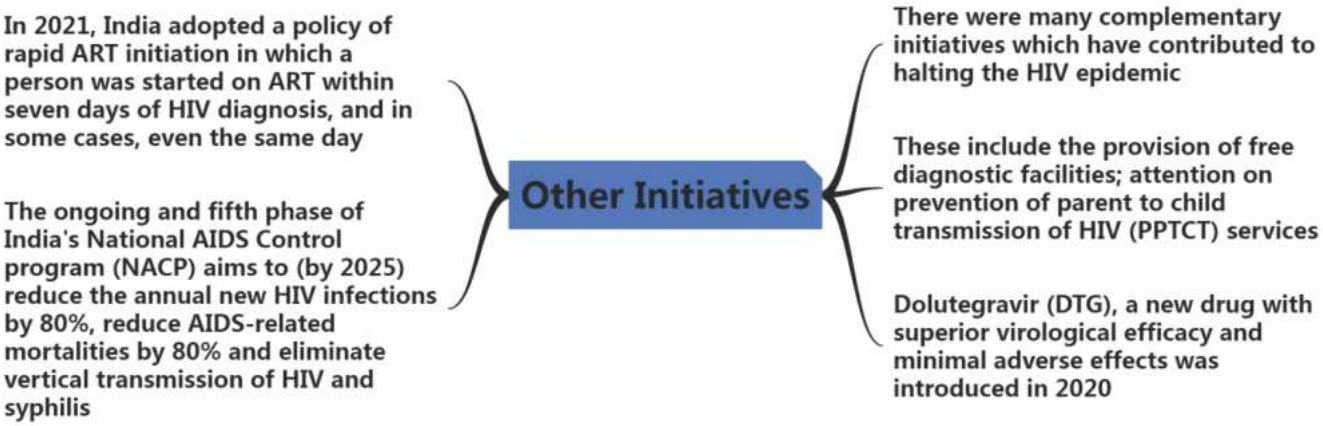
ABOUT ANTIRETROVIRAL THERAPY (ART) INITIATIVE



- It was on April 1, 2004 for **Persons living with HIV (PLHIV)**.
- It is the treatment of people infected with **human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** using anti-HIV drugs.
- The standard treatment consists of a combination of drugs (often called "**highly active antiretroviral therapy" or HAART**) that suppress HIV replication.
- **Rationale behind the initiative:** At the emergence of HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s, the disease was considered a **death sentence** and was met with a lot of **fear, stigma and discrimination**.
  Access to many medicines including the first antiretroviral drug, **AZT (zidovudine)**, remained limited for most of the world's population except in some high-income countries.

Impact: In 2023, the prevalence of HIV in 15-49 years has come down to 0.20 (confidence interval 0.17%-0.25%) and the burden of disease in terms of estimated **PLHIV has been coming down to 2.4 million**.
India's share in PLHIV globally had come down to 6**.3% (from around 10% two decades ago**).
The annual new HIV infections in India have **declined by 48%** against the global average of 31% (the baseline year of 2010).

OTHER RELATED INITIATIVES



Source: TH

3. CARBON FIBRE

India is planning to manufacture carbon fibre for use in **aerospace, civil engineering and defence** as an **alternative to metal**.

ABOUT CARBON FIBRE

- Carbon fiber is made by **heating a carbon-containing material**, such as **polyacrylonitrile (PAN), rayon, or pitch**, to a very high temperature in an inert atmosphere.
- The main features include the **high modulus** and specific **tensile strength** calculated by the excellence of the **graphite crystallites**.

Applications	Carbon fiber composites are **very strong and lightweight**, and they are also **corrosion-resistant** and have a **good electrical conductivity**. This makes them ideal for use in a variety of applications, including: **Aircraft manufacturing, Automotive manufacturing, Sports equipment, and Medical devices**.
Status in India	Currently, India **does not produce any carbon fibre**, relying entirely on imports from countries such as the **US, France, Japan and Germany**.

