



ENSURE IAS

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Monthly

Current Affairs



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Week 1

CURRENT AFFAIRS
01/01/2023 TO 06/01/2023

1. AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME

Ministry of Railways has recently formulated a new policy for **modernization of stations** named “**Amrit Bharat Station**” scheme.

FACILITIES PLANNED UNDER THE SCHEME:

- Provision for **Roof Plaza** to be created in future
- **Free Wi-Fi, space for 5G** mobile towers
- **Smooth access by widening of roads, removal of unwanted structures**, properly designed signages, dedicated pedestrian pathways, well planned parking areas, improved lighting etc.
- **High level platforms** (760-840 mm) at all stations with a length of 600 metres
- **Special amenities** for the disabled

ABOUT THE SCHEME

- Provision for **Roof Plaza** to be created in future
- **Free Wi-Fi, space for 5G** mobile towers
- **Smooth access by widening of roads, removal of unwanted structures**, properly designed signages, dedicated pedestrian pathways, well planned parking areas, improved lighting etc.
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VANDE BHARAT IN WB (EASTERN INDIA)

The state of **West Bengal** and the eastern Indian recently got its **first Vande Bharat Express** train connecting **Howrah to New Jalpaiguri**, which will bring down travel time between **Kolkata and Siliguri** - the gateway to the Northeast India, considerably.

ABOUT VANDE BHARAT:

- Also known as Train 18, it is a **semi-high-speed**, intercity, electric multiple-unit train operated by the Indian Railways.
- Its advanced version is much lighter and capable of reaching higher speed in shorter duration, i.e., accelerates to **100 km per hour in just 52 seconds. Its maximum operating speed is 130 kmph.**
- Total of **7 Vande Bharat trains** are operating presently.

2. MISSION PURVODAYA

- **Background:** The Eastern region of India is rich in **resources** like coal, bauxite with **locational advantage** with the presence of **major ports** such as Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, Kolkata.



- But it **lags** behind other states in terms of Gross State Domestic Product (**GSDP per capita**) and Human Development Index (**HDI**) majorly due to poor infrastructure, lack of governance and connectivity.
- **Mission Purvodaya**: It was kickstarted in 2020 to accelerate the development of Eastern India with the establishment of an **integrated steel centre** in Kolkata, West Bengal.
 - It was focused on the **eastern states** of India, namely Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, and northern Andhra Pradesh, which own chromite, bauxite, and dolomite reserves.
- **Focus area**: Mission Purvodaya has now become a framework to transform logistics, infrastructure and multi-modal connectivity in the eastern part of India.
 - **For example**, projects like the **freight corridor, Bharatmala** for roadways, and **Sagarmala** for waterways will further drive economic growth and employment opportunities in the eastern region.
- **The outlay for projects**: In the state of **West Bengal**, **Rs 10,262 crore** has been earmarked in FY 22-23 which is more than double compared with Rs 4,380 crore on average between FY 2009-10 and FY 2013-14.
- **Progress**: The progress is evident as **West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha** combined have more than 4,700 km of **railway track commissioned** and 7,277 km of **railway lines electrified** in the last eight years.
 - Also, **37 world-class stations** being developed in the eastern region will revolutionise the transportation of people and goods in tune with the surge in future demand.
 - Also, the highest number of terminals are planned in the Kolkata-Haldia stretch.

WAY FORWARD

- **By creating a free, competitive marketplace for businesses** to thrive, the GSDP of these states can be further boosted.
- **Enabling local policies, good governance**, the rule of law and dynamic and resilient infrastructure can hence ensure all-round development of these states.
- In India's march towards a \$5 trillion economy, the eastern states can play a major role by improving the GDP of eastern India and enable the India's vision 'Purvodaya' to become a '**Sarvodaya**' (Progress for all).
- India thus must live up to the democratic value of **cooperative federalism** to remain a bright spot and these eastern states could emerge as torchbearers, leading the path for **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** to emerge as a developed nation in 2047.

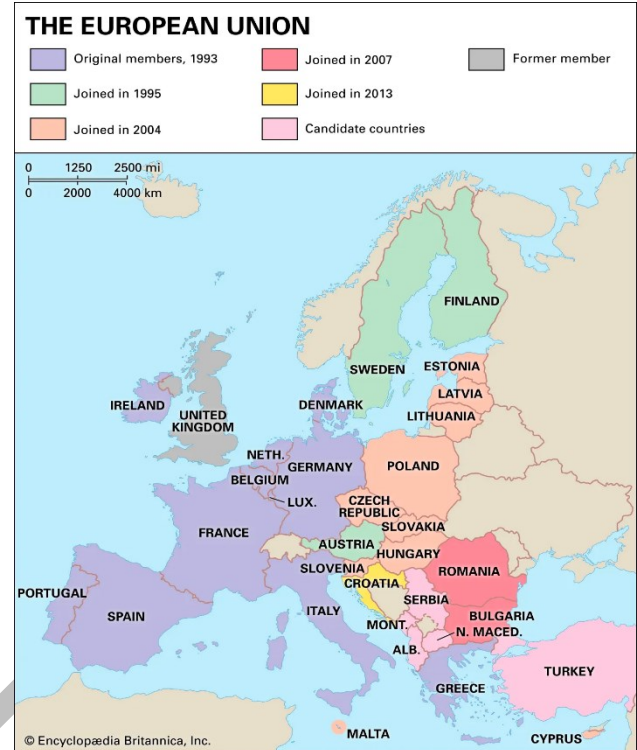


3. EUROPEAN UNION

Croatia adopted the European Union's common currency, the euro, and joined the Schengen Area, Europe's visa-free travel area, on January 1.

With this, Croatia became the fully integrated member of EU.

The country had joined the EU in 2013.



EUROZONE

- All European Union Member States are part of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and coordinate their economic policy-making to support the economic aims of the EU.
- However, a number of Member States have taken a step further by **replacing their national currencies with the single currency – the euro**.
- These Member States form the euro area, also known as eurozone.
- In other words, it is a **geographic and economic region** that consists of the European Union countries that have **fully incorporated the euro as their national currency**.
- As of January 2023, the **eurozone consists of 20 countries** in the European Union (EU):
 - Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain.

REQUIREMENTS FOR JOINING EUROZONE

In order to join the eurozone and use euro as their currency, EU nations must meet certain criteria consisting of four macroeconomic indicators that focus on:

- **Price stability** by demonstrating sustainable price performance and average inflation no more than 1.5 percent above the rate of the three best-performing member states.



- **Sound and sustainable public finances** - the government must run a **budget deficit** no greater than 3% of GDP and hold **public debt** no greater than **60% of GDP**.
- **The durability of convergence** – It is assessed through its long-term interest rates, which cannot be more than 2 percent above the rate in the three member states with the most stable prices.
- **Exchange rate stability** - The nation must demonstrate exchange rate stability by participating in the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) II for at least two years without severe tensions and without devaluing against the euro

ABOUT SCHENGEN AREA

- Schengen Area signifies a zone where **27 European countries, abolished their internal borders**, for the free and unrestricted movement of people.
 - Croatia became the 27th nation in the passport free Schengen zone.
- **Member of this area include: 23 of the 27 EU member states and all members of the European Free Trade Association (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).**
- **Non Schengen EU countries list:** · Bulgaria · Romania · Cyprus · Ireland.
- Being part of this area means that countries:
 - do not carry out checks at their internal borders, except in cases of specific threats;
 - carry out harmonised controls at their external borders, based on clearly defined criteria.

4. BHIMA-KOREGAON

The **205th anniversary** of the **Battle of Koregaon Bhima** was celebrated at the Jaystambh in **Pune's Perne village** amidst heavy police deployment.

One person was killed and several others were injured in violence in the Koregaon Bhima area on **January 1, 2018**.

Every year since then, the district administration and police machinery has been taking stringent steps to prevent any law-and-order situation in the area.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- A small village in Pune district of Maharashtra, **Bhima-Koregaon** is associated with an important phase of Maratha history.
- The people of **Dalit communities** gather in Bhima Koregaon on **1 January** every year to pay tribute to the **Dalit heroes** who died in the war between the **British and the Peshwas** on **1 January 1818**.
- The **Peshwas were defeated** in this battle of Bhima Koregaon.

THE BATTLE

- The battle of Bhima Koregaon was fought on January 1, 1818, between **Peshwa Bajirao II** and **British army** commanded by **Captain F F Staunton** of the East India Company.



- The battle was a part of the **Third Anglo-Maratha War**.
- The **British army was largely dominated by Mahars** - the most populous of the Dalit sub-castes in Maharashtra.
- The Dalit-dominated British Army had **defeated a Peshwa army**
- It resulted in **losses to the Maratha empire**, then under Peshwa rule, and control over most of western, central and southern India by the British East India Company.

SIGNIFICANCE

- **Mahar relates this battle to their self-respect** because they were insulted by the Peshwa Baji Rao II on their identity and caste when they offered their services to the Peshwa.
- Many historians have termed this incident as the **first historic step towards making India free of caste**, which happened almost two hundred years ago.
- After **Dr. Ambedkar** visited the site on **January 1, 1927**, it became a place of pilgrimage for Dalits, an assertion of pride. In recent years, attendance has been in the lakhs, with Dalits coming from all over India.

5. POLAR VORTEX

A **deadly blizzard (snowstorm)** has gripped the **United States & Canada**, leading to multiple deaths and complete disruption of normal life.

Scientists have once again started to discuss if the **rising temperatures of the Arctic** are responsible for extreme cold conditions in some of the areas of the Northern Hemisphere.

IS IT A NEW PHENOMENON?

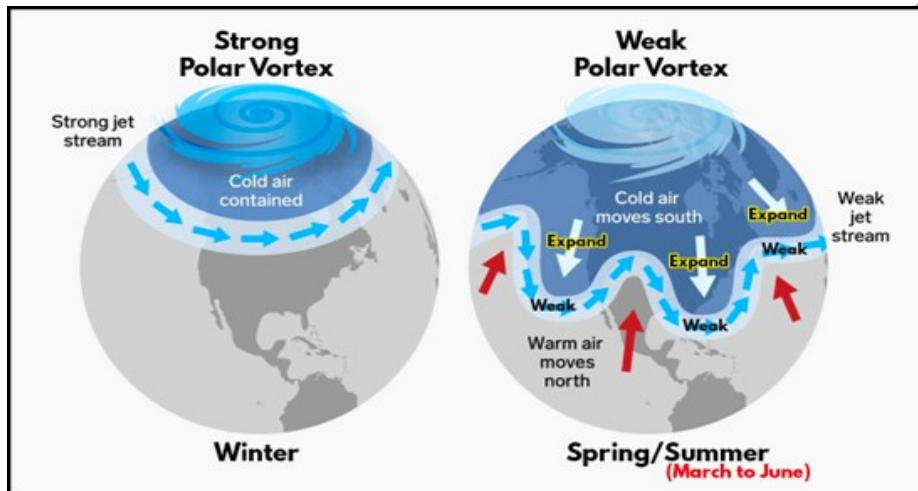
- Polar vortices are **not something new**.
- The term “**polar vortex**” has only recently been popularized, bringing attention to a weather feature that has always been present.
- By itself, the only danger to humans is the magnitude of how cold temperatures will get when the polar vortex expands, sending Arctic air southward into areas that are not typically that cold.

WHAT IS A POLAR VORTEX?

- The polar vortex is a **large area of low pressure and cold air** surrounding both of the Earth’s poles.
In the study published, the researchers found that the expansion of the polar vortex has been occurring more than twice as often in recent years and the reason for it is the rapidly warming Arctic.
- It ALWAYS exists near the poles, but weakens in summer and strengthens in winter.
- The term "vortex" refers to the **anti-clockwise flow of air** that helps keep the colder air near the Poles.



- Many times, during winter in the northern hemisphere, the polar vortex will expand, sending cold air southward with the jet stream.
 - Jet stream is the area of fast-moving air high in the atmosphere that surrounds the polar vortex.
- This occurs fairly regularly during wintertime and is often associated with large outbreaks of Arctic air in the United States & Canada.
- Portions of Europe and Asia also experience cold surges connected to the polar vortex.



POLAR VORTEX & CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION?

- Recently, a study was published in [Science.org](https://www.science.org), revealing that the **rapid warming of the Arctic might be allowing frigid air in the region to move southward more frequently than ever before.**
 - However, scientists said they need more data to arrive at a consensus about the claim.
- The study largely focused on something called the **polar vortex**, which is a mass of cold, low-pressure air that consistently hovers over the Arctic region.
- With the help of observational analysis and numerical modelling, the study came to the following conclusion.
 - The melting sea ice in **Barents** and **Kara seas** north of Russia and Scandinavia and increasing Siberian snowfall create larger and more energetic atmospheric waves.
 - These waves ultimately stretch the polar vortex, causing extreme winter weather in the US and other places.

6. PRAJWALA CHALLENGE

Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development under the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** has launched the Prajwala Challenge.

- **Aim:** To invite ideas, solutions and actions that can **transform the rural economy**. This Mission is looking for ideas which are broadly categorised into:
 - Focus on Women and the Marginalized section of the community



- Localised Models
- Sustainability
- Cost Effective solutions
- Multi-sectoral ideas and solutions
- Shortlisted ideas will be acknowledged by the Mission and will be provided mentorship support from an expert panel and incubation support to scale up. The **top 5 ideas will be rewarded with Rs. 2 Lakh each.**

ABOUT DAY-NRLM

- It is one of the **flagship poverty alleviation programs** which aims at creating efficient and effective institutional platforms for the rural poor, enabling them to increase household income through sustainable livelihood enhancements and improved access to financial services.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Universal Social Mobilisation:** At least one woman member from each identified rural poor household, is to be brought under the Self Help Group (SHG) network in a time bound manner.
 - **Participatory Identification of Poor (PIP):** All households identified as poor through the PIP process is the NRLM Target Group and is eligible for all the benefits under the programme.
 - **Community Funds as Resources in Perpetuity:** NRLM provides Revolving Fund (RF) and Community Investment Fund (CIF) as resources in perpetuity to the institutions of the poor, to strengthen their institutional and financial management capacity.

7. NILGIRI TAHR

Recently, the Tamil Nadu government launched an initiative for the **conservation of the Nilgiri Tahr at Rs 25 crore.**

- Under The Nilgiri Tahr project, the Tamil Nadu government plans to
- Develop a better understanding of the Nilgiri Tahr population through surveys and radio telemetry studies
- Reintroduce the Tahrs to their historical habitat
- Address proximate threats
- Increase public awareness of the species
- The project is to be implemented for 5 year period from 2022 to 2027.



● **ABOUT NILGIRI TAHR**

- Nilgiri Tahr is the **only Caprinae species** found in the **tropical mountains of southern**
- **Habitat:** They are **endemic to the Western Ghats** and used to inhabit a large part of the Western Ghats between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.



- **Conservation Status**
- IUCN - **Endangered**
- Wildlife (Protection) Act of India, 1972 - **Schedule I**

8. ATOMIC ENERGY REGULATORY BOARD

Dinesh Kumar Shukla, former Executive Director of AERB & Distinguished Scientist assumed the charge as Chairman, AERB on 31st December 2022.

ABOUT AERB:

- The AERB was constituted on November 15, 1983, by the **President of India** by exercising the powers conferred by the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962** to carry out certain regulatory and safety functions under the Act.
- **The regulatory authority of AERB** is derived from the rules and notifications promulgated under the **Atomic Energy Act and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- **The Mission of the AERB** is to ensure the use of ionizing radiation and nuclear energy in India does not cause undue risk to the health of people and the environment.

MEMBERS & POWERS

- **The total number of members** including the Chairman and Member-Secretary shall not exceed five. The Board shall be responsible to the **Atomic Energy Commission**.
 - The Board shall consist of full time and part time members. The Board shall have a **full time Chairman and a full time Member-Secretary**.
- The AERB shall have authority to administer the provisions of the **Factories Act, 1948, the industrial safety for the units of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) as per Section 23 of the Atomic Energy Act, 1962**.
- **The executive functions of the AERB** shall be vested in Chairman, AERB.
- The DAE will provide the necessary administrative support to the AERB in this regard to its budget, parliamentary work and establishment and accounts matters.

9. VIBRANT VILLAGE PROGRAM

Union Home Minister recently asked **Border Security Force (BSF)** to strengthen **Vibrant Village Programme** and ensure welfare programmes are implemented.

- Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) has been **announced in the Finance Minister's Budget Speech 2022**.
- **VVP is aiming at enhancing infrastructure** in villages along India's border with China, in states like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Activities under the VVP include **building infrastructure such as housing, tourist centres, road connectivity**, providing decentralised renewable energy, direct-to-home access for Doordarshan and educational channels, and support for livelihood generation.
- The programme envisages coverage of border villages on Northern border having **spare population, limited connectivity and infrastructure**, which often get left out from the development gains.



- Convergence of existing schemes is proposed under VVP. The villages on the Northern border to be covered under VVP are being finalised.

OTHER SCHEMES/PROGRAMS

- **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** Implemented through the State Governments/UT Administrations in habitations located within 0-10 kms from the first habitation at international border in 16 States and 2 UTs.
 - Under BADP, the annual action plans of the States/UTs consisting of works related to village infrastructure like roads and bridges, health, education etc. are considered and approved.
- **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme:** BIM aims to strengthen the border infrastructure for improving border management, policing and guarding the borders.
- **Enhanced budgetary allocation for BRO:** Government of India in its Union Budget for FY 2022-23 has increased the capital outlay for the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), by a record 40 percent, as compared to FY 2021-22.
 - BRO is not just contributing to enhanced operational preparedness but making a very significant contribution towards socio-economic integration and development of the regions.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **To ensure a secure and safe border:** It would help enhancing security and development of orders besides providing a sense of belonging to these people.
 - They are the first in line when irregular events take place at the border.
 - In addition, local communities can identify the most vulnerable persons as well as the risk factors in terms of safety and health.
- **Improved situational awareness:** Border communities hold vast amounts of intimate knowledge on the area, characteristics of the terrain etc.
- **Enhanced surveillance:** In the difficult areas like coasts, fishermen watch groups can be formed to fill in large gaps existing in the surveillance cover on a regular basis. They can act as guides to the Armed Forces. o Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) regularly conduct Community Interaction Programmes (CIPs) for fishermen in coastal villages wherein they are sensitised about safety and security issues.
- **Utilisation of community mechanisms:** Improved interaction with local populations would allow gradual development of a new community-based policing approach to border management. o Also, it will enhance the utilisation of community mechanisms for managing challenges and conflicts

10. SUSTAINABILITY OF NFSA & PMGKAY MERGER

- The government recently decided to discontinue the free-food scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) that was started during the Covid pandemic, citing improved economic situation and eased restrictions.



- It also announced to distribute food grains for free for one year from January 2023 under the Public Distribution System (PDS) of National Food Security Act (2013) in a move to shield the poor from the effects of termination of PMGKAY.
- With India's deficit being the highest among G20 countries.

