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1. THE SUDAN CRISIS

Fierce fighting broke out between the **Sudan's army and its paramilitary forces** in Khartoum.

Clashes erupted after weeks of heightened tensions between the **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**, a paramilitary group led by **Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo** — also known as **Hemedti** — and **the military**, headed by **Lt Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan**.

ORIGIN OF THE CONFLICT

- **Ouster of President Omar al-Bashir**
 - The roots of the ongoing conflict go back to **April 2019**, when Sudan's long-serving authoritarian **President Omar al-Bashir was overthrown**.
 - He was **overthrown by military generals** following a countrywide uprising against him.
- **Constitution of the Sovereignty Council - a power-sharing body**
 - Despite Bashir's ouster, **civilians continued their demonstrations**, seeking democratic elections and the establishment of a civilian government.
 - This led to the constitution of **the Sovereignty Council**, a power-sharing body of **military officers and civilians**.

This council would **lead Sudan to elections** at the **end of 2023** and **Abdalla Hamdok** was appointed **Prime Minister for the transitional period**.

- **Military overthrew Hamdok's government in October 2021**
 - The new arrangement was short-lived as the military overthrew Hamdok's government in October 2021, and **Burhan became de-facto leader of the country**.
 - **Dagalo**, Vice-President of the ruling council and Burhan's partner in the military seizure of power, became the second-in-command.
 - Burhan announced that the military would hold power **until elections are held in July 2023**.
- **Tussle between Army and RSF**
 - Soon after the 2021 coup, **relations between the military and the RSF deteriorated**.
 - RSF was formed in 2013, and has been accused of human rights abuses, including the massacre of more than 120 protesters in June 2019.



Burhan and Dagalo disagree over how the 10,000-strong RSF should be integrated into the army, and which authority should oversee that process

- **Other fault lines**
 - Civilians have called for the handover of lucrative military holdings in agriculture, trade, and other industries.
 - These are crucial source of power for an army that has often outsourced military action to regional militias.
 - Another point of contention is the pursuit of justice over allegations of war crimes by the military and its allies in the conflict in Darfur from 2003.
 - The International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking trials for Bashir and other Sudanese suspects.
- **Ferocious battle broke out**
 - Later, the RSF was redeployed around the country, which the army saw as a provocation and threat.

With both sides on edge, a ferocious battle broke out recently.

IMPACT OF THE CRISIS

ON SUDAN:

- The third largest country in Africa by size has seen repeated pro-democracy protests since the 2021 coup.
- But the battle between the army and RSF has likely made Sudan's transition to democracy more difficult.
- Some experts fear the tussle could transform into a wider conflict leading to the country's collapse.
- Sudan's economy is struggling, battered by hyperinflation and crippled by massive foreign debt.

Billions of dollars given in international support and debt relief, were frozen after the ouster of the Hamdok government.

ON REGIONAL STABILITY:

- Sudan is in a volatile region, **bordering the Red Sea, the Sahel, and the Horn of Africa.**
- The country's strategic location and agricultural wealth have attracted regional power plays.





- Hence, stability in Sudan is vital for regional peace & security.
 - Several of Sudan's neighbours, including Ethiopia, Chad and South Sudan, have been affected by political upheavals and conflict.

Western powers fear the potential for a Russian base on the Red Sea, which Sudanese military leaders have expressed openness to.

ON INDIA:

- Over the years, India has developed close ties with Sudan and in recent years warmed up to the Government of South Sudan as well.
 - India's Election Commission had helped organise Sudan's first general elections in 1950s.
 - Indian engineers had played a major role in setting up the country's sugar industry and railways.
- In the last decade, India's investments have been mainly in the energy sector.
 - In 2003, India's ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) had invested \$750 million to acquire 25 per cent equity held by the Talisman group in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC).

Therefore, it is natural that conflict and instability in the region will have an adverse impact on India.

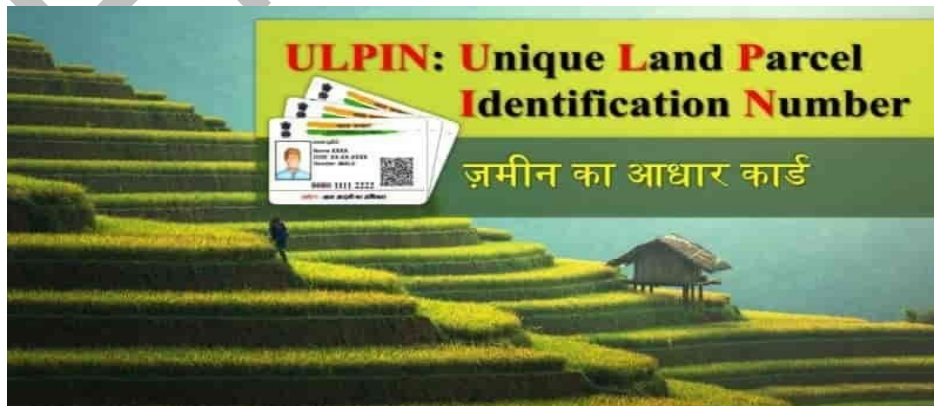
OPERATION KAVERI

- It is a **rescue operation** being carried out by the Indian Government to **bring back Indian citizens stranded in Sudan.**
- According to the official data, the **number of Indians in Sudan is around 4,000.**

As part of the operation, **two C-130 aircraft and the navy ship INS Sumedha is on standby** to safely evacuate stranded Indians.

2. UNIQUE LAND PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (ULPIN)

The Rural Development Ministry recently said that ULPIN has been adopted by 26 states and union territories so far.





ABOUT ULPIN

- It is **part of the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**.
- ULPIN or Bhu-Aadhar is a **14-digit identification number accorded to a land parcel**.
- It would uniquely **identify every surveyed parcel of land** and prevent land fraud,

especially in rural India, where land records are outdated and disputed.

- The identification is **based on the longitude and latitude coordinates** of the landparcel and **depends on detailed surveys and geo-referenced cadastral maps**.
- It aims to **compile every detail pertaining to different properties** from across thecountry.
- ULPIN is a Single, **Authoritative Source of Truth for information** on any parcel of land or property **to provide Integrated Land Services to the citizens** as well as allstakeholders.

Various types of data relating to the landed properties, which are **currently under the possession of different ministries** and departments, too **will be linked with the ULPIN**.

ABOUT DIGITAL LAND RECORD MODERNISATION PROGRAM

- It is a **central sector scheme** being implemented by the Department of LandResources **under the Ministry of Rural Development**.
- **Aim:** It attempts to **build upon the commonalities** that exist in the arena of **land records in various States to develop** an appropriate **Integrated Land InformationManagement System (ILIMS)** across the country.
- The **ILIMS integrates all the processes and lands records databases** with thebanks, financial institutions, circle rates, Registration Offices and other sectors.

