

PLUTUS IAS

Monthly Current Affairs
September-October 2023



The Indian EXPRESS

Key Highlights:

- G20 New Delhi Leaders Summit
- Aaditya L-1 Launched
- One Nation One Election
- 15th BRICS Summit
- Women and Climate Change

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Foreword

Dear Aspirants,

This magazine by the Plutus IAS team is designed in such a fashion that it holistically covers all the relevant and important topics for the Civil Services Exam to make aspirants exam-ready. Plutus IAS Current Affairs Magazine is a secondary source of information; the newspaper will remain the primary source for the preparation of Current Affairs.

Now, Current Affairs are no longer merely current; they are Contemporary Affairs. Questions asked in both Prelims as well as the Mains assess the conceptual clarity of an aspirant. This magazine is prepared with the aim of helping you understand the interlinkages of both Static and Dynamic news events and internalize the concepts required to crack this examination.

The Plutus IAS team wishes you all the best. Prepare for the UPSC Civil Services Examination with a calm, composed, or serene mind and some patience to crack this examination in one go.

**Team
Plutus IAS**

Sources:

The Hindu | The Indian Express | The Economic Times | Press Information Bureau | PRS Legislative Research | IDSA: Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis | Yojana and Kurukshetra | Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Debates.

OUR TOP RANKERS

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Achchhelal**

AIR-56



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AIR-57



Aditi Varshney

AIR-87



Ayan Jain

AIR-175



Natasha Goyal

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Anunay Anand

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**Bhumi
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Neha Goyal

AIR-43



Shubahm Shukla

AIR-28



Divya Mishra

AIR-30



Divyanshu Choudhary

AIR-268



Nitish Rajora

AIR-612



Mahima Madan

AIR-706



Rijul

**Are
You
Next?**

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AMITAVA ROY COMMITTEE REPORT ON PRISON REFORMS

Why in the news?

The Supreme Court has requested input from both the central government and the individual states regarding the Justice Amitava Roy Committee's report.

Key observations and suggestions:

Gender Disparities:

- Female inmates encounter inadequate access to fundamental amenities, including health-care, legal aid, employment prospects, and recreational facilities.
- Many women prisoners are accommodated within larger male-dominated prison complexes, resulting in concerns related to privacy, safety, and limited access to crucial services.

Sanitary Napkin Provision:

- In India, fewer than 40% of prisons offer sanitary napkins to female inmates, neglecting their basic hygiene needs. This deficiency can have adverse health repercussions and compromise the dignity of women in custody.

Facilities for Children:

- Only a handful of states and union territories permit female prisoners to interact with their children without physical barriers like bars or glass partitions. Such barriers impede vital family connections, which are essential for the well-being of both mothers and their children.

Shared Facilities:

- A significant concern is that 75% of female wards in Indian prisons share common facilities and kitchens with male wards. This shared arrangement can potentially result in safety and privacy issues for female inmates, particularly considering the gender dynamics within prison environments.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Segregation

- Segregation of undertrials, convicts and first-time offenders not only inside jails but also during production in courts, visit to hospitals or intra-jail movements.
- Special fast-track courts to deal with petty offences pending for 5 years or more.
- District and sessions judge to regularly monitor progress of cases pending in for more than one year in a session triable case and for more than six months in magistrate triable cases.

Suicides

- Suggests suicide-proof barracks with collapsible material.
- Identify potential hanging and anchoring points within the existing design of prison infrastructure.

Undertrial and Convict Housing:

- Irrespective of their legal status (whether undertrials or convicts), female prisoners are frequently housed in the same wards and barracks. This lack of differentiation based on legal status can affect female inmates' prospects for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Gender-Specific Training:

- The report emphasizes the absence of gender-specific training for prison staff, including matrons responsible for overseeing female inmates. This training gap extends to areas like conducting searches, which should be done with sensitivity and respect for the dignity of female prisoners.

Complaint Mechanisms:

- In India, female inmates can file complaints against jail staff for abuse or harassment in only 13 states and 2 Union Territories. This limited access to justice within the prison system can leave female inmates vulnerable to abuse without proper avenues for redress.

Medical and Psychiatric Care:

- Many Indian prisons lack separate medical and psychiatric facilities for female inmates. This deficiency presents substantial challenges in addressing the unique health needs of female prisoners, including those related to pregnancy and mental health.

Telemedicine and Vocational Training:

- To address these issues, the report recommends introducing telemedicine facilities for remote diagnosis and virtual consultations, strengthening vocational training and educational programs, and reducing the reliance on the imprisonment for minor offenses. Instead, it suggests implementing community service initiatives and comprehensive counselling for inmates with psychological disorders.

Overcrowding:

- Overcrowding in Indian prisons has long been a pressing concern, resulting in substandard living

conditions, heightened inmate tension, and difficulties delivering essential services and rehabilitation programs.

Need for Reforms:**Protection of Human Rights:**

- **Dignity:** Prison reform safeguards the basic human dignity of individuals, including those convicted of crimes, by preventing cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment in correctional facilities.
- **Access to Necessities:** It ensures that inmates have access to fundamental necessities like food, clean water, proper healthcare, and sanitary conditions.
- **Protection from Torture:** Reform efforts aim to prevent any form of physical or psychological abuse within prisons, protecting inmates' physical and mental well-being.

Rehabilitation:

- **Skill Development:** Prison reform focuses on providing inmates with the skills and knowledge they need to reintegrate into society successfully. This involves vocational training and mental health support.
- **Reduced Recidivism:** Successful rehabilitation programs reduce the likelihood of inmates returning to criminal activities, enhancing public safety and reducing the burden on the criminal justice system.

Fairness and Justice:

- **Equality:** Prison reform ensures that all individuals, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, are treated fairly and equally within the criminal justice system.
- **Due Process:** It upholds principles of due process, including the right to a fair trial, access to legal representation, and the presumption of innocence until proven guilty.

Safety and Security:

- **Living Conditions:** Overcrowded prisons often

lead to inadequate living conditions and overcrowded cells. The reform aims to reduce overcrowding to ensure healthier and safer inmate environments.

- **Alternative Sentencing:** Efforts are made to promote alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders, reducing strain on prison resources and facilities.

Cost-Effectiveness:

- **Long-Term Savings:** While initial costs may be associated with implementing rehabilitation and reintegration programs, these initiatives are often cost-effective in the long run. By reducing recidivism and facilitating successful reintegration into society, they can lower the financial burden on the criminal justice system and social services.

Measures taken in India:

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB):

- **Data Collection:** The NCRB plays a crucial role in collecting and maintaining data related to prisons and inmates in India. This data provides valuable insights into prison conditions, demographics, and trends.
- **Informed Decision-Making:** By analysing this data, policymakers and authorities can make more informed decisions regarding prison management, resource allocation, and reform initiatives.

Legal Aid:

- **Access to Justice:** Legal aid programs ensure inmates have access to legal representation, which is essential for a fair trial and for protecting their legal rights.
- **Fair Proceedings:** These programs help inmates understand their rights and effectively present their cases, contributing to a more equitable criminal justice system.

Vocational Training:

- **Skill Development:** Vocational training pro-

grams in some Indian prisons equip inmates with practical skills, improving their employability upon release.

- **Rehabilitation:** These programs align with the rehabilitation aspect of prison reform, helping inmates build better futures and reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

THE STATE OF SCHOLARSHIPS FOR MINORITIES

Why in the news?

Recent years have witnessed the discontinuation of two major minority education schemes, a reduction in the scope of another, and a gradual budget decrease for various Ministry of Minority Affairs programs.

Who are the Minorities?

- While the Constitution of India does not provide a definition for "minority," the **National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992** outlines a minority community as "a community notified as such by the Central Government."
- Under this Act, the following six communities have been notified as minorities: **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis (Zoroastrians).**
- India is home to more than 300 million (20% of the population) belonging to religious minority groups.

Introduction of Scholarships for Religious Minorities in India:

- **Addressing Minority Deprivation:** The introduction of scholarships for religious minorities aims to address the social, economic, and educational challenges faced by these communities.
- **Sachar Committee Report:** The Sachar Committee's findings underscored the marginalised status of Muslims and other minorities in various aspects of development. This report highlighted the need for targeted measures.

- **Establishment of Ministry of Minority Affairs:** In response to these findings, the UPA government established the Ministry of Minority Affairs to focus on issues affecting notified minorities. This move aimed to ensure a more concentrated approach to their upliftment.
- **Revised 15-Point Programme:** The government revamped its 15-Point Programme to include educational empowerment, leading to the provision of scholarships for minority students.

Various Welfare Schemes aimed at Educational Empowerment among minority communities and their Status

Scheme	Description	Current Status
Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme	Financial assistance for minority students in classes 9 and 10.	Discontinued for classes 1 to 8. Reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24.
Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme	Scholarship for minority students from class 11 to Ph.D.	Increased funds in Union Budget 2023-24.
Merit-cum-Means based Scholarship Scheme	Scholarships for professional and technical courses.	Reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24.
Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF)	Financial support for M.Phil and Ph.D. research scholars.	Canceled in 2022. Government cited scheme overlap as the reason for its discontinuation.
Padho Pardesh	Interest-free education loans for international studies.	Discontinued from 2022-23.
Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship	Scholarship for meritorious girls pursuing higher secondary education.	Zero allocation.

Naya Saver	Free coaching for minority students for technical courses and exams.	Allocated reduced funds in Union Budget 2023-24. Discontinued due to New Education Policy 2020.
Nai Udaan	Support for minority students preparing for competitive exams.	No funds allocated in the ongoing financial year.
Scheme for Providing Education to Madrasahs	Subsidy for modern subjects in recognized madrasahs.	Reduced allocation in Union Budget 2023-24.
Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK)	Infrastructure development in minority concentration areas, including education.	Reduced allocation in Union Budget 2023-24. Restructured in 2018.

Impact of Reduced Budget on Minority Education Schemes:

- **Decrease in Beneficiaries:** Over the past three years (2019-2022), the beneficiaries of central educational schemes for minorities reduced by around 7%. Specifically, scholarships awarded dropped from 67.3 lakh in 2019-20 to 62.6 lakh in 2021-22.
- **Underutilization of Funds:** Despite initial allocations, several programs faced underutilization of funds. The pre-matric and post-matric scholarship schemes, for instance, saw lower spending than initially estimated.
- **Impact on Scholarships:** The merit-cum-means scholarship for professional and technical courses faced funding cuts. The allocation for the post-matric scholarship scheme increased, but underutilization issues persisted.
- **CBGA Report Findings:** A 2022 report by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA) highlighted a declining trend in

minority budget allocation. It also noted that scholarships were often disbursed toward the end of the academic year, implying that recipients were obtaining their scholarships solely in the latter part of the academic year.

Importance of Strengthening Educational Aid for Minorities

- **Affirmative Action for Socio-economic Progress:** Niti Aayog's 2018 Strategy Document emphasizes the necessity of affirmative action to enhance the socio-economic standing of religious minorities, particularly Muslims, who lag behind in various domains.
- **Alarming Dropout Rates:** Data from the Institute of Objective Students indicates a higher dropout rate among Muslims (23.1%) compared to the national average (18.96%). This raises concerns about the effectiveness of education policies, including the Right to Education.
- **Lower Higher Education Enrollment:** The All India Survey on Higher Education reveals a substantial gap in higher education enrollment for Muslim students, dropping from 5.5% to 4.6% in 2020-21. Other minority groups also experienced declines.
- **Regional Disparities:** The survey highlights regional disparities, with Kerala and Telangana showing increased Muslim student enrollment while Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir have lower figures.