**Whether the government's decision is a sound policy?
Is it sustainable?**

11. PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN ANNA YOJANA & NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT MERGED

The Union government said it would **provide free foodgrains** to beneficiaries under the **National Food Security Act, 2013**, as per their entitlement, for a year beginning **January 2023**.

It has, however, **discontinued** the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana** launched in April 2020 amid Covid-19.

Discontinuing the PMGKAY would, however, save the government Rs 15,000 crore a month or about Rs 1.8 lakh crore a year.

ABOUT PM GARIB KALYAN ANNA YOJANA

PM-GKAY is a **food security welfare scheme** announced by the Central Government in **March 2020**, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is a part of **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGKP)** to help the poor fight the battle against Covid-19.

Objective: To feed the poorest citizens of India by **providing grain** through the **Public Distribution System**, to all the priority households (ration card holders and those identified by the Antyodaya Anna Yojana scheme).

Implementing Agency: Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

SALIENT FEATURES

More than **80 crore beneficiaries** are provided **5 kg free wheat/rice per person per month**.

This is **in addition to the 5 kg food grains** already provided to the beneficiaries under the **National Food Security Act, 2013**.

The NFSA, 2013 legally entitled up to **75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population** to receive subsidized food grains under Targeted Public Distribution system.

It is known as the largest food security programme in the world.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- To alleviate the Covid-19 pandemic induced distress, initially, the scheme was announced for a period of six months only i.e. **April-September 2020**. However,



the scheme was **extended several times**, with its sixth phase ending September 2022.

- By September 2022 the total expenditure under PM-GKAY to nearly 3.40 Lakh Crore.
- Till Phase V (i.e. till March 2022), the Government had allocated about 759 LMT of free foodgrains under the PM-GKAY.

Even though the Covid-19 pandemic has significantly abated and economic activities are gathering momentum, this PM-GKAY extension has ensured that no poor household goes to bed without food during this time of recovery.

ABOUT NFSA

The issue of 'food security' at the household is continuously being addressed by the Government since long, through the **Public Distribution System and the Targeted Public Distribution System**.

The Act legally entitled up to **75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System**.

About **two thirds of the population therefore is covered under the Act** to receive highly subsidized foodgrains.

As a step towards **women empowerment**, the eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is **mandated to be the head of the household for the purpose of issuing of ration cards under the Act**.

WHAT HAPPENS IN CASE OF NON SUPPLY?

In case of non-supply of the entitled quantities of foodgrains or meals to entitled persons under NFSA, such persons shall be entitled to receive such food security allowance from the concerned State Government to be paid to each person.

Responsibilities under NFSA –

NFSA defines the **joint responsibility of the Centre and State/UT Government**.

While the Centre is responsible for **allocation of required foodgrains to States/UTs, the States/UTs are responsible for effective implementation of the Act**.

The work of **identification of eligible households is to be done by States/UTs**.

PRICE OF FOODGRAINS AND BENEFICIARIES

The NFSA provides a legal right to persons belonging to “eligible households” to receive food grains at subsidised price– **rice at Rs 3/kg, wheat at Rs 2/kg and coarse grain at Rs 1/kg** — under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS).

The term “**eligible households**” comprises two categories — **Priority Households, and families covered by the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY)**.

Priority households are entitled to receive 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month, whereas **AAY households are entitled to 35 kg per month** at the same prices.

Under Schedule-I of the Act, these subsidised prices were fixed for “**a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act**”.

However, the government has yet **not revised the subsidised prices**.

12. SPECIAL FOCUS ON WOMEN & CHILDREN



- **Women:** It provides meals to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and six months after the child birth.
 - Such women will also be entitled to receive maternity benefits of not less than **Rs. 6,000/-**.
- **Children:** Up to 14 years of age will be entitled to nutritious meals as per the prescribed nutritional standards.

WHY THEY HAVE BEEN MERGED?

- The Union Budget 2022 had pegged the **fiscal deficit**, which is the difference between government revenue and expenditure, at **6.4%** or **Rs. 16.61 lakh crore**.
- In its monthly report, the **Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance** cited the adverse financial position - due to the below mentioned measures - of the Central government has created serious fiscal situation:

- **Continuation of PM-GKAY,**
- Huge increase in fertiliser subsidy burden (both urea and non-urea),
- Re-introduction of subsidy on cooking gas,
- Reduction of excise duty on petrol and diesel and customs duty on various products.

The Department in its report has made an observation that the **scheme should not be extended beyond September** as it could strain government finances.

WHY PMGKAY, NFSA WERE MERGED

LOWER FOODGRAIN STOCKS

As on Nov 30, combined stock of rice (115.42 lakh metric tonne) and wheat (190.27 LMT) was at 305.69 LMT. This was lower than the figure of 591.56 LMT (rice 213.03 LMT, wheat 378.53 LMT) on Nov 30, 2021.

HIGHER ECONOMIC COST

Economic cost for rice has increased to Rs 3,670.04 per quintal this year from Rs 3,597.17 last year. For wheat, it has gone up to Rs 2,588.70 per quintal from Rs 2,499.69 per quintal last year.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF THE GOVT'S MOVE

- **Enhanced savings:** The free food grain distribution under **PM-GKAY** has costed government nearly \$47 billion, which is fiscally inviable.
 - The government will save at least \$20 billion over the next 12 months by ending PMGKAY, as they will only spend on one food scheme (NFSA) instead of multiple programmes.
- **Alleviate inflation concerns:** The government was struggling to manage the wheat stockpile due to additional distribution of wheat under PMGKAY and the prices in the local market jumped to the record high.
 - Thus, discontinuing scheme means the **government can now sell 2 to 3 million tonnes in the open market to stabilize prices.**
- **Depletion of buffer to ease:** A monthly ration of 10 kg (5 kg each under NFSA and PMGKAY) for 81.35 crore persons translates into nearly 100 million tonnes (mt) or over a third of India's total cereal production.



- Termination of PMGKAY had become inevitable as buffer stocks of both wheat and rice have depleted considerably in the last one year by 50% and 45%, respectively.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE MOVE

- **Fiscally unsustainable:** The Union government bearing the entire cost of Rs 2 lakh crore to give rations free for the next 12 months, citing food security concerns could put immediate pressure on the public purse.
 - It also commits the government to a scheme that makes it more difficult to achieve **medium term fiscal consolidation targets**.
- **Unviable post-pandemic plan:** The free foodgrain under NFSA implies that food subsidy will go up and will increase the fiscal burden compared with the pre-pandemic times, because:
 - The selling prices of PDS grains have been reduced to zero
 - The quantities provided have been increased
- **Politically unviable:** In the past, the government could reduce the budget deficit by raising the prices at which food grains were distributed through PDS.
 - However, now it will be **difficult** for the government to go back to **charging a subsidised price** for food grains, ever again after making it free now.
- **Implications for agricultural policy:** This announcement will have repercussions for overall agricultural policy as the government will be more **constrained** as far as **raising the minimum support price (MSP)** is concerned.
 - This is because **raising the MSP could squeeze its budget further** as it will procure the grains at a higher price and then distribute them for free.
 - If the government does not raise the MSP, the **farmers' income will fall in real terms** and they may decide to **sell to the free market** rather than the government that could lead to a **shortage of foodgrain stock** with government.

13. NEHRU MEMORIAL MUSEUM & LIBRARY

The Prime Minister has chaired the **Annual General Meeting** of Nehru Memorial Museum & Library Society (NMML) Society where he emphasised on encouraging research, scholarship among the youth and making history more appealing.

The Prime Minister also discussed ways to make the **PM-Sangrahalaya** more popular among youngsters.

ABOUT NMML

- **Status:** The Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (NMML) is an autonomous institution under the **Ministry of Culture, Government of India**.
- **Background:** It was **established in 1964** in the memory of First Prime Minister (PM) of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1889 - 1964).
- **Location:** It is located in the Teen Murti House, Delhi (the official residence of the first PM).
- **Administration:** Prime Minister of India is the President of the NMML.



- **NMML Society:** It is responsible for all the key decisions regarding the functioning of the memorial.
- **Units:** It has four major constituents namely –
 - Memorial Museum,
 - Library on modern India,
 - Centre for Contemporary Studies and
 - Nehru Planetarium.

14. DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

On 27th December 2022, the Election Commission began the delimitation of Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Assam by using the Census data of 2001 for the readjustment seats.

The Commission said a **ban has been put in place effective January 1, 2023**, on the **creation of new administrative units** in the state till the exercise is complete.

However, a day before the ban came into effect, the **Assam Government** approved the **merger of four districts** with the districts they had been carved out of earlier.

The mergers will bring down the **count of districts in Assam** from **35 to 31**.

WHAT IS DELIMITATION?

- According to the Election Commission, the word ‘delimitation’ is defined as “**the act or process of fixing limits/boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country or a province having a legislative body**”.
- In the Indian context, the exercise of redrawing the boundaries of Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly Constituencies in a region is known as delimitation.
- In this process, the number of seats allocated to a particular state/UT in Lok Sabha or in the Legislative Assembly may vary.
 - **For example** – Delhi, a union territory with legislative assembly, has 7 Lok Sabha constituencies while in the Legislative Assembly it has 70 constituencies.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- **Article 82** and **Article 170** of the Constitution empowers the Parliament to readjust the allocation of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of States respectively, after every census.
- Accordingly, the Parliament enacts a **Delimitation Commission Act** and an independent high-powered panel known as the **Delimitation Commission** is constituted to carry out the exercise of delimitation.
- The Parliament has enacted the Delimitation Commission Acts in **1952, 1962, 1972** and **2002** for this purpose. There was no Delimitation Commission Act after the 1981 and 1991 census.
- The present delimitation of constituencies has been done on the basis of 2001 census data under the provisions of **Delimitation Commission Act, 2002**.
- The next Delimitation Commission will be set up after 2026.



- Further, **Article 330** and **Article 332** of the Constitution provide for re-fixing the number of seats reserved for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of the states, on the basis of the 2001 census.

ABOUT DELIMITATION COMMISSION

- The Delimitation Commission is a **high-powered committee** entrusted with the task of drawing and redrawing of boundaries of different constituencies for state assembly and Lok Sabha election.
- It is **appointed by the President** and works in collaboration with the Election Commission.
- **The Commission consists of –**
 - A retired or working Supreme Court Judge (chairperson)
 - Election Commissioner
 - Concerned State Election Commissioners
- The Commission's orders have the force of law and **cannot be called in question before any court.**
- The Commission's orders are laid before the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies concerned, **but they cannot effect any modifications in the order.**

15. DEMONETISATION CASE VERDICT

The Supreme Court upheld the government's 2016 decision to demonetise currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 by a **4:1 majority**.

WHAT IS DEMONETISATION?

- Demonetization is the **process** through which a **nation's economic unit of exchange loses its legally enforceable validity.**
- It is a drastic intervention into the economy that involves **removing the legal tender status of a currency.**
- It arises whenever the official currency is changed. The existing kind or types of currency are withdrawn through circulation and supplanted with new currency.

DEMONETISATIONS IN INDIA

- **Previous demonetisation** - Demonetisation has been implemented twice:
 - **In 1946**, RBI demonetized **1000- and 10000-rupee notes.**
 - **In 1978**, the government demonetized **1000-, 5000-, and 10000-rupee notes** in order to curb the menace of black money.
- **2016 demonetisation**
 - **On November 8, 2016**, PM Modi announced the decision of the government to demonetise currency notes of **Rs 500 and Rs 1,000** in a bid to tackle corruption, black money & terror financing.

WHY COUNTRIES OPT FOR DEMONETISATION?



- To address issues like **hyperinflation and to stabilize the currency**.
- To **eliminate negative situations** or actions like **counterfeit currency, terror, and tax fraud**.
- To **introduce a new monetary system** in some circumstances.
- To **facilitate trade and access to markets**.
- To push informal economic activity into **more transparency**.

WHY WAS DEMONETISATION (2016) CHALLENGED?

- **58 petitions** challenging various aspects of the government's note ban decision was filed in the SC.
- These petitioners contended that the **procedure prescribed in Section 26(2) of RBI Act, 1934, was not followed**.
 - **Section 26(2)** of the RBI Act states that **on recommendation of the Central Board of the RBI, the Central Government may declare that any series** of bank notes of any denomination shall cease to be legal tender.
 - The petitioners argued that the word **“any”** would have to be **given a restricted meaning**.
 - i.e., RBI has power only to recommend “a particular series” of notes. It does not have powers to demonetise “all series” of a particular denomination.
- They also argued that the demonetisation notification is liable to be struck down applying the **test of proportionality**.
 - The **four ingredients** of the proportionality test to be satisfied are:
 - legitimate purpose; rational connection with the purpose; necessity; whether the action taken is proportional or balanced.
- They also contended that the entire decision-making process was flawed in law as the **proposal should have been emanated from RBI Board, not from the Centre**.

16. THE VERDICT

- In its majority **4:1 judgment**, it was held that the Centre's notification dated November 8, 2016, **was valid and satisfied the test of proportionality**.
- The court held that the **central government's decision was after RBI board's approval** which shows in-built safeguard against centre's powers.
 - The Centre is required to take the action after the consultation with the Central Board and there is an inbuilt safeguard.
 - Decision-making process cannot be faulted merely because the proposal emanated from the centre.
- The **hardships faced by citizens** following demonetisation six years ago **cannot be a ground to reverse the decision**.
 - The individual interests must yield to the larger public interest sought to be achieved by the impugned notification.



- On creating a **fresh window for return of demonetised currency**, the majority verdict said it did not have the expertise to frame such a scheme.

'NOT RELEVANT WHETHER OBJECTIVES ACHIEVED OR NOT'	
<p>MAJORITY VERDICT OF JUSTICES SA NAZEER, BR GAVAI, AS BOPANNA & V RAMASUBRAMANIAN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Majority verdict says demonetisation had a "reasonable nexus with its objectives" such as eradicating black money and terror funding and it is not relevant whether those objectives were achieved or not ➤ Says government was in consultation with RBI for six months and it is empowered to take such a decision ➤ No fresh window to exchange notes, 52 days' time given earlier not unreasonable <p>“ There has to be great restraint in matters of economic policy. Court cannot supplant the wisdom of executive with its wisdom...”</p>	<p>MINORITY VERDICT OF JUSTICE BV NAGARATHNA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonetisation move 'exercise of power' by Union government, contrary to law and vitiated under the RBI Act ➤ Carried out in 24 hours, so central bank had no time to consider it ➤ Parliament, which is "at the centre of our democracy, cannot be left aloof in a matter of such importance" ➤ Around 98% of value of banned currency reported to have been exchanged, so measure may not have been as effective as it was hoped to be <p>“ This (use of phrases such as 'as desired' by the Centre in communication to RBI governor) demonstrates that there was no independent application of mind by the Bank</p>

17. YO YO TEST & DEXA SCAN

The **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** has recently announced the (re)introduction of the **Yo-Yo Test** and the introduction of **Dexa scans** for the purposes of selection to the team.

WHY THIS STEP WAS TAKEN?

It is probably because of high number of injuries being contracted by many Indian players. This led them to miss out on crucial tournaments like the T20 world cup.

THE YO YO TEST

- The Yo-Yo test was first introduced to the Indian cricket team during Virat Kohli's fitness-focused captaincy reign. Developed by Danish football physiologist Jens Bangsbo, it is a **"maximal aerobic endurance fitness test, involving running between markers placed 20 metres apart, at increasing speeds, until exhaustion."**
- Players are given scores on the basis of how many levels they are able to clear. Previously, the minimum score set by the BCCI to pass the test was 17 (increased from 16.1).

THE DEXA SCAN

- Dexa scans were recommended to the BCCI and the National Cricket Academy (NCA) as far back as 2011 because of a significant increase in players' workloads with the introduction of T20 cricket and professionalisation of the game.
- Through Dexa tests, the **trainers will be able to measure body fat percentage, lean muscle mass, water content and bone density.**



- It helps to understand where the fat is and whether the training methods are yielding the result.

108th INDIAN SCIENCE CONGRESS

PM Modi inaugurated the **108th Indian Science Congress (ISC)** being held in **Nagpur** via video conferencing.

The focal theme of this year's ISC is “**Science and Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment**”.

ABOUT ISC

- ISC is a **one-of-its-kind event** in the country which brings together the scientific communities on a platform for their interaction with students and the general public on matters related to science.
- The event is organized by the **Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA)**.
 - ISCA is an **independent body** functioning with the support of the **Department of Science and Technology (DST)** in the central government.
- Dubbed as the **largest gathering of scientists and students** in the country, the Science Congress is an **annual five-day event** from January 3 to 7
- The **first session** of the Indian Science Congress was **held in 1914** at the premises of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta.

PM's SPEECH HIGHLIGHTS

- **India's achievements highlighted**
 - India is now one of the top three countries in the world when it comes to the number of PhD research works and startup ecosystems.
 - The country is now ranked **40th on the Global Innovation Index 2022**, up from the 81st rank in 2015.
 - He underlined that scientific developments should ultimately make the country Atma Nirbhar.
- **Need to increase women's participation:**
 - While highlighting the importance of women's involvement in scientific research, PM Modi said that the **increasing participation of women is a reflection of the progress of society and science.**
 - Today, the country's thinking is not only that **women should be empowered through science, but science should also be empowered with the participation of women.**
 - He pointed out that women's participation in extramural research has doubled over the last eight years.
 - India has been given the opportunity to preside over G20. Women-led development is one of the high-priority subjects taken up by the chair.
- **Science must come out of the lab and reach the land**



- The efforts of Science can bear fruit only when they go from labs to land.
- With 2023 being declared as the International Year of Millets, India's millets and their use should be further improved with the use of science.
- He also urged the scientific community to work towards reducing post-harvest losses with the help of biotechnology.
- **Need to focus on energy innovation**
 - He pointed out the need to focus on energy innovation, with energy needs continuing to be on the rise.
 - He endorsed the need for the scientific community to focus on working on a National Hydrogen Mission and stressed the need to manufacture critical equipment like electrolyzers in India to make it a success.
 - **National Hydrogen Mission** was launched on India's 75th Independence Day (15th August, 2021).
 - The Mission aims to aid the government in meeting its climate targets and making India a green hydrogen hub.
 - This will help in meeting the target of production of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030.

18. TERMITES & GLOBAL WARMING

According to a study published in Science, the Earth gets warmer, termites will rapidly spread across the world. This could, in turn, lead to a further rise in global temperatures. It has found that termites decompose wood at a much higher rate in warmer conditions. For every 10 degrees Celsius increase in temperature, their decomposition activity goes up by almost seven times.