Source: LM

ECONOMY

1. SUPREME COURT'S BAN ON PATANJALI ADS

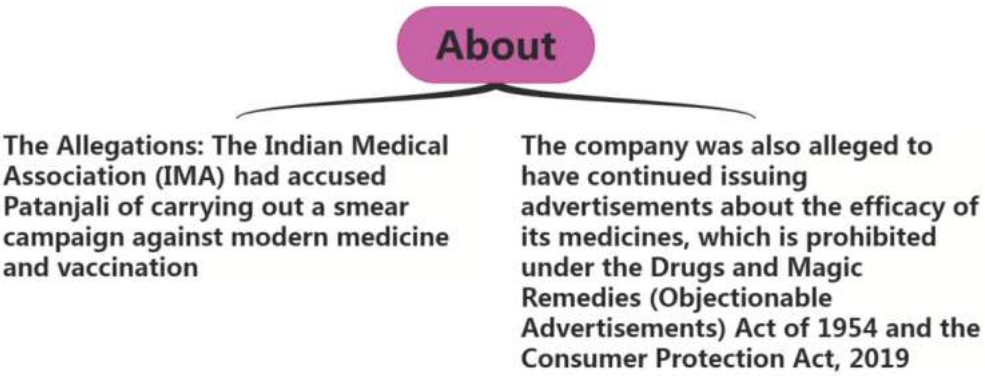
Recently, the Supreme Court of India issued the **contempt notice** and passed an **interim order** imposing a ban on advertisements of Patanjali Ayurved's medicines.
Earlier, the **Central Consumer Protection Authority** has also issued guidelines to curb misleading advertising in the coaching field.

CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2019

• This Act replaced The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, and seeks to widen its scope in addressing consumer concerns.	• The new Act recognizes offences such as providing **false information** regarding the **quality or quantity of a good or service**, and misleading advertisements.
• The **Act came into force in July 2020 and it will empower consumers and help them in protecting** their rights through its various notified **rules and provisions**.	

CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY

- Section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority which seeks to **promote, protect and enforce the rights** of consumers as a class.
- **Powers & Functions of CCPA**: It is empowered to:
  (a) conduct investigations into violation of **consumer rights and institute complaints / prosecution**
  (b) order recall of **unsafe goods and services**
  (c) order discontinuation of **unfair trade practices** and **misleading advertisements**
  (d) impose penalties on **manufacturers/endorsers/publishers** of misleading advertisements.



IMPACTS

- It serves as a reminder that **misleading claims about medicinal products** are not only **unethical but also illegal**.
- It highlights the role of regulatory bodies and the judiciary in ensuring that companies adhere to advertising laws and regulations.

Source: TH

2. INDIA'S FIRST UNDER-RIVER METRO TUNNEL INAUGURATED IN KOLKATA

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated India's first **under-river metro tunnel** in Kolkata.

HOOGHLY RIVER

- It is the **western distributary of the Ganges** and the vast majority of the water that flows into the Hooghly River is provided by the **man-made Farakka Feeder Canal**.
- The **upper riparian zone** of the river is called the Bhagirathi while the **lower riparian zone** is called the Hooghly.

ABOUT

- The metro tunnel is part of the **East-West Metro corridor** and passes under the Hooghly River, between **Howrah Maidan and Esplanade**.
- The stretch also has the deepest metro station in the country — the Howrah metro station at around 32 metres below the ground.
- The first underground metro operation in India was started in Kolkata in 1984.
- The metro network in India is currently the third biggest in the world after the **USA and China**.

Source: DTE

3. SELA TUNNEL

Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the strategically-important Sela tunnel in **Arunachal Pradesh**.

SELA PASS

- The Sela Pass is a **high-altitude mountain pass** located on the border between the **Tawang and West Kameng districts i**n Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Pass is a sacred site in **Tibetan Buddhism**.

ABOUT

• The Sela Tunnel, situated at an elevation of 13,000 feet, will be the **world's longest bi-lane tunnel** at an elevation.	• Executed by the **Border Road Organisation** (BRO), the project features two tunnels and a link road.
• The tunnel has been made on the road connecting **Assam's Tezpur to Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang**.	