Way Forward:

- **Strengthening Scholarships:** The 2018 Niti Aayog policy document suggests boosting pre-matric, post-matric, and merit-cum-means scholarships, among others. A recommended annual increase of 15% from 2019-20 is advised. Additionally, a yearly augmentation of 10% in scholarships for girls from minority communities is proposed.
- **Customized Interventions:** The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability's Report underscores leveraging the 15-Point Programme to formulate tailored interventions for minority development.

CAUVERY WATER ISSUE

Why in the news?

Recently, the Cauvery Water Management Authority has issued a directive to Karnataka.

The Cauvery River: A Geographical Overview

- **Origin:** The Cauvery River, often referred to as 'Dakshi Bharat ki Ganga' or 'the Ganga of the South,' originates from Talakaveri on the Brahmagiri range in Karnataka's Kodagu district, situated at an elevation of 1,341 meters.
- **Length and Course:** It flows predominantly through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, covering a distance of 705 kilometers in a south-easterly direction.
- **Formation of a Delta:** As it nears its final destination, the Cauvery River splits into numerous distributaries, forming a vast and fertile delta region often described as the "garden of southern India." It eventually meets the Bay of Bengal, merging with the sea south of Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu.
- **Geographical Extent:** The Cauvery basin covers expansive regions of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and the Union Territory of Puducherry, encompassing a vast area of 81 thousand square kilometers.
- **Left Bank Tributaries:** The Cauvery's left bank receives contributions from various tributaries, including the Harangi, Hemavati, Shimsha, and Arkavati rivers.
- **Right Bank Tributaries:** These tributaries include the Lakshmantirtha, Kabbani, Suvarnavati, Bhavani, Noyil, and Amaravati rivers, which enrich the main river's water resources and ecological diversity.

What is Cauvery Water Dispute?

- **River Origin and Flow:** The Cauvery River originates in Karnataka's Kodagu district and flows into Tamil Nadu before reaching the Bay of Bengal.

- **1892: Genesis of the Dispute:** The dispute began in 1892 between the Madras Presidency (under British rule) and the Princely state of Mysore. It started when Madras opposed Mysore's plan to construct irrigation systems, citing concerns about its impact on water flow into Tamil Nadu.
- **1924: A Temporary Resolution:** In 1924, the dispute neared resolution as Mysore and Madras reached an agreement allowing Mysore to build a dam in Kannambadi village. This agreement was valid for 50 years and set for review. Karnataka subsequently built the Krishnaraja Sagar dam based on this pact.
- **1974: Lapse of the 1924 Agreement:** The 1924 water-sharing agreement between the former Madras Presidency and the Princely State of Mysore (now Tamil Nadu and Karnataka) expired after its 50-year term.
- **1990: Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal:** To adjudicate the Cauvery water dispute among the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and the Union Territory of Puducherry, the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal was established.
- **2007: Tribunal's Final Award:** In 2007, the tribunal issued its final award, allocating 419 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) of water to Tamil Nadu, more than double the interim order of 1991.
- **2016: Tamil Nadu's Water Deficit Claim:** In 2016, Tamil Nadu claimed a deficit of 50.0052 tmcft of water released from Karnataka, citing inadequate rainfall. Tamil Nadu sought the intervention of the Supreme Court.
- **2017: Supreme Court's Directive:** In 2017, the Supreme Court ordered Karnataka to release 15,000

cusecs of water per day to Tamil Nadu for ten days. This directive led to widespread protests and bandhs in Karnataka.

- **Continued Supreme Court Involvement:** Following modifications, the Supreme Court ordered Karnataka to release 2,000 cusecs of water per day to Tamil Nadu until further notice.
- **2018: Final Supreme Court Verdict:** In 2018, the apex court issued its final verdict, granting Karnataka an additional 14.75 TMC of river water and reducing Tamil Nadu's share to 177.25 TMC from the previously allocated 192 TMC. The court considered Bengaluru's water scarcity while delivering the judgment and emphasized the importance of adhering to its orders by all states involved.

Constitutional Provisions for Inter-State Water Disputes

Article 262 of the Constitution addresses the resolution of water disputes among states. The key points are:

- **Adjudication of Disputes**
 - Article 262(1) allows **Parliament** to pass laws for settling disputes or complaints related to the use, distribution, or control of water in inter-State rivers or river valleys.



- **Exclusivity of Jurisdiction**

- Article 262(2) grants Parliament the authority to declare that **neither the Supreme Court nor any other court can have jurisdiction** over such disputes mentioned in above.

OBC RESERVATION IN LOCAL BODIES

Why in the news?

The state government of Gujarat has recently increased the reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) from the current 10% to 27% in panchayats and urban local bodies.

Key points regarding this decision:

- The decision was made based on recommendations from the **Justice K S Jhaveri Commission**, which was established following a 2022 Supreme Court directive aimed at suggesting measures for OBC (Other Backward Classes) reservation in local bodies in Gujarat.
- The expanded OBC reservation of 27% will be applicable **across all levels of local bodies**, including municipal corporations, municipalities, gram panchayats, taluka panchayats, and district panchayats.
- However, this increased OBC reservation will **not be enforced in regions governed by the PESA Act of 1996, where the Scheduled Tribe (ST) population exceeds 50%**. In such areas, OBC candidates will receive a reservation of 10%.
- It's important to note that the existing quotas for Scheduled Castes (SCs) at 14% and Scheduled Tribes (STs) at 7% remain unchanged, ensuring compliance with the 50% reservation cap mandated by the Supreme Court.

What is the Supreme Court's stance on reservation in local bodies?

- In a landmark decision by a five-judge Constitution Bench in the case of **K. Krishnamurthy (Dr.)**

v. Union of India (2010), the Supreme Court interpreted **Article 243D(6) and Article 243T(6)**, which allow for the reservation of seats for backward classes in panchayats and municipal bodies, respectively.

- The Supreme Court also emphasized that the obstacles to political participation differ from those hindering access to education and employment, as seen in Article 15(4) and Article 16(4), which pertain to reservation in education and employment.
- However, the Supreme Court clarified that while reservations in local bodies are permissible, they are contingent on empirical evidence of backwardness specific to these bodies. This determination is based on what is known as the "triple test," comprising the following conditions:
 1. The establishment of a dedicated Commission to conduct a thorough empirical inquiry into the nature of backwardness in local bodies.
 2. The specification of the proportion of reservation required to be allocated on a local body-by-body basis.
 3. The assurance that such reservation does not exceed an aggregate of 50% of the total seats reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) combined.

Arguments in Favor of OBC Reservation in Local Body Elections

- **Empowerment, Inclusivity, and Participation:** Reservation offers OBC individuals a chance to actively engage in local governance, enabling them to voice their concerns, represent their communities, and play a role in shaping policies that affect their lives.
- **Relevance of Policies:** Elected representatives from OBC backgrounds are more likely to comprehend the unique challenges faced by their communities and work effectively to address them.

- **Skill and Leadership Development:** Reservation provides increased opportunities for individuals to acquire experience in leadership positions, public speaking, and decision-making.
- **Heightened Political Awareness:** It fosters political awareness and engagement among community members, motivating them to participate more actively in the political process.
- **Long-Term Positive Impact:** Advocates argue that over time, this approach may lead to a fairer distribution of resources, improved socio-economic indicators, and reduced disparities among various segments of society.

Arguments Against OBC Reservation in Local Body Elections

- **Caste-Based Division:** Some critics argue that reservations based on caste perpetuate societal divisions, emphasizing differences instead of promoting unity.
- **Disadvantaged Groups Within OBCs:** Concerns exist regarding varying levels of privilege within the OBC category, with some groups considered more privileged (referred to as the “creamy layer”) than others. Implementing reservations for the entire OBC category might lead to relatively more privileged groups benefiting disproportionately, while the most marginalized OBCs continue to be underrepresented.
- **Reservation Efficacy:** Skeptics also raise doubts about the long-term effectiveness of reservations in genuinely addressing socio-economic disparities. They advocate for alternative approaches such as targeted welfare programs and skill development initiatives.
- **Impact on Local Governance:** There are concerns that political considerations may take precedence over governance priorities when candidates are elected through reservations. This could potentially hinder effective decision-making and the overall development of local governing bodies.

ONE NATION, ONE ELECTION

Why in the news?

The Union government has formed a committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind to examine the viability of the “one nation, one election” concept.

One Nation, One Election

- **“One Nation, One Election”** is a proposed electoral system that **aims to synchronize elections across all Indian states and the Lok Sabha (the lower house of parliament)**. This concept calls for a significant restructuring of the Indian electoral cycle, enabling voters to participate in both state assembly and Lok Sabha elections on the same day or through phased voting.
- **Historical Context:** Simultaneous elections were a standard practice in India until 1967. However, this practice began to change following the dissolution of certain Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969. The idea of reverting to simultaneous polls gained traction over the years:
 - **1983- Election Commission’s Proposal:** The concept of simultaneous elections was initially proposed in the annual report of the Election Commission in 1983.
 - **1999- Law Commission’s Inclusion:** The Law Commission’s report in 1999 also discussed the idea of “One Nation, One Election.”
 - **2017- Niti Aayog’s Working Paper:** In January 2017, Niti Aayog prepared a working paper on the subject, further exploring the feasibility of this electoral reform.
 - **2018- Law Commission’s Recommendations:** In April 2018, the Law Commission emphasized that implementing “One Nation, One Election” would require at least “five Constitutional recommendations.”

Challenges to Implementation

● Synchronization of Terms

- A critical challenge is aligning the terms of the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies to enable simultaneous elections.
- Currently, terms vary, leading to different completion dates. Some assemblies had elections recently, while others are due soon.

● Constitutional Amendments Required

- Achieving term synchronization necessitates amendments to several key articles of the Indian Constitution, including:

Article	Description
Article 83	Specifies the Lok Sabha's five-year term.
Article 85	Empowers the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha.
Article 172	Defines the legislative assembly five-year term.
Article 174	Empowers the Governor to dissolve the Legislative Assembly.
Article 356	Allows the Central Government to impose President's Rule under certain circumstances.

- Additionally, amendments to the Representation of the People Act and related parliamentary procedures are also necessary.

● Parliamentary Form of Government

- India's parliamentary system makes it accountable to the Lower House (Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly).
- Government can fall before completing its term, triggering the need for a new election, posing a challenge to the concept of fixed-term elections.

● Political Consensus

- Convincing all political parties to support "One Nation One Election" is a formidable obstacle.
- Parties may have differing views and interests, making consensus difficult to achieve.

Logistical Challenges in Implementing 'One Nation One Election'

- **Increased EVM and VVPAT Requirements:** Currently, one voting machine is utilized per polling station for elections. However, the move to simultaneous elections would necessitate double the number of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) since both Legislative Assembly and Lok Sabha elections would require separate sets.
- **Augmented Polling Staff:** Simultaneous elections would demand additional polling staff to manage the increased workload, further straining existing resources.
- **Transportation Challenges:** The logistics of transporting election materials to polling stations become more complex with the need for multiple sets of EVMs and VVPATs.
- **Enhanced Security Demands:** Conducting simultaneous elections would require a substantial increase in security arrangements. Central Police Forces would need augmentation to ensure the safety and integrity of the electoral process.
- **EVM Storage Issues:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) is already grappling with storage challenges for EVMs after individual elections. This problem would exacerbate with the accumulation of more voting equipment due to simultaneous elections.

Solutions for Implementing 'One Nation One Election'

- **Historical Precedent:** Drawing from India's electoral history, where simultaneous elections were held from 1951-52 to 1967, reaffirms the

feasibility and effectiveness of 'One Nation One Election.' This historical precedent can serve as a basis for implementing the concept.