ABOUT

- According to the study, termites release **carbon from dead wood in the form of carbon dioxide and methane, two of the most important greenhouse gases**. So, an increase in termite population and their faster decomposing activity can cause more greenhouse emissions, resulting in a hotter planet.
- **There are around 3,000 species of termites across the world**, including the ones that consume plant material and even soil. However, the most famous are the wood-eating termites.
- Another research by scientists at the University of Florida found that two Floridian varieties of termites were able to **interbreed during warmer winters and hybridise into new "highly destructive super-termites"**.

19. MICROPLASTICS

Scientists from **South Korea** have recently developed a new water purification system that can **quickly and efficiently filter out microplastics**.

WHAT ARE MICROPLASTICS?

- Microplastics are tiny bits of various types of plastic found in the environment.
- The name is used to differentiate them from "macroplastics" such as bottles and bags made of plastic.



There is **no universal agreement on the size** that fits this bill — the U.S. NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and the European Chemical Agency define microplastic as **less than 5 mm in length**.

TYPES OF MICROPLASTICS

- There are two categories of **microplastics: primary and secondary**.
- **Primary microplastics** are tiny particles designed for commercial use, such as cosmetics, as well as microfibers shed from clothing and other textiles, such as fishing nets.
- **Secondary microplastics** are particles that result from the breakdown of larger plastic items, such as water bottles.
 - This breakdown is caused by exposure to environmental factors, mainly the sun's radiation and ocean waves.

COLOUR CODED WARNINGS

Recently **India's Meteorological Department (IMD)** issued an **orange alert** in the Delhi-NCR region.

WHY?

In Delhi, the day temperature settled several notches below normal and the minimum temperature plunged to **4.4 degrees Celsius**, the season's lowest and making the national capital colder than Dharamshala, Nainital and Dehradun.

These are issued by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) for explaining the severity of the weather phenomena which has the potential to cause damage, widespread disruption or danger to life.

These alerts are also issued during floods, depending on the amount of water rising above land/in a river as a result of torrential rainfall. Warnings are updated daily.

THE COLOUR CODED WARNINGS

- **Green (All is well):** No advisory is issued.
- **Yellow (Be Aware):** Yellow indicates severely bad weather spanning several days. It also suggests that the weather could change for the worse, disrupting day-to-day activities.
- **Orange/Amber (Be prepared):** The orange alert is issued as a warning of extremely bad weather with the potential of disruption in commute with road and rail closures, and interruption of power supply.
- **Red (Take Action):** When extremely bad weather conditions are certainly going to disrupt travel and power and have significant risks to life, the red alert is issued.

ABOUT IMD

- It is the main agency responsible for meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology in India.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences.



- It operates hundreds of observation stations across India and Antarctica.
- Regional offices are in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata, Nagpur, Guwahati and New Delhi.
- It is also one of the six Regional Specialised Meteorological Centres of the World Meteorological Organisation.
- It has the responsibility for **forecasting, naming and distributing warnings** for tropical cyclones in the Northern Indian Ocean region, including the Malacca Straits, the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf.

20. BIND SCHEME

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently approved the proposal of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting regarding the BIND scheme at a cost of ₹2,539.61 crore up to 2025-26.

It is a **Central Sector Scheme** which provides financial support for the infrastructure development of **Prasar Bharati i.e. All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD)**.

ABOUT THE SCHEME

- This scheme will enable the public broadcaster to undertake a major upgradation of its facilities with better infrastructure which will widen its reach, including in the LWE, border and strategic areas and provide high-quality content to the viewers.
- Another major priority area of the scheme is the development of high-quality content for both domestic and international audiences and ensuring the availability of diverse content to the viewers by upgradation of the capacity of the DTH platform to accommodate more channels.
- Purchase of **OB vans and digital upgradation of DD and AIR Studios** to make them HD-ready will also be done as part of the project.
- The Project for modernization and augmentation of broadcast infrastructure also has the potential to **generate indirect employment** by way of manufacturing and services related to the supply and installation of broadcast equipment.
- The Scheme will **increase coverage of AIR FM transmitters** in the country to 66% by geographical area and 80% by population up from 59% and 68% respectively.
- It also envisages free distribution of over 8 lakh DD Free Dish STBs to people living in remote, tribal, LWE and border areas.



Week 2

CURRENT AFFAIRS
07/01/2023 TO 13/01/2023

1. FAIR & REMUNERATIVE PRICE FOR SUGARCANE

The sugarcane farmers in **Haryana** sat on dharnas outside the sugar mills across the State recently kicking off the agitation to seek **hike in the crop's support price**.

What is FRP?

Fair and remunerative price (FRP) is the **minimum price** at which rate sugarcane is to be purchased by sugar mills from farmers.

Who determines it?

The FRP is fixed by **Union government (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA))** on the basis of recommendations of **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.

ABOUT FRP

- **Rules:** The 'FRP' of sugarcane is determined under Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966.
- **Methodology:** Recommended FRP is arrived at by taking into account various factors (cost of production, demand-supply situation, domestic & international prices, inter-crop price parity etc.
- **Benefits:** FRP assures margins to farmers, irrespective of whether sugar mills generate a profit or not.
- This will be uniformly applicable all over the country. Besides FRP, some states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, UP and TN announce a State Advised Price, which is generally higher than the FRP.

2. PURPLE FEST

The first-of-its-kind inclusive festival in India, '**Purple Fest: Celebrating Diversity**' is set to begin on January 6, 2023 in Goa.



ABOUT PURPLE FEST

- It aims to showcase how we can come together to create a welcoming and inclusive world for everyone.
- It is aimed at furthering the spirit of inclusion, the Purple Fest will feature a variety of exciting live performances, sporting events, grand exhibitions, immersive experience zones, accessible movie screenings, & discussions on vital subjects like inclusive education, tourism, employment, & independent living.
- **Who is organising Purple Fest?**
 - The Purple Fest will be hosted by the Goa State Commission for Persons with Disabilities in association with the Directorate of Social Welfare and Entertainment Society of Goa.
- **When is Purple Fest Goa?**
 - Purple Fest Goa will be held from January 6-8, 2023, in Panjim, Goa.

3. Y 20

Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Anurag Singh Thakur will launch the themes of the Y20 summit, logo, and website in New Delhi on January 6 in the curtain raiser event of Y20 Summit India.



WHAT IS Y20?

The Y20 is the official youth engagement group for the G20 (Group of 20), the forum for the world's largest and most advanced economies.

ABOUT Y 20

- The Y20 is a process which brings together young leaders from across the globe, to discuss and debate global challenges and agree policy recommendations they would like to see G20 leaders take forward.
- The list of policy recommendations is known as a **communiqué**, which is announced publicly at the Y20 Summit and presented to world leaders as part of the official G20 summit.
- **India is hosting the Y20 summit for the first time.**
- In Youth 20 Engagement Group, India's key focus is to bring young leaders from all across the globe together and discuss ideas for a better tomorrow and draft an agenda for action.
- The activities to be undertaken by Y20 during India's presidency will focus on global youth leadership and partnership.
- In a run-up to the final Youth-20 Summit, for the next eight months, there will be Pre summits on the **five Y20 themes** along with various discussions and seminars at different Universities across the country.

4. WATER

Addressing the opening session of first All India Annual State Ministers' Conference on Water, the PM stated that it is the responsibility of all to make water a subject of collaboration, coordination, and cooperation between states.

The theme of the 1st Conference (organised by the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti in Bhopal, MP) is '**Water**

STATUS OF WATER IN THE CONSTITUTION

- **Schedule VII of the Indian Constitution:**
 - **Entry 17 of the State List** (List II), deals with 'Water' which includes - Water supply, irrigation, canal, drainage, embankments, Water storage and Water power.
 - **Entry 56 of Union List** (List I) empowers the Central Government to regulate and develop inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament in the public interest.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** The constitutional right to access to clean drinking water can be drawn from the right to food, the right to clean environment and the right to health, all of which have been protected under the broad heading of the **RIGHT TO LIFE**.
- **Current status of Water:** Hence, for all practical purposes, unless there is an emergency situation, 'Water' continues to be a **state subject**.

HIGHLIGHT OF PM's SPEECH

- The **states' efforts for water conservation** will go a long way in achieving the collective goals of the country. This assumes significance in view of the **inter-state water disputes** between several states.



- According to the vision of ‘**whole of government**’ and ‘**whole of country**’, different state departments such as Water, Irrigation, Agriculture, Rural, Urban Development and Disaster Management, should have constant interaction.
- We need to make people associated with industry and agriculture sectors, aware towards water security.
- He also suggested that the states should adopt the Centre’s **Namami Gange Mission** as a template and start similar campaigns for the conservation of rivers.
- Citing an example of **Swachh Bharat Mission**, he asked the states to involve the public in the campaigns related to water conservation.
- He laid thrust on **natural farming**, as the positive effects of water conservation have been noticed in places where natural farming is practised. **Crop diversification** should be based on water availability.
- He also highlighted the ‘**Per Drop More Crop**’ campaign that began under the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana** (PMKSY) and informed that more than 70 lakh hectares of land in the country have been brought under micro-irrigation so far.
- He asked the **gram panchayats to prepare an action plan** for the next five years where a roadmap ranging from water supply to cleanliness and waste management is considered.
- He also asked **states to adopt ways where the water budget is prepared** at the panchayat level based on the quantity of water required in each village.
- He also highlighted the importance of the **circular economy** in the field of water conservation and called for developing a **water testing system** to ensure the quality of water.

5. **DRAFT NORMS FOR FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES**

The **University Grants Commission (UGC)** has announced draft norms for facilitating foreign universities and educational institutions to set up campuses in India which allow them autonomy in decision making. The final norms will be notified by the end of the month after feedback from all stakeholders.

WHY FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES SHOULD BE ALLOWED?

- The UGC chief pointed out that in 2022 over 4.5 lakh Indian students went abroad to study, leading to outflow of estimated \$28-30 billion.
- Allowing foreign universities to set-up campuses in India will also ensure that all our students — there are around 40 million pursuing higher education — have access to global quality education.
- The ideal of setting up foreign universities’ campuses in India is also mentioned in the **National Education Policy 2020**.

ABOUT UGC

- The University Grants Commission of India is a **statutory body** under the provisions of UGC Act, 1956.
- It is **responsible for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education**.
- It provides recognition to universities in India, and disburses funds to such recognized universities and college.



- **Nodal Ministry:** Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education

OBJECTIVES

- Promoting and coordinating university education.
- Determining and maintaining standards of teaching, examination and research in universities.
- Framing regulations on minimum standards of education.
- Monitoring developments in the field of collegiate and university education; disbursing grants to the universities and colleges.
- Serving as a vital link between the Union and State governments and institutions of higher learning.
- Advising the Central and State governments on the measures necessary for the improvement of university education.

DRAFT NORMS

- **Criteria –**
 - A foreign university with a rank among the top 500 global rankings or a foreign educational institution of repute in home jurisdiction can apply to the UGC to set up a campus in India.
- **Application Process –**
 - The application will be considered by a standing committee appointed by the UGC which will submit its recommendations within 45 days after examining the institution's credibility.
 - Subsequently, within 45 days, the UGC may grant in-principle approval to the foreign institution to set up campuses in India within two years.
 - The initial approval will be for 10 years, which can be extended.
- **Reasonable Fees –**
 - Such a campus can evolve its own admission process and criteria to admit domestic and foreign students.
 - It will also have autonomy to decide its fee structure, and will face no caps that are imposed on Indian institutions.
 - The fee should be “reasonable and transparent”.
- **Mode of Teaching –**
 - It will also have autonomy to recruit faculty and staff from India and abroad.
 - The courses to be offered cannot be in online and open and distance learning mode.
 - The qualifications awarded to the students in the Indian campus should have equivalence with those awarded by the institutions in their country of origin.
- **Fund Management –**
 - Foreign universities will be allowed to repatriate funds to parent campuses.
 - Cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of Foreign Currency Accounts, mode of payments, remittance, repatriation, and sale of proceeds, if



any, will be as per the **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) 1999** and its Rules.

6. **INDIAN WOMEN IN UN PEACEKEEPING FORCE**

The Indian Army has deployed its largest-ever contingent of women soldiers for UN peacekeeping operations in the volatile oil-rich **Abyei region of Africa**.

Abyei region is situated between northern and southern Sudan and is hotly contested by both.



ABOUT THE OPERATION IN SUDAN

- India has deployed a **platoon of women peacekeepers in Abyei** as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA).
- The women platoon will provide relief and assistance to local women and children in one of the highly operational and challenging conditions under the UN flag.
- This is India's largest single unit of women peacekeepers in a UN Mission since it deployed the first-ever all women's contingent from the Central Reserve Police Force in Liberia in 2007 as part of United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).
- Indian women particularly have a tradition in Peacekeeping.
 - Dr Kiran Bedi, UN's first Police Adviser, Major Suman Gawani and Shakti Devi have made a mark for themselves in UN Peacekeeping.

ABOUT UN PEACEKEEPING FORCES

- The UN Charter gives the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.
- In fulfilling this responsibility, the Council can establish a UN peace operation.

MANDATE OF PEACEKEEPING:

- UN peace operations are deployed on the basis of mandates from the UNSC
- These mandates differ from situation to situation, depending on the nature of the conflict and the specific challenges it presents.
- Depending on their mandate, peace operations may be required to:
 - **Deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict** or the spill-over of conflict across borders;
 - Stabilize conflict situations **after a ceasefire**;
 - Assist in implementing **comprehensive peace agreements**;
 - Lead states or territories through a **transition to stable government**, based on democratic principles, good governance and economic development.

PRINCIPLES OF PEACEKEEPING

- There are three basic principles that continue to set UN peacekeeping operations apart as a tool for maintaining international peace and security. These are:
 - **Consent of the parties**



- In the absence of such consent, a peacekeeping operation risks becoming a party to the conflict; and being drawn towards enforcement action.
 - **Impartiality**
 - Peacekeepers should be impartial in their dealings with the parties to the conflict, but not neutral in the execution of their mandate.
 - **Non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate**

SUCCESS OF PEACEKEEPING FORCES

- Since 1948, the UN has helped end conflicts and foster reconciliation by conducting successful peacekeeping operations in dozens of countries, including Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia and Tajikistan.
- UN peacekeeping has also made a real difference in other places with recently completed or on-going operations such as Sierra Leone, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Timor-Leste, Liberia, Haiti and Kosovo.
- In other instances, however, UN peacekeeping have been challenged and found wanting, for instance in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s.
- Overall, UN Peacekeeping Forces have an impressive record of peacekeeping achievements, including winning the Nobel Peace Prize (1988).

UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS & INDIA

- India has been actively participating in peacekeeping right from 1950 when it supplied medical personnel and troops to the UN Repatriation Commission in Korea.
- Currently, India is Fifth largest troop contributor with ~5,500 personnel across 9 missions. **India's contribution to the peacekeeping budget stands at 0.16%.**
 - Nearly 80% of the Indian peacekeepers are deployed in hostile regions such as Central African Republic and South Sudan in various sections.
- In April 2019, a total of 150 Indian peacekeepers serving with the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) have received medals of honour for their dedicated service and sacrifice.
- In August 2021, India, in collaboration with the UN launched **UNITE AWARE platform**.
 - It is a technology platform to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers.
- India has also proposed a 10-point plan, including making those targeting UN peacekeepers more accountable.
- India has also suggested to build a memorial wall to honour peacekeepers.

7. 2021 CENSUS DELAYED TO 2024-25

The Census enumeration, which was **scheduled to take place in 2021**, has been further pushed to **2024-25** until further orders.

The Census enumeration is to be **preceded by house-listing** enumeration where the exercise for **National Population Register (NPR)** is to be held.

The ensuing decadal Census of India will be the **16th** in series and **8th after independence**. In the history of Indian Census, **for the first time**, the **Census data** will be collected digitally i.e., on **Mobile App** in the ensuing census.

Also, self-enumeration facility will be provided for the first time in the forthcoming Census.



ABOUT THE CENSUS

- Population Census provides basic statistics on state of human resources, demography, culture and economic structure at local, regional and national level.
- Beginning in the year 1872, when the first census was conducted non-synchronously, the census enumeration exercise in India is carried out in every 10 years.
 - The first synchronous census was taken under British rule in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India.
- The responsibility of conducting the decadal census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

MENTION OF CENSUS IN THE CONSTITUTION OR ANY LEGISLATION:

- Population census is listed in **Union List (entry 69)** of Seventh Schedule in Indian Constitution.
- Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948**.

PROCESS OF CENSUS ENUMERATION

- The Census Operations in India have been carried out in two phases:
 - House-listing and Housing Census and
 - Population Enumeration.
- The Population Enumeration follows the Housing Census within a gap of six to eight months.
- In Population Enumeration phase each person is enumerated and her/his individual particulars like Age, Marital status, Religion, Schedule Cast/Schedule Tribe, Mother tongue, Education level, Disability, Economic activity, Migration, Fertility (for female) are collected.

8. NATIONAL POPULATION REGISTER

According to the **Union Home Ministry Annual Report**, there is a **need to update the National Population Register (NPR)** again to incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration for which demographic and other particulars of each family and individual are to be collected.

The **first National Population Register was prepared in 2010** and updation of this data was done during 2015 by conducting door to door survey. **The next will happen in 2023.**

LEGAL BASIS OF NPR:

- NPR is prepared under Rule 3 of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
 - These rules were framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The NPR is different from the National Register of Citizens (NRC)
 - NRC is a register containing details of Indian Citizens living in India and outside India.

WHAT IS NPR?



- The National Population Register (NPR) is a **register of usual residents of the country**.

- It includes both **Indian citizens as well as a foreign citizen**.

WHO IS CONSIDERED AS A RESIDENT?

According to the **Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003**, a usual resident is a person **who has resided in a local area for the past 6 months or more or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next 6 months or more**.

It is being prepared at the local (Village/sub-Town), sub-District, District, State and National level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

WHICH DETAILS ARE ASKED DURING SURVEY?

The demographic details of every individual are required on **21 points** which includes 'date and place of birth of parents', last place of residence, Permanent Account Number (PAN), Aadhar (on a voluntary basis), Voter ID card number, Driving License Number and Mobile Number.

In the **last NPR done in 2010**, the **data was collected on the 15 points** and it did not include 'date and place of birth of parents' and last place of residence.

FREEZING OF ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES

- Before every Census, states are required to provide information to the RGI on changes in the number of notified districts, villages, towns and other administrative units such as tehsils, talukas and police stations in a state since the last Census.
- The boundaries of administrative units are frozen three months before the commencement of Census.
 - As per **Rule 8(iv) of Census Rules, 1990**, the boundaries of the administrative units shall be frozen from the date intimated by the Census Commissioner, which shall not be earlier than one year from the **Census reference date**.
- In this period, the boundaries of administrative units cannot be changed and the data is compiled and shared with RGI which begins its preparatory work for the Census.