Source: Mint

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

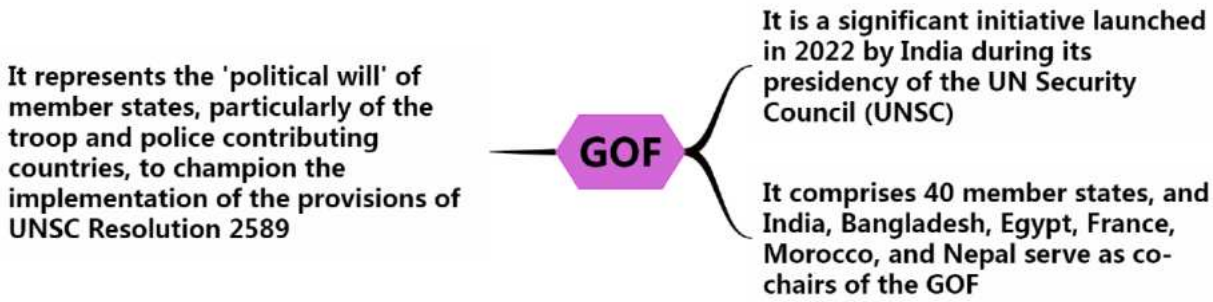
1. INDIA-LED GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)

Recently, the India-led Group of Friends (GOF) deliberated on strategies to strengthen legal frameworks against **perpetrators of malicious acts targeting Peacekeepers**, focusing on supporting measures for ensuring accountability.

INDIA'S ROLE IN UN PEACEKEEPING

• India has been one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations.	• More than **250,000 Indian troops** have served in 49 of the 71 UN peacekeeping operations so far.
• Since its first commitment in Korea in 1950, Indian troops have supervised **complex, unmanageable peace operations**, earning **universal admiration** for their professional excellence.	• At present, India is currently the **second-largest troop contributor with 5,506 personnel** deployed in nine UN peacekeeping missions.

ABOUT THE INDIA-LED GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)



OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

• It aims to promote accountability for all acts of **violence against United Nations (UN) peacekeepers** and provide capacity building and **technical assistance** to the host state authorities.	• It serves as an **informal platform** at the UN to **exchange information, share best practices, and mobilize resources** directed at facilitating accountability for crimes committed against peacekeepers.
• It monitors progress on bringing accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.	• It convenes two meetings of its members per year and organizes **one event per year** involving **Permanent Missions** and other stakeholders to take the plan forward, thereby ensuring **greater safety and security** for peacekeepers.

Source: PIB

2. ORDER OF THE DRUK GYALPO

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred the Order of the Druk Gyalpo.

ABOUT

- Order of the Druk Gyalpo is **Bhutan's highest civilian award**.
- It was instituted as the **decoration for lifetime achievement** and is the **pinnacle of the honor** system in Bhutan, taking precedence over all orders, decorations and medals.
- The Prime Minister has been recognized for his contribution to the **growth of India-Bhutan relations**.
- PM Modi is the first **foreign Head of the Government** to receive the honor.

Source: IE

3. UNITING FOR CONSENSUS MODEL

Recently, India criticised the **Uniting for Consensus (UfC) Model** at the United Nations for opposing reforms to the Security Council.

ABOUT THE UNITING FOR CONSENSUS (UfC) MODEL

- It is a significant initiative at the United Nations (UN) which was initiated by **Italy in the 1990s**.
- It is also known as the '**Coffee Club'** that comprises 12 member countries (**Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain, and Turkiye**) and 2 observers (**China and Indonesia**).
- It primarily aims to counter bids for permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council by **G4 nations – India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan**.

THE UfC MODEL AND ITS CRITICISM

• UfC proposes a Security Council with 26 seats, with an increase only in the **non-permanent, elected members**.	• It does not support the representation of **Africa and the Global South** in the permanent category as a '**non-negotiable**' goal.
• It stands against the idea advocated by a majority of the UN member states, which is an expansion in both the **permanent and non-permanent categories** of an expanded security council.	

Source: AIR

POLITY

1. PB-SHABD

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting launched the **Prasar Bharti - Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination (PB-SHABD)**, a news-sharing service from Prasar Bharati, aimed at transforming **news dissemination** in India.