- **Expanding to Local Body Elections:** India could consider extending the concept of simultaneous elections to include local body elections, further streamlining the electoral process.
- **Fixed Election Dates:** Emulating the United States, India could establish fixed election dates for national and state elections. For example, the Lok Sabha elections could be set to occur on a specific date every five years, ensuring synchronization.
- **Alternative Government Formation:** Under the current Parliamentary system, when a government falls before completing its term, India could explore alternative methods of government formation. This might involve inviting the second or third leading person in the house or a leader of a political party to form the government. Alternatively, the House could be provided with the chance to choose its leader.
- **Constitutional Amendments:** To facilitate synchronization, constitutional amendments could be made. For instance, if any state assembly's term is set to end within six months before or after Lok Sabha elections, the state election could be held concurrently with the Lok Sabha polls.

STATE OF THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

Why in the news?

India's RTI Act, once celebrated as one of the world's most comprehensive transparency laws, is now facing effectiveness challenges, raising concerns about its role in holding public officials accountable.

About Right to Information Act (RTI)

The Right to Information Act (RTI) was passed by the Indian Parliament in May 2005. It gives citizens the right to access information held by public authorities, except in cases where the information is

exempted under the Act. The RTI Act aims to promote transparency and accountability in government, and to combat corruption.



- **Coverage:** The RTI Act defines a "public authority" as any body or institution that is funded by the government, or that exercises a power or function in the public interest. This includes government departments, local bodies, public corporations, and private companies that provide a public service.
- **Time Frame:** Under the Act, citizens can request information from a public authority in writing. The authority is required to provide the information within 30 days, or give reasons for refusing to do so. If the citizen is not satisfied with the response, they can appeal to the Central Information Commission or the State Information Commission.
- **Information covered:** The Act defines information broadly to include any material in any form, such as documents, records, emails, etc. It also allows partial access to exempted information and disclosure of information in public interest.
- **Information Commissions and penalties:** The Act establishes Central and State Information Commissions to receive complaints, conduct inquiries and impose penalties. The Commissions have the powers of civil courts and can recommend disciplinary action against erring PIOs.
- The RTI Act has been hailed as a major step forward in promoting transparency and accountability in government. It has helped to expose corruption and inefficiency, and has empowered citizens to hold their governments to account.

Achievements of RTI Act:

- The number of RTI applications filed has increased steadily since the Act came into force. In 2021, a total of 3.2 million RTI applications were filed, up from 0.2 million in 2006.
- RTI applications have led to the uncovering of several scams and irregularities, including the 2G scam, the coal block allocation scam.
- RTI applications have also helped to improve the delivery of government services. For example, RTI applications have led to the closure of fake schools, the provision of benefits to eligible beneficiaries.

Earlier Problems with regard to the Right to Information Act (RTI):

- **Limited applicability to political parties:** The RTI Act does not apply to political parties, which are considered to be private bodies. It allows political parties to operate in secrecy and makes it difficult to hold them accountable.
- **Broad exemptions for the judiciary:** The RTI Act does not apply to the judiciary, except for information that is related to the administration of justice. It undermines the public's right to know about how the judiciary operates.
- **Broad exemptions for intelligence agencies:** The RTI Act does not apply to intelligence agencies, except for information that is related to the security of the state. This exemption has been justified on the grounds that it is necessary to protect national security. However, transparency activists argue that it allows intelligence agencies to operate in secrecy and makes it difficult to hold them accountable.
- **Lack of awareness:** Many people in India are not aware of the RTI Act, or they do not know how to use it. This makes it difficult for them to exercise their right to information.
- **Delays in responding to requests:** Public authorities often take a long time to respond to RTI requests. This can be frustrating for citizens, and it can also make it difficult to hold public authorities accountable.

- **Denial of information:** Public authorities sometimes deny RTI requests, even when the information is not exempted under the Act. This can be done for a variety of reasons, such as a desire to protect their own interests or to avoid embarrassment.
- **Harassment of RTI applicants:** RTI applicants are sometimes harassed by public authorities, such as by being threatened with legal action or by being denied government services. This can discourage people from exercising their right to information.

Recent Issues relating to amendments and Implementation of RTI Act:

- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** prohibits the disclosure of personal data of citizens by the government, even if there is a public interest. This could hamper social audits and accountability of public officials.
- **Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019** gives the Union Government the power to decide the tenure and salary of information commissioners, who hear appeals under the RTI Act. This could compromise their independence and autonomy.
- **Issues with RTI Implementation:**
 - Dependence on subordinate Rules set by Union and State Governments.
 - Delayed appointments to information commissions, affecting the timely resolution of appeals.
 - Inadequate online RTI portals and difficulties in filing applications and accessing information.

While the RTI Act has been instrumental in advancing transparency and accountability in Indian governance, there is a pressing need to address its shortcomings and ensure that it continues to serve as a robust tool for citizens to hold public officials accountable and promote good governance in the country.

LAÏCITÉ AND FRENCH SECULARISM

Why in the news?

The French government recently banned wearing the abaya in state-run schools, citing violations of the Laïcité principle, the French Concept of Secularism.

Laïcité: French Concept of secularism

- Coined in the 19th century, **Laïcité denotes the formal separation of the State and Church.**
- It advocates **removing religious values from the public sphere and replacing them with secular values like liberty, equality, and fraternity.**
- The core objective is to **foster tolerance and assimilation**, confining religion to the private sphere.
- The state plays a crucial role in upholding Laïcité in governance and public affairs.

Historical Roots of Laïcité

- Laïcité emerged following the **French Revolution in 1789.**
- It took concrete shape through **The Law of 1905**, establishing state-run secular schools during the Third Republic.
- The law guarantees freedom of conscience and worship unless it conflicts with public order.
- Although publicly funded Catholic schools exist in France, but most students attend free, secular public schools.

Demographic Shifts and Challenges

- Due to France's homogeneity, Laïcité faced limited issues during most of the 20th century.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, decolonisation in North Africa led to an influx of immigrants, mainly from Muslim countries. These demographic changes resulted in occasional tensions.

- Over the years, global and domestic events, such as 9/11, the rise of anti-immigration parties like the National Front, and attacks like Charlie Hebdo and Nice, increased anti-Muslim sentiments.
- The **Stasi Commission's** recommendation led to a 2004 law **banning "ostentatious" religious symbols in public spaces.**
- In 2011, **face-covering veils were prohibited.** These decisions shifted the focus towards Muslim practices.
- In 2020, following a teacher's beheading, **homeschooling was banned for children over three years old**, and Muslim leaders were asked to agree to a "charter of republic values."
- Until now, the **Abayas remained a grey area**, as they were considered fashionable garments tied to Arab culture.

COMPARING INDIAN AND FRENCH SECULARISM

Aspect	Indian Secularism	French Secularism
Definition of Secularism	Respects all religions, promoting harmony and equality	Religion strictly separated from the public sphere
Religious Attire and Symbols in Public Spaces	Allows religious attire and in public spaces	Bans certain religious symbols in public institutions
State Funding for Religion	Provides financial support to all religious institutions	Does not fund or support any religious practices
Approach to Religious Conflicts	Resolves conflicts through dialogue and legal means	Often leads to legal restrictions and bans on religious practices
Cultural and Religious Diversity	Embraces and celebrates cultural and religious diversity	Emphasises assimilation and faces challenges with multiculturalism

Way Forward:

- Promote education about Secularism to emphasise tolerance and equality.
- Ensure Secularism accommodates diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Encourage respectful dialogue among different groups.
- Provide clear guidelines to prevent misuse of secularism laws.
- Uphold individual rights while maintaining a secular public sphere.
- Implement Secularism without discrimination against any group.
- Adapt policies for a multicultural population.
- Encourage balanced public discourse on secularism issues.
- Regularly assess and adjust secularism policies to align with evolving societal values and needs.

By embracing these principles, societies can foster Secularism that respects individual freedoms, promotes social harmony, and accommodates the rich diversity of beliefs and cultures.

LAWS GOVERNING FORESTS OF THE NORTHEAST

Why in the news?

The Mizoram Assembly recently passed a resolution opposing the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023.

Key Features of Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023:

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, was enacted by both houses of the Indian Parliament, with approval from Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. This amendment revises the provisions of the existing Forest Conservation Act of 1980, primarily aimed at conserving forested lands.

- **Relaxation of Restrictions:**

- The amended Act expands the list of allowed activities on forest land, including conservation, management, and development efforts.
- It now permits activities such as zoos, eco-tourism, silvicultural operations, and others as specified by the central government.
- Specific surveys can also be excluded from non-forest purposes under central government terms.

- **Land Classification:** The Act classifies land under two categories:

1. declared or notified forests under various laws and
 2. land notified as forests after October 25, 1980.
- It does not apply to land changed from forest to non-forest use before December 12, 1996.

- **Exemptions:**

- The amendment permits the diversion of forest land for roads, railway lines, or **“strategic linear projects of national importance and concerning national security” within 100 kilometres** of India’s international borders or lines of control without requiring a forest clearance under the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) of 1980.

- **Land Assignment:**

- Under the amended Act, state governments or authorities can assign forest land through leases or other means to organisations not government-owned, subject to conditions prescribed by the central government.

- **Central Government Authority:**

- The Act grants the central government the power to issue directives for the effective implementation of the Act to any author-

ity or organisation under or recognised by the central, state, or union territory government.

Forest Land in Northeast India:

- **Recorded Forest Area (RFA) Dominance:**
 - Over half of the Northeast region is categorised as Recorded Forest Area (RFA).
 - Within RFA, 53% comprises unclassified forests managed by individuals, clans, village councils, or communities governed by customary practices.
 - The remaining RFA is notified forest under the jurisdiction of State Forest Departments.
- **Regional Variation in RFA:**
 - RFA percentages vary across Northeastern states, ranging from 34.21% in Assam to 82.31% in Sikkim.
 - Nagaland possesses the highest percentage of unclassified forests, accounting for 97.29% of its forested land.

Challenges and Limitations of Forest Laws in Northeast India:

- **Special Constitutional Protections:** Article 371A (Nagaland) and Article 371G (Mizoram) grant unique constitutional protections, requiring Legislative Assembly approval for applying specific parliamentary laws impacting customary laws, land ownership, and resources.
- **Nagaland's Selective FCA Application:** Nagaland has extended the Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA) primarily to government forests and certain wildlife sanctuaries, covering a limited portion of its forested terrain.
- **Conflicting FCA Notifications:** Contradictory notifications have arisen concerning the applicability of the FCA in Nagaland.
- **FCA Applicability Across Northeast:** Besides Nagaland and Mizoram, the FCA is in force in other Northeastern states, namely Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, Manipur, Sikkim, and Arunachal

Pradesh, each experiencing varying levels of forest land clearance under the FCA.

FRA Application in the Northeast:

- **FRA 2009 and Recognition of Rights:**
 - The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA) 2006 includes unclassified forests, among other categories, in its definition of "forest land," aligning with the 1996 Supreme Court redefinition.
 - The FRA recognises rights under state laws, autonomous district councils, or tribal customary laws.
- **Low FRA Implementation:**
 - Only Assam and Tripura in the Northeast have implemented the FRA.
 - Reasons for limited implementation include the perception that the FRA is irrelevant due to land ownership by communities, clans, chiefs, and individuals and the absence of forest-dependent forest-dwellers.
- **Mizoram's Shifting Stance:**
 - Mizoram initially extended the FRA and its Rules in 2009. Still, it reversed its decision in 2019, deeming the FRA irrelevant due to the absence of rights claims and citing a lack of funding from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Nagaland's Ongoing Deliberations:**
 - Under Article 371A, the Nagaland assembly has yet to decide on adopting the FRA, with a committee reviewing the matter for an extended period.