9. SINKING JOSHIMATH

Due to land subsidence, roads and over 560 houses in Joshimath - a key transit point for tourists travelling to Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib - developed cracks, causing panic and protests among the local population. Officials said the disaster management department is conducting surveys at locations where new cracks have developed.

ABOUT JOSHIMATH

- Joshimath/ Jyotirmath is a hilly town in **Chamoli District** in the Indian state of **Uttarakhand**, located on the **Rishikesh-Badrinath National Highway (NH-7)** at a height of 6150 feet (1875 m).





- The town (fall in high-risk seismic Zone-V) is traversed by running streams with a high gradient from Vishnuprayag, a confluence of the **Dhauliganga and the Alaknanda rivers**.
- It is a gateway to several Himalayan Mountain climbing expeditions, trekking trails (Auli, Valley of Flowers) and pilgrim centres like **Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib**.
- Joshimath is also of **great strategic importance** to the Indian armed forces and is home to one of the Army's most important cantonments.
- It is home to one of the four cardinal maths or monasteries established by **Adi Shankara** - Sringeri in Karnataka, Dwarka in Gujarat, Puri in Odisha and **Joshimath** near Badrinath in Uttarakhand.
- A 2022 report (by the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology) stated that the area around Joshimath is covered with **thick layers of overburdened material**.

WHY IS JOSHIMATH SINKING?

- **Joshimath is located on the site of an ancient landslide:** This was found in a 1976 report (by government-appointed Mishra Commission), meaning scientists and geologists working in the area **have been sounding the alarm for decades**.
- **Geography of the town:** Scattered rocks in the area are covered with old landslide debris comprising boulders, gneissic rocks (highly weathered), and **loose soil** (due to seepage from streams uphill), with a **low bearing capacity**.
- **High rate of construction:** Increased construction, hydroelectric projects, and the widening of the NH have made the slopes highly unstable in the last couple of decades.
- **Erosion:** Due to the running streams from Vishnuprayag and sliding along the natural streams are the other reasons behind the city's fate.
- **The Rishi Ganga flood disaster:** This has worsened the situation, followed by incessant rainfall between August to October in 2021.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

- **The urgent need is to relocate** the residents to a safer place and **then reimagine the town's planning** to accommodate the new variables and the changing geographical factors.
- **Drainage and sewer planning** (as more and more waste is seeping into the soil, loosening it from within) is one of the biggest factors that needs to be studied and redeveloped.
- **Experts recommend a complete shutdown** of development and hydroelectric projects in the region.
- Experts have also suggested **replantation in the region**, especially at the vulnerable sites **to retain soil capacity**.
- **There is a need for a coordinated** effort between the government and civil bodies with the aid of military organisations like the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** to save Joshimath.
- A sufficient number of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State DRF teams should be deployed and helicopter facilities should be provided, if required.

10. SOVEREIGN GREEN BONDS



The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that the maiden Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs) would be issued in two tranches for an aggregate amount of Rs 16,000 crore. The RBI will auction 5-year and 10-year green bonds worth Rs 4,000 crore each on 25 January and on 9 February. The proceeds will be utilised for funding public sector projects seeking to reduce carbon emissions.

SOVEREIGN GREEN BONDS

The Central government released the **Sovereign Green Bonds Framework**. The revenue generated from the issuance of sovereign green bonds **will be deployed in public sector projects** that help in **reducing the carbon intensity of the economy**.

BACKGROUND:

- In **Union Budget 2022-23**, the Finance Minister had announced that sovereign green bonds will be issued for mobilising resources for **‘green projects’**.
- Prior to that, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in November 2021** had announced India’s commitments under **‘Panchamrit’** to reduce carbon emissions.
- Panchamrit is a set of **five commitments** that the Prime Minister made at the Conference of Parties (COP26) held at Glasgow, UK.

THE PANCHAMRIT

- To raise the **non-fossil fuel based energy capacity** of the country to **500 GW by 2030**.
- **By 2030, 50% of the country’s energy requirements** would be met using **renewable energy sources**.
- The country **will reduce the total projected carbon emission** by **one billion tonnes between now and the year 2030**.
- The **carbon intensity** of the economy would be reduced to **less than 45% by 2030**.
- India would become **carbon neutral** and achieve **net zero emissions by the year 2070**.

THE SOVEREIGN GREEN BONDS FRAMEWORK OF INDIA

Aim:

- To mobilise **Rs 16,000 crore** through the **issuance of green bonds** in the **current fiscal ending March 2023**.
- Under the framework, **the Finance Ministry** will, **every year, inform the RBI** about **spending on green projects** for which the funds raised through these bonds will be used.

PROJECTS INCLUDED:

- All eligible green expenditures will include **public expenditure undertaken by the government** in the form of **investment, subsidies, grants-in-aid, or tax foregone** (or a combination of all or some of these) or select operational expenditures that help in reducing carbon emissions.
- **R&D expenditures** in public sector projects.

IMPLEMENTING AGENCY



- The Ministry of Finance has constituted a **Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC)** including members from relevant line ministries and chaired by the Chief Economic Advisor.
- The **GFWC will meet at least twice a year to support the Ministry of Finance with selection and evaluation of projects** and other work related to the Framework.
- Initial evaluation of the project will be the responsibility of the concerned Ministry/Department in consultation with experts.
- The **allocation of the proceeds will be reviewed in a time-bound manner** by the GFWC to ensure that the allocation of proceeds is completed within 24 months from the date of issuance.

11. AMERICAN FOULBROOD

Recently, The **United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)** has granted a conditional license for a vaccine for honeybees to curb **American foulbrood (AFB)**.

WHAT IS AMERICAN FOULBROOD?

- It is a fatal bacterial disease which affects insects and it is caused by the spore-forming **bacterium Paenibacillus larvae**.
- Infected honey bee broods usually die at the pre-pupal or pupal stage.
- The disease cannot be cured, meaning that the destruction of infected colonies and hives or irradiation of infected material is the only way to manage AFB.

ABOUT HONEYBEE

- There are almost 20,000 different species of bees in the world.
- In each bee colony, there are three types of bees, the queen bee, the worker bee, and the drone.
- The worker and the queen bee both are females, but only the queen bee can reproduce and all drones are male.
- India is home to four of the seven known bee species.
- **Domesticated:** Apis cerana (oriental honey bee) and Apis mellifera (European honey bee).
- **Wild:** Apis dorsata (giant/rock honey bee) and Apis florea (dwarf honey bee).
- Recently, a new species of endemic honeybee named **Apis karinjodian** has been discovered in the Western Ghats after a gap of more than 200 years.
- Common Name: Indian black honeybee.
- **IUCN Red List: Near Threatened (NT)**
- It is distributed from the central Western Ghats and Nilgiris to the southern Western Ghats, covering the **States of Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu**.

12. ASTRO TOURISM

National Council of Science Museums in association with **Nehru Memorial Museum and Library** organised Astro Tourism - A Sky Gazing event at Delhi's India Gate recently.

WHAT IS ASTRO TOURISM?

- **Astro tourism** is an experiential travel trend, that combines travellers interest in astronomy, night sky along with the love for exploring new remote locations.



- It also boosts nature-based travelling, tapping on growing interest of tourists to discover destinations that offer the luxury of being close to nature in a comfortable accommodation.
- The Astro Tourism event includes various activities like Astro Talks by expert Astronomers, an Exhibition on Astronomy, Storytelling related to celestial objects, an Experience of using the telescope to see the craters of the Moon, Astronomy Activities, a Photographic Panel Exhibition, and Astrophotography.

13. PARASNATH HILLS

Tribal bodies recently stepped up their demand to “free” the Parasnath hills in **Jharkhand’s** Giridih district from the “clutches” of the Jain community.

KEY FACTS:

- Parasnath is a mountain peak in the Parasnath Range.
- It is located towards the eastern end of the Chota Nagpur Plateau in the Giridih district of the Indian state of Jharkhand.
- It has been named Parasnath after the 23rd Jain Tirthankara.
- It is a holy and revered sites for the Jain community, called it as “Sammed Sikhar”.
- Out of 24 Tirthankaras of Jains, 20 got NIRVANA on Parasnath Hills.
- On the mountain, A Jain temple is believed to be constructed by Magadha King Bimbisara (543-491 BCE.)

ABOUT SANTHALS

- The Santhal tribe, one of the largest Scheduled Tribe community in the country, has a sizeable population in Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal.
- Santhals call parasnath hill “Marang Buru”. They celebrate a hunting festival on the full moon day in Vaishakha (mid-April).

14. BIO ETHANOL

In order to move faster towards its clean energy goal, India will set-up many bio-ethanol plants across the country under the cooperative sector.

ABOUT BIOFUELS:

- Biofuel is a fuel that is produced over a short time span from biomass, rather than by the very slow natural processes involved in the formation of fossil fuels, such as oil.
- Since biomass can be used as a fuel directly (e.g., wood logs), some people use the words biomass and biofuel interchangeably.
- However, the **word biofuel is usually reserved for liquid or gaseous fuels**, used for transportation.
- Most of biofuel consumption occurs as a blend with refined petroleum products such as gasoline, diesel fuel, heating oil, and kerosene-type jet fuel.
 - However, some biofuels do not require blending with their petroleum counterparts and are referred to as drop-in biofuels.

NATIONAL POLICY ON BIOFUELS

The Cabinet approved amendments to the **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018** to advance the target of **20% ethanol blending in petrol (E20)** to year **2025-26** from earlier **2030**.

WHAT ARE BIOFUELS?



Biofuels refers to **liquid transportation fuels**, such as **ethanol and biodiesel**, derived from agricultural produce, forests or any other organic material (feedstock).

GENERATIONS OF BIOFUELS

Based on the feedstock (raw materials) used to produce biofuels, they are classified into **four generations** (see image). Presently, first-generation biofuels are the main source of biofuels globally.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ETHANOL BLENDING

- **Reduce dependency on Petroleum:**

By blending ethanol into gasoline, it can reduce the amount of petrol required to run a car, thereby **reducing dependence on imported, expensive, and polluting petroleum**.

Today, India imports 85% of its oil requirements.

- **Save Money:**

India's net import of petroleum was 185 million tonnes in 2020-21 at a cost of USD551 billion. Most of the petroleum products are used in transportation and therefore, the E20 programme can save the country USD4 billion annually.

- **Less Polluting:**

Ethanol is a less polluting fuel and offers equivalent efficiency at a lower cost than petrol.

RELATED ISSUES WITH BIOFUELS

- **Risk of Hunger:**

The food grains meant for the impoverished are being sold to distilleries at prices cheaper than what states pay for their public distribution networks.

- **Cost:**

Production of biofuels requires land, this impacts the cost of biofuels as well as that of food crops.

- **Water use:**

Massive quantities of water are required for proper irrigation of biofuel crops as well as to manufacture the fuel, which could strain local and regional water resources.

LEARNINGS FROM BRAZIL WRT ETHANOL BLENDING)

Brazil is one country that has successfully integrated biofuels into its fuel economy. It has efficiently leveraged its traditions and dominance in sugarcane production into a biofuel economy without compromising food security.

Biofuels are also central to Brazil's low carbon emission strategy.

Brazil aimed for a **higher productivity** and **sugar-ethanol balance**.

With a **mandatory blending of 27%** ethanol with gasoline, in **2019 alone Brazil saved about 0.5 million barrels per day of gasoline with a savings of \$13 billion** in imports.

78% of Brazilian automobiles today run on 27% of ethanol blend.

HOW DID BRAZIL ACHIEVE HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY & SUGAR ETHANOL BALANCE?

Brazil revolutionised its biomass production for ethanol and develop a new variety of sugarcane.



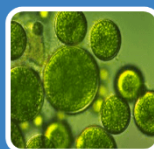
1st Generation Biofuel

- It has **High Carbon Content**.
- Made from Edible Items. Eg- Sugar, Corn, Starch etc.



2nd Generation Biofuel

- **Greenhouse Gas content less than 1st Generation Biofuel**
- Made from leftover of Food Crops. Eg- Rice Husk, Wood Chips etc.



3rd Generation Biofuel

- It is **Carbon Neutral** in. (CO₂ Emitted = CO₂ Sequestered)
- Produced using Microorganisms. Eg, Algae



4th Generation Biofuel

- Made from '**Genetically Engineered Crops**'.
- They are **Carbon Negative**.



This is popularly known as ‘**energy cane**’, which is **low on sucrose but high on biomass**. With productivity up to **350 tonnes of biomass per ha**, against **80 tonnes per ha of traditional sugarcane**, it offered a perfect balance.

Brazil thus took up ethanol production without compromising sugar production.

This enabled it to gradually augment its production and blend.

15. ASPIRATIONAL BLOCK PROGRAM

- The Prime Minister of India recently launched the **Aspirational Block Programme (ABP)**, which is aimed at improving performance of blocks lagging on various development parameters.
- Launching the ABP, PM underscored the success achieved in various Aspirational Districts in the country under the **Aspirational District Programme (ADP)**.

ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAM (ADP)

- Launched in **2018**, the ADP aims to quickly and effectively **transform** (socio-economic status of) **112 most under-developed districts** across the country, with a vision of a New India by 2022.
- The focus is to improve India’s ranking under the **Human Development Index (HDI)** and localising **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, leading to the progress of the nation.
- The districts have been **identified by NITI Aayog** based upon composite indicators from -
 - Health and Nutrition (30%),
 - Education (30%),
 - Agriculture & Water Resources (20%),
 - Financial Inclusion & Skill development (10%) and
 - Basic Infrastructure (10%), which have an impact on HDI.
- The broad contours (all driven by a mass movement) of the programme are -
 - **Convergence** (of Central & State Schemes),
 - **Collaboration** (of Central, State level Nodal Officers & District Collectors), and
 - **Competition** among districts through monthly delta ranking (available on the Champions of Change Dashboard), so that they can learn from others in the spirit of **competitive and cooperative federalism**.
- With States as the main drivers, this program focuses on the **strength of each district, identifying low-hanging fruits** for immediate improvement and measuring progress by ranking districts on a monthly basis.
- NITI Aayog works closely with the respective line Ministries and various development partners to fast-track progress at the district level, **ensuring inclusive growth** for all, ‘Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas’.

HOW HAS THE ADP PERFORMED?

- The UNDP India has lauded the ADP as ‘**a very successful model of local area development**’, and acted as a **catalyst for expediting development** in the previously neglected districts, including those affected by Left Wing Extremism.
- The programme has **strengthened the technical and administrative capacities** of the districts, however, there was a need to focus more on capacity building.



- **Best Practice under the ADP - GoalMart:** It is an e-commerce portal launched by Assam's Goalpara district administration to promote rural, ethnic and agrarian products of the district in the national and global markets.

16. EXERCISE VEER GUARDIAN

India and Japan are all set to hold the joint Air Exercise, '**Veer Guardian-2023**' involving the Indian Air Force and Japan Air Self Defence Force (JASDF) at Hyakuri Air Base, Japan from 12th of January.



ABOUT THE EXERCISE

- The Joint Exercise which will continue **till 26th January** aims at promoting **Air Defence cooperation between the countries.**
- The Indian contingent participating in the air exercise will include four Su-30 MKI, two C-17 and one IL-78 aircraft, while the JASDF will be participating with four F-2 and four F-15 aircraft.
- It will include the conduct of various aerial combat drills between the two Air Forces.
- They will undertake multi-domain air combat missions in a complex environment and will exchange best practices.
- Exercise 'Veer Guardian' will fortify the long-standing bond of friendship and enhance the avenues of defence cooperation between the two Air Forces.

FLOATOVOLTAICS

Covering **10% of the world's hydropower reservoirs** with 'floatovoltaics' would install electrical capacity equivalent to that provided by all electricity-generating fossil fuel plants in operation worldwide.

WHAT ARE FLOATOVOLTAICS?

- **Floatovoltaics, floating solar plants, or FSPV (floating solar photovoltaic) are panel structures that are installed on water bodies like lakes, basins, and reservoirs instead of on solid structures like a roof or terraces.**
- The biggest impetus behind the rise of large-scale FSPV has been that it doesn't take up any land space, which could be then used for construction and agriculture.
- **The world's first large-scale FSPV system was installed in 2011, in Napa Valley, California.**



FLOATOVOLTAICS IN INDIA

- Recently, floating solar power plants have become part of India's plans of solar expansion.
- According to a 2020 study by TERI (The Energy and Resources Institute) reservoirs cover **18000 square Kilometer in India and can generate 280 GW through floating solar panels.**
- Currently less than **1% of solar installations are floating.**
- The largest floating solar power plant in India is currently the **Ramagundam in Peddapalli district of Telangana, with a capacity of 100 MW.**
- Currently a plant is being built on the **Narmada' Omkareshwar Dam in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh** is being built with a capacity of 600 MW, which will soon be the **largest floating solar power plant in the world.**
- The project is touted to be worth Rs 3000 crore.
- **What are the benefits of floating solar panels?**
 - the water's cooling effect makes them more efficient than land-based ones;
 - they don't interfere with desert ecosystems; and
 - they keep precious water from evaporating.
 - Even though reservoirs are artificial ecosystems, they provide habitats for wildlife.



Week 3

CURRENT AFFAIRS
14/01/2023 TO 20/01/2023

1. ECONOMIC CRISIS IN PAKISTAN

Recently, Pakistan announced a series of measures, including **closing all malls and markets by 8.30 pm**, in an attempt to **conserve energy** amid an economic crisis.

Also, the Pakistani administration is engaged in negotiations over the **delayed release of \$1.1 billion** from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.

In 2019, Islamabad had secured a **\$6 billion bailout from the IMF**.

THE CRISIS

- In 2022, the country's foreign exchange reserves dwindled to a little over **\$9 billion**, the rough equivalent of the country being able to pay for six weeks of imports.
 - They hit a low of **\$5.56 billion in January 2023**.
- Year-on-year **inflation** stood at **24.5%** in **2022**. For perishable food items, this number was 55.93%.
- The country is struggling to cope with mounting **debt, inflated energy import costs, dwindling forex reserves, global inflation, political instability** and a sustained **drop in GDP growth**.
- Such is the extent of the crisis that the **government auctioned a Pakistani embassy property in the US** a few days ago.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CRISIS

- **Pakistan's short-sighted policy decision**
 - The present crisis is primarily attributed to Pakistan's policy decision leading to extensive spending on non-developmental and economically unviable projects.
 - The infrastructure projects like Gwadar-Kashgar Railway line were financed through long-term debt instruments.
 - Pakistan relied massively on external borrowing rather than from domestic institutions which added to its troubles.
- **CPEC Projects**
 - Roll out of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) increased the debt burden opening the doors of the ever-increasing external loans.
 - Notably, CPEC created a Chinese debt of US\$ 64 billion on Pakistan which was originally valued at US\$47 billion during 2014.
- **Persistent fall in the Pakistani Rupee against the US Dollar**
 - This has further contributed to the ballooning external debt.
- **Role of International Institutions**
 - Low ranking by international rating agencies and grey listing of Pakistan in Financial Action Task Force (FATF) kept foreign investors away.
 - In October 2022, Pakistan has been removed from the grey list after four years



- The State Bank of Pakistan data suggests that in the past 10 years, FDI inflows into Pakistan never exceeded 1% of GDP.
- The vicious cycle of seeking fresh loans and repaying old ones has led Pakistan into the notorious 'debt trap'.
- **Other reasons**
 - Pakistan has been struggling with mounting trade deficit driven by its ever-increasing import bills and falling exports. In February 2022, ADB reported that Pakistan has one of the lowest trade-to-GDP ratios in the world.
 - The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic further deteriorated the situation.
 - Inflation in Pakistan touched its highest level in November 2021. This is primarily because of the global rise in crude oil prices.
 - A devastating flood that hit the nation in 2022 from June to October is another factor that has worsened the economic situation in Pakistan.