Major components: Computerization of land records, Survey/re-survey, Computerization of Registration

3. WATER BODY CENSUS

- **The Ministry of Jal Shakti** has released the report of **India's first water bodies census**, a comprehensive database of ponds, tanks, lakes, and reservoirs in the country.
- The census was conducted in 2018-19, and enumerated more than 2.4 million water bodiesacross all states and Union Territories.

NEED FOR SUCH A CENSUS:

- The Centre earlier maintained a database of water bodies that were getting central



assistance under the scheme of Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of water bodies.

- In 2016, a Standing Committee of Parliament pointed to the need to carry out a separate census of water bodies.

The government then commissioned the first census of water bodies in 2018-19 along with the sixth Minor Irrigation (MI) census]

WHAT IS A WATER BODY?

- The census defines a water body as **all natural or man-made units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work used for storing water** for
 - **Irrigation** or
 - **Other purposes** (example industrial, pisciculture, domestic/drinking, recreation, religious, groundwater recharge, etc).
- Water bodies are usually of **various types** known by different names like tank, reservoirs, ponds etc.
- A structure where water from ice-melt, streams, springs, rain or drainage of water from residential or other areas is accumulated will also be treated as a waterbody.

Water stored by diversion from a stream, nala or river will also be treated as waterbody.

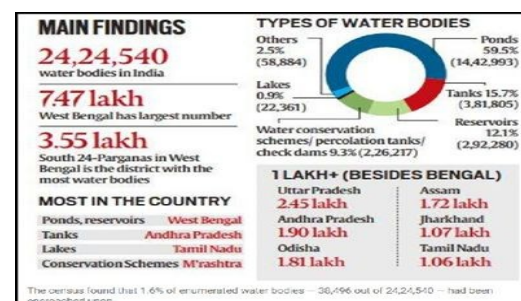
EXCLUDED WATER BODIES FROM THE CENSUS

- Oceans and lagoons;
- Rivers, streams, springs, waterfalls, canals, etc. which are free flowing, without any bounded storage of water;
- Swimming pools;
- Covered water tanks created for a specific purpose by a family or household for their own consumption;
- A water tank constructed by a factory owner for consumption of water as raw material or consumable;
- Temporary water bodies created by digging for mining, brick kilns, and construction activities, which may get filled during the rainy season; and
- Pucca open water tanks created only for cattle to drink water

Key Findings

West Bengal's **South 24 Pargana** has been ranked as the district having the **highest (3.55 lakh)** number of water bodies across the country. The district is

followed by Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur (50,537) and West Bengal's Howrah (37,301).





ENCROACHMENT OF WATER BODIES

- The census found that 1.6% of enumerated water bodies — 38,496 out of 24,24,540 — had been **encroached upon**. More than 95% of these were in rural areas.
- In almost 63% of encroached water bodies, less than a quarter of the area was underencroachment; in about 12% water bodies, more than three-quarters of the area was under encroachment.
- Uttar Pradesh accounted for almost 40% (15,301) of water bodies under encroachment, followed by Tamil Nadu (8,366) and Andhra Pradesh (3,920).

No encroachment was reported from West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and Chandigarh.

4. INDIA'S POPULATION: BOON OR BANE?

By mid-2023, India is expected to surpass China as the most populous country.

As this can be a great demographic advantage than a serious concern, India must focus on exploiting benefits from the available demographic dividend.

When will India surpass China?

- United Nation reports suggest that **India will have a population of 142.86 crore by mid-2023, which is 2.9 million higher than China's population of 142.57 crore.**

Considering the limited information for both China and India, especially in the absence of the Census 2021, **it is difficult to predict the exact date** on which India will surpass China and become the most populous nation.

IS IT A BOON OR A BANE FOR INDIA?

Whether this change in demographic order will prove to be a burden or resource largely dependson the following points:

The Nature of Population Growth

- Population is a **resource** as long as the country's **carrying capacity is intact**.
- **Carrying capacity** does not refer to only per capita availability of natural resources. It is dynamic and changes with changing technology, the efficiency of production and consumption systems of a country.

Population size

- India is **already at replacement level** fertility with the **total fertility rate (TFR) at 2.0 in 2023**. This means two children are replacing their parents.
- This is an **indication of the stabilisation of the population**. However, it continues to experience positive growth, but in a **decelerated mode until 2064**, from which point it will become **negative growth**.
- The peak of India's population size will be around **169.6 crore in 2063**.



The age composition of the population:

- It tells us about:
 - **Available support ratios** in the form of the number of the **working-age population (15-64 years)**.
 - And, the **dependent population (0-14 years and 65 years and above)**.
- With **68% of the working age population in 2023**, the country continues to have a demographic window of opportunity for the next 35 years to reap an economic dividend.

However, the availability of a demographic window of opportunity **in itself will not automatically turn into economic dividend**.

HOW CAN DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND BE REAPED?

- **Employment or job creation:** To realise the vision of demographic dividend becoming a reality India must generate sufficient and quality jobs for its working-age population.
- **Education and skills generation:** A skilled workforce is critical for better productivity of economic activity and reduces excessive public spending and helps in greater capital creation.
- **Focus on the health of the workforce:** Ensuring a healthy lifespan by preventing diseases and disabilities is an important mechanism that translates demographic opportunity into economic gains.

Good governance: Good governance should be reflected through conscientious policies that helps in creating a healthy environment for increasing the efficiency and productivity of the population.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- In Indian perspective, a **total fertility rate of less than 1.8 may not be economically beneficial**. This is because once fertility tends to decline, it is hard to reverse it.
- Therefore, **drastic population control methods** run the risk of inducing forced population ageing, which would result in the nation "getting old before getting rich".

The invisible and unsustainable production, consumption, and unequal distribution, rather than the visible population size, are what are inflicting greater harm and economic devastation

5. UDAN 5.0

Recently, the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation has **launched the UDAN 5.0** to further enhance the connectivity to remote and regional areas of the country.

- It is a regional airport development and "**Regional Connectivity Scheme**" (RCS) of the Union Government of India.
- The scheme envisages **providing connectivity to un-served and underserved airports** of the country through the revival of existing airstrips and airports.



- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Civil Aviation

ABOUT UDAN 5.0

- This round of the scheme focuses on **Category-2 (20-80 seats) and Category-3 (>80 seats)**.
- The earlier **stage length cap of 600 km is waived off** and there is no restriction on the distance between the origin and destination of the flight.
- **Viability gap funding (VGF)** to be provided will be **capped at 600 km stage length** for both Priority and Non-Priority areas which was earlier capped at 500 km.
- Airlines would be required to **commence operations within 4 months** of the award of the route. Earlier this deadline was 6 months

COMPONENTS OF UDAN

- **Airports:** The first component is to **develop new airports and enhance the existing regional airports** to increase the number of operational airports for scheduled civilian flights.