ABOUT

- PB-SHABD will serve as **a single-point source of news content** for smaller news organizations **lacking extensive networks**.
- SHABD service is offered **free for the first year**, providing news stories in major **Indian languages** across fifty categories.
- The minister highlighted the revamped platforms for **Doordarshan News and Akashvani News**, and updated News on the Air mobile app, emphasizing their role in democratizing **access to news** and fostering collaboration within the media industry.
- Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency. It is a **statutory autonomous body** set up by the Prasar Bharati Act, 1997.
- The Prasar Bharati Corporation's main objective is to provide autonomy to **Doordarshan and Akashvani** to "**educate and entertain the public**."

Source: PIB

2. DISTRICT ELECTION MANAGEMENT PLAN

As per the Election Commission of India, the **district election management plan** (DEMP) is to be prepared at least **six months before the tentative poll** day.

ABOUT

- DEMP is a comprehensive document that uses statistics and analysis to ensure the **smooth conduct of elections**.
- Executing the DEMP requires a collaborative effort involving **election officials, administrative authorities, law enforcement agencies** etc. Regular interactions with political parties and media are also planned to brief them on electoral rules.
- Material management is a crucial component of the DEMP involving procuring **61 essential items, including indelible ink, seals, stamps, stationary and statutory forms**.
- These items are categorized based on the level at which they are to be procured (**State/U.T. or district level**), with timelines ranging from **two-to-three weeks to four months** before the election.

Source: TH

3. SECTION 123(3) OF THE RPA 1951

It has been found that the various parties and their leaders have been accused of **violating Section 123(3) of the Representation of People Act**.

ABOUT THE SECTION 123(3) OF RPA 1951

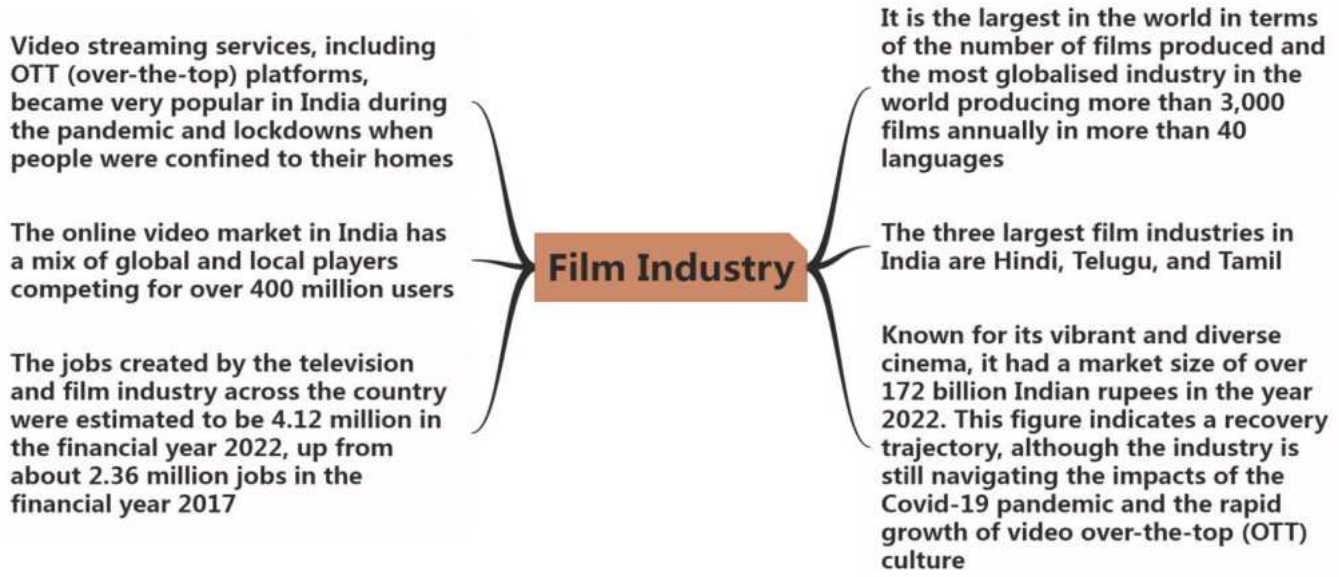
• It provides that appeals by a candidate, or any other person with the **consent of a candidate, to vote or refrain from voting** on the ground of his **religion, race, caste, community, or language** is a corrupt electoral practice.	• It denounces any attempt by a candidate to promote feelings of **enmity or hatred** among citizens on these grounds during elections.
• It aims to ensure that elections are conducted in a free and fair manner, without appealing to the **communal or sectarian sentiments** of the voters.	• It underscores the principle that the appeal for votes should be based on **policies, performance, and public welfare**, rather than on **narrow communal or sectarian lines**.