IMPACT ON INDIA

- **On Trade volume**
 - Bilateral trade between these two countries had been abysmally low in the past. It was around \$2.3 billion in 2016-17.
 - After the Pulwama terror attack, India withdrew the MFN status to Pakistan. India also raised customs duties on goods being imported from Pakistan up to the bound level duty rates.
 - Hence, given the low trade volume between two countries, the present crisis will not have any noticeable impact on bilateral trade.
- **Increased presence of China**
 - The present crisis in Pakistan will give space to increased presence of China in the India's neighbouring country.
 - As per the Pakistani Finance Minister, Saudi Arabia and China are all set to shore up Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves before the end of January 2023.
- **Threat to internal security**
 - The economic crisis in Pakistan will provide a fertile ground for terrorism and radicalism to flourish. It will also embolden the military of Pakistan.
 - The relationship between New Delhi and Islamabad has particularly deteriorated after India abrogated Article 370
 - Hence, the present crisis might create challenges for India's internal security.

2. INDIA CHINA TRADE RELATIONSHIP

According to data released by Chinese customs, the trade between India and China touched an all-time high of \$135.98 billion in 2022.

However, New Delhi's trade deficit with Beijing also crossed, the \$100 billion mark for the first time.

BILATERAL TRADE



- China is **India's largest trade partner for the year 2022**.
- India's trade deficit **concerns** with China are two-pronged.
 - The actual size of the deficit.
 - The imbalance has continuously been widening year after year.
- Analysts have seen India's growing imports from China as both a worry, reflecting continued dependence for a range of key goods, but also, to some extent, as a positive indicator of the Indian economy importing more intermediate goods.

	2021	2022	% Change
Bilateral Trade	\$125 billion	\$135.98 billion	8.4 % increase
China's exports to India	\$97.59 billion	\$118.5 billion	21.7 % increase
India's exports to China	\$28.03 billion	\$17.48 billion	37.6% decrease
India's Trade Deficit	\$69.38 billion	\$101.02 billion	45.6% increase
India's major imports from China	Electronic goods, engineering goods, chemicals and related products, other manufactured goods, and textiles.		
India's major exports to China	Engineering goods, agricultural and allied products, ores and minerals, chemicals and related products, petroleum and crude products.		

REASONS BEHIND WIDENING TRADE DEFICIT

- **Gap between domestic production and demand**
 - India imports goods to fill the gap between domestic production (supply) as well as consumer preferences (demand) for various products.
- **Export of raw material while importing finished goods**
 - India's predominant exports have consisted of raw materials like- iron ore, cotton, copper, aluminium and diamonds/ natural gems.
 - However, majority of Chinese exports consists of machinery, power-related equipment, telecom equipment, organic chemicals and fertilisers.
 - This resulted in decline in total value of Indian exports to China.
- **Indian pharmaceutical industry is heavily dependent on APIs from China**
 - India's \$42 billion pharmaceutical industry, imports about 68% of its active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China.
- **Other factors**
 - A narrow basket of commodities, mostly primary items, that India exports to China.
 - Market access impediments for most Indian agricultural products and competitive markets, such as IT/ITES, etc.



3. NEW UMBRELLA ENTITY

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is said to have put on hold licensing of the **New Umbrella Entity (NUE)** network, a fintech institution planned as a **rival** to the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.

- **Six groupings, which included Facebook, Google, Amazon, Flipkart and others, had applied for NUE licences and all of them have fallen short of the RBI's expectations.**



WHAT IS NUE?

- As envisaged by the RBI, an NUE will be a non-profit entity that will set up, manage and operate new payment systems, especially in the retail space such as ATMs, white-label PoS; Aadhaar-based payments and remittance services.
- The entity formed shall be a company incorporated in India under **the Companies Act, 2013**. Currently, the umbrella entity for providing retail payments systems is NPCI, which is a non-profit entity, owned by banks.
- **Promoters:** A promoter will hold at least 25% and up to 40% of the operator. Only those entities that are owned and controlled by Indian citizens with at least **three years of experience** in the payments segment can become promoters of NUEs.
- **Foreign investment:** Foreign companies can own a maximum of 25%, so are teaming up with local players.
- **Capital required:** According to the RBI guidelines, the entity will have **minimum paid-up capital of Rs 500 crore**, with no single promoter group holding over 40 per cent investment in the capital.
- **Governance structure:** The new entity will have to abide by corporate governance norms and the 'fit and proper' criteria for persons to be appointed to the board.

4. VILLAGE DEFENCE COMMITTEES

After militants killed six people in two days in the village of Jammu and Kashmir, locals have demanded that they be provided weapons to take on attackers.

Responding to the demands, **Lt Governor Manoj Sinha** assured the people that they would get a **Village Defence Committee (VDC)** on the lines of those in **Doda district**.

Recently, Jammu and Kashmir L-G Manoj Sinha said that the Village Defence Guards (VDGs) would be set up in the UT.

The VDCs have now been renamed as Village Defence Guards (VDG).

WHAT IS VDC?

- The VDCs were first formed in the erstwhile Doda district (now Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban districts) in mid 1990s as a force multiplier against militant attacks.
 - The then J&K administration decided to provide residents of remote hilly villages with weapons and give them arms training to defend themselves.
- The new scheme to set up VDGs in vulnerable areas of J&K was approved by the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in March 2022.
- Like a VDC member, each VDG will be provided a gun and 100 rounds of ammunition.



NEED OF VDC

- The militancy that began in Kashmir in the early 1990s had spread to the adjoining Doda district by mid 1990s.
- The demand for arming the civilian population first rose after the massacre of 13 people in Kishtwar in 1993.
- As the killings increased, prompting the migration of Hindus from villages to nearby towns, the Home Ministry in 1995 decided to set up the VDCs.

CONTRIBUTION OF VDC IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM:

- During the peak of militancy in most parts of Jammu division, the VDCs played a significant role in combating militancy.
- They were the most-feared armed groups among militants in areas where poor road networks delayed the arrival of security forces.
- The villagers, well-versed with the local topography, averted many militant attacks and helped in their capture and killings.

IS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VDC & VDG?

- Both VDG and VDC is a group of civilians provided guns and ammunition to tackle militants in case of attack until the arrival of security forces.
- Under the new scheme, the persons leading the VDGs will be paid Rs **4,500 per month** by the government, while others will get Rs 4,000 each.
- In the VDCs, only the Special Police Officers (SPOs) leading them were provided a remuneration, of Rs 1,500 monthly.
 - The SPOs, the lowest rank in the J&K Police, used to be retired army, para military or police personnel.
- The VDGs will **function under the direction of the SP/SSP of the district concerned.**

CONTROVERSIES

- Along with the successes, the VDCs also faced allegations of human rights violations and other crimes, including murder, rape and extortions.
- As per official figures placed on the floor of the erstwhile J&K Legislative Assembly in 2016, 27,924 civilians were serving in 4,248 VDCs across the state.
- After peace returned, there were demands from certain quarters to disband the VDCs in 2002.
- Over a period of time, the number of VDC members has dropped significantly, either because of their involvement in a criminal case, or the government taking back their weapons once they turned 60.

WHY THERE IS A DEMAND FOR ARMING THE CITIZENS?

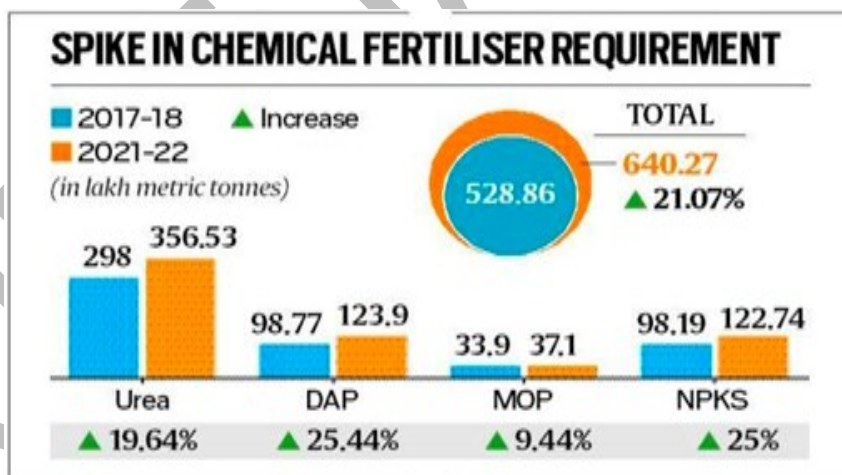
- **Revival of attacks targeting minorities and non-locals**
 - Recent terror attacks in J&K have targeted minorities and non-locals.
 - This targeted killing is aimed at creating an atmosphere of fear and damaging communal harmony
 - This has revived the memories of the mass exodus of minority communities that took place in the early 1990s
- **Shift in strategy & new challenges in front of security agencies**



- Almost all civilian killings have been carried out by newly recruited terrorists or those about to join the ranks.
 - Previously, full-time militants used to go missing from their villages or advertise themselves on social media. Thus, it was easy to track them.
 - On the other hand, these part-timers are difficult to track.
 - These neo-recruits of hybrid terrorists who beat surveillance with one-off attacks, helps Pakistan-based masterminds maintain deniability.
- Nearly all civilian killings were carried out using pistols. These weapons were brought in using drones from across the border.
 - The pistols were delivered to these neo-recruits by Pakistani handlers specifically for the strikes and later taken back.
 - This allowed them to conveniently return to their homes in populated neighbourhoods.

5. OVERUSE OF FERTILIZERS IN INDIA

According to the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers, urea and di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) sales have increased recently, regardless of the rise or fall in the global fertiliser prices. Global fertiliser prices skyrocketed in the run-up to and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, but have since dropped significantly.



FERTILIZER USE IN INDIA

◆ THE FERTILIZER INDUSTRY:

- Fertilisers (organic/inorganic) are **substances that provide one or more of the chemicals required for plant growth**.
 - As per industry experts, out of the **16 elements** necessary for plant growth, 9 elements are required in large quantities (major elements = primary and secondary), while the other 7 are needed in smaller amounts (minor elements).
 - **Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are known as primary plant nutrients;**
 - Calcium, magnesium and sulphur, as secondary nutrients;
 - Iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron, molybdenum and chlorine as trace elements or micro-nutrients.
 - The primary objective of fertiliser industry is **to ensure the inflow of both primary and secondary elements** as are necessary for crop production in the desired quantities.
 - However, the **sharp increase in the overall fertiliser requirement** in the country during the last 5 years, have resulted in soil nutrient imbalances.
- #### ◆ Inorganic or Chemical Fertiliser:
- These fertilisers are usually **derived from chemical compounds** like potassium chloride, ammonium phosphates and ammonium nitrate.



- The requirement of 4 most used chemical fertilisers (Urea, DAP, MOP - Muriate of potash, NPKS - Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium), in the country **increased by 21%** in 2021-22 in comparison to 2017-18.
- Urea has 46% nitrogen (N), while DAP contains 46% phosphorus (P) plus 18% N and MOP has 60% potassium (K).
- ❖ **Reasons for increased urea and DAP consumption:**
 - **High subsidy** on urea, DAP is a less expensive alternative.
 - Thus, price determines the choice of fertilisers, rather than NPKS or other macro and micro nutrients in the fertiliser.

6. FERTILIZER SUBSIDY

Faced with **rising contracted gas prices** following the **Ukraine war**, the Central government is **discussing a mechanism** to ensure **better prices for fertiliser plants**.

WHAT ARE FERTILIZERS?

Fertilizers are agriculture inputs which enhance the productivity of the crops. These can be synthetic (chemical based) or organic.

THE SUBSIDY

- Farmers buy fertilisers at **MRPs (maximum retail price)** below their normal supply-and-demand-based market rates or what it costs to produce/import them.
- The MRP of **neem-coated urea**, for instance, is fixed by the government at **Rs. 5,922.22 per tonne**, whereas price payable to domestic manufacturers and importers comes to around **Rs 23,000 per tonne**.
- The **difference**, which varies according to plant-wise production cost and import price, is **footed by the Centre as subsidy**.
- The MRPs of non-urea fertilisers are decontrolled or fixed by the companies. However, the Centre pays a flat per-tonne subsidy on these nutrients to ensure reasonable prices.

HOW IS THE SUBSIDY PAID?

- The subsidy goes to fertiliser companies, although its ultimate beneficiary is the farmer who pays MRPs less than the market-determined rates.
- Under the Direct-Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, subsidy payment to the companies would happen only after actual sales to farmers by retailers.
- Each retailer now has a point-of-sale (PoS) machine linked to the Department of Fertilisers' **e-Urvarak DBT portal**.
- Anybody buying subsidised fertilisers is required to furnish his/her Aadhaar unique identity or Kisan Credit Card number.
- Only upon the sale getting registered on the e-Urvarak platform can a company claim subsidy.

GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR FERTILIZERS

- **New Investment Policy 2012:**
 - The Government had notified New Investment Policy – 2012 in January, 2013 with the main objective to facilitate fresh investment, make India self-reliant and reduce import dependency in urea sector.



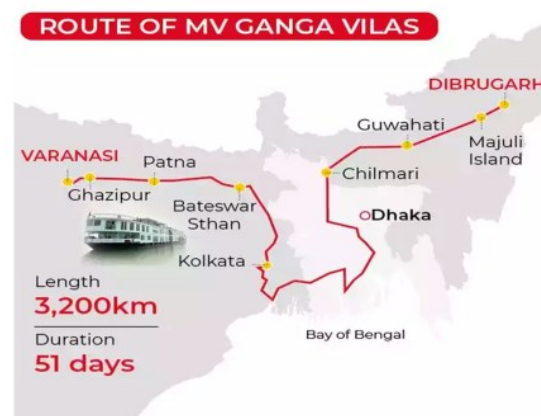
- **Neem-coated Urea:**
 - Urea that is coated with neem tree seed oil is called neem-coated urea.
 - The Department of Fertilizers has made it mandatory for all the domestic producers to produce 100% urea as Neem Coated Urea (NCU).
 - Benefits of NCU include:
 - Slow down the process of nitrification of urea
 - Enhance the yield
 - Decrease urea requirement, hence save money
- **New Urea Policy 2015:**
 - The New Urea Policy was released in May 2015.
 - The Policy seeks to:
 - Increase indigenous urea production,
 - Promote energy efficiency in urea production, and
 - Reduce subsidy burden on the Central government.
- **Nutrient Based Subsidy Scheme:**
 - Nutrient Based Subsidy Programme for fertilizers was initiated in 2010.
 - Under the scheme, a fixed rate of subsidy (in Rs per kg basis) is announced for nutrients namely Nitrogen (N), Phosphate (P), Potash (K) and Sulphur (S) by the government on an annual basis.
 - It aims at ensuring the balanced use of fertilizers, improving agricultural productivity, promoting the growth of the indigenous fertilizers industry and also reducing the burden of Subsidy.

7. MV GANGA VILAS

Recently, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways stated that the Prime Minister of India will flag off the **world's longest river cruise 'MV Ganga Vilas'** from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh on the 13th of January 2023.

ABOUT MV GANGA VILAS

- The luxury cruise will cover a distance of more than **3,200 kilometres across 27 river systems** in five States in **India and Bangladesh**.
- The 51 days cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots including **World Heritage Sights, National Parks, river Ghats**, and major cities like **Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam**.
- The MV Ganga Vilas vessel is 62 meters in length and 12 meters in width. It has three decks, and 18 suites on board with a



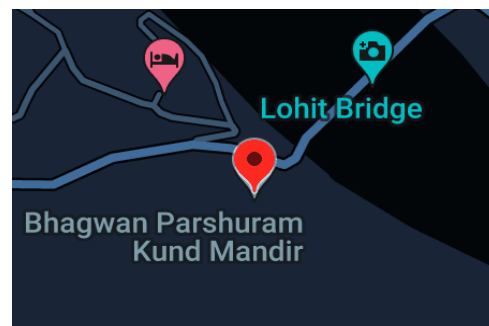


capacity of 36 tourists, with all the amenities to provide a memorable and luxurious experience for the tourists.

- The ship follows sustainable principles at its core as it is equipped with pollution-free mechanisms and noise control technologies.

8. PARSHURAM KUND FESTIVAL

Recently, the Arunachal Pradesh government informed that **Parshuram Kund Festival (PKF)**, is to be celebrated from **12 to 16 January 2023**.



ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

- It is a Hindu pilgrimage site situated on the **Brahmaputra plateau** in the lower reaches of the Lohit River and 21 km north of Tezu in the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh, India.
- Devotees and sadhus take a holy dip in its water each year on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, in January.
- It is also known as the Kumbh of the Northeast.
- **Religious significance:** It is dedicated to a mythological figure **sage Parshuram**. This popular festival attracts pilgrims from Nepal, from across India, and from nearby states of Manipur and Assam.
- The project “Development of Parasuram Kund is sanctioned under the Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive’ (PRASHAD) Scheme of the Ministry of Tourism.

9. DELAY IN CENSUS

Recently, the government postponed the decennial census exercise (Census 2021) till at least September 2023, as it informed states that **administrative boundaries would be frozen** beginning July 1, 2023. (to be released later in 2024)

It was intended to be conducted between 2020-21 but did not take place due to the spread of COVID-19.

ABOUT THE CENSUS

- Population Census provides basic statistics on state of human resources, demography, culture and economic structure at local, regional and national level.
- Beginning in the year 1872, when the first census was conducted non-synchronously, the census enumeration exercise in India is carried out in every 10 years.
 - The first synchronous census was taken under British rule in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India.
- The responsibility of conducting the decadal census rests with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

MENTION OF CENSUS IN THE CONSTITUTION OR ANY LEGISLATION:

- Population census is listed in **Union List (entry 69)** of Seventh Schedule in Indian Constitution.
- Census is conducted under the provisions of the **Census Act, 1948**.