Flight routes: The second component is to add several hundred financially viable, capped airfare, and new regional flight routes to connect more than 100 under-served and unserved airports in smaller towns by using **"Viability Gap Funding" (VGF)** where needed.

6. LOCKBIT RANSOMWARE

Recent reports emerged that for the first time, the LockBit Ransomware was found to be targeting Mac devices.

ABOUT

- It is malicious software designed to **block user access to computer systems** in exchange for a ransom payment.
- It was **formerly known as "ABCD" ransomware**, but it has since grown into a unique threat within the scope of extortion tools.
- It is a subclass of ransomware known as a **'crypto virus'** due to forming its ransom requests around financial payment in exchange for decryption.
- It focuses mostly on enterprises and government organizations rather than individuals.

It functions as **ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS)**. Willing parties put a deposit down for the use of custom for-hire attacks, and profit under an affiliate framework

HOW DOES IT WORK?

- It works as a **self-spreading malware**, not requiring additional instructions once it has successfully infiltrated a single device with access to an organisational intranet.
- It is also known to **hide executable encryption files** by disguising them in the .PNG format, thereby avoiding detection by system defences.
- Attackers use **phishing tactics** and other social engineering methods to impersonate trusted personnel or authorities to lure victims into sharing credentials.
- Once it has gained access, the ransomware prepares the system to release its encryption payload across as many devices as possible.
- It then disables security programs and other infrastructures that could permit





systemdata recovery.

7. ECO SENSITIVE ZONES

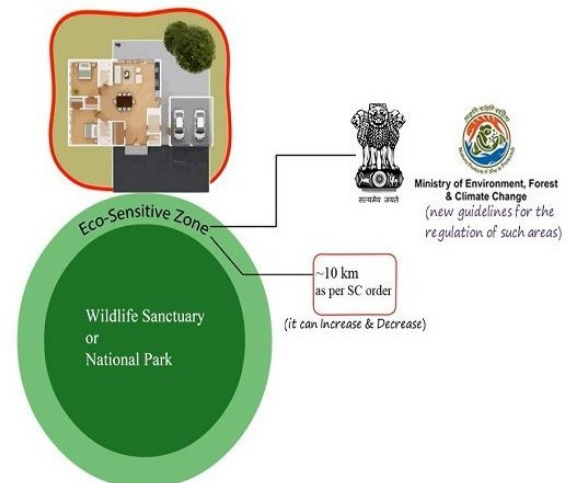
The Supreme Court modified its 2022 order, which mandated a minimum 1-km eco-sensitive zone around national parks or wildlife sanctuaries.

THE JUDGEMENT:

- Noting that the purpose of declaring ESZs is not to hamper the day to day activities of the locals/ to prevent the government from building strategic infrastructure in those areas, **the apex court modified its previous judgement.**
- Henceforth, the 2022 order **will not be applicable to ESZs** in respect to which draft and final notifications have been issued by the MoEFCC, and where proposals for such notifications have been received by the ministry.
 - It will also not be applicable where the national parks and sanctuaries are **located on inter-state borders or share common boundaries.**
- But, the SC underlined that **no mining would be allowed**, either within national parks and sanctuaries or in a 1-km radius.

ECO SENSITIVE ZONES (ESZ)

- The Supreme Court has directed that **every protected forest, national park and wildlife sanctuary in the country** should mandatorily have a **minimum 1 km ESZ**, from their demarcated boundaries.
- The directions were passed in reference to applications filed under the **TN Godavarman Thirumulpad versus Union of India case.**
- **The order would apply in all such states/UTs where the minimum ESZ is not prescribed.**



THE JUDGEMENT

- Extended boundary shall prevail if the existing ESZ goes beyond 1 km buffer zone or if any statutory instrument prescribes a higher limit.
- No new permanent structure will be allowed within the ESZ.
- Mining within national wildlife sanctuary or national park is not permitted.
- Activity already being undertaken, within the 1km or extended ESZ, but lying outside the ambit of prohibited activities may continue with permission.
- The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of each State/UT has been directed to make a list of subsisting structures at the ESZs and submit a report to the court within 3



months.

- The requirements could be diluted if there is “overwhelming public interest”. In respect of PAs for which the proposal of a State/UT has not been given, the 10 kilometres buffer zone as ESZ shall be implemented, according to MoEFCC guidelines, till a final decision is arrived.

WHAT ARE ECO SENSITIVE ZONES?

As per the **National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)**, issued by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, land within **10 km of the boundaries of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries** are to be notified as eco-fragile zones or

Eco-Sensitive Zones (ESZ).

While the **10-km rule is implemented as a general principle**, the extent of its application can vary. It can be more or less also. (In case of Kerala, it is only 1 KM)

Areas beyond 10-km can also be notified by the Union government as ESZs, if they hold larger ecologically important “sensitive corridors”

WHY ARE THEY CREATED?

According to the **guidelines issued by the Environment Ministry** on February 9, 2011, ESZs are created as “**shock absorbers**” for the protected areas, to **minimize the negative impact** on the “**fragile ecosystems**” by certain human activities taking place nearby.

Furthermore, these areas are meant to **act as a transition zone** from areas **requiring higher protection to those requiring lesser protection**.

PERMITTED & PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES:

Activities **prohibited** in an ESZ, such as **commercial mining, saw mills, commercial use of wood**, etc., apart from **regulated** activities like **felling of trees**.

There are **permitted** activities like **ongoing agricultural or horticultural practices, rainwater harvesting, organic farming**, among others

8. CHINA RENAMES 11 PLACES IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

In an attempt to lay claim to areas inside the Indian territory, the Chinese government announced it would standardise the names of **11 places in Arunachal Pradesh**.

This is Beijing’s third such list on Arunachal Pradesh, attempting to rename places by giving them what it calls **standardised geographical names**.

In 2017, the Chinese Ministry of Civilian Affairs put out a **similar list of six places**.

Again, in **December 2021**, released a **list of 15 places** that it sought to rename.



THE INDO CHINA BORDER



WHAT IS McMAHON LINE?