Source: TH

4. CINEMATOGRAPH (CERTIFICATION) RULES, 2024

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has introduced the Cinematograph (Certification) Rules, 2024, replacing the outdated 1983 rules, in accordance with the Cinematograph (Amendment) Act, 2023. The Cinematograph (Amendment) Act of 2023 amended the Cinematograph Act of 1952, which governs the **certification, exhibition, and censorship of films in India**.

FILM INDUSTRY IN INDIA



CENTRAL BOARD OF FILM CERTIFICATION (CBFC)

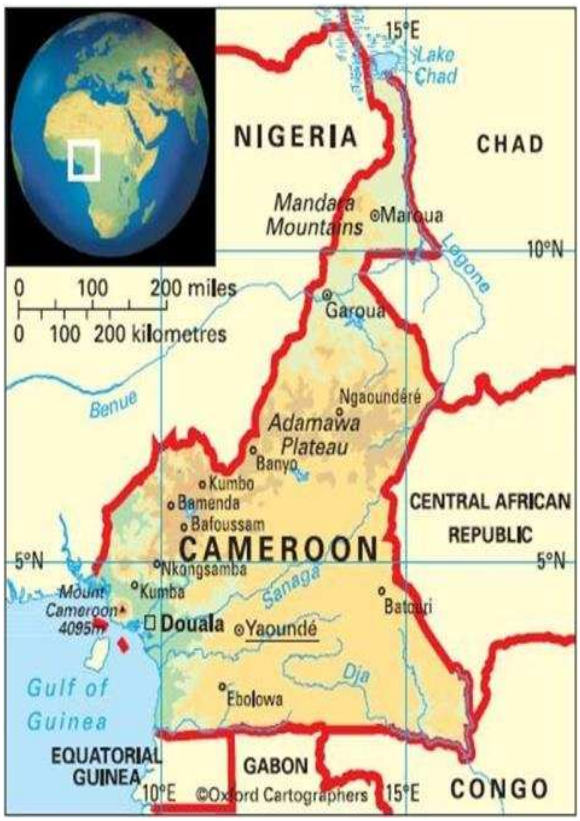
• The CBFC is a **statutory body** operating under the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**, entrusted with regulating the public exhibition of films as per the **Cinematograph Act 1952**.	• Films can only be publicly exhibited in India once they have obtained certification from the CBFC, ensuring compliance with **legal requirements and standards**.
• The CBFC comprises **non-official members and a Chairman**, all appointed by the Central Government, with its headquarters located in **Mumbai**.	• Additionally, it operates **nine Regional offices across India**, each equipped with **Advisory Panels** to assist in the examination of films.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

1. YAOUNDE DECLARATION

Recently, the Yaoundé Declaration marked a significant milestone in the **fight against malaria**, as health ministers from 11 African countries pledged to end malaria deaths.

ABOUT



- The total number of malaria cases globally increased **from 233 million in 2019 to 249 million** in 2022.
- Africa witnessed a significant rise in malaria cases during this period, reaching 233 million cases. Africa accounts for 94% of global malaria cases and 95% of malaria-related deaths.
- While progress against malaria has **stagnated in the WHO Africa region**, the 11 African countries involved in the Yaounde conference account for over 70% of the global malaria burden.
- The declaration aims to **strengthen health infrastructure, expand personnel capacity, and enhance program implementation**. They also seek to foster **partnerships for funding, research, and innovation.**
- Despite the declaration, experts highlight the need for concrete action on the ground. The African Union's goal to control and eliminate malaria by 2030 faces significant financial gaps, with USD 1.5 billion needed to sustain basic malaria services and **additional funds required for climate adaptation** in the health sector.

Source: DTE

2. LYME DISEASE

A case of Lyme disease was reported in **Kerala's Ernakulam**.