FRA Compliance under FCA:

- **Changing FRA Compliance Process:**
 - In 2009, the Environment Ministry mandated FRA compliance and Gram Sabha consent for forest diversion proposals managed by District Collectors.
 - However, the 2022 Forest Conservation

Rules eliminated the need for FRA compliance before final approval, shifting the responsibility to state governments.

- **Enhancing FRA Compliance:**

- States can take legal measures to ensure mandatory FRA fulfilment before recommending forest diversion and securing Gram Sabha's consent.
- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs can issue legally enforceable directions under the FRA or enact a separate law to safeguard forest rights during land diversion and relocation, aligning with its Business Rules.

NATIONAL JUDICIAL DATA GRID (NJDG)

Why in the news?

Recently, Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud publicly announced in the Supreme Court about integrating the Supreme Court with the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).

National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)

- NJDG is an online database containing information about orders, judgments, and case details from 18,735 District and subordinate Courts, High Courts and now Supreme Court.
- It's an integral part of the eCourts Project and can be accessed at <https://njdg.ecourts.gov.in/>
- NJDG provides real-time updates and detailed data, including information from the Taluka (sub-district) level to the Supreme Court of India.
- NJDG is developed as part of Phase II of the e-Courts project, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- The platform is a collaborative effort between the National Informatics Centre (NIC) and the in-house software development team of the Computer Cell, Registry of the Supreme Court.

Benefits of National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)

- NJDG serves as a monitoring tool to track and reduce case backlogs. For example, in the Supreme Court in 2023, there are 64,854 pending cases, largely due to legacy cases.
- It identifies bottlenecks in the judicial process. For instance, a sudden increase in land disputes can prompt policymakers to strengthen relevant laws.
- NJDG generates insights into specific areas of law. It's linked with Land Records data from 26 States for land disputes, providing valuable information for decision-makers.

Ease of Doing Business Recognition:

- The World Bank acknowledged the effectiveness of the National Judicial Data Grid in its Ease of Doing Business report for 2018.
- It was praised for its role in generating case management reports, simplifying the enforcement of contracts.

Data Accessibility:

- In line with the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) announced by the Government of India, the NJDG provides an Open Application Programming Interface (API).
- Central and State Government agencies can access NJDG data using a departmental ID and access key, facilitating institutional litigants in evaluating and monitoring cases.
- There are plans to extend this accessibility to non-institutional litigants in the future.

Recent Addition:

- NJDG has recently incorporated a feature to specify the reasons for case delays.
- This addition is valuable as it allows tracking the judiciary's challenges during case adjudication.
- It enables decision-makers to take targeted steps to address the growing backlog of cases.

The e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project:

- The e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project is a Government of India initiative to enhance access to justice through technology.
- It falls under the national e-Governance project of the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice.
- The project's inception is rooted in the 'The National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of ICT in the Indian Judiciary – 2005,' established by the e-Committee of the Supreme Court of India.
- Its primary objective is computerising district and subordinate courts to offer improved services to litigants, lawyers, and the judiciary.
- The project has been executed through a three-phase approach:

Phase	Objectives
Phase I (2011-2015)	Computerise 14,249 district and subordinate courts Launch of the national e-courts portal (ecourts.gov.in).
Phase II (2015-2023)	Computerise 18,735 district and subordinate courts, create NJDG
Phase III (Commencing in 2023)	Establish a unified technological platform for the judiciary, digitise all court records, universalise e-filing and e-payments, create virtual courts and eSewa Kendras

LEGISLATORS' IMMUNITY FROM PROSECUTION

Why in the news?

The Supreme Court has recently referred the question of whether legislators' legal immunity, as outlined in Articles 105(2) and 194(2) of the Constitution, extends to shielding them from criminal prosecution for the act of either giving or receiving a bribe to a seven-judge bench for further consideration.

Provisions related to Immunity and Privileges of Legislators

- The legal provisions that grant legislators immunity from prosecution are primarily outlined in **Article 105 of the Constitution**, which pertains to the **"powers, privileges, etc. of the Houses of Parliament and of the members and committees thereof."**
- Article 105(2) stipulates that **"No member of Parliament shall be subject to legal proceedings in any court for anything said or any vote cast by them in Parliament or any of its committees. Likewise, no individual shall be liable for legal action in relation to the publication of reports, papers, votes, or proceedings authorized by either House of Parliament."**
- In essence, this provision **exempts Members of Parliament (MPs) from legal consequences for statements made or actions taken during their official duties.** For example, they cannot be sued for defamation based on statements made within the House.
- Moreover, this immunity **also extends to certain non-members who have the privilege to speak in Parliament, such as the Attorney General of India or a Minister who is not a member.** In cases where a member's speech goes beyond acceptable boundaries, the Speaker of the House is responsible for addressing the matter, rather than the court.
- Similarly, **Article 194(2) extends this immunity to Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) at the state level.** It states that **"No member of a State Legislature shall be subject to legal proceedings in any court for anything said or any vote cast by them in the Legislature or any of its committees. Additionally, no person shall be liable for legal action in relation to the publication of reports, papers, votes, or proceedings authorized by a House of such a Legislature."**
- In the current case, the court is tasked with determining whether the legal immunity enjoyed by parliamentarians extends to protection from prosecution for acts involving bribery, including demanding or accepting bribes.

Collective Privileges	Individual Privileges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right to publish its reports, debates, and proceedings. • Right to exclude strangers from its proceedings • Right to make rules to regulate its own procedure • Right to punish members as well as outsiders for breach of its privileges • The courts prohibited inquiring into the proceedings of a House. • No person can be arrested without the permission of the presiding officer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members cannot be arrested during the session of Parliament 40 days before the beginning and 40 days after the end of a session. • Members have freedom of speech in Parliament, and no member is liable to any proceedings in any court • They are exempted from jury service when Parliament is in session.

The Current Supreme Court Case:

- Sita Soren, a Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) member, is facing accusations of accepting a bribe in exchange for her vote during the 2012 Rajya Sabha elections. A complaint prompted the Chief Election Commissioner to request a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry. The CBI filed charges against Soren, including bribery, criminal conspiracy, and misconduct under the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Corruption Act.
- Soren sought dismissal of the charges and legal proceedings, claiming immunity under Article 194(2) of the Constitution. The Jharkhand High Court rejected her plea in 2014. Consequently, she has approached the Supreme Court, seeking a review of the High Court's decision.

The significance of privileges:

- **Protecting Independence:** They ensure that members of Legislature can carry out their duties without external interference or intimidation.
- **Immunity from Arrest:** This protection allows

them to discharge their responsibilities without the fear of being detained or prosecuted.

- **Freedom of Speech:** Members of Legislature can speak openly and critically on various issues without the risk of legal repercussions.
- **Privilege of Confidentiality:** Legislators enjoy the privilege of confidentiality, which allows them to access and share sensitive information necessary for informed decision-making.
- **Privilege of Access:** Privileges grant lawmakers the privilege of access to critical information and resources that aid in their legislative functions. This access helps them make well-informed decisions and contribute effectively to the legislative process.
- **Checks and Balances:** These privileges are an essential component of the checks and balances within a democratic system. They contribute to maintaining the integrity of democratic institutions and enable them to function efficiently.

Challenges and issues related to Privileges:

- **Scope and Boundaries:** Defining the scope and boundaries of parliamentary privileges is a

challenge. While intended to protect legislative independence, they must be balanced with accountability and transparency, which can sometimes be in tension.

- **Conflict with Constitutional Principles:** Privileges may at times appear to contradict fundamental constitutional principles like equality before the law.
- **Misuse:** Instances of lawmakers misusing their privileges have often occurred.
- **Lack of Transparency:** The process of claiming and enforcing parliamentary privileges lacks transparency in India. This opacity can hinder efforts to hold lawmakers accountable for their actions and erode public trust in the legislative system.
- **Inadequate Oversight:** There is a notable lack of robust oversight mechanisms to monitor and enforce parliamentary privileges.

WOMEN'S RESERVATION BILL

Why in the news?

The bill proposing reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies was passed by the parliament.

Background:

- In 1996, the Lok Sabha saw the introduction of the Constitution (81st Amendment) Bill, aiming to reserve one-third of seats for women in Parliament and state legislatures. A Joint Committee recommended changes to ensure clarity in the wording and suggested extending reservations to the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Councils, even considering the inclusion of reservations for Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The committee proposed a 15-year reservation period, Subject to review.
- Attempts by BJP-led NDA Government From 1998 to 2004, the BJP-led NDA government made multiple efforts to pass the Bill. However,

these attempts faced opposition from coalition partners and other quarters.

- **Push by UPA** The UPA government took up the cause in 2008, introducing the Bill in the Rajya Sabha. It was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee, which recommended its passage without delay. In 2010, the Rajya Sabha passed the Bill with a two-thirds majority. Despite this, due to internal differences within the UPA and the Cabinet, the Bill never made it to the Lok Sabha and lapsed with the dissolution of the 15th Lower House.
- **BJP reiterated its commitment to the cause in its manifestos for the 2014 and 2019 elections.** The party recognized women as a significant constituency, benefiting from women-focused welfare schemes like the Ujjwala Yojna.

Why is it Required?

- **Increasing Women Participation:** Over the years, there has been a gradual and consistent rise in the number of women candidates contesting Lok Sabha elections, from a mere 45 in 1957 to 726 in 2019. This trend signifies growing interest and engagement of women in the political process.
- **Rising Women's Turnout:** Women's participation in the electoral process has also shown a positive trajectory. In 1962, 46.6% of women electors exercised their voting rights, and this figure increased to 67.2% in 2019. This demonstrates an increasing awareness and involvement of women in shaping the nation's future.
- **Disparity in Representation:** Despite the increasing participation of women in elections, their representation in the Lok Sabha remains disproportionately low. In the inaugural Lok Sabha in 1952, there were 22 women MPs, constituting 4.41% of the total 489 members. While the 2019 elections saw a record high of 78 women elected, it still only accounted for 14.36% of the total. This falls significantly short of the envisioned 33% reservation in the Women's Reservation Bill.

Various aspects of the Women's Reservation Bill

- **Empowerment of Women:** The Women's Reservation Bill would facilitate affirmative action, promoting the empowerment of women in the political sphere. Similar efforts at the grassroots level, such as the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which reserves seats for women in panchayats, have led to gender-sensitive decision-making, increased responsiveness to women's issues, and greater participation of women in local governance.
- **Decriminalization of Politics:** Increasing the representation of women in legislatures could potentially contribute to the decriminalisation of politics. Research indicates that women legislators are less likely to face criminal charges than their male counterparts. This could lead to cleaner and more ethical politics.
- **Distraction from Electoral Reforms:** Critics argue that the focus on women's reservation may divert attention away from other crucial electoral reforms, such as improving intra-party democracy, reducing the influence of money in politics, and enhancing transparency. These broader reforms are seen as necessary for improving the overall quality of Indian democracy.
- **Limiting Voter Choice:** Another concern is that reserving seats for women could limit voters' choices. In constituencies reserved for women, voters may not have the opportunity to elect their preferred candidate based on merit, regardless of gender. This could lead to situations where less-qualified candidates are elected simply because of gender-based reservations.
- **Incentive to Work:** Critics also argue that the rotation of reserved constituencies may limit the incentive for women MPs to work effectively. Knowing that they will not be re-elected from the same constituency in the next term may reduce their motivation to invest in long-term development projects in their constituencies.

The Women's Reservation Bill is a complex issue with both advantages and disadvantages. The debate surrounding it involves considerations of gender equality, effective governance, and electoral re-

forms, and policymakers must weigh these factors carefully when making decisions about its implementation.

DELIMITATION

Why in the news?

The Union Home Minister has confirmed in parliament that the Women's Reservation Bill will be implemented only after 2029, following the completion of a delimitation exercise.