- The disputed boundary in the **Eastern Sector** of the **India-China border** is over the McMahon Line.
- Representatives of China, India and Tibet in **1913-14** met in **Shimla** to settle the boundary between **Tibet and India**, and **Tibet and China**.
- During the Shimla conference, **Sir Henry McMahon**, the then foreign secretary of British India, drew up the **550-mile (890 km) McMahon Line** as the border between British India and Tibet.
- This line was drawn from the **eastern border of Bhutan to the Isu Razi pass** on the China-Myanmar border

THE DISPUTE IN THE EASTERN SECTOR

- The McMahon line moved British control substantially northwards. This agreement ceded Tawang and other Tibetan areas to the imperial British Empire.
 - Though the Chinese representatives at the meeting initialled the agreement, they subsequently refused to accept it.
 - Subsequently, the Chinese government stated that it does not recognize the "illegal" McMahon Line.
- China accuses India of occupying areas in Arunachal, which it calls part of Southern Tibet.
 - China claims territory to the south of the McMahon Line, lying in Arunachal Pradesh.
- China also bases its claims on the historical ties that have existed between the monasteries in Tawang and Lhasa



IMPACT OF THE 1962 WAR ON ARUNACHAL

- The Arunachal Pradesh border, that China claims to be its own territory, is the largest disputed area, covering around 90000 sq. km.
- During the 1962 war, the **People's Liberation Army occupied it** but they announced a unilateral ceasefire and withdrew respecting the McMahon Line.
- However, it has continued to assert its claim over the territory. Nowadays, almost the whole of Arunachal is claimed by China

WHY IS CHINA GIVING NAMES TO PLACES IN INDIA?

- China claims some 90,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory.
- It calls the area Zangnan in the Chinese language and makes repeated references to "South Tibet".
 - Chinese maps show Arunachal Pradesh as part of China, and sometimes parenthetically refer to it as "so-called Arunachal Pradesh".
- China makes periodic efforts to underline this unilateral claim to Indian territory.
 - Giving Chinese names to places in Arunachal Pradesh is part of that effort.

WHAT DOES CHINA GAIN?

- It is a part of the Chinese strategy to assert its territorial claims over Indian territory.
 - As part of this strategy, China routinely issues statements of outrage whenever an Indian dignitary visits Arunachal Pradesh.
 - It did so when the then Vice President Venkaiah Naidu went there to address the state Assembly in October 2021.

The first batch of renaming in 2017 had come days after the Dalai Lama visited Arunachal Pradesh

- Also, Chinese officials claim that the **standardisation was necessary since all names used in southern Tibet were inherited through word-of-mouth** for generations by minority ethnic groups.
- Hence, these names reflect that China's proposal on the sovereignty claim of the region has a prominent historical, cultural, administrative and jurisdictional
- Laying aggressive claims to territories on the basis of alleged historical injustices done to China is a part of Beijing's foreign policy playbook.
 - The claim on Taiwan is one such example.

Also, consistent efforts are being made by China to change the facts on the ground in several disputed islands in the South China Sea

9. FINLAND JOINS NATO

Finland joined the NATO military alliance, dealing a major blow to Russia with a historic realignment of the continent triggered by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.



WHAT IS NATO?

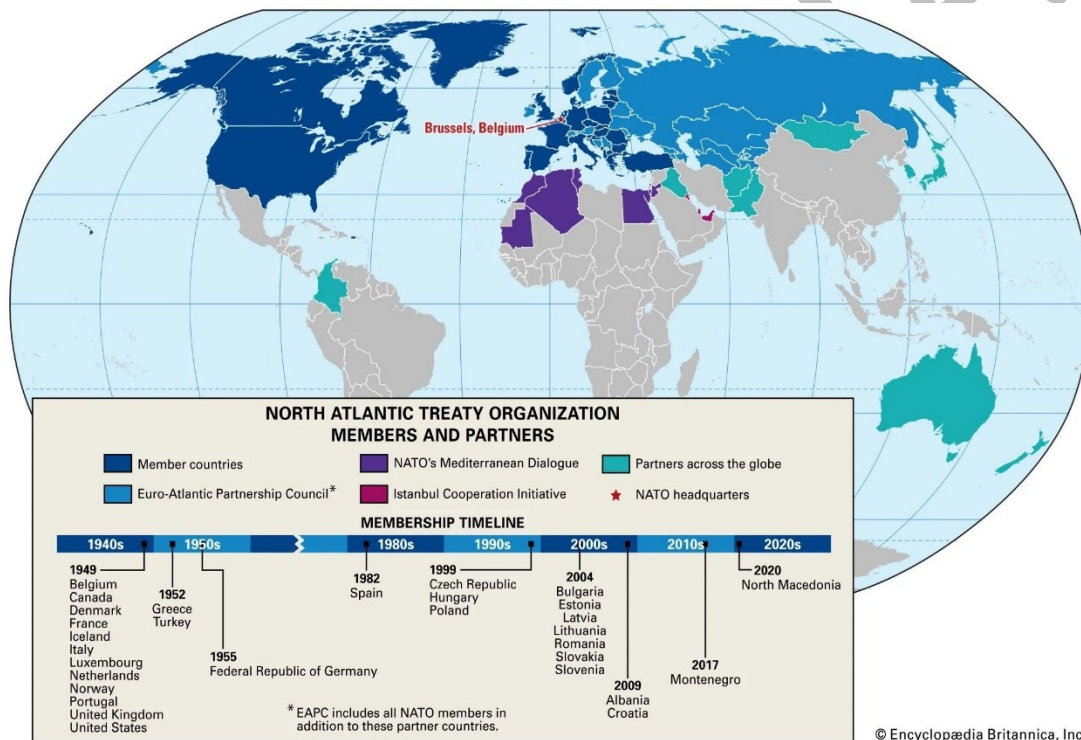
Formed in 1949 with the signing of the **Washington Treaty**, NATO is a **security/military alliance of 30 countries** from **North America and Europe**.

NATO's **fundamental goal** is to **safeguard the Allies' freedom and security by political and military means**.

It is a **system of collective defence** where independent member states agree for mutual defence in case of any attack by external party.

Article 5 of the Washington Treaty states that an attack against one Ally is an attack against all.

Headquarter - Brussels, Belgium



ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

- Fear of antagonising Russia as Russia will not like it's All Weather Friend joining NATO.
- Sovereignty of India might be compromised.
- India will earn new enemies throughout the globe

10. INDIA'S FOREIGN TRADE POLICY

When India got its freedom in 1947, the newly formed government was somewhat reluctant toward foreign trade.



Economic growth was primarily **driven by the public sector**. But over a period of time, subsequent governments corrected their stance and realized the potential of foreign trade.

As a result, the **first Foreign Trade Policy was introduced in 1985** for only three years.

At that time the term "Foreign Trade Policy" didn't exist; it was referred to as **EXIM policy** or Export Import policy.

FOREIGN TRADE POLICY 2023

India's **previous FTP was for five years** from **2015-2020** but first **due to the pandemic and later due to Ukraine war**, it was not revised and the government decided to proceed with it until the end of March 2023.

On 31st March 2023, the Union Minister for Commerce and Industry announced FTP 2023. The government has set an ambitious target of Exports worth 2 trillion dollars by 2030. At the **end of the financial year 2022-23**, India's **exports of Goods and Services stood at 760 billion dollars**

KEY FEATURES

- One of many goals set by the government is to **increase India's share in global supply chains and exports manifold**.
- The govt has announced many schemes and many of them are already in place to make a shift from providing incentives to a remission structure.
- The new FTP **does not have any sunset clause**. Earlier it used to be five years meaning earlier FTPs were for five years and at the end of five years new FTP was announced.