ABOUT

- It is caused by the **bacterium Borrelia burgdorferi**.
- It is transmitted by **infected ticks of the genus Ixodes**.
- **Erythema migrans rash** is the most characteristic symptom and others are **headache, fatigue, and muscle aches**.
- It is mostly common in the **US, Europe** & some parts of **Asia**.

Source: TOI

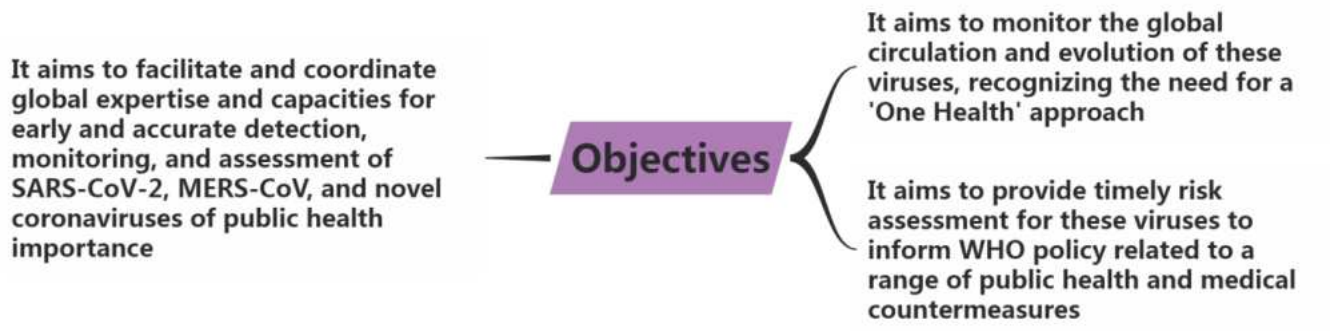
3. WHO CORONAVIRUS NETWORK (COVINET)

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched the '**CoViNet**' — a global laboratory to monitor **emerging coronaviruses**.

ABOUT THE CoViNet

- CoViNet is a **network of global laboratories** with expertise in **human, animal, and environmental coronavirus surveillance.**
- The network currently includes **36 laboratories from 21 countries in all 6 WHO regions**.
- It expands on the WHO COVID-19 reference laboratory network established during the early days of the pandemic.
- Initially, the lab network was focused on **SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19**.
- However, the network will now address a broader range of coronaviruses, including **MERS-CoV and potential new coronaviruses**.

THE OBJECTIVES OF CoViNet



Source: DTE

4. ASBESTOS

Recently, the **United States' Environmental Protection Agency** (EPA) announced a **comprehensive ban on all forms of the deadly carcinogen asbestos**.

ABOUT THE ASBESTOS

- It is a naturally occurring mineral, has been widely used in various industries **due to its heat and chemical resistance**, **tensile strength, and insulating properties**.
- However, it is a **known carcinogen**, and exposure to it can lead to serious health issues, including **lung cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis**, and it is linked to more than 40,000 deaths in the US each year.

THE GLOBAL SCENARIO

- Currently, more than 65 countries, including the **US**, have imposed **bans or severe restrictions** on its use.
- It continues to be **used in many other countries**, including **India**.

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

1. JUICE JACKING

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** issued a warning against **charging mobile phones using public ports**.

ABOUT THE JUICE JACKING

- It is a type of cyberattack where **hackers tamper with public USB charging ports**, infecting them with malware or making hardware changes that allow them to **steal data from devices** connected to them.
- Most attacks target both **Android and iOS mobile devices**, with older devices being particularly vulnerable due to their outdated software.

THE THREAT

When users connect their devices to compromised USB ports, hackers use the connection to hack into mobile devices and steal personal data like **email, SMS, and saved passwords** or **deliver malware** by gaining access to the phones.

Source: Business Line

2. FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT

Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND) has imposed a fine of Rs 5.49 crore on **Paytm Payments Bank** for violating its obligations under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act**.