PROCESS OF CENSUS ENUMERATION



- The Census Operations in India have been carried out in two phases:
 - House-listing and Housing Census and
 - Population Enumeration.
- The Population Enumeration follows the Housing Census within a gap of six to eight months.
- In Population Enumeration phase each person is enumerated and her/his individual particulars like Age, Marital status, Religion, Schedule Cast/Schedule Tribe, Mother tongue, Education level, Disability, Economic activity, Migration, Fertility (for female) are collected.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CENSUS

- The Census provides **population data** and **characteristics**, housing and amenities for every village and town.
- It helps in **framing government programs** to uplift vulnerable sections and it is used to **validate or reject estimates** of various sample surveys.
- The Census data are used to **determine the number of seats** to be reserved for SCs, STs in Parliament and State legislatures and **delimitation of constituencies**.
- In case of panchayats and municipal bodies, reservation of seats for SCs and STs is based on their proportion in the population. Other than the Census, there is no other source that can provide this information.
- It is also the basis for **reviewing the country's progress in the past decade**, monitoring the ongoing schemes of the government and planning for the future.

WHY ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES ARE FROZEN?

- Before every Census, states are required to provide information on changes in the number of notified districts, villages, towns and other administrative units such as tehsils, talukas and police stations to the Registrar General of India (RGI).
- Freezing of boundary **limits of administrative units**, at least three months prior, thus is a prerequisite for conducting the census, **to prevent State governments' tendency to create new** districts and tehsils or reorganise existing ones.
- If changes in administration boundaries happen during a Census, **there would be chaos in the field** over supervision of such areas. This could lead to some areas being left out of the Census.

IMPLICATIONS OF DELAY

- **Non-availability of reliable data:** Though India has population projections at the State and national level, but it is not feasible to get reliable projections at lower geographic levels such as for districts and cities until census is not conducted.
- **Limitation of sample surveys:** Information on the improvement in literacy and educational levels, economic activity, migration, etc., or the impact of schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is derived from sample surveys.
 - But these surveys cannot be used to find answers related to **literacy rates in villages or proportion of people in tehsil** getting regular potable water supply.
 - Such information related to population characteristics, housing, amenities, etc., are provided by timely conducted census.



- **Ambiguity in granting reservation**: Delay in the Census means that the data from the 2011 Census would continue to be used to determine the reservation of seats for SCs, STs, etc., in legislature, local bodies, etc.
 - Since many towns and panchayats have seen rapid changes in the composition of their population over the last decade, **delaying census would mean that either too many or too few seats are being reserved.**
- **Dynamic rural-urban distribution**: The rural-urban population has been rapidly changing and there is high population growth in the urban areas over the years due to migration.
 - **For example**, areas under the Bengaluru Municipality grew by 49.3% during 2001-11, while the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (11.9%), Delhi (11.7%), and Chennai (7%) had much lower growth rates.
 - Thus, to enumerate these population dynamics, timely census is critical.
- **Enumerating Covid mortality**: The pandemic impact on age distribution in severely affected areas would give an indirect approximation of the number of deaths.
 - The census could **validate or reject the various estimates** of the number of deaths due to the pandemic.
- **Discrepancies in PDS entitlement**: The National Food Security Act, 2013, entitles subsidised food grains to 75% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population, utilizing 2011 Census (121 crore).
 - However, today India's population has grown to about 137 crore and current delay in Census data would deprive more than 10 crore people of subsidised food entitlements.

10. PRAVASI BHARTIYA DIVAS

- The 17th edition of the '**Pravasi Bharatiya Divas**' (PBD) convention has started in Madhya Pradesh's Indore city.
 - The 17th PBD Convention holds significance as it is being organised as a physical event after a gap of four years and the first after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - The 16th edition of the PBD convention was held in virtual mode in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Theme of this year's PBD is 'Diaspora: Reliable partners for India's progress in Amrit Kaal'.

ABOUT PBD

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas is observed on **January 9** to strengthen the engagement of the Indian community overseas with the India government and reconnect them with their roots.
 - January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate PBD as it was on this day in **1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, had returned to India from South Africa.**
- It also marks the **contribution of the Indians living abroad** in the development of the land of their ancestors.



- These conventions are very **useful in networking** among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.
- PBD conventions were being held every year since 2003.
 - Since 2015, its format has been revised. PBD is now celebrated once in every two years. But this has not been fixed yet.

HISTORY OF PBD

- A High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, headed by LM Singhvi, had recommended in January 2002 that the government must renew and strengthen linkages of overseas Indians to their place of origin, and with each other.
- The decision to celebrate PBD was taken by the former Indian Prime Minister, late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2003.
 - The 1st PBD was celebrated on 9th January, 2003 in New Delhi.
- It is organized by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, in partnership with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and other stakeholders.

PRAVASI BHARATIYA SAMMAN AWARD

- During the Convention, **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA)** is conferred on the selected overseas Indians.
 - This award is given for the significant contributions by overseas Indians to various fields both in India and abroad.
 - It is the highest honour conferred on a Non-Resident Indian, Person of Indian Origin; or an organisation or institution established and run by Non-Resident Indians or Persons of Indian Origin.
- PBSA is conferred by the President of India.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PM'S SPEECH

- **Termed Pravasi Bharatiya as the country's brand ambassadors**
 - Terming Indians living overseas as the country's brand ambassadors, PM Modi said they would play a pivotal role in satisfying the growing curiosity about India across the world.
 - He called the NRIs, ambassadors of India's heritage, Make in India campaign, yoga, ayurveda, the cottage industry and handicrafts.
- **India will chair the G20 summit in 2023**
 - He reminded the gathering that India will host the G20 summit in 2023 as the chair of the multilateral forum.
 - He underlined that it was a big opportunity to make the world aware of the country's past experiences to attain a sustainable future.
- **Highlighted the responsibilities of the Indians living overseas**
 - India's strength will grow further in the days to come. And so will the curiosity about India.
 - The more overseas Indians know about India, the more they will be able to tell others.



- In this context, he urged NRIs to visit India during festivals or watch events related to Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- **Listed India's achievements that drew world's attention**
 - These were:
 - country's Covid-19 vaccination programme,
 - attaining the status of the fifth largest economy,
 - manufacture of Tejas fighter jets,
 - INS Vikrant, Arihant-class submarine, and
 - growing popularity of digital transactions.

11. GOVERNOR VS STATE GOVERNMENT (TN)

- Governor of Tamil Nadu, **R N Ravi**, skipped certain portions of the text of his customary address to the state's legislature.
- As a result, the Chief Minister of the state, **M K Stalin**, moved a resolution demanding only the original printed speech in Tamil be put in records.
- Governor R N Ravi reacted to this in an unprecedented manner by staging a walkout from the House in protest even before the national anthem was played.

BACKGROUND

- The Constitution gives the President (**Article 87**) and the Governor (**Article 176**) the power to address a sitting of the legislature.
- The special power is with regard to two occasions.
 - The first is to address the opening session of a new legislature after a general election.
 - The second is to address the first sitting of the legislature each year.
- Commonly referred to as the President's or Governor's Address, they are a constitutional requirement.
- A session of a new or a continuing legislature cannot begin without fulfilling this requirement.

ARTICLE 176 OF THE CONSTITUTION

- At the commencement of the first session after each general election to the Legislative Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the Governor shall address the Legislative Assembly and inform the Legislature of the causes of its summons.
 - In the case of a State having a Legislative Council, both Houses assembled together.
- Provision shall be made by the rules regulating the procedure of the House or either House for the allotment of time for discussion of the matters referred to in such address.

WHAT DOES THIS ADDRESS CONTAIN?

- The President's/Governor's speech follows the convention of the British system, where it contains legislative and policy proposals that the government intends to initiate.
- The speech also recaps the government's accomplishment in the previous years.



- The contents of the speech are put together by aggregating inputs from various ministries of the government.

IS IT PREPARED BY THE GOVERNOR HIM/HERSELF?

- The Constitution, under **Article 74** and **Article 163** respectively, binds the President and the Governor to act on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers of the Union and state governments respectively, on a majority of issues.
- Therefore, the **speech that the President or the Governor reads before the legislature is the viewpoint of the government and is prepared by it.**

WHAT HAPPENS IN CASE OF DISAGREEMENT?

- The **President or a Governor cannot refuse to perform the constitutional duty of delivering an address to the legislature.**
- But there can be situations when they deviate from the text of the speech prepared by the government.
- So far, there have been no instances of President doing so. But there have been multiple occasions when a Governor skipped a portion of the address to the Assembly.

DOES IT VIOLATE ANY CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION?

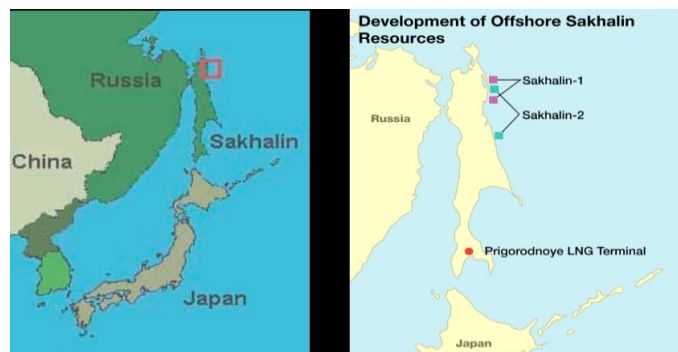
- The **debate has not been conclusively decided.**
 - In **Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab**, the Supreme Court said that the principle that the President (or the Governor) is guided by the aid and advice of the Cabinet covered every function.
 - Whether it relates to addressing the House or returning a Bill for reconsideration, or assenting or withholding assent.
 - Many experts believe that it was the **intention of the Constitution-makers** that the Governor's speech would be prepared by the Council of Ministers and the Governor would read it.
 - Hence, they are of the opinion that if a Governor violates this convention and deletes any para of the address under the cloak of his discretionary power, **his action may not be unlawful' from a rigid legalistic viewpoint.**
 - However, this will surely strike at the roots of the norms of parliamentary system of government.

12. SAKHALIN-1 OIL & GAS FIELD

Recently, ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas arm of state-owned **Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC)**, has re-taken a **20 per cent stake** in the **Sakhalin-1 oil and gas fields** in the far east region of Russia.

ABOUT SAKHALIN 1

- The Sakhalin-1 oil and gas development project is located in the **Okhotsk Sea, off the north-eastern coast of Sakhalin Island** in the **Russian Far East.**
- It comprises **three offshore fields namely Chayvo, Odoptu, and Arkutun-Dagi.**
- The Sakhalin-1 project is operated by **Exxon Neftegas (ENL)**, a subsidiary of Exxon Mobil which holds a 30% participating interest. The other partners of the project are the Japanese consortium Sakhalin Oil and Gas Development Company (SODECO, 30%), India's state-owned ONGC Videsh (20%), and Russian oil company Rosneft (20%).





- The Sakhalin 1 project is estimated to hold approximately 2.3 billion barrels of oil and 17.1 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) in recoverable reserves.

ABOUT ONGC VIDESH LTD.

- OVL is a **Miniratna Schedule “A” Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE)** of the Government of India and is the wholly owned subsidiary and overseas arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC).
- OVL comes under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**.
- The primary business of ONGC Videsh is to prospect for oil and gas acreages outside India, including exploration, development and production of oil and gas.
- ONGC Videsh is the **second largest petroleum company of India**, next only to its parent ONGC. ONGC Videsh produced about 27.3% of oil and 19.4% of oil and natural gas of India’s domestic production in 2021-22.

13. DIGITAL VOTER ID

Recently, in response to an RTI enquiry, ECI said that just Over 67 lakh voters (less than 1% of voters) have downloaded a digital voter ID, known as the **electronic Electoral Photo ID Card (e-EPIC)**, from the time the document was made available until December 23, 2022.

ABOUT e EPIC

- e-EPIC is a portable document format(PDF) version of the EPIC which can be downloaded on mobile or in a self-printable form on the computer.
- A voter can thus store the card on his/her mobile, upload it on Digi locker or print it and self-laminate it.
- It can be used as a valid proof of age and address to avail various government services and schemes. It is equally valid as a proof of document for voter participation.
- In the first phase, new electors who were registered during the Special Summary Revision 2021 and had a unique mobile number in the e-roll were eligible for the e-EPIC. In the second phase, all eligible voters who have a valid EPIC number were made eligible for the e-EPIC.

14. RURAL HEALTH STATISTICS REPORT

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), has published the Rural Health Statistics Report 2021-22.

- The Rural Health Statistics in an annual publication of MoHFW since the year **1992**.
- This provides the data on health infrastructure including manpower up to 31st March of every year.
- The publication is **based on the data uploaded by States/UTs** on Health Management Information System (HMIS) Portal and published only after getting verified by respective States/UTs.
 - HMIS portal provides periodic reports on the status of the health services performances and Human Resources and Infrastructure services facilities available.
- It serves as a **vision document in identifying the gaps in the existing Healthcare Infrastructure and Human Resources** in rural, urban and tribal areas of the country.
- It also serves as an important source of information for citizens.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

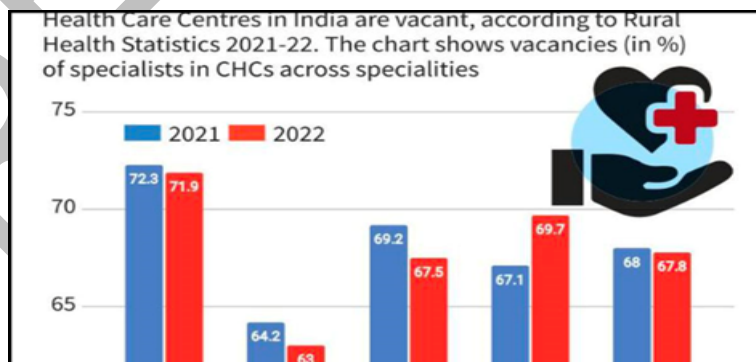
- **Health Centers –**



- As per norms, each sub center (**SC**) is supposed to cater to a population of 3,000-5,000, each Primary Health Centers (**PHC**) to a population of 20,000-30,000 and each Community Health Centers (**CHC**) to a population of 80,000-1,20,000.
- The RHS estimates as of 31 March, 2022, has revealed that each SC catered to an average of 5691 people, each PHC to 36049 people and each CHC to 164027 people.
- **Urban Health Statistics –**
 - There is a vacancy of 18.8% of doctors, 16.8% of pharmacists, 16.8% of lab technicians and 19.1% of staff nurses at the U-PHCs (Urban PHCs).
 - The population covered by a U-PHC may vary from 50,000 to 75,000.
 - Urban Community Health Centre (U-CHCs) is set up as a referral facility for every 4-5 U-PHCs. The U-CHC caters to a population of 2,50,000 to 5 lakhs.
- **Rise in Number of Allopathy Doctors –**
 - There has been an over 50% rise in the number of allopathy doctors in primary health centers since the launch of the National Rural Health Mission in 2005.
 - The allopathic doctors at PHCs have increased from 20,308 in 2005 to 30,640 in 2022.

Shortage of Specialist Doctors

- India is reeling under an acute shortage of specialist doctors, with a shortfall of nearly 80% of the required specialists at CHCs.
 - CHCs are 30-bed block-level health facilities which are ideally supposed to provide basic care related to surgery, gynecology, pediatrics and general medicine.
 - There are **6,064 CHCs across India** and the Health Ministry has been unsuccessful in meeting the requirement for specialist doctors in most of these centers.
- The report points out that there is a shortfall of specialist doctors, including surgeons (83.2%), obstetricians and gynecologists (74.2%), physicians (79.1%) and pediatricians (81.6%).
- Apart from specialist doctors, there is also a **shortage of female health workers and auxiliary nursing midwives**, with up to 14.4% of these posts lying vacant in PHCs and SCs.



15. VOICE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH SUMMIT

On 12th and 13th January, India is, virtually, hosting the Voice of Global South Summit. Addressing at the summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told leaders of developing countries that “your voice is India’s voice” and “your priorities are India’s priorities”.

EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL SOUTH

- The idea of a powerful Global North and a resistant Global South was promoted by the Zapatista revolt in Mexico, the “African Renaissance,” and the World Social Forum launched in Brazil.



- Industrial growth in Asia, and the emerging **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) group in world politics, complicated the North-South picture.
- This also gave rise to **South-South cooperation**, a collaboration of developing and least-developed countries — as defined by the United Nations on a bilateral, regional, intraregional or interregional basis in the political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technical domains.
- The ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war** has compelled the developing and lower-income countries, which define the ‘Global South’, to take a firm stand and not be dragged into either of the camps.
- According to External Affairs Minister **S Jaishankar**, the ‘Global South’ today is facing critical issues like an unabated rise in the prices of oil, food and fertilisers, coupled with mounting debt and rapidly deteriorating economic growth.

ABOUT THE VOICE OF GLOBAL SOUTH SUMMIT

- Voice of Global South Summit is an initiative by India.
- It is an effort to give “voice to the unheard”, and thereby **leverage India’s role as the current G20 president**.
 - The idea behind the summit is that India will work to ensure that inputs generated from partner countries in the Voice of Global South Summit deliberations will be pushed forward at the G20 summit which will be hosted by India later this year.
- India is hosting the summit under the theme — “**Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose**”.
- The initiative is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayaas**, and is underpinned by India’s philosophy of “**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**”.
- Underlining that the “world is in a state of crisis”, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told leaders of developing countries that “your voice is India’s voice” and “your priorities are India’s priorities”.
- He said that it is clear the world is in a state of crisis. It is difficult to predict how long this state of instability will last.
- **PM Modi gave the mantra of ‘Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform’**.
 - “To re-energise the world, we should together call for a global agenda of ‘Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform’,” he said.
- According to the Prime Minister, the agenda should be –
 - **Respond** to the priorities of the Global South by framing an inclusive and balanced international agenda.
 - **Recognize** that the principle of ‘Common but Differentiated Responsibilities’ applies to all global challenges.
 - **Respect** sovereignty of all nations, rule of law and peaceful resolution of differences and disputes; and,
 - **Reform** international institutions, including the United Nations, to make them more relevant.

16. MINORITIES IN INDIA

Recently, the **Central Government** submitted the **views of 24 States** to the **Supreme Court** on whether **religious and linguistic minority communities** should be **identified and notified by the Union Government or the respective State Governments**.

WHAT TYPES OF MINORITIES ARE PRESENT?



- **Religious Minorities (Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Zoroastrians (Parsis) have been notified as minority communities** under Section 2 (c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act, 1992.)

- **Linguistic Minorities**

WHO GIVES MINORITY STATUS IN INDIA?

- The **Central Government** decides who gets the minority community status in India.
- It is **done under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.**
- Only those belonging to the communities notified under Section 2(c) of the 1992 law are regarded as minority citizens.
- The **central government has notified only six communities** as having the minority status at the national level. Five of them were declared minority communities in October 1993 Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis. In January 2014, the Centre added Jains to the list.
- States generally don't have their separate lists of the minority communities. But there are exceptions. For example, Maharashtra has notified Jews as a minority community in the state.