About Delimitation:

- Delimitation is necessary to ensure equitable representation in legislative bodies, such as the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's Parliament) and state legislative assemblies.
- It involves redrawing electoral boundaries and allocating seats to reflect changes in population and prevent gerrymandering, which is the manipulation of boundaries to benefit a particular political party.
- Delimitation is carried out to uphold the principle that every person's vote should carry a similar weight in the electoral process.

Here's How Delimitation Is Carried Out In India:

- **Population Adjustment:** The primary objective of delimitation is to allocate Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies to states in a way that maintains a reasonably consistent ratio between the number of constituencies and the population of each state. This ensures that representation in these legislative bodies is proportional to the population distribution across states.
- **Geographical Division:** Delimitation also aims to divide geographical areas into electoral seats fairly. This is crucial to prevent gerrymandering, which is the manipulation of electoral boundaries to favour one political party over another. By dividing areas fairly, the process aims to create a level playing field for all political parties.

- **Constitutional Requirement:** The need for delimitation is enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Article 82 of the Constitution mandates the “readjustment” of seats in the Lok Sabha and the division of states into constituencies after each Census. Other articles, such as Articles 81, 170, 330, and 332, also reference this requirement when dealing with the composition and reservation of seats in legislative bodies.
- **Independent Delimitation Commission:** Delimitation is carried out by an independent delimitation commission appointed by the President of India. This commission is responsible for determining the number and boundaries of constituencies based on population data and geographical considerations.

What is delimitation



The process of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in the population.

The main task of the Delimitation Commission is redrawing the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies based on a recent census.

In the process, the number of seats allocated to states in Lok Sabha or in the Legislative Assembly may also change

It also reserves Assembly seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in accordance with the Constitution



- **Finality of Decisions:** To prevent indefinite delays in the electoral process, the decisions

made by the delimitation commission are considered final and unchallengeable in any court. This ensures that the delimitation process is not subject to prolonged legal disputes.

Last Delimitation:

- The most recent delimitation exercise in India took place in 2002. However, this exercise focused solely on redrawing the boundaries of constituencies and did not increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies. Consequently, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies has remained unchanged since 1976.
- According to the Constitution, the next delimitation exercise should be based on the first Census conducted after 2026, 25 years after the 84th Amendment Act of 2001. Typically, this would imply that delimitation should occur after the 2031 Census. However, the 2021 Census was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- If the house-listing phase of the Census is conducted in the following year, the actual population enumeration can occur in 2025. Typically, it takes a minimum of one to two years for the initial results to be published. This means that delimitation need not wait for the 2031 Census; it can also occur based on the delayed 2021 Census.
- If all goes smoothly and quickly, the 2029 general elections could be held with increased Lok Sabha seats resulting from the delimitation exercise. This would be contingent on the efficient completion of the Census and delimitation process.

Why Delimitation Becomes A Contentious Political Issue:

- **Changes in Seat Numbers:** Delimitation exercises can lead to changes in the total number of parliamentary and assembly seats. This can be a cause for concern for politicians and political parties because it affects their representation in legislative bodies.
- **Inter-State Seat Distribution:** Delimitation is based on the principle of allocating seats to

states based on their population ratios. This means that states with a higher population growth rate may gain more seats, while those with lower population growth may see a reduction in seats. This dynamic can lead to inter-state conflicts and political disagreements.

- **Regional Disparities:** Delimitation can accentuate regional disparities in political representation. States or regions that have actively promoted family planning and population control may feel that they are unfairly penalized by receiving fewer seats compared to states with less effective population control efforts.
- **Political Equilibrium:** Political parties often seek to maintain a delicate political equilibrium that allows them to hold power or influence at various levels of government. Delimitation can disrupt this equilibrium by altering the number of seats in favor of one party or region, leading to opposition and resistance.
- **Electoral Implications:** Changes in constituency boundaries can affect the electoral prospects of individual politicians and parties. Politicians may fear losing their existing constituencies or facing tougher electoral battles due to redrawn boundaries.
- **Political Manipulation:** In some cases, there are allegations of political manipulation in the delimitation process. Accusations of gerrymandering, where boundaries are adjusted to benefit a particular political party, can further intensify political disputes.

Why Was The Number Of Seats In Lok Sabha Frozen

The freeze on the strength of the Lok Sabha at 543 seats since the 1970s results from political decisions to address concerns related to delimitation and population control efforts. Here's a summary of the key developments that led to this freeze:

- **42nd Amendment (1976):** In 1976, the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi introduced the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment suspended the process of redrawing seat boundaries and seat allocation

until 2001. It was justified as part of an effort to promote family planning and population control.

- **Extension in 2001:** The freeze on the number of seats in Parliament and state legislative assemblies was extended in 2001 by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This extension was enacted as the Constitution (Eighty-Fourth Amendment) Act, 2002.
- **Motivation for the Freeze:** The "Statement of Objects and Reasons" for the 2002 Amendment explained that there were consistent demands both for and against undertaking fresh delimitation. To motivate state governments to pursue population stabilization efforts, the government decided to extend the delimitation freeze until 2026. The assumption was that by 2026, population policies would have worked effectively, leading to population stabilisation.

REPORT ON STATUS OF UNDERTRIALS

Why in the news?

A Parliamentary Panel on Home Affairs has put forward suggestions to tackle the problem of prison overcrowding in India.

About Undertrials in India:

- The situation concerning undertrials in India is a cause for serious alarm. In the year 2021, a striking 77% of the entire prison population in India consisted of undertrials, signifying that these individuals had not been formally convicted of any criminal offense. This represents a notable escalation from the 68% of undertrials recorded in 2019 and establishes the highest proportion of undertrials in any country globally.

Key Recommendations of the report:

Use of Ankle Trackers or Bracelets for Inmates:

- The Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs has suggested addressing prison overcrowd-

ing by introducing ankle trackers or bracelets. These tracking devices would be designed to be cost-effective and would be worn by individuals who have been granted bail and are temporarily released from prison.

- The primary objective behind these trackers is to closely monitor the movements of these individuals and ensure their compliance with their bail conditions. This proposal stems from the recognition that bail is often denied for three reasons: concerns about undertrial prisoners potentially influencing witnesses, attempting to leave the country, or engaging in further criminal activities while on bail.

Voluntary Use and Informed Consent:

- The report emphasizes the importance of upholding human rights and ethical principles in the use of ankle trackers.
- To prevent potential human rights violations, the panel recommends that the use of ankle trackers should be entirely voluntary.
- Inmates should provide informed consent before wearing these tracking devices.

Overcrowding and Delayed Justice:

- The committee acknowledges the significant issue of overcrowding in Indian prisons, which has led to delays in the delivery of justice for both prisoners and the overall criminal justice system.
- To alleviate this problem, the report suggests the transfer of prisoners from overcrowded facilities to other jails with available cells.
- Transfers can occur either within the same state or in jails located in different states.

Lack of Signal Jamming Technology:

- The panel has identified a technological deficiency in many State prison departments.
- This deficiency pertains to the absence of signal jamming technology or the possession of devices that can only block 2G and 3G network signals.

- The lack of effective signal jamming technology has allowed mobile phones to become a significant contraband item that is frequently smuggled into prisons.

Prison Statistics :

- According to data sourced from the National Crime Record Bureau for the year 2021, the report provides an alarming picture of India's prison situation. India boasts a total of 1,319 correctional facilities designed to accommodate 4,25,609 inmates. However, the actual number of incarcerated individuals surpasses this capacity, with a staggering count of 5,54,034 inmates, resulting in an occupancy rate of 130.2%. Within this inmate population, 4,27,165 individuals are undertrial prisoners, while 1,22,852 have been convicted.
- The report also draws attention to the growing number of female prisoners and a critical staffing shortage issue. Prisons are operating with a workforce that is roughly 30% below the required staffing levels, which adds to the complexity of the situation.

NATIONAL AND STATE PARTIES

Why in the news?

Official records obtained through the Right to Information show that many recognised national and state parties still use the assigned land in New Delhi even though they were not supposed to.

National Parties:

- A national party in India is typically understood as a political party with a presence across the entire nation, as opposed to regional parties confined to specific states or regions.
- However, being a national party does not automatically guarantee significant national political influence.

Criteria for Recognition as a National Party:

According to the Election Commission of India (ECI),

a political party can be recognised as a national party based on the following conditions:

- **State Party Recognition:** The party must be recognised as a state party in at least **four states**.
- **Vote Share and Seats:**
 - The party should have obtained a **minimum of 6% of the total valid votes in any four or more states** during the previous Lok Sabha or Assembly elections, with **at least four members of parliament** in the last Lok Sabha polls.
 - Alternatively, the party must have **won at least 2% of the total Lok Sabha seats in at least three states**.

Criteria for Recognition as a State Party:

To be recognised as a state party, a political party must meet **one of the following requirements**:

- **Minimum Vote Share and Members:**
 - The party should have obtained **at least 6% of the valid vote share** in the last Assembly elections and have at least **two members in the legislative assembly**.
 - Alternatively, the party should have **secured at least a 6% vote share** in the last Lok Sabha elections from the state, with at least **one member of parliament**.
- **Minimum Seats:** The party should have won a **minimum of 3% of the total seats** in the last Assembly elections, or at least three seats, whichever is higher.
- **Proportional Representation:** The party should have at **least one member of parliament for every 25 members allotted to the state** in the Lok Sabha, or any fraction thereof.
- **Minimum Vote Share:** The party should have obtained **at least 8% of the total valid votes** in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

Advantages of Obtaining National Party Recognition:

Being recognised as a national party entails several

benefits, including:

- **Exclusive Election Symbols:** National parties have reserved election symbols that their candidates across the country can use.
- **Land Allotment:** They can receive land in Delhi to establish a party office.
- **Increased Star Campaigners:** National parties are allowed up to 40-star campaigners, who play a crucial role in elections, compared to the 20 allowed for registered unrecognised parties. The expenditure on the campaign and travel of star campaigners is not added to the candidate's spending limit.
- **Broadcast/Telecast Facilities:** They can access broadcast and telecast facilities on Akashvani/Doordarshan during general elections.
- **Filing nominations:** The recognised national and state parties require only one proposer.

Current Status:

- As of May 2023, there are 6 national parties, 54 state parties, and 2,597 unrecognised parties in India
- **National Parties in India include:**
 - AAP: Aam Aadmi Party
 - BSP: Bahujan Samaj Party
 - NPP: National People's Party
 - BJP: Bharatiya Janata Party
 - CPI-M: Communist Party of India (Marxist)
 - INC: Indian National Congress

HINDI DIWAS

Why in the news?

On Thursday, September 14, 2023, the Prime Minister extended his greetings on 'Hindi Diwas,' an annual observance promoting the Hindi language.

Hindi Diwas

- Each year on September 14, India observes Hindi Diwas, a day that marks the adoption of Hindi as the official language of the country.
- On this day in 1949, the **Constituent Assembly of India recognised and adopted Hindi**—an Indo-Aryan language written in the Devanagari script—as the official language.
- The celebration of Hindi Diwas aims to promote and create awareness about the importance of the Hindi language in India's cultural identity. It serves as a reminder of the linguistic diversity and cultural richness of the country.
- Hindi is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India and plays a significant role as the Official language.

Hindi - the Official Language of India

- The Constituent Assembly of India, post-independence, chose Hindi as the country's official language after extensive discussion spanning three days.
- The choice was influenced by several considerations, including script and numeral choice. The languages considered for official status included Hindustani (with Urdu elements) and Sanskrit.