SALIENT FEATURES

- | | |
|--|--|
| ▶ Targets \$2 trillion exports by 2030 | ▶ Digitisation and faster processing of applications |
| ▶ Continuous and responsive framework with no end date | ▶ Amnesty scheme for shortfall in export obligations |
| ▶ Making rupee a global currency | ▶ Restructuring of Department of Commerce |
| ▶ Making India a trade hub | ▶ Over 50% reduction in threshold for recognition of star trade houses |

PILLARS OF FTP

The key approach is based on 4 pillars:

- Incentive to Remission,
- Export promotion through collaboration - Exporters, States, Districts, Indian Missions,



- Ease of doing business, reduction in transaction cost and e-initiatives, and **Emerging Areas** – E-Commerce Developing Districts as Export Hubs and streamlining **Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment, and Technologies (SCOMET)** policy.

GOALS & TARGETS

- The government aims to increase India's overall exports to **USD 2 trillion by 2030**, with equal contributions from the merchandise and services sectors.
- The government also intends to **encourage the use of the Indian currency** in cross-border trade, aided by a new payment settlement framework introduced by the RBI in July 2022.

This could be particularly advantageous in the case of countries with which India enjoys a trade surplus.

SECTOR WISE COMMITMENTS

- To boost manufacturing and production in the **textile sector** the govt has come forth with **PM MITRA textile parks**.
- To help India's **dairy farmers**, the dairy sector has been **exempted from maintaining average export obligations**.
- To boost the **export of vegetables and fruits** status **house certifications have been extended**.

Reduced obligations have been announced to **aid the manufacturing of electric vehicles**.

THE ROADMAP

- To make exports a seamless process, govt is planning to launch a dedicated e-commerce hub with the help of the private sector.
- The aim is to bring collaboration between exporters, States and districts by creating exclusive cluster-based economic development and strengthening infrastructure and logistics ecosystem.

While the target of achieving **2 trillion-dollar exports** is laudable, implementation is the key. India is a **leading exporter of IT services** but the government **needs to push exports in merchandise**. If we look at data from previous years this target seems a bit far. But with proper implementation, and bringing together all stakeholders this target can be achieved

11. STANDUP INDIA SCHEME

As much as **Rs 40,710 crore** sanctioned to over **0.18 million accounts** under the government's flagship **Stand Up India Scheme** during the **last seven years** since its inception.



- **About**

- It was launched on April, 2016 to promote entrepreneurship at grassroot level focusing on economic empowerment and job creation.
- The scheme has been extended till 2025.

- **Aim**

The scheme aimed to promote entrepreneurship amongst women and SC/ST to help them in starting a greenfield enterprise in manufacturing, services or the trading sector and activities allied to agriculture

- **Objective**

- Facilitate bank loans between Rs.10 lakh and Rs.1 crore to at least one Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe borrower and at least one woman borrower per bank branch of Scheduled Commercial Banks.

- **Eligibility**

- SC/ST and/or women entrepreneurs, above 18 years of age;
- Loans under the scheme is available for only green field project.
 - Green field signifies, in this context, the first-time venture of the beneficiary in the manufacturing, services, agri-allied activities or the trading sector.

In case of non-individual enterprises, 51% of the shareholding and controlling stake should be held by either SC/ST and/or Women Entrepreneur.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Stand Up India initiative has played an important role in empowering the SC/ ST communities and ensuring women empowerment.
- **Amount sanctioned since the inception of this scheme**
 - Rs 40,710 crore sanctioned to over 0.18 million accounts under the scheme since its inception.
 - Rs 33,152.43 crore was sanctioned to 0.14 million accounts of women while Rs 5,625.5 crore was sanctioned to 26,889 SC accounts.
 - Rs 1,932.5 crore was sanctioned to 8,960 accounts of ST members.
- **Women empowerment**
 - Of the funds sanctioned till March 21, 2023, about 80 per cent of the loans have been given to women entrepreneurs.

So far, more than 1 lakh women promoters have benefitted from this Scheme

- **Funding the unfunded**



- The scheme is based on the third pillar of National Mission for Financial Inclusion namely Funding the unfunded.

It has ensured availability of seamless credit flow from branches of Schedule Commercial Banks to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs.

12. TIGER CENSUS


The **5th cycle of Tiger Census**, an evaluation of tiger reserves in India released by the PM of India, has estimated the number of big cats in the country (**interim figures**) at **3,167** in 2022 (**increased by 200 or 6.7% in the past four years**).

The **2018 Tiger Census** (released in 2019) had established the presence of **2,967 tigers in India**



MORE TIGER PHOTOS THAN EVER

	Estimated in 2018	Photographed in 2022
Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains	646 (567-726)	804
Central India and Eastern Ghats	1,033 (885-1193)	1,161
Western Ghats	981 (871-1093)	824
North-East	290 (194-244)	194
Sunderbans	88 (86-90)	100
All-India	2,967 (2603-3346)	3,080



THREATS TO TIGERS ACROSS HABITATS

- **Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains:** Expansion of road infrastructure between the western and eastern part of Rajaji tiger reserve.
- Implementing **green infrastructure** will be key to the recovery of tigers in this fragmented landscape.
- **Central Indian Highlands and Eastern Ghats:** Tiger occupancy declined in Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Telangana.
- **The big cat went extinct locally** in Kawal tiger reserve (Telangana), Sri Venkateswara national park (Andhra Pradesh), Satkosia tiger reserve (Odisha),



Sahyadri tiger reserve (Maharashtra).

Mitigation measures like lower-impact mining techniques, rehabilitation of mining sites and eco-friendly structures to lessen the impact of linear infrastructure should be the priority

- **Western Ghats:** While the tiger populations inside the reserves remain stable (Mudumalai, Periyar) or have increased (Bandipur, Nagarhole), the tiger occupancy outside has declined in stretches such as the Wayanad landscape and in BRT Hills.
- **North Eastern Hills & Brahmaputra Plains Landscape:** Despite having habitat connectivity, many of the protected and forested areas are devoid of tigers.
- The rapid development of linear **infrastructures and several hydroelectric projects** could potentially disturb the existing corridors and natural habitats and further alter the gene pool.
- **Ecological monitoring** outside protected areas is necessary.
- **Sunderbans:** Vulnerable to climate change and submergence from sea level rise, the deltaic region faces a substantial amount of accretion and erosion every year. Fishing, palm and timber extractions, and **growing national and international waterways** make this landscape and the tiger population vulnerable

PROJECT TIGER

Project Tiger will complete 50 years.

ABOUT PROJECT TIGER:

Launched in 1973, it is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** of the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**. It provides central assistance to tiger range States for **in-situ conservation of tigers** in designated tiger reserves.