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS

- **Article 29 and Article 30** guarantee certain rights to the minorities.
- Article 29 protects the interests of the minorities by making a provision that any citizen / section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same
- Article 29 mandates that no discrimination would be done on the ground of religion, race, caste, language or any of them
- While **Article 30 and Article 29 of the Constitution do not specify 'minorities' in India**, it is **classified into religious minorities and linguistic minorities.**
- **Religious Minorities in India:** The basic ground for a community to be nominated as a religious minority is the numerical strength of the community.
- **Linguistic Minorities:** Class or group of people whose mother language or mother tongue is different from that of the majority groups is known as the linguistic minorities.



Week 4

CURRENT AFFAIRS
21/01/2023 TO 27/01/2023

1. YELLOW BAND DISEASE

Recently, scientists found that **corals of eastern Thailand** are getting affected by **Yellow band Disease** which is killing corals over vast stretches of the sea floor.

ABOUT THE DISEASE

- The colour of the corals turns yellow before they get destroyed.
- It was first spotted decades ago and has caused widespread damage to the reefs in the Caribbean. Over 600 acres of the sea have been infected.
- Corals cannot remain alive when they are exposed to this yellow-band disease. They will die gradually.



IMPACT:

- The loss of coral could have a devastating impact on the ecosystem.
- The reef is “like a forest” sustaining massive amounts of life, and its death could eventually impact humans too.
- They are rushing to find a treatment.

THE DISEASE

- Yellow-band disease (**similar to Yellow Blotch disease**) is a coral disease that attacks colonies of coral at a time when coral is already under stress from pollution, overfishing, and climate change.
- Yellow-band disease is a bacterial infection that spreads over coral, causing discolored bands of **pale-yellow** or white lesions along the surface of an infected coral colony.
- The lesions are the locations where the bacteria have killed the coral’s symbiotic photosynthetic algae, called **zooxanthellae** which are a major energy source for the coral.
- This cellular damage and the loss of its major energy source cause the coral to starve, and usually cause coral death. There is evidence that climate change could be worsening the disease.

2. BIMODAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION

Recently, as part of the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) program for 2023, NASA selected a bimodal nuclear propulsion concept for Phase I development which could reduce transit times to Mars to just 45 days.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

- The Nuclear Thermal system includes a nuclear reactor that will **heat liquid hydrogen** (LH2) propellant and turn it into **ionised hydrogen** gas (plasma) that will then be channelled through a nozzle to generate thrust.





- Nuclear Electric Propulsion depends on a nuclear reactor to provide electricity to a Hall-Effect thruster (ion engine), which will generate an electromagnetic field that will ionise and accelerate an inert gas to create thrust.
- **Advantages:** Fuel efficiency, a higher specific impulse, rating and unlimited energy density.

3. **13TH AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION OF SL**

India's External Affairs minister during a recent visit to Sri Lanka expressed India's "**considered view**" with the Sri Lankan President that the full implementation of the 13th Amendment was "critical" for power devolution.

- **1987:** India intervened directly after it faced opposition from Tamilians and flooding of refugees. A peace accord was signed and SL amended its Constitution (13th Amendment Act). SL promised to give an autonomous provincial council with land, finance and law & order power to Tamilians. **Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF)** was controlling the regional council and called for various other militant outfits to disarm. SL government also requested Gol to send Indian Army so that disarmament of Tamil militant forces could happen. Hence India sent **Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)** and named it **Operation Pawan**.
LTTE rejected the Peace accord because they **opposed the Chief Administrative Officer of the regional council to be from EPRLF**. LTTE **proposed its candidate** as CAO which was rejected by India. Now the conflict was between IPKF and LTTE. IPKF assassinated the leader of LTTE.
- **1989:** IPKF was withdrawn.

ABOUT THE ACT

- It is an **outcome of the India-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987**, signed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayawardene.
- It was an **attempt to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict** that had aggravated into a full-fledged civil war, between the armed forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.
- The 13th Amendment, **led to the creation of Provincial Councils**.
- It **assured a power sharing arrangement** to enable all **nine provinces in the country**, including Sinhala majority areas, **to self-govern**.
- **Subjects such as education, health, agriculture, housing, land and police are devolved to the provincial administrations**.
- It **made Tamil one of Sri Lanka's official languages** and English, a link language.
- The **amendment has never been fully implemented** because of the overriding powers given to the President.

4. **GOLD ETFs**

Inflow in **Gold Exchange Traded Funds (Gold ETFs)** plunged by 90% to ₹459 crore in 2022 due to rising prices of yellow metal, increasing interest rate structure coupled with inflationary pressure, data with Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed.

ABOUT ETFs

- They are **commodity-based exchange-traded funds** with an **underlying asset as gold**.
- They are **passive investment instruments that are based on gold prices** and invest in gold bullion.



- Gold ETFs are units representing physical gold which may be in paper or dematerialised form.
- One Gold ETF unit is equal to 1 gram of gold and is backed by physical gold of very high purity.
- Gold ETFs combine the flexibility of stock investment and the simplicity of gold investments.
- They are listed and traded on the National Stock Exchange of India (NSE) and Bombay Stock Exchange Ltd. (BSE) like a stock of any company.
- It can be bought and sold continuously at market prices.
- There is a complete transparency on the holdings of a Gold ETF due to its direct gold pricing.
- ETFs have much lower expenses as compared to physical gold investments.

WHAT IS ETF?

- An ETF is a collection of investments such as equities or bonds.
- It is a basket of securities that trades on an exchange just like a stock does.
- ETF share prices fluctuate all day as the ETF is bought and sold, which is different from mutual funds, which only trade once a day after the market closes.
- ETFs can contain all types of investments, including stocks, commodities, or bonds
- They have cheaper fees than other types of funds.

WHAT IS PASSIVE INVESTMENT?

- It is an investment strategy wherein investors buy securities that mirror stock market indexes and hold them long-term.
- It is a strategy that focuses on replicating the index performance as opposed to daily buying and selling.
- Passive investing seeks to avoid the management fees and high transaction costs that frequent trading can cause.

5. RISKS OF TRANSITIONS

- India's financial sector is highly exposed to the risks of the economy transitioning from being largely dependent on fossil fuel to clean energy.
- This was revealed by a study published in the Global Environmental Change journal.

WHAT IS TRANSITION?

Transition in a process in which certain transformative changes happen. In this case transition is a shift from fossil based energy sources to renewable energy sources.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- Analysis of individual loans and bonds exposed to sectors dependent on fossil fuel
 - The report revealed that 60% of lending to the mining sector was for oil and gas extraction.
 - One-fifth of manufacturing sector debt is for petroleum refining and related industries.



- Electricity production – by far the largest source of carbon emissions – accounted for 5.2% of outstanding credit.
 - This reveals that India's financial sector is highly exposed to the activities related to fossil fuels.
 - Hence, any transition from fossil fuel to clean energy will have a negative impact on this sector.
- **Shortage of experts to advise the institutions on such a transition**
 - The report noted that there was a shortage of experts in India's financial institutions who had the expertise to appropriately advise the institutions on such a transition.
 - Very few financial institutions collect information on environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks and these firms do not systematically incorporate that data into financial planning.
 - This will affect the countries who are planning for orderly transition to net-zero.
 - **High-carbon industries have less financial capacity to respond to shocks and stresses**
 - High-carbon industries -- power generation, chemicals, iron and steel, and aviation -- account for 10% of outstanding debt to Indian financial institutions.
 - However, these industries are also heavily indebted, and therefore have less financial capacity to respond to shocks and stresses.
 - This will further expose India's financial sector to the risk associated with the transition.
 - **Financial decisions are locking the country into a more polluting, more expensive energy supply**
 - The financial decisions of Indian banks and institutional investors are locking the country into a more polluting, more expensive energy supply.
 - For example, only 17.5% of bank lending to the power sector has been to pure-play renewables.
 - Consequently, India has much higher electricity from carbon-sources than the world average.
 - Coal currently accounts for 44% of India's primary energy sources and 70% of its power(electricity)
 - The country's coal-fired power plants have an average age of 13 years and India has 91,000 MW of new proposed coal capacity in the works, second only to China.
 - According to the Draft National Electricity Plan 2022, **coal's share in the electricity generation mix will decrease to 50% by 2030**
 - **Tremendous opportunity for financial sector if they ramp up their capacities relatively quickly**
 - The current lending and investment patterns reveals that India's financial sector is heavily exposed to potential transition risks.



- However, the other side of risks is the tremendous opportunity to move finance towards sustainable assets and activities.
 - In 2021, PM Modi committed India to reach net-zero emissions by 2070.
 - India has also announced plans to source half of its electricity needs (50%) from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.
 - This will require financing to the order of at least a trillion dollars to meet these commitments.

6. GIG WORKERS

In a report titled 'India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy', NITI Aayog has projected that the **Gig workforce** in India may hit **23.5 mn by FY30**.

WHAT IS GIG ECONOMY?

It is defined by a market which is based on a **fixed-term contract** or that is **paid per project** by a **company, third party, or online marketplace**.”

Gig worker is a person who **performs work or participates in a work arrangement** and earns from such activities outside of traditional employer-employee relationship.

TYPES OF GIG WORKERS

- **Platform Gig Workers:** Workers whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms such as food aggregator platforms **Zomato, Ola, Swiggy** etc.
- **Non-platform Gig Workers:** Casual wage workers and own-account workers in the conventional sectors, working part-time or full time. **E.g. Construction.**

With half-a-billion labour force, India has already emerged as **one of the world's largest countries of Gig workforce** due to pandemic and rising factors like urbanization, access to internet, digital technologies and smartphones in India, start-up culture, freelancing platforms, etc.

BENEFITS OF GIG ECONOMY

- **FOR CONSUMERS**
 - Cheaper goods & services.
- **FOR WORKERS**
 - Flexible working hours with remote working options.
 - Can work for two or more companies.
 - Can develop interest as career.
- **FOR BUSINESSES**
 - Cheaper employee cost & overhead cost.
 - Easily scalable as per demand.
 - Greater diversity at workplace leading to more creativity.

FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- **Workforce numbers:** In 2020–21, 77 lakh workers (1.5% of total workforce) engaged in the gig economy. It is expected to reach 2.35 crore workers (4.1% of the total workforce) in India by 2029–30.
- **Platformization of Work:** Higher employment elasticity of gig workers shows their growing demand, indicating platformization of non-gig work to gig work.
- **High potential industries for Gig Workers:** Construction, Manufacturing, Retail, and Transportation and Logistics.



- **Skill Level of Gig Workforce:** Presently, about 47% of the gig work is in medium skilled jobs, about 22% in high skilled and about 31% in low skilled jobs.
- **Skill Polarisation:** The report draws attention to skill polarisation as the trend shows gradual decline in concentration of workers in medium skills while that of the low skilled and high skilled is increasing.

ISSUES FACED BY GIG WORKERS

- **Lack of job security**, irregular wages, and uncertain employment status. E.g. declining income of drivers on Ola, Uber or temporary hiring by food delivery apps during IPL.
- The **uncertainty of work and income** may lead to increased stress and pressure.
- **Limited access to internet and digital technology** can be a restrictive factor for workers willing to take up jobs in the gig and platform sector.
- **Denial of workplace protections** and entitlements due to contractual relationship between the platform owner and gig worker.
- **Stress** due to pressure from **algorithmic management practices** and performance evaluation **on the basis of ratings**. E.g., monitoring of Ola and Uber employees.

SUGGESTIONS BY NITI AAYOG

- **Increase platformization:** Introduce Platform India initiative (similar to Startup India).
- **Accelerate financial inclusion:** Enhance access to institutional credit through financial products specifically designed for platform workers and those interested to set-up their own platforms.
- **Accelerate Social benefits inclusion:** In the New-age Digital Economy, enhance social inclusion through gender sensitization and accessibility awareness programmes.
- **Skill development:** Pursue ends- or outcome-based, platform-led models of skilling and job creation development of youth and the workforce to make them employable.
- **Universal Social Security coverage.**
- **Research & Development in platform economies.**

7. CHARAIDEO MAIDAM

Assam Chief Minister recently said that the Central Government has decided to send a proposal to UNESCO nominating Charaideo Maidam of Ahom Kingdom as a World Heritage Site.



ABOUT

- Charaideo commonly known as ‘**Pyramids of Assam**’ was the **original capital of the Ahom Kings**.
- **Charaideo remained the symbolic center of Ahom Kingdom** even though the capital of the kingdom moved many times.
- It was **built by Chaolung Sukhapa the founder of the dynasty in about 1229 CE**.
- **Location:** Located at the foothills of Nagaland, it’s situated at a distance of around **30 KM from the historical Sivsagar town in Assam**.
- **Why is Charaideo known as ‘Pyramids of Assam’?**
 - It contains sacred burial grounds of Ahom kings and queens and is also the place of the ancestral Gods of the Ahoms.



- Some 42 tombs (Maidams) of Ahom kings and queens are present at Charaideo hillocks.
- **Architecture:** It comprises a massive underground vault with one or more chambers having domical superstructure and covered by a heap of earthen mound and externally it appears a hemispherical mound.

AHOM DYNASTY

- It was **founded by Chaolung Sukapha**, who entered the Brahmaputra valley in 1228.
- They **ruled Assam for six centuries**.
- The Ahoms **created a new state by taking over the older political system of the bhuiyans (landlords)**.
- The Ahom **administration was a monarchical government** with democratic and aristocratic values as well.
- Ahom **society was divided into clans** and with the expansion of the kingdom, the clans moved and took charge of the designated territory.
- The Ahoms **followed stringent travel policies to protect their motherland** against the foreign invaders for inward travel.
- In the **17th century, the Ahom rule got weakened** due to multiple Burmese invasions and internal conflicts.
- Ahom Kingdom was **annexed by the British East India Company after the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826**.

8. JOINT THEATRE COMMANDS

According to government officials, the armed forces are finalizing theaterisation plans that seek to integrate the Army, Navy and Indian Air Force, as well as their resources, into specific theater commands.

WHAT IS THEATERISATION?

Theaterisation or Theatre Command means putting specific number of personnel from the three services —army, navy and air force— under a common commander in a specified geographical territory.

At present, the Indian Army, navy and air force each has **multiple commands** that are **vertically split in terms of their command structure**.

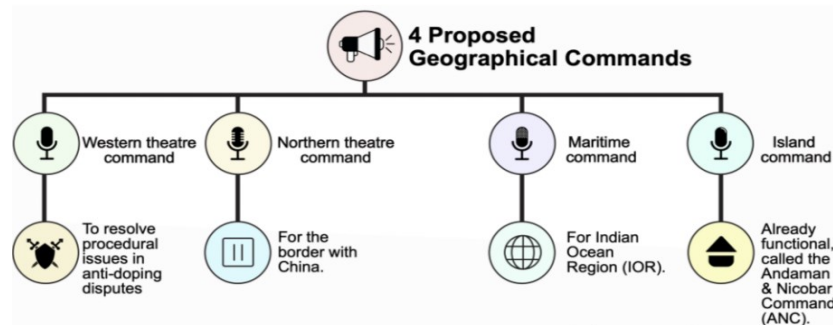
GLOBAL EXAMPLES

- The word ‘theatre warfare’ became **more prominent during World War II** with the battles being fought across continents.
- As of now, **almost all major countries** like China, Russia, the US, the UK and France work on a theatre command concept.
 - **For example, China’s** (latest entrant to a theatre concept) Western Theater Command looks after the entire borders with India.
- **In India**, the need for a unified approach was brought out after the **1999 Kargil battle**.
 - **The Kargil Review Committee**, the Naresh Chandra Committee and the Group of Ministers had called for structural changes in higher defence management.
 - It was the **Shekatkar** committee, which had recommended the creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and theatre commands.

THE PROPOSED (EXPECTED) DETAILS



While the details are not immediately clear, reports say that single service commands that currently exist would be combined into just 4 geographical commands. Also, Air space and cyber war would be the 5th and 6th theatre commands.



9. NATIONAL TOURISM DAY

- On the **National Tourism Day** (January 25), the Ministry of Railways in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, is launching its Jagannath Yatra train package.
- Linked to **theme-based tourist circuit trains**, the initiative is Government of India's one among many to showcase India's rich heritage using a '**whole of government**' approach and promote tourism.

TOURISM SECTOR IN INDIA

- In the past 75 years, **India has become synonymous with tourism, spirituality, transformation, culture and diversity.**
- The Tourism sector generated Rs 16.91 lakh crore (USD 240 billion) or 9.2% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2018 and has supported around 42.67 million jobs or 8.1% of total employment.
- India is estimated to contribute **250 Bn \$ GDP from Tourism, 137 mn jobs** in the Tourism sector, 56 bn \$ in Foreign Exchange Earnings and 25 mn foreign arrivals are expected to be achieved by **2030**.
- With tourism as its primary concern, the Ministry of Tourism has launched a number of initiatives and **implemented a four-pronged development strategy** that focuses on:
 - Improving the connectivity - air, rail, and roads.
 - Enhancing the tourism infrastructure and dependent services.
 - Streamlining branding and promotion.
 - Showcasing the culture and heritage.
- Various **tourist circuits** are being promoted and a new 'Ambedkar Circuit' and 'Himalayan Circuit' will also be promoted under the action plan for development of tourist circuits.
- A number of projects have been sanctioned under the **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** for building tourist infrastructure across various themes.
- The Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (**PRASHAD**) Scheme aims to strengthen the tourist facilities around spiritual locations, under which 39 projects have been sanctioned in 24 States.
- According to the Ministry of Tourism, the financial assistance to the tourism sector, which is the biggest sufferer due to Covid 19, continues to be extended upto 31st March, 2023.

EFFORTS TO PROMOTE TOURISM



- The promotion of India's tourism **will only be effective when different Ministries** at the Union level and States work in **cohesion** by combining their domain expertise.
- As a result, the Ministry of Tourism has prioritised the task of **inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination**
- Today, the Ministry of Tourism coordinates its work effectively **with over 20 central government Ministries** in the promotion and the development of tourism in the country.
- **For example**, the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Home Affairs organised the **National Conference on Tourist Police** (to develop tourist specific policing) in 2022.
- In partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Tourism Ministry has begun establishing 'Yuva Tourism' clubs to nurture young ambassadors of Indian tourism.
- In another instance, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is aiming to make India an **attractive cruise tourism destination** using state-of-the-art infrastructure.
- In partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, **tourism officers** have been placed in 20 Indian missions in countries that contribute to some of the highest foreign tourist arrivals in India.
- Similarly, with the Ministry of Roadways and the Petroleum Ministry, steps are being taken to ensure that highways and fuel stations have **clean sanitation infrastructure**.
- The Ministry of Tourism is also **funding several commercial flight routes** in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Aviation, making them viable.
- However, it is not enough if there is a pledge to work together. This needs to be **formalised through structures and institutions**.
- **Visit India Year 2023**: The Ministry of Tourism's declaration of "Visit India Year 2023" **aims to promote various tourism products and destinations** to increase India's share in the global tourism market.