The Munshi-Ayyangar Formula

- To find a middle ground, the Munshi-Ayyangar formula, named after members of the Drafting Committee, K M Munshi and N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, was embraced as a compromise solution.
- As per **Article 343** of the Constitution, based on this formula, the **official language of India would be Hindi in Devanagari script**, while the **numerals used would follow an international form of Indian numerals**.

Continuation of English and the Official Languages Act

- Despite the above clause, the **Constitution allowed the use of English for all official union purposes for 15 years post-adoption**.

- After that, protests erupted due to fears of Hindi imposition. In light of this reaction, the Centre maintained English as an official language alongside Hindi under the Official Languages Act, of 1963.

PRELIMS QUESTION

Q1. With reference to Minorities, consider the following statements:

The term "minority" is not explicitly defined in the Constitution of India.

- According to the National Commission for Minorities Act of 1992, a minority community is defined as any community apart from Hindus.
- The Act designates the following communities as minorities: Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis (Zoroastrians).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

1. Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF)	Financial support for M.Phil and Ph.D. research scholars.
2. Nai Udaan	Free coaching for minority students for technical courses and exams.
3. Begum Hazrat Mahal National Scholarship	Scholarship for meritorious girls pursuing higher secondary education.
4. Naya Savera	Support for minority students preparing for competitive exams.

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q3. With reference to Interstate Water Disputes, consider the following statements:

1. The Constitution enables Parliament and Legislative Assemblies to create rules for resolving problems about how water is shared in rivers that flow through valleys between states.
2. As per the Indian Constitution, the Supreme Court does not have jurisdiction over Interstate Water Disputes.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 and 2

Q4. Consider the following:

1. Harangi
2. Hemavati
3. Ghataprabha
4. Malaprabha
5. Amaravati
6. Musi

How many of the following are tributaries of River Cauvery?

- (a) Only three
- (b) Only four
- (c) Only five

- (d) All six

Q5. Local self-government is most accurately described as a manifestation of:

- (a) Federalism
- (b) Democratic decentralization
- (c) Administrative delegation
- (d) Direct democratic engagement

Q6. Consider the following statements:

1. To become a member of a Panchayat, an individual must be at least 25 years old.
2. If a Panchayat is reconstituted due to premature dissolution, it will exist only for the remaining duration of its original term.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q7. In a parliamentary system of government, which of the following statements is true?

- (a) All political parties in the parliament have representation in the government.
- (b) The government is accountable to the parliament and can be ousted by it.
- (c) The government is elected by the populace and can be dismissed by them.
- (d) The government is selected by the parliament but cannot be dismissed by it before serving a pre-determined term.

Q8. Consider the following statements about Lok Sabha:

1. The Constitution has specified a term of five years for Lok Sabha.
2. Term of the Lok Sabha cannot exceed five years.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q9. With reference to Right to Information Act (RTI), consider the following statements:

1. Citizens have the right to access information held by public authorities under the Right to Information Act.
2. The RTI Act defines a “public authority” as any government-funded body or institution.
3. The definition of “public authority” excludes private companies that provide a public service.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q10. Consider the following:

1. Local bodies
2. Public corporations
3. Supreme Court Collegium
4. Private companies
5. National and State Political Parties

How many of the above mentioned institutions come under the ambit of RTI act?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only four

- (d) All five

Q11. With reference to Laïcité, consider the following statements:

1. Laïcité, an American Principle of Secularism, denotes a strict separation of the State and Church.
2. The Concept of laïcité, or Secularism, arose after the American Revolution 1776.
3. It guarantees freedom of thought and religion unless it disrupts public order.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q12. Consider the following:

1. Indian Secularism respects all religions, promoting harmony and equality.
2. French Secularism embraces and celebrates cultural and religious diversity.
3. Indian Secularism does not fund or support any religious practices.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q13. With reference to Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, revises the existing Forest Act of 1927 provisions.
2. Activities such as zoos, eco-tourism, and silvi-

cultural operations are now permitted on forest lands.

3. The Act allows the diversion of forest land for strategic linear projects of national importance within 10 km of India's international borders without a forest clearance.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q14. Consider the following:

1. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA) 2006 recognises rights under state, autonomous district councils, or tribal customary laws.
2. The FRA has been implemented in all North-eastern and Himalayan states.
3. The FRA 2006 originally mandated consent from Lok Sabha for forest diversion proposals managed by District Collectors.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q15. In which of the following list of Schedule 7 the Subject of prisons is mentioned?

- (a) Union List
- (b) State List
- (c) Concurrent list
- (d) None of the above

Q16. Justice Amitav Roy's Report is related to:

- (a) Prison Reforms
- (b) Privacy Law
- (c) Sedition Law
- (d) Performance of NITI Ayog

Q17. With reference to the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), consider the following statements:

1. NJDG provides real-time updates and detailed data, including information from the Taluka (sub-district) level to the Supreme Court of India.
2. NJDG is developed as part of Phase I of the e-Courts project, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
3. NJDG does not integrate data from computerised courts but relies on manual data entry.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q18. Consider the following:

1. National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a monitoring tool to track and reduce case backlogs, particularly in legacy cases.
2. NJDG generates insights into specific areas of law, notably in cases related to land disputes.
3. NJDG provides an Open Application Programming Interface (API) facilitating data access for government agencies and institutional and non-institutional litigants.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three

(d) None

Q19. Consider the following statements regarding undertrials:

1. The number of Undertrials in prison is greater than the number of Convicted.
2. It is mandatory for undertrials to wear ankle bracelets in India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q20. With reference to political parties in India, consider the following statements:

1. A political party can be recognised as a national party if it is recognised as a state party in at least three states.
2. To be recognised as a state party, a party should have at least one member of parliament for every 25 members allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha
3. A party can be recognised as a state party if it has secured at least a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha elections from the state, with at least one member of parliament.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q21. Consider the following:

1. National parties have reserved election symbols that their candidates across the country can use.

2. In the case of a registered unrecognised political party, the recognised national and state parties require only one proposer instead of a hundred electors.
3. The expenditure on the campaign and travel of star campaigners is also added to the candidate's spending limit.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q22. Consider the following Articles of the Constitution:

1. Article 105
2. Article 194
3. Article 84
4. Article 117

How many of the above articles are related to the Privileges provided to the Legislators:

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q23. Consider the following regarding Parliamentary privileges:

1. All the members of the Parliament enjoy the privileges.
2. Anyone who is not a member of Parliament cannot have these privileges.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

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

Q24. Consider the following statements regarding the Women's Reservation Bill:

1. The Women's Reservation Bill proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies for women
2. Several Indian states have enacted legal provisions to ensure 50% reservation for women in local bodies.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q25. Consider the following statements regarding the Women's Reservation Bill:

1. The 73rd amendments to the Constitution mandated the reservation of one-third of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions
2. The Bill proposes that reservation of seats for women will cease to exist 30 years after the commencement

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q26. Consider the following statements:

1. The Indian Constitution mandates delimitation after every Census, as per Article 82.

2. The 42nd Amendment Act in 1976 suspended delimitation until 2001.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q27. Consider the following statements:

1. The President appoints the delimitation commission.
2. Decisions made by the delimitation commission are final and not Subject to legal challenges.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q28. Examine the statements and answer the questions according to the instructions given below:

Statement 1: Hindi Diwas is celebrated on September 18.

Statement 2: On Hindi Diwas Day in 1949, the Constituent Assembly of India recognised and adopted Hind as the official language.

- (a) Statement -1 is true, statement -2 is true; statement -2 is the correct explanation for statement -1.
- (b) Statement -1 is true, statement -2 is true; statement -2 is NOT the correct explanation for statement -1.
- (c) Statement -1 is true, and statement -2 is false.
- (d) Statement -1 is false, and Statement -2 is true.

Q29. Consider the following:

1. As per Article 343 of the Constitution, based on the Rao- Manmohan formula.
2. The constitution allowed the use of English for all official union purposes for 99 years post-adoption.
3. Centre maintained English as an official language alongside Hindi under the Constitution of India.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answer
1.	c
2.	b
3.	a
4.	a
5.	b
6.	b
7.	b
8.	a
9.	a
10.	b
11.	c
12.	a
13.	b
14.	a
15.	b
16.	a
17.	b
18.	b

19.	c
20.	b
21.	a
22.	b
23.	a
24.	c
25.	a
26.	a
27.	b
28.	d
29.	d

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Recent years have witnessed significant changes in minority education schemes in India. Discuss the impact of these changes on minority education and highlight the importance of strengthening educational aid for minorities.

Q2. Discuss the constitutional provisions and mechanisms available in India for the resolution of interstate water disputes. Evaluate their effectiveness and suggest possible reforms.

Q3. "Discuss the evolving dynamics of reservation policies in India, considering the recent decision by the Gujarat state government to raise OBC reservations in panchayats and urban local bodies. Analyze the constitutional and social implications of such changes, and evaluate their impact on social justice and governance."

Q4. Discuss the potential advantages and challenges of implementing the 'One Nation, One Election' concept in India. Provide recommendations for a successful transition to simultaneous elections.

Q5. Discuss the Right to Information Act (RTI) highlighting its achievements and challenges related to recent amendments. Suggest measures to ensure effectiveness of RTI.

Q6. Discuss the Concept of Laïcité in France and its implications on religious freedom and cultural

diversity. Compare and contrast the principles of Secularism in India and France.

Q7. Analyse the challenges and limitations in implementing the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in the Northeast region and propose measures to enhance FRA compliance.

Q8. Analyze the significance of prison reforms in upholding human rights and promoting rehabilitation within the criminal justice system.

Q9. How do initiatives like the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) and the e-Courts Project contribute to making justice more accessible and efficient in India?

Q10. India's prison system faces a multitude of challenges, from severe overcrowding to ethical concerns surrounding the treatment of inmates. Analyze.

Q11. Analyse the criteria used by the Election Commission to recognise parties as national or state parties. How does the national party tag affect the visibility and influence of a political party?

Q12. Discuss the contemporary status of women's representation in Indian politics. Analyze the significance of the Women's Reservation Bill in addressing gender disparities in legislative bodies.

Q13. Discuss the significance of delimitation in the Indian electoral system. Analyze the reasons for the freeze on the number of Lok Sabha seats and its implications for political representation. How can the delimitation process be made more transparent and less contentious?

Q14. Discuss the historical significance of Hindi Diwas in India, highlighting the process and factors that led to the adopting of Hindi as the official language.

MATHEMATICS OPTIONAL

FOR UPSC CSE 2023-24

NEW TOPIC

Calculus

-

Paper-1

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ASEAN-INDIA ECONOMIC MINISTERS' MEETING

Why in the news?

Recently, the 20th ASEAN-India Economic Ministers' Meeting took place in Semarang, Indonesia. This event signifies a notable advancement in bolstering economic collaboration between India and the member nations of ASEAN.

About The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN):

- ASEAN is a regional organization that facilitates economic, political, and security collaboration.
- It was founded in August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, by signing the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by its founding members: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.
- ASEAN consists of ten nations situated in Southeast Asia: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- The leadership of ASEAN rotates annually, following the alphabetical order of the English names of its Member States.
- The ASEAN member countries

collectively house an estimated population of 666.19 million people and boast a combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of approximately USD 3.2 trillion.

Cooperative Domains between India and ASEAN:

India and ASEAN share a broad spectrum of collaborative areas, with ASEAN playing a significant role within India's Act East Policy.

These areas of cooperation encompass:

- **Annual Summits:** India engages in yearly summits with ASEAN nations. The formal interaction began in 1992 as a "Sectoral Dialogue Partner" and evolved into a "Dialogue Partner" in 1996. It advanced to a summit-level partnership



in 2002.