ABOUT

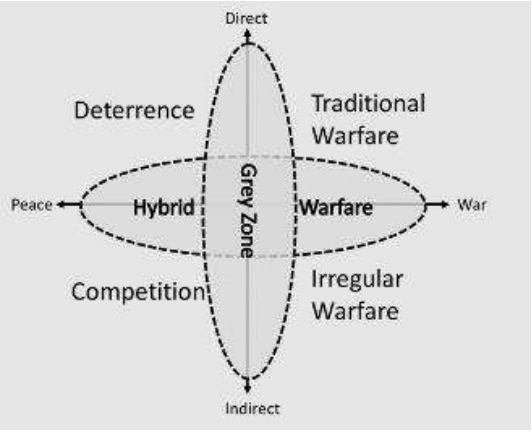
• Financial Intelligence Unit – India (FIU-IND) is the central, national agency established in 2004 under the **Ministry of Finance**.	• It is responsible for **receiving, processing, analyzing and disseminating** information relating to suspect **financial transactions to enforcement agencies and foreign FIUs**.
• It is also responsible for coordinating and strengthening efforts of **national and international intelligence, investigation and enforcement agencies** in pursuing the global efforts against **money laundering and financing of terrorism**.	• FIU-IND is an **independent body** reporting directly to the **Economic Intelligence Council (EIC)** headed by the Finance Minister.

Source: ET

3. GREY ZONE WARFARE

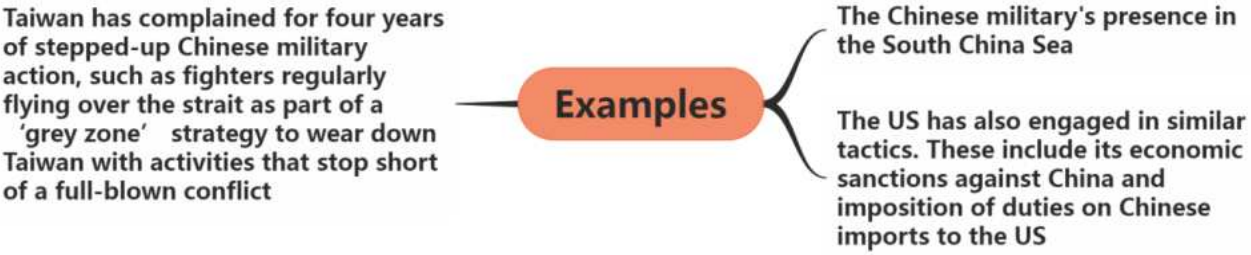
In the 2024 **Raisina Dialogue**, India's Chief of Defence Staff mentioned that grey zone warfare is the **latest informal warfare**.

ABOUT



- Grey zone warfare generally means a **middle, unclear space** that exists between **direct conflict and peace in international relations**.
- It includes criminal economic activities, influence operations, and cyberattacks to **mercenary operations, assassinations, disinformation campaigns, debt traps and economic sanctions**.
- Reasons for engaging in such tactics include the **projection of strength**, and to **normalize disputed territorial claims** by repeatedly marking a presence in those regions.

SOME EXAMPLES OF GREY ZONE WARFARE



Source: IE

4. VAJRA SENTINEL SYSTEM

The **Ministry of Defence** has signed a contract with **Big Bang Boom Solutions Pvt Ltd** (BBBS) to supply **'Vajra Sentinel' anti-drone system for IAF**.

VAJRA SENTINEL ANTI-DRONE SYSTEM

Source: TH

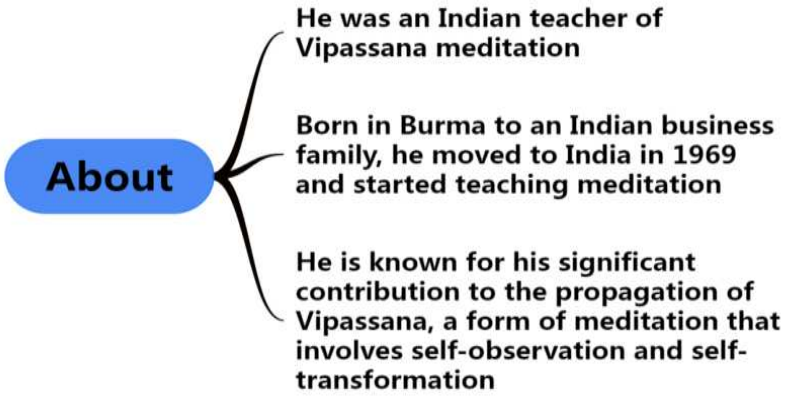
- It is a state-of-the-art solution designed to **detect, track and neutralize drones** at extraordinary ranges.
- It utilizes **passive RF sensor technology** to **eliminate false alarms,** and its sensor and jammer combination meets stringent military standard specifications for **durability and reliability**.
- The system's core sensor, built around Artificial Intelligence and computer vision algorithms, enables **precise identification, classification and location identification of drones**.