It was initially launched in **9 Tiger reserves (TRs)** in different states of India.

- **Implementing Agency:** National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was established through **Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2006** to provide statutory authority to Project Tiger.
- **Funding pattern:** Centre provides financial assistance to States of 60% and 50% for expenditure on all non-recurring items and expenditure on recurring items respectively. North Eastern and Himalayan States are provided 90% central assistance in both cases.
- **Increase in Estimated Tiger population** from 1,411 in 2006 to 2,967 in 2018.
- India **achieved the targets set under TX2 initiative in 2018** (4 years in advance).
 - Tx2 is the global goal to double the number of wild tigers by the year 2022. It was adopted in 2010 at the St. Petersburg Tiger Summit by 13 tiger range



countries.

- 14 Tiger Reserves in India have been awarded with international Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) accreditation.

HOW HAS PROJECT TIGER ENABLED TO INCREASE TIGER POPULATION?

- **Establishment and development of new TRs:** There are 52 tiger reserves covering over 75,000 sq. km. ○ Further, Guru Ghasidas National Park (Chhattisgarh) and Tamor Pingla Wildlife Sanctuary (Chhattisgarh) was recently approved for declaration as the 53rd TR in India.
- **Adopting core buffer strategy to manage TRs:** Core areas are kept free of all human activities while a coexistence agenda is adopted in buffer and fringe areas with landscape approach. NTCA recently banned new construction in tiger reserves' core areas.

Regular assessment of Tigers, Co predators, prey and their habitats: NTCA is conducting 5th cycle of assessment using application MSTRIPES (Monitoring System for Tigers Intensive-Protection & Ecological Status), which records primary field data digitally using GPS to geotag photo-evidence.

- Independent **monitoring and the evaluation** of tiger reserve by developing Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE) Framework as per international standards.
- **Anti-poaching initiatives:** Special Tiger Protection Force (STPF) are deployed in several TRs for focused anti-poaching operations.
- **Fostering awareness** for eliciting local public support enabled by branding and marketing of project tiger.
- **Promoting sustainable tourism** through National Tiger Conservation Authority (Normative Standards for Tourism Activities and Project Tiger) Guidelines 2012.
- **Technological advancements** such as use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) for Surveillance and Monitoring tool for Protection of Tiger under E-Bird project.

13. MIYAWAKI METHOD

To tackle climate change and pollution, the **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)**

recently started creating a Miyawaki forest at Deonar village in Govandi.



ABOUT

- It is a **method of afforestation** developed by the **Japanese botanist** and plant



- ecology expert **Professor Akira Miyawaki**.
- It involves **planting two to four types of indigenous trees within every square meter**.
- In this method, **the trees become self-sustainable and grow to their full length within three years**.
- Miyawaki forests **grow 10x faster, are 30 x denser and contain 100x more biodiversity**.
- They are **quick to establish, maintenance-free after the first two-to-three years**, and can be **created on sites as small as 3 sq m**.
- The goals of a Miyawaki technique include **improving biodiversity, sequestering carbon, increasing green cover, lowering air pollution**, and preserving the water table.
- Miyawaki forests are **viable solutions** for cities looking to rapidly **build climate resilience**.

14. CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL (CAT)

A Parliamentary committee recently asked the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) to decide on a priority basis the **cases pending disposal for more than 10 years**.

About Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT):

- The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) had been **established under Article 323-A** of the Constitution
- Mandate:** To **adjudicate disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service** of persons appointed to public services and posts **in connection with the affairs of the Union** or other authorities **under the control of the Government**
- In addition to the Ministries and Departments of Central Government, the **Government has notified about 214 organizations** under section 14 (2) of the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985, to **bring them within the jurisdiction of the CAT** from time to time.
- There are **17 Benches and 21 Circuit Benches** in the CAT all over India.
- Composition:** A bench consists of **one Judicial Member and one Administrative Member**.
- The **conditions of service of the Chairman and Members** of CAT are the **same as** applicable to a **Judge of High Court**.
- Salaries, Allowances and Conditions of Service of the officers** and other employees of the Tribunal **are specified by the Central Government**

POWERS

- It exercises **jurisdiction only in relation to the service matters** of the parties covered by the Administrative Tribunals Act 1985.
- The Tribunal is **guided by the principles of natural justice** in deciding cases and is not bound by the procedure prescribed by the Civil Procedure Code.
- CAT is **empowered to frame its own rules of procedure and practice**.



It has been **conferred with the power to exercise the same jurisdiction and authority in respect of contempt of itself as a High Court.**

15. EXERCISE COPE INDIA

Indian Air Force will soon kick off Cope India' exercise with the US Air Force (USAF) at the Kalaikunda airbase in West Bengal.

ABOUT:

- It is a **bilateral joint exercise** between **Indian Air Force (IAF)** and the **United States Air Force (USAF)**.
- Cope India **began in 2004** as a fighter training exercise.
- The exercise has **evolved to incorporate subject matter expert exchanges, air mobility training**, airdrop training and large-force exercises, in addition to fighter-training exercises.
- The exercise will further **enhance operational capability and interoperability** between the two air forces..

The **last edition of the exercise was held in 2019.**

16. SLINEX

The 10th edition of the maritime **Exercise SLINEX - 2023** recently began in Colombo.

- Exercise SLINEX is an **annual bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy and Sri Lanka Navy.**
- **SLINEX - 2023 is the 10th edition of the annual exercise.**
- SLINEX-2023 will aim to **enhance interoperability, improve mutual understanding and exchange best practices** and procedures in multi-faceted Maritime operations between both Navies.
- The exercise is being **conducted in two phases**, the **Harbour Phase** followed by the

Sea Phase.

- The **Indian Navy will be represented by INS Kiltan** (Advanced Anti Submarine Warfare Corvette) **and INS Savitri** (Offshore Patrol Vessel), while the Sri Lanka Navy will have SLNS Gajabahu (Advance Offshore Patrol Vessel) and SLNS Sagara (OPV) in the exercise.

SLINEX is in consonance with **India's policy of 'Neighbourhood First'** and **Prime Ministers' vision of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)'**.

17. BLACK CARBON

A **Parliamentary Standing Committee** on Water Resources recently recommended a **detailed study on the impact of atmospheric pollution**, including **black carbon**, on the **Himalayan glacier system**

WHAT IS BLACK CARBON?