- **Trade and Investment:** The **India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** has propelled trade and investment ties. **ASEAN ranks India's 4th largest trade partner, with bilateral trade totalling \$110.4 billion from 2021-22.**
- **ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC):** In 2005, AIBC fostered closer business linkages between India and ASEAN nations.
- **Regional Connectivity:** Initiatives like the **India-Myanmar-Thailand (IMT) Trilateral Highway** and the **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project** aim to enhance connectivity with ASEAN countries.
- **Defence and Security:** Joint military exercises such as the **ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise** and **ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+)** underscore the deepening of defence cooperation. India's Indo-Pacific vision emphasizes ASEAN's pivotal role.
- **Socio-cultural Ties:** Cultural exchanges strengthen people-to-people connections. Programs like the **Students Exchange Programme**, **ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks**, and **ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series** are examples.
- **Education and Research:** The **ASEAN-India Centre at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)** promotes research on ASEAN-India relations.
- **Delhi Dialogue (2009):** An annual forum discussing politico-security, economic, and socio-cultural matters between India and ASEAN.
- **Funding:** Financial support is extended to ASEAN nations through the **ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund**, **ASEAN-India S&T Development Fund**, and **ASEAN-India Green Fund**.

Key Highlights of the Meeting:

Strengthening Economic Partnership:

- Emphasis on enhancing the **ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** for mutual benefits.

- Recognized the significance of promoting economic cooperation amidst pandemic-related challenges.
- It was noted that bilateral trade between India and ASEAN during 2022-23 stood at USD 131.5 billion, **contributing 11.3% of India's global trade** in the same period.

ASEAN-India Business Council (AIBC):

- Acknowledged AIBC's efforts in 2023, including the **5th ASEAN-India Business Summit** in March 2023 held in **Kuala Lumpur**.
- **AIBC, established by ASEAN and India in 2005**, aims to strengthen business ties and offer an industry perspective on deepening economic connections.
- Addressed concerns raised by businesses regarding **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)**, emphasizing increased interactions among stakeholders from both sides.

Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):

- NTBs are obstacles to international trade **that don't involve direct tariffs but impede the flow of goods**.
- Examples include **product-specific quotas, quality conditions imposed by importers, and unjustified sanitary and phytosanitary requirements**.
- Businesses' concerns about NTBs were acknowledged, reflecting the growing engagement between stakeholders from ASEAN and India.

INDIA - BHUTAN RELATIONS

Why in the news?

Recently, China and Bhutan convened the 13th Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Beijing, focusing on boundary delimitation. This event led to forming a collaborative Joint Technical Team responsible for delineating the China-Bhutan boundary.

Key Highlights of the Meeting

- The 13th Expert Group Meeting was marked by both nations reaffirming their dedication to accelerating initiatives to resolve the contested border issue.
- A blueprint was established for the imminent 14th round of boundary discussions to uphold the positive momentum.
- Deliberations during the meeting centred on the execution of the Three-Step Road Map, underscoring the resolve to adhere to the prescribed approach for expediting boundary negotiations.

Implications for India's Strategic Interests

In recent developments in China-Bhutan relations, India's strategic interests are being closely observed, particularly in the Doklam tri-junction, where the borders of India, Bhutan, and China converge.

- China has notably revived its territorial claim over **Bhutan's eastern region, Sakteng**, which encompasses a Wildlife Sanctuary and **shares its borders with India's Arunachal Pradesh state**. This region is paramount as China asserts its dominion over Arunachal Pradesh, referring to it as **"South Tibet."**
- The implications of this claim extend beyond Bhutan's boundaries, potentially serving as both a pressure tactic to coax Bhutan into acceding to its boundary-related demands and a direct challenge to India's sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh.
- Bhutan, historically a strong ally of India in the region, has traditionally received substantial economic and military support from India. Nonetheless, recent times have increased China's economic and diplomatic engagement with Bhutan, potentially diluting India's influence. This evolving dynamic underscores the importance of monitoring the situation as it could impact India's strategic standing.

Historical and Cultural Bonds:

- The foundation of India's relations with Bhutan

is deeply embedded in shared cultural heritage, including Buddhism, Hinduism, and various other traditions.

- Many Bhutanese pilgrims journey to India's sacred sites like Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Sikkim, and Udayagiri, reflecting the spiritual ties between the two nations.
- Bhutan notably stood among the initial nations to acknowledge India's sovereignty and independence in 1947. This acknowledgement began an enduring alliance characterized by Bhutan's consistent support for India's progress and modernization.

Strategic Collaboration and Security Cohesion:

- The **1949 Treaty of Friendship between India and Bhutan**, revised in 2007, is a testament to their enduring relationship, emphasizing mutual respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal matters.
- India's contributions to Bhutan encompass a range of critical areas such as defence, infrastructure, and communication. These contributions are pivotal in preserving Bhutan's territorial integrity and autonomous governance.
- An illustrative instance of the bond's strength emerged during the 2017 Doklam standoff involving India and China. Bhutan played a pivotal role by permitting Indian troops to access its territory to counter Chinese encroachments, highlighting the solidarity and cooperation shared between the two nations.

Economic Collaboration and Development Partnership:

- The **India-Bhutan Trade, Commerce, and Transit Agreement, initially signed in 1972 and updated in 2016**, establishes a framework for free trade between the two nations.
- Notably, **India is Bhutan's largest trading partner**, accompanied by economic aid for Bhutan's socio-economic advancement. The focus sectors include agriculture, irrigation, infrastructure, energy, health, education, and culture.

- Key exports from India to Bhutan include petrol, diesel, passenger cars, rice, wood charcoal, cellphones, soya-bean oil, excavators, electric generators, motors, and turbine parts.
- Conversely, prominent imports from Bhutan to India encompass electricity, betel nut, oranges, semi-finished iron or non-alloy steel products, and boulders.
- India's dominant role in Bhutan's investment landscape is evident, **contributing to 50% of the country's total foreign direct investment (FDI).**

Hydropower Collaboration:

- A robust hydropower partnership thrives within the **framework of the 2006 Agreement on Co-operation in Hydropower.**
- India's commitment to assisting Bhutan in developing a minimum of 10,000 MW of hydropower and importing surplus electricity from this capacity by 2020 underscores their energy collaboration.
- Operational hydroelectric projects, including **Chhukha, Kurichu, Tala, and Mangdechhu, with a total capacity of 2136 MW,** contribute significantly to Bhutan's electricity supply to India.
- Additionally, the implementation of two hydropower projects, **Punatsangchhu-I and Punatsangchhu-II,** under the Inter-Governmental mode is in progress.

Multilateral Engagement:

- Both nations actively participate in multilateral forums such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (**SAARC**), **BBIN** (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal), and **BIMSTEC** (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), fostering regional cooperation and collaboration.

People-to-People Connections:

- Approximately 50,000 Indian citizens contribute to Bhutan's workforce, predominantly in sectors like construction, education, and technical

consultancy related to infrastructure projects.

- India remains a sought-after educational destination for Bhutanese students, reinforcing solid ties.
- Cultural exchange between India and Bhutan thrives through various avenues, including delegations, artists, scholars, exhibitions, festivals, and more, facilitating a deeper understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

Challenges in India-Bhutan Relations:

- **Chinese Presence and Border Tensions:** China's increasing presence in Bhutan, particularly along the disputed border, raises concerns for India due to its strategic implications. While the India-Bhutan border has largely been peaceful, recent instances of Chinese border incursions like the 2017 Doklam standoff have introduced tensions among India, China, and Bhutan, potentially straining India-Bhutan relations.
- **Hydropower Development:** While India has significantly supported Bhutan's hydropower development, concerns have arisen within Bhutan about the terms of specific projects favouring India. Public opposition to these projects has emerged, leading to internal debates about the best approach to ensure mutual benefits.
- **Trade and Tourism Issues:** India is Bhutan's largest trading partner and a primary source of tourists. However, differences have emerged over trade and tourism policies. Bhutan's concerns regarding the environmental impact of trade and tourism on its delicate ecology and cultural heritage have led to discussions about regulations and potential entry charges for Indian tourists.
- **Education Trends:** Over time, the number of Bhutanese students pursuing tertiary education in India has declined significantly. From constituting 7% of all international students a decade ago, the figure now stands at 3.8%, reflecting changing educational preferences and potential challenges in people-to-people connections between the two countries.

Way Forward

- **Enhanced Regional Engagement:** Strengthening collaboration on regional multilateral platforms will foster stability and serve shared interests. Through such platforms, India and Bhutan can consolidate efforts for regional progress.
- **Open Communication to Ease Border Tensions:** Establishing transparent communication channels involving India, Bhutan, and China will be instrumental in easing border tensions. Open dialogue can contribute to a better understanding of each other's concerns and promote peaceful coexistence.
- **Resolving Hydropower Concerns:** Addressing apprehensions related to hydropower projects necessitates constructive conversations. Fair terms should be discussed to ensure these projects mutually benefit India and Bhutan while upholding their long-standing partnership.
- **Joint Policy Formulation:** A collaborative approach involving establishing a joint committee could facilitate the creation of sustainable policies. These policies should strike a balance between economic growth and the preservation of Bhutan's unique ecology and culture.
- **Education and Skill Development:** India's education and skill development assistance can be manifested through scholarships for Bhutanese students and professional training programs. Such initiatives will enhance Bhutan's human resource capabilities and deepen people-to-people ties.

15TH BRICS SUMMIT

Why in the news?

In the recently held 15th BRICS summit, it expanded its membership to include 6 more members.

Expansion: Highlight of the 15th BRICS Summit:

- The 15th BRICS Summit marked a significant

expansion of its membership, evolving from five to eleven countries. This move is aimed at strengthening its global influence.

- The inclusion of Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and Argentina enhances geographical representation across the Middle East, Africa, and South America.
- This expansion will come into effect on January 1, 2024.
- Their substantial economies and growth potential united the original BRIC members. The newly expanded BRICS-11 introduces greater diversity, with some members confronting challenges while others experience economic prosperity.

India's Role in the BRICS Summit:

- The BRICS Summit holds immense importance for India, especially since it marks the first face-to-face interaction after the India-China military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- Following bilateral discussions between the Prime Minister of India and the President of China, both nations have committed to intensifying efforts towards troop disengagement and de-escalation along the LAC.
- Leveraging the BRICS platform, India seeks to expand its partner network and enhance its global geopolitical influence.
- India perceives BRICS as a platform representing diverse perspectives rather than one that is exclusively against Western influences.
- A novel proposition from the Indian Prime Minister involves establishing a BRICS consortium for space exploration to foster collaboration in space technology and research.
- Furthermore, India's dedication to environmental and wildlife protection is evident through its call for collaborative efforts within the International Big Cat Alliance to safeguard endangered big cat species residing within BRICS nations.

Geopolitical Significance:

- The ongoing summit holds paramount impor-

SHARE OF GLOBAL

GDP 2023 EoY PROJECTION

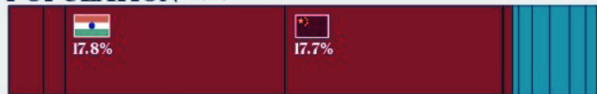


BRICS total with new members

29%

Saudi Arabia is the only trillion-dollar economy being added to BRICS.

POPULATION 2023



46%

Adding high-population-growth countries like Ethiopia means BRICS could soon represent over half the world's population.

OIL PRODUCTION 2022



43%

The addition of Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the UAE will more than double BRICS' share of global oil production.

EXPORTS OF GOODS* 2022



25%

BRICS' share of global exports will increase slightly, continuing to be led by China.

tance in the aftermath of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, an event that has reverberated across the globe, profoundly impacting global stability and security.