ART & CULTURE

1. ACHARYA SHRI SATYA NARAYANA GOENKA

Recently, the Prime Minister addressed the concluding ceremony of year-long celebrations of Acharya Shri S N Goenka's 100th birth anniversary.

ABOUT ACHARYA SHRI SATYA NARAYANA GOENKA (1924 – 2013)



HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS

- Goenka dedicated his life to the mission of **Vipassanā** and is remembered as a perfect example of **'One Life, One Mission'**.
- His teachings have had a profound impact on many lives, and his influence continues to be felt today.

VIPASSANA

• It is an **ancient meditation technique** that originated in India and is attributed to **Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha**.	• It is deeply embedded in **Buddhist traditions** but has gained popularity globally as a **secular technique** for cultivating mindfulness and insight.
• It is a logical process of **mental purification through self-observation**.	• It means '**to see things as they really are**'.
• It enables us to experience **peace and harmony by purifying the mind**, freeing it from suffering and the deep-seated causes of suffering.	

Source: IE

2. 2024 GRAMMY AWARDS

Indian **jazz band Shakti** bagged **Best Global Music Album** for '**This Moment'** in the 2024 Grammy Awards.

ABOUT

• The recently reunited fusion band, once named "**Turiyananda Sangit**," was originally founded by British guitarist John McLaughlin, Indian **tabla maestro Zakir Hussain**, **and percussionist Vikku Vinayakram** in 1973.	• They were joined later by violinist L. Shankar and the **late mridangam maestro Ramnad Raghavan**.
• The band was regrouped in 2020 with **McLaughlin, Hussain, vocalist Shankar Mahadevan, percussionist V. Selvaganesh, and violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan**.	• **Mahadevan, Selvaganesh, and Rajagopalan** secured the band's Grammy award alongside founding members McLaughlin and Hussain.

GRAMMY AWARDS

- The Grammy Awards, officially known as the **GRAMMYs**, are the premier music awards in the **United States** and among the most prestigious globally.
- **Objective:** To recognize outstanding achievements in the **music industry** across **various genres and categories**.
- **Awarded by:** The **Recording Academy**, a voting membership body of music professionals.
- Held **annually**, typically in **February**.
- Its location varies; usually major cities like **Los Angeles or New York City**.

CATEGORIES AND AWARDS:

- Over 80 categories spanning various genres like **pop, rock, country, rap, R&B, classical, jazz**, and more.
- General Field awards recognize overall achievements like **Album of the Year, Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Best New Artist**.

2024 GRAMMYs

OTHER AWARDS:

- **Song of the year** – Billie Eilish – What Was I Made For? from Barbie
- **Best pop vocal album** – Taylor Swift – Midnights
- **Best pop solo performance** – Miley Cyrus – Flowers
- **Best rap album** -Killer Mike – Michael
- **Best African music performance** – Tyla – Water
- **Best rock album** – Paramore – This Is Why
- **Best country duo/group performance** – Zach Bryan featuring Kacey Musgraves – I Remember Everything

Source: TH

3. HASTSAL MINAR

Recently, efforts are being made to **unravel the mysteries** surrounding the Hastsal Minar, a Mughal-era symbol of glory.

ABOUT THE HASTSAL MINAR:

- It is known as the **Mini Qutub Minar**, is a minaret tower located in **Hastsal village in West Delhi**, India.
- **Historical Significance:** The minar was used by **Emperor Shah Jahan** for his **entertainment after hunting** in the encompassing wilderness that used to surround this colossal Hastsal minaret and **royal hunting lodge**.

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