10. **CHAT GPT**

Recently, ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence (AI)-powered chatbot crossed one million users in less than a week since it was officially made available to the public.

WHAT IS CHAT GPT?

- ChatGPT is **language-generation software** that's been designed to carry conversations with people.
- The tool has been developed by **OpenAI**, a research institute founded in 2015, by a group of entrepreneurs and researchers, including Elon Musk, **Sam Altman, and Greg Brockman**.
- The company is best known for **Dall-E** — the AI-based text-to-image generator
- It is based on the company's **GPT 3.5 series of language learning models (LLM)**.
- GPT stands for **Generative Pre-trained Transformer 3** and this is a kind of computer language model that relies on deep learning techniques to produce human-like text based on inputs.

FEATURES

Some of its features include the following:

- Answering follow-up questions
- Challenging incorrect premises
- Rejecting inappropriate queries and even admitting its mistakes, etc.



- It is trained on an enormous amount of text data (from archived books, Wikipedia, etc.) and learned to recognize patterns that enable it to produce its own text mimicking various writing styles.
- It is a part of the larger generative AI, which refers to the ability of computers to automatically create text, videos, photos and other media using cutting-edge machine learning technologies.
- This chatbot powered by AI, makes use of Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF) technology.
- This technology produces different answers for the same question in the future since it improves over time and understands queries better through machine learning.

SIGNIFICANCE

- ChatGPT's ability to learn and adapt quickly to new information means that it can be trained to handle new topics and tasks without the need for extensive retraining.
- Many experts believe that ChatGPT's advanced capabilities will be a valuable asset for companies in fields such as customer service, online education, and market research.
- It can respond to a large range of questions while imitating human speaking styles, e.g., answering customer service queries, help debug a code, etc.
- It is being seen as a replacement for the basic emails, party planning lists, CVs, and even college essays and homework.
- It can also do creative tasks such as writing a story and can explain scientific concepts and answer any question that needs factual answers.
- ChatGPT is much more than a chat bot. For example, it can be asked to write a program or even a simple software application.
- It is also capable of reviewing and writing codes in seconds, making the future of coders grim.
- ChatGPT has also been trained to decline 'inappropriate' requests, presumably those which are 'illegal' in nature.

LIMITATIONS

- The ChatGPT displayed racial and sexist biases, which remains a problem with almost all AI models.
- Though it gives grammatically correct and read well answers but few users have pointed out that these lack context and substance and are more generalized.
- It also overuses certain phrases due to biases in the training data.
- It also occasionally produces inaccurate information and that its knowledge is restricted to global events that occurred before 2021.
- It is also unable to provide answers to country-specific questions.

11. NATIONAL VOTERS DAY

The Election Commission of India is celebrating the 13th National Voters' Day on 25th January 2023.

ABOUT THE DAY

- National Voters' Day has been celebrated on January 25 every year since 2011, all across the country to mark the **foundation day of the Election Commission** of India, i.e. 25th January 1950.





- The main purpose of the celebration is to create electoral awareness amongst citizens and encourage them to participate in the electoral process.
- Dedicated to the voters of the country, National Voters' Day is also used to facilitate the enrolment of voters, especially the newly eligible young voters.
- The theme for 2023: **Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure.**

12. BharOS

KEY FEATURES

- BharOS is a **mobile operating system** similar to Android or iOS; it is based on an AOSP (Android Open Source Project) operating system and does not use any Google apps or services.
- It would support **Native Over The Air (NOTA)** updates as well as **No Default Apps (NDA)**.
- It has a minimalistic home screen with the Indian flag, a list of app categories, and a selection of apps that have passed the OS's trust and security standards.
- It will employ the **Private App Store Services (PASS)** system to examine and curate apps that are safe for users.
- These systems enable smartphone users to interact with their devices and access their features while also ensuring their safety.
- **Current status:** The current version of BharOS includes third-party apps such as DuckDuckGo and Signal by default.



What is Native Over The Air (NOTA)?

- Security updates and bug fixes will be automatically installed rather than users having to check for updates and implement them on their own

What is the No Default Apps setting? :

- Users do not have to keep or use pre-installed apps in this mobile operating system.

13. NOROVIRUS

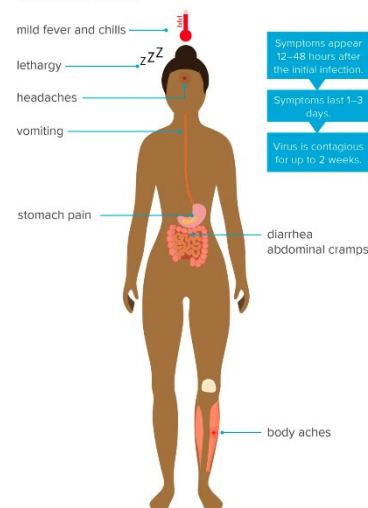
ABOUT NOROVIRUS

- The Norovirus, also known as the "**winter vomiting bug,**" causes vomiting and diarrhoea.
- **Infection agents:** The most common infective agent is contaminated water or food.
- The virus spreads via faeces to the mouth. Consuming contaminated food or liquids, touching contaminated surfaces or objects, or coming into direct contact with an infected person.



- **Symptoms:** Acute gastroenteritis is caused by inflammation of the stomach or intestine. Diarrhoea, vomiting, nausea, and stomach ache are also symptoms. Fever, headaches, and muscle pain may also persist.
- The symptoms usually appear 12 to 48 hours after the virus has been exposed.
- It affects particularly children, the elderly, and people suffering from other illnesses.
- **Severity:** Although these virus outbreaks are rarely severe, they can spread quickly if proper precautions are not taken.

Effects on the Body Norovirus



14. STATE VISIT OF EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT

- President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, is on a State visit to India from 24-26 January 2023.
- President Sisi, who is on his second State Visit to India, will also be the Chief Guest on India's 74th Republic Day.
 - This is for the **first time** that President of the Arab Republic of Egypt has been invited as Chief Guest on our Republic Day.
 - A military contingent from Egyptian Army will also participate in the Republic Day parade.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INVITATION: An invitation to be the Republic Day chief guest is highly symbolic from the Indian government's perspective. The choice of chief guest every year is dictated by a number of reasons — strategic and diplomatic, business interests, and international geo-politics.

INDIA EGYPT RELATIONSHIP

- India and Egypt enjoy warm and friendly relations marked by civilizational, cultural and economic linkages and deep-rooted people-to-people ties.
- India and Egypt are celebrating 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations this year.
- Egypt has also been invited as a 'Guest Country' during India's Presidency of G-20 in 2022-23.

Trade relation

- Bilateral trade between India and Egypt achieved a record high of USD 7.26 billion in FY 2021-22.
 - The trade was fairly balanced, with USD 3.74 billion Indian exports to Egypt and USD 3.52 billion imports from Egypt to India.
- More than 50 Indian companies have invested around USD 3.15 billion in diverse sectors of Egyptian economy, including chemicals, energy, textile, garment, agri-business, retail, etc.

Defence cooperation

- In October 2021, **Desert Warrior** exercise was conducted as the first-ever joint tactical exercise by the air force of the two countries.
 - The more recent exercise between the special forces is another indication of the growing willingness to work together.



- The Egyptians have also shown some interest in India's Tejas fighter jets and Dhruv light attack helicopters.

Cooperation during Covid-19 & Russia – Ukraine war

- When India was hit hard by the second wave of COVID-19, Egypt responded by dispatching three plane loads of medical supplies and providing 300,000 doses of Remdesivir in May 2021.
- India reciprocated a year later when Egypt, the world's largest importer of wheat, was facing a dire situation following the abrupt halt in wheat shipments from Ukraine following the war.
 - In May last year, India — which had put a ban on sale of wheat — allowed export of 61,000 tonnes to Egypt.

WHY EGYPT HAS BEEN CHOSEN?

- **Push to engage the Global South**
 - The invitation to Mr. Sisi is also being seen as part of the government's push to engage the Global South.
- **Rekindling of the principles of non-alignment**
 - This invitation is also seen as an attempt to rekindle the principles of non-alignment that have come back to the fore during Russia – Ukraine war.
- **Strategic weight of Egypt**
 - With a population of almost 110 million, Egypt is situated at a location that straddles Africa and Asia.
 - It has a standing army that is the largest in the region, a capital that hosts the League of Arab States and a diplomatic presence that punches above its weight in global affairs.
 - India is keen on further expanding its ties with Egypt, **a key player in the politics of both the Arab world as well as Africa.**
- **Economic importance of Egypt**
 - Egypt has boosted its attractiveness through a series of free trade agreements that span Africa (ACFTA; AGADIR; COMESA), Europe (EFTA), Latin America (MERCOSUR) and the Arab world (GAFTA).
 - It is also seen as a major gateway to markets in Africa and Europe.
- **Resetting India's ties with Muslim-majority countries**
 - India's ties with Muslim-majority countries were tested following controversial remarks made by then spokesperson of ruling party in June 2022.
 - Egypt was one of the few countries from the Arab world which did not react officially to the controversial remarks.
- **Egypt's plans to develop the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) into a global manufacturing hub**
 - The ambitious plans to develop the Suez Canal Economic Zone into a global manufacturing hub are now gathering critical mass.
 - SCZONE sits astride both banks of the Suez Canal, a strategic waterway that connects the Mediterranean with the Red Sea to provide the shortest link between European and Asian markets.



- Almost, 20 percent of global container trade takes place through this canal.
- China, as usual, has been the first to take advantage of the opportunities presented by SCZONE.
 - China views SCZONE as a vital part of its Belt & Road and Maritime Silk Road projects.
- A deeper economic engagement with Egypt therefore acquires an additional strategic imperative.

15. LIGHT TANK ZORAWAR

ABOUT THE TANK

- It is an **indigenously designed and developed Light Tank**.
- Developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in collaboration with Larsen & Toubro Limited**.
- **Features:**
- It is **designed to operate in varying terrain** from high altitude areas and marginal terrains to island territories.
- It will be **highly transportable** for rapid deployment to meet any operational situation.
- It will be **equipped with all the modern technologies** such as **Artificial Intelligence, Drone Integration**, a high degree of situational awareness, and **amphibious operation capability**.
- It will **weigh less than 25 tonnes** with a **high power-to-weight ratio** as well as superior firepower and protection.



16. OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES

AMONG THE SMALLEST SEA TURTLES

(Lepidochelys olivacea)

Olive Ridley TURTLES

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE
Warm, tropical and subtropical waters of the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic oceans

ODISHA
• In India mass nesting happens only along the Odisha coast
• Gahirmatha, mouth of the Devi River, and Rushikulya are the three main nesting sites
• Several hundred thousand olive Ridley's mass nest at Rushikulya and Gahirmatha beaches every year

ARIBIDADA
• Olive Ridley turtles are known for their synchronized mass nesting or arribada
• Mass nesting is thought to be a strategy to increase survival of hatchlings
• Show site fidelity; females return to nest on the same beach that they were born on, sometimes travelling hundreds of km
• They use the wind and tide to help them reach the beach

NEST
• Females may lay eggs up to three times in a nesting season
• A clutch consists of 50 to 200 eggs
• Incubation period is about 2 months
• Sex of the hatchlings is determined by temperature; warmer temperatures produce more females

EAT Invertebrates, jellyfish, crabs, lobsters, shrimps, algae, fish

RECORDED AT depths of over 200 m where they feed on benthic invertebrates (bottom-dwelling organisms)

LIFESPAN: believed to be 50-60 years

WEIGHT: 25-45 kg

LENGTH: 60-70 cm

HABITAT: Found both in open ocean and coastal areas

THREATS
• Eggs and hatchlings are often stolen by humans or eaten by dogs, pigs, birds, and other predators
• Hunted for meat
• Overfishing and entanglement in fishing nets
• Marine debris/plastic in the ocean

CONSERVATION
In some parts of the world, such as the US, all trawlers fishing in waters where olive Ridleys are found are mandated by law to use Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) to prevent accidental drowning and entanglement of these turtles. These rules exist in some areas of India as well but are rarely followed

PROTECTION STATUS: VULNERABLE ON THE IUCN RED LIST

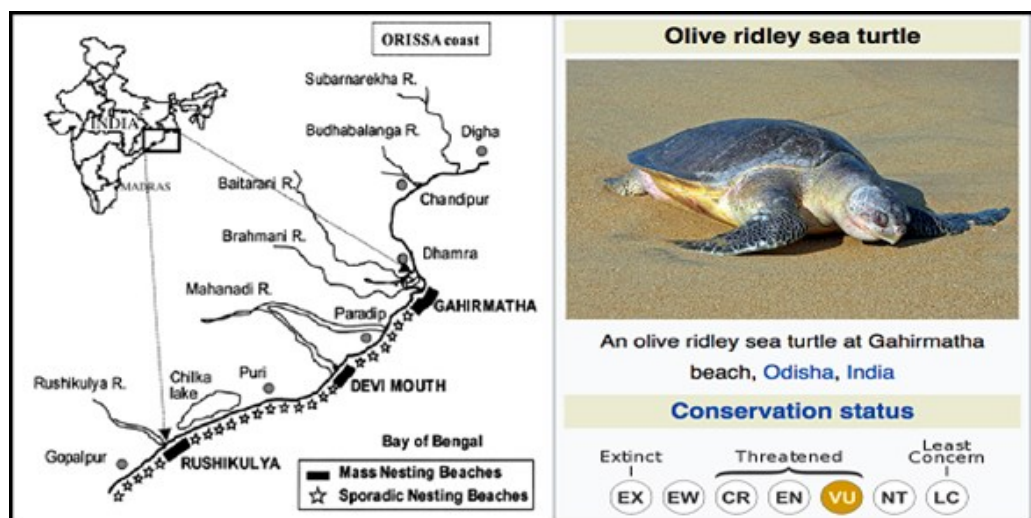


ABOUT OLIVE RIDLEY TURTLES

- They (Scientific Name: Lepidochelys olivacea) are the **smallest and most abundant** of all sea turtles found in the world, inhabiting **warm waters** of the Pacific, Atlantic and **Indian oceans**.
- These turtles are best known for their unique mass nesting called **Arribada**, where thousands of females come together on the same beach to lay eggs.
- Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years, and the species is recognized as **Vulnerable** by the IUCN Red list.
- The turtles' **olive-coloured carapace** (heart-shaped and rounded) gives them their name and they are **carnivores** that feed mainly on jellyfish, shrimp, snails, crabs, molluscs, etc.
- These turtles spend their entire lives in the ocean, and **migrate thousands of kms between feeding and mating grounds** in the course of a year.
- **They face serious threats across their migratory route**, habitat and nesting beaches, due to human activities such as -
 - **Turtle unfriendly fishing practices** such as the accidental killing of adult turtles through **entanglement** in trawl nets and gill nets.
 - **Poaching** for their meat, shell, leather and their eggs. This is despite the fact that international trade in these turtles and their products is banned under **CITES Appendix I**.
 - Development and exploitation of nesting beaches for ports and tourist centres.
- **Mass mortality of Olive Ridleys:**
 - The breeding grounds between Kakinada and Antarvedi have been witnessing the mass mortality of the turtles over the past few weeks.
 - This is mainly **attributed to the effluents** that are discharged from the aqua ponds along the coast and the discharges from the pipelines of the onshore oil exploration sites.
 - A complaint had also been filed in the National Green Tribunal (NGT) against the marine and groundwater pollution in the Konaseema region.
- **Other threats to Olive Ridleys:**
 - **Operation of fishing boats** in the ecologically sensitive rookery (a breeding colony) zone along the 30-km coastline in the Godavari estuary which includes the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary and Hope Island.

BREEDING GROUNDS

- The Olive Ridely Turtles come to the beaches of Odisha coast annually **between November and December and stay on until April and May** for nesting.
- The turtles **choose the narrow beaches near estuaries and bays** for laying their eggs.



STEPS FOR CONSERVATION

- **Legal protection:** They are legally protected under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- **Setting up of rookeries** (a group of nesting rooks): To ensure safe breeding and collect eggs through the ex-situ conservation method.
- **Fencing off the nesting area and patrolling it:** WWF-India, along with the fishermen community, has been involved in protecting the mass nesting site at Rushikulaya, Orissa.
- **Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs):** The Orissa government has made it mandatory for trawls to use TEDs - a net designed to allow the turtles to escape while retaining the catch.
- **Operation Olivia:** As the nesting period stretches over six months, the Indian Coast Guard undertakes the Olive Ridley Turtle protection program every year.

17. GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT

- India's global standing will improve because the World Economic Forum (WEF) will rank countries based on the participation of women at the panchayat level in its upcoming Global Gender Gap reports.
- According to an assurance given to the Indian Women and Child Development Minister, who recently reiterated the flaws in the ranking system at Davos, **the WEF is re-examining and changing the indices for the ranking.**

ABOUT GENDER GAP INDEX

The gender gap is the **difference between women and men** as reflected in **social, political, intellectual, cultural, or economic attainments or attitudes.**

THE INDEX

It benchmarks countries on their **progress towards gender parity** in four Key dimensions with Sub Metrics.

INDIA'S REPORT CARD

Index/sub-index	2022 (146 countries)		2021 (156 countries)	
	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
Global Gender Gap Index	135	0.629	140	0.625
Political empowerment	48	0.267	51	0.276
Economic participation & opportunity	143	0.350	151	0.326
Educational attainment	107	0.961	114	0.962
Health and survival	146	0.937	155	0.937



- Economic Participation and Opportunity
- Educational Attainment
- Health and Survival
- Political Empowerment

On each of the four sub-indices as well as on the overall index the GGG index provides **scores between 0 and 1**, where **1 shows full gender parity and 0 is complete imparity**.

It is the longest-standing index, which tracks progress towards closing these gaps over time since its inception in 2006. **Gender parity is not recovering, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2022. It will take another 132 years to close the global gender gap.**

18. THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DECLARATION

The **first National Women Legislators' Conference** in Kerala concluded with the adoption of **Thiruvananthapuram Declaration**.

MAIN THEME OF THIRUVANANTHAPURAM DECLARATION

The Thiruvananthapuram Declaration laments the **long-pending Women's Reservation Bill (since 1996) for 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislatures**. The low representation of women in Parliament, i.e. lack of political empowerment is the **main reason for India's poor performance on Global Gender Gap Index** published by **World Economic Forum**. (India was ranked at 140 out of 156 countries in 2021)

ABOUT THE DECLARATION

The President (former) of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind inaugurated the National Women Legislators' Conference-2022 in Thiruvananthapuram on May 26, 2022.

The Conference is being hosted by the Kerala Legislative Assembly as part of '**Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav**'.



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