- Discussions within BRICS carry an inherent geopolitical weight, often seen as representing a perspective that contrasts Western influences.
- In light of the diplomatic efforts to “isolate” Russia due to the Ukraine conflict, the deliberations within BRICS gain heightened significance, potentially shaping broader geopolitical dynamics.

United Nations Reform:

- India and its BRICS counterparts share a cohesive stance, advocating for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations. This overhaul extends to the institution's Security Council, aiming to imbue it with greater attributes of democracy, representation, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Addressing Climate Change:

- BRICS member nations have achieved consensus on addressing the pressing challenges of climate change. Their collective commitment extends to facilitating a just, cost-effective, and sustainable transition towards economies characterized by low carbon emissions.
- This joint commitment underlines the shared belief that developed countries should lead

by example, embracing similar transitions and supporting developing nations as they strive for sustainable transformations.

- Additionally, BRICS nations express their opposition to trade barriers imposed by specific developed countries under the pretext of addressing climate change concerns, highlighting the intricacies of the intersection between climate policies and global trade dynamics.

BRICS Overview:

- BRICS is an acronym representing a coalition of prominent emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Origins and Formation:

- The term BRIC was coined in 2001 by British Economist Jim O'Neill to refer to the four emerging economies - Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was formally established during the inaugural meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers in 2006.
- South Africa became a part of BRICS in December 2010, leading to the adoption of the acronym BRICS.

Collective Share:

- BRICS effectively brings together five of the

world's largest developing nations, collectively accounting for 41% of the global population, 24% of the global GDP, and 16% of global trade.

Rotating Chairmanship:

- Leadership within the forum rotates annually among the members following the sequence of B-R-I-C-S

INDIA AND THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

Why in the news?

Murmansk, an Arctic hub and NSR origin, sees rising Indian involvement in cargo. India handled 35% of 8 million tonnes of cargo handled by the Murmansk port, about 2,000 km northwest of Moscow.

About Murmansk

- Murmansk Port, a significant seaport in **north-western Russia**, was established in 1916 to provide supplies to the Russian military during World War I.
- Situated in the largest city above the Arctic Circle in Russia, Murmansk, it rests on the shores of the **Barents Sea** on the **Kola Peninsula**.
- This port holds a pivotal role as an entry point to the Arctic region and stands as a crucial node along the Northern Sea Route—an Arctic Ocean shipping route connecting Europe and Asia.
- Its **ice-free waters permit year-round maritime operations**, solidifying its status as a vital hub for Arctic shipping

and trade.

Northern Sea Route (NSR)

- The Northern Sea Route (NSR) is the most direct shipping pathway for transporting goods between Europe and the Asia-Pacific nations, spanning across four Arctic Ocean seas.
- Extending for 5,600 km, the route **commences at the** border between the Barents and Kara seas, known as the **Kara Strait**, and **concludes at the Bering Strait** in Provideniya Bay.
- A September 2011 publication on the Arctic Institute's website highlights that the NSR offers potential distance savings of up to 50% in comparison to the currently utilized shipping routes through the Suez or Panama canals.

Making NSR Navigable- Russian Icebreaker

- Facilitating navigation along the NSR in the face of Arctic Ocean's year-round ice coverage necessitates the organization of icebreaking support.
- Russia stands as the only nation worldwide



equipped with a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers, as stated by Rosatom State Nuclear Energy Corporation, the overseeing body of NSR infrastructure.

- A groundbreaking milestone occurred in December 1959 with the launch of the world's inaugural nuclear icebreaker, "Lenin," marking a pivotal juncture in NSR's evolution. Its active service spanned three decades before decommissioning.
- Presently, FSUE Atomflot, a Rosatom subsidiary, takes charge of operating the fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers, which consists of seven vessels, in addition to a nuclear-powered container ship. The fleet is slated to welcome three new additions into commission between 2024 and 2027.

What motivates India to engage in NSR development?

Cargo Traffic Growth and Energy Supplies:

- One significant driving factor behind India's involvement in the development of the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is the remarkable growth in cargo volume, which reached a substantial 34.117 million tonnes in the previous year.
- India's mounting import requirements for crucial resources like crude oil and coal from Russia play a pivotal role in this scenario.

Strategic Geographical Position and Maritime Trade:

- India's unique geographical location amplifies the importance of the NSR as a vital transit route.
- Situated with a strategic advantage, the nation's heavy reliance on sea transportation for trade adds to the significance of leveraging the NSR's potential benefits.

Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor (CVMC) Project:

- Born from a memorandum of intent signed in September 2019 between India and Russia, the CVMC project is being explored as a means to

link with the NSR for facilitating international container transit.

- The corridor's extensive span of 10,500 km, traversing through the Sea of Japan, South China Sea, and Malacca Strait, holds the promise of significantly reducing transport time.
- This time-saving potential becomes evident when compared to the existing St. Petersburg-Mumbai route that spans 16,000 km.

Geostrategic Considerations:

- Beyond these economic and logistical factors, discussions among experts revolve around the possibility of collaborative influence from China and Russia over the NSR.
- This geopolitical dimension adds an additional layer of consideration for India's engagement in NSR development.

Arctic Region's Significance to India

Abundant Resource Potential:

- This largely unexplored area is speculated to contain a significant portion of the Earth's remaining hydrocarbon resources.
- Shyam Saran, a former Foreign Secretary, highlighted in an article that the Arctic might harbour over 40% of the global reserves of oil and gas, in addition to possible deposits of coal, zinc, and silver.
- It's important to note that India's approach to the region's economic development aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined in its 2022 Arctic Policy.

Historical Engagement:

- India's connection with the Arctic dates back to the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in February 1920 in Paris.
- This treaty marked an early point of engagement. Over time, India has expanded its involvement through extensive scientific studies and research endeavors in the Arctic.
- These efforts encompass a wide spectrum of

fields, including atmospheric, biological, marine, hydrological, and glaciological studies.

Scientific Endeavours and Facilities:

- India's commitment to Arctic research is evident through its establishment of significant scientific infrastructure. In 2008, India set up the Himadri research station at Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard.
- Subsequently, the country launched a multi-sensor moored observatory in 2014 and a northernmost atmospheric laboratory in 2016.
- A total of thirteen successful Arctic expeditions were carried out until the previous year, underscoring India's active scientific engagement.

Arctic Council Participation:

- India's growing involvement with the Arctic was further solidified in May 2013 when it became an observer-state of the Arctic Council, a prominent international forum focused on Arctic affairs.
- This status, shared with five others, including China, reflects India's recognition as a stakeholder in the region's developments.

In a rapidly changing world, where the Arctic is undergoing transformative environmental shifts, geopolitical dynamics, and economic opportunities, India's proactive involvement underscores its commitment to responsible global citizenship. As India continues to balance economic interests with environmental consciousness, its active engagement in the Arctic region sets a positive precedent for international collaboration, scientific exploration, and sustainable development.

MULTILATERALISM

Why in the news?

Multilateralism, as we knew it in the post-Cold War era, has reached a turning point, with signs of decline evident at both the global and regional levels. This week's East Asia Summit in Jakarta and the G20 summit in Delhi underscore the profound and pos-

sibly irreversible challenges facing the traditional multilateral framework.

About Multilateralism:

Multilateralism is a diplomatic approach in international relations where multiple countries collaborate to address common challenges or achieve shared objectives. **It involves the participation of three or more countries and often includes engagement from other actors, such as civil society or the private sector.** Multilateralism is built on foundational principles like consultation, inclusivity, and solidarity.

Key multilateral organisations that play a significant role in addressing global issues include:

- **United Nations (UN):** Established in October 1945, the UN comprises 193 member states and is dedicated to addressing a wide range of global problems. Its focus areas include peace and security, sustainable development, human rights, humanitarian assistance, gender equality, and more.
- **World Health Organization (WHO):** Founded in April 1948, WHO operates on the premise that health is a fundamental human right. It strives to ensure that all individuals attain the highest possible physical, mental, and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity.
- **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD):** Established in 1961, OECD succeeds the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation and is a global organization dedicated to shaping policies that promote prosperity, equal opportunities, and overall well-being for all.

Some key reasons why multilateralism is crucial:

- **Global Challenges:** Contemporary global challenges, such as climate change, poverty, inequality, and migration, are complex and transcend national borders. These issues affect rich and poor countries, and their solutions require coordinated efforts globally.
- **Climate Change and Migration:** The impact of climate change is expected to lead to significant

migration in regions like Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. Multilateral cooperation is essential to mitigate the effects of climate change and manage migration flows effectively.

- **Emerging Threats:** Natural disasters, terrorism, cyber warfare, and health pandemics are rising. Multilateral collaboration is critical for preparedness, response, and prevention in the face of these growing challenges.
- **Poverty and Inequality:** Multidimensional poverty exists not only in low-income countries but also in middle-income countries. Addressing poverty and inequality globally necessitates collective action and cooperation among nations.
- **Social Inclusion:** In regions like South Asia, a significant portion of the population is at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Multilateral efforts can promote social inclusion and support vulnerable populations.
- **Maintaining Peace and Prosperity:** Multilateralism has been fundamental in maintaining peace and prosperity since the end of World War II. International organisations like the United Nations have played a central role in preventing conflicts and promoting stability.
- **Financial Stability:** Multilateral cooperation has been critical in addressing global financial crises and promoting international financial stability. Institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) work to stabilize the global economy through multilateral efforts.

Multilateralism is currently facing significant challenges:

- **Waning Support:** There is a decline in widespread support for multilateralism, with some countries showing less enthusiasm for international cooperation. This reduced commitment hinders the effectiveness of multilateral efforts.
- **Growing Chauvinism:** Nationalism and chauvinistic tendencies are rising in some parts of the world. These tendencies prioritize individual national interests over collective global well-being, undermining the spirit of cooperation.

- **Protectionism:** Protectionist policies and trade barriers are being erected by some nations, hindering global trade and economic cooperation.
- **Impact on Developing Countries:** The challenges directly affect the lives of the poorest and most vulnerable, especially in developing countries. These nations often rely on international cooperation and assistance to address their pressing issues.
- **Decreased Funding:** While Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding to multilateral development organisations had been increasing in previous years, there is a risk that this trend could reverse due to rising mistrust in multilateralism. Reduced funding can limit these organisations' capacity to address global challenges effectively.

Way forward:

- Engaging all stakeholders beyond governments.
- Utilizing technology and social media for transparency and communication.
- Adapting to address 21st-century challenges.
- Prioritizing shared values, especially human dignity.
- Building resilient communities and promoting social equality.
- Strengthening accountability, transparency, and inclusivity.
- Forming a global compact involving all parties.
- Amplifying the voices of marginalized groups.

G20, ORIGINS AND PREVIOUS SUMMITS

Why in the news?

The G20 Heads of State and Government Summit in New Delhi concluded on September 9 and 10, marking the 18th annual summit. This event represents the culmination of year-long G20 processes, including

meetings among ministers, senior officials, and civil societies.

About G20 (Group of 20)

• Origins:

- The G20 was established in 1999 in response to the financial crisis that had a significant impact on East Asia and Southeast Asia in the late 1990s.
- Middle-income nations were encouraged to

participate in order to ensure global financial stability.

- On the advice of the G7 Finance Ministers, the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors began convening meetings to examine the reaction to the global financial crisis that happened.

• Objectives:

- Policy collaboration among its members to ensure sustainable growth and global eco-

G20 Members

The Group of Twenty (G20) comprises 19 countries (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States) and the European Union. The G20 members represent around 85% of the global GDP, over 75% of the global trade, and about two-thirds of the world population



Argentina



Australia



Brazil



Canada



China



France



Germany



India



Indonesia



Italy



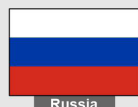
Japan



Mexico



Republic of Korea



Russia



Saudi