- Black carbon is the **sooty black material emitted from gas and**



diesel engines, coal-fired power plants, and other **sources that burn fossil fuel.**

- It is **formed by the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels**, wood and other fuels.
- It **comprises a significant portion of particulate matter or PM**, which is an air pollutant.
- It is a **short-lived climate pollutant** with a lifetime of only days to weeks after release in the atmosphere.
- It is an important **contributor to warming** because it is very **effective at absorbing light and heating** its surroundings. It contributes to warming by converting incoming solar radiation to heat.
- It has a **warming impact on climate** that is 460-1,500 times stronger than CO₂.
- It also **influences cloud formation and impacts regional circulation and rainfall patterns.**

When deposited on ice and snow, black carbon and co-emitted particles **reduces surface albedo (the ability to reflect sunlight) and heat the surface**

18. UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY FUND (UNDEF)

India gave \$5 million to the fund in 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009 and 2011.

The contributions began dipping from 2012 (\$4.71 m) and the following year it was \$1.85 million.

After no contribution in 2017, India was back with \$100,000 in 2018 and 2019. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, it gave \$150,000.

ABOUT UNDEF

- The UNDEF was created by UN Secretary-General **Kofi A. Annan** in 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund to support democratization efforts around the world.
- It was welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in the Outcome Document of the **2005 World Summit**.
- UNDEF **funds projects that empower civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes.**
- The large majority of UNDEF funds go to local civil society organizations.
- In this way, UNDEF plays a novel and unique role in complementing the UN's traditional work - work with Governments **to strengthen democratic governance** around the world.
- UNDEF depends entirely on **voluntary contributions** from Governments

AREAS OF SUPPORT

- Grants ranging from US\$100,000 to US\$300,000, support initiatives in the areas of –



- Support for Electoral Processes
- Women's Empowerment
- Media and Freedom of Information
- Rule of Law and Human Rights
- Strengthening Civil Society Interaction with Government
- Youth Engagement

COMPOSITION

- The **Advisory Board**, constituted by the Secretary General, includes eight largest Member State contributors and six other states to reflect diverse geographical representation.
- **India has been a member of the Board since the beginning.**
- The Advisory Board considers the proposals from NGOs and recommends proposals for approval by the Secretary General

19. MUNICIPAL ACT IN NAGALAND REPEALED

- Recently, the Nagaland government **repealed the Nagaland Municipal Act of 2001.**
- This led to the cancellation of the **State Election Commission's notification** for holding elections to Nagaland's 39 urban local bodies (ULBs) **with 33% of the seats reserved for women.**
- The apex court has however, stayed the notification cancelling the civic body polls

WHY THERE IS OPPOSITION TO ULB POLLS?

- Nagaland is arguably the only State where ULB seats are not reserved for women as mandated by clause IV of the 74th Amendment to the Constitution of India.
 - 74th Amendment deals with the constitutional provisions relating to urban local governance in India.
 - It has provisions related to the reservation of seats in urban local bodies for women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- Most of the traditional tribal and urban organisations oppose the 33% reservation of seats for women.
- They argue that such reservation would **violate the special provisions granted by Article 371A of the Constitution to Nagaland.**
 - The hohos (apex tribal bodies) point out that **women have traditionally not been part of decision-making bodies**

THE TIMELINE OF ULB IN NAGALAND

- The **first and only** civic body election in Nagaland was held in **2004** **without any reservation of seats for women.**



- The State government amended the **2001 Municipal Act in 2006** to **include 33% reservation for women in line with the 74th Amendment.**
- This triggered **widespread opposition** forcing the government to indefinitely postpone the ULB polls in 2009.
- In **September 2012**, the State Assembly **passed a resolution to exempt Nagaland** from **Article 243T of the Constitution** which is related to the reservation for women.
- This **resolution was revoked in November 2016** and elections to the civic bodies **with 33% reservation were notified a month later.**
- The notification led to widespread mayhem in which two people were killed in large-scale violence.
- This made the government declare the process to conduct election null and void in February 2017

THE PRESENT ISSUE

- Under pressure from the **Supreme Court**, the current Nagaland government laid the ground for holding ULB polls after consultations with various stakeholders.
- Notification in this regard was put out by the **State Election Commission.**
- However, the tribal bodies and civil society organisations **threatened to boycott the polls** until the **Municipal Act of 2001** factoring in women's reservation **is reviewed.**

The government succumbed to public pressure and repealed the Municipal Act with immediate effect as the people cannot be compelled to participate in the elections.

ARTICLE 371 A OF THE CONSTITUTION

Article 371A of the Indian Constitution is a **special provision made for the state of Nagaland.**

It was introduced by the **13th Amendment** to the Constitution of India in **1962.** **OBJECTIVES:**

- The main objective of Article 371A is to provide **special safeguards** for the protection of the unique social and cultural practices, customs and traditions of the Naga people, who have a distinct identity and history.
- The provision also aims to promote the equitable development of the state of Nagaland.

PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 371 A

- The **Governor** of Nagaland has special responsibility to ensure the development of the state with respect to law and order, and administration of justice.
- The Governor **must be consulted** on all matters concerning the **appointment of civil servants** and the selection of candidates for admission to educational institutions in Nagaland.
- The **state legislature of Nagaland** has the power to **enact laws** relating to the ownership and transfer of land and its resources, customary law and practice of the Naga tribes.



- The provision **prohibits the Parliament of India** from enacting any law that affects the religious or social practices of the Naga people, their customary law and procedures, ownership and transfer of land and its resources in Nagaland.

Overall, Article 371A **recognizes the unique history, culture, and identity** of the Naga people and provides special protections to ensure their equitable development while preserving their traditions and customs

20. CIVIL UNION

- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, began hearing a batch of petitions seeking legal recognition of same sex marriage.
- The Centre argued against the petitions and questioned the **judiciary's right to confer legal recognition on the socio-legal institution of marriage.**

However, the apex court clarified that the hearing's scope would be limited to developing a notion of a **civil union** that finds legal recognition under the **Special Marriage Act.**

WHAT IS A CIVIL UNION?

- A **civil union** under the Special Marriage Act is a **legally recognized union** between two individuals, regardless of their caste, religion, or nationality.
- It also refers to the legal status that allows same-sex couples specific rights and responsibilities normally conferred upon married couples.
- This type of union allows couples to have a formal, legally binding relationship without going through the traditional rituals and customs of a religious or cultural marriage ceremony.
- Although a civil union resembles a marriage and brings with it employment, inheritance, property, and parental rights, there are some differences between the two.

CIVIL UNION V/S MARRIAGE

- A civil union is a **legal agreement** between two individuals that provides them with some of the rights and benefits of a marriage, such as inheritance rights, tax benefits, and access to healthcare.
- However, it is different from a marriage in several ways:
 - Religious or cultural beliefs do not play a role in a civil union, whereas they often do in a marriage.
 - In some countries, civil unions are only available to same-sex couples, whereas marriage is available to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples.
 - A civil union may not be recognized by all states or countries, whereas a marriage is generally recognized worldwide.
 - There may be differences in the legal requirements and procedures for entering into a civil union versus a marriage. It may be different in terms of social and cultural significance and legal recognition



21. HEATWAVES IN INDIA

- Thirteen people died from an apparent **heat stroke** while attending a government award function in an open space in Navi Mumbai.
- This is possibly **the biggest-ever heatwave-related death** toll from a single event in the country.
- It brings back the spotlight on **potential risks from heatwaves**, whose intensity and frequency is expected to rise because of climate change

WHAT IS A HEAT WAVE?

- A Heat Wave is a **period of abnormally high temperatures**, more than the normal maximum temperature.

It can be assessed qualitatively & quantitatively.

- **Qualitatively**, heat wave is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to human body when exposed.

Quantitatively, it is defined based on the temperature thresholds over a region in terms of actual temperature or its departure from normal

CRITERIA FOR DECLARATION

- As per IMD, heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.
- IMD uses following criterion to declare the occurrence of heat wave in the region:
 - **Based on Departure from Normal Temperature:**
 - **Heat Wave** - Departure from normal is 4.50°C to 6.40°C;
 - **Severe Heat Wave:** Departure from normal is >6.40 degree C
 - **Based on Actual Maximum Temperature:**
 - **Heat Wave** - When actual maximum temperature $\geq 45^{\circ}\text{C}$;
 - **Severe Heat Wave:** When actual maximum temperature ≥ 47
 - If above criteria met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological subdivision for at least two consecutive days then heat wave occurrence is declared on the second day.
- **Heat Wave in coastal region**
 - When maximum temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, Heat Wave may be described provided actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more

THE PREDICTIONS

- The summer this year is predicted to be excessively hot because of the end of the strong La Nina phase in equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- New forecasts suggest that El Nino, which has the opposite impacts of La Nina, is expected to kick in from the May-July period itself



- The El Niño is a complementary phenomenon in which warmer water spreads west-east across the equatorial Pacific Ocean

WHAT IS A HEAT STROKE?

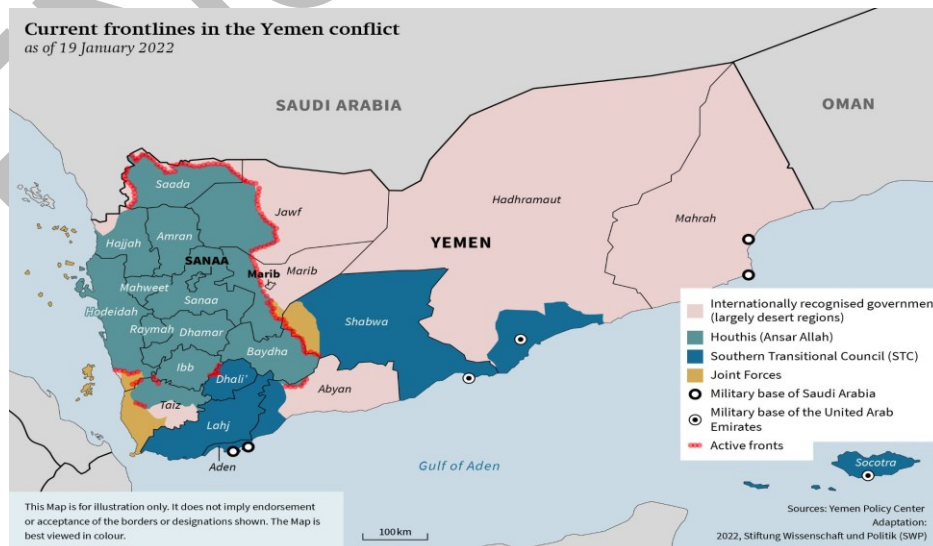
- A heat stroke or sunstroke is the result of **overheating of the body** as a result of **exposure to high temperatures and humidity**, or due to prolonged physical exertion at high temperatures.
- A heat stroke is considered to be a **medical emergency** that requires prompt attention.
- Persons suffering from heat exhaustion experience **fatigue, dizziness, headache, nausea, vomiting, hypotension (low blood pressure) and tachycardia** (increased heart rate).

THE PRESENT DEATHS

- **Role of high temperature and humidity**
 - High temperature in itself is not fatal. The combination of high temperature and high humidity, referred to as the **wet bulb temperature**, is what makes heat waves deadly.
 - High moisture content in the atmosphere makes it difficult for the sweat to evaporate and bodies to cool down.
 - As a result of which the internal body temperature increases sharply, and is often fatal.
- **Physical exertion**
 - Apart from the long exposure to heat in the open ground, physical exertion may have had a role to play.

22. YEMEN CIVIL WAR

After eight years of crushing civil war in Yemen, a new round of talks this week has raised a glimmer of hope for a breakthrough in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.





BACKGROUND

- The wave of protests known as the **Arab Spring** did not take long to arrive in Yemen after the Tunisian Revolution (2011–2012).
- **Yemen**, only unified since 1990, was a **poor country** with a government widely acknowledged to be **corrupt**, with a large number of **weapons in private hands**. It had **deep divisions that persisted** between the north and south.

By 2011, the country was **already facing challenges** from al Qaeda-linked militants and separatists in the south and Zaydi Shia Muslim rebels in the north

THE BEGINNING OF CIVIL WAR

- In September 2014, the **Houthi insurgency** (predominantly a Iran-backed Zaydi Shia force) transformed into a full-blown civil war as Houthi fighters swept into the capital of Sana'a.
- The rebels continued to apply pressure until the **internationally recognised government was ousted in January 2015**.
- The **Houthis declared themselves in control of the Yemeni government**, dissolving the Parliament, and installing an interim **Revolutionary Committee**.
- The then President (Hadi) escaped to Aden and declared himself Yemen's legitimate president and proclaimed Aden as the country's temporary capital.

The **Saudi-led coalition** intervened in 2015 in an attempt to restore the (Hadi) government, launching a devastating **bombing campaign** that lasted years

- **What has changed now?**
 - A surprise rapprochement/resumption of harmonious relations between two regional powers, **Saudi Arabia and Iran** - who fed a **proxy conflict** that worsened the war.
- **Who is at the talks?**
 - The negotiations in Yemen's capital, Sana, bring together **Saudi Arabia** and the **Houthis**.
- **What are they trying to achieve?**
 - Negotiators are seeking the reinstatement of a **truce** and a **complete withdrawal of foreign forces from Yemen**.

The negotiators also want to pave the way for broader talks **to resolve Yemen's multifaceted political conflict and repair its demolished economy**

- **Why does the détente between Saudi Arabia and Iran matter?**
 - Both Riyadh and Tehran are keen to prove that their diplomatic efforts were instrumental in bringing calmness to Yemen.
 - Saudi officials are eager to end their military involvement in Yemen, which has been **expensive and damaging to the kingdom's international reputation**.
- **Will these talks end Yemen's conflict?**
 - Without genuine support within the country, among the Yemenis



themselves, apolitical resolution cannot take root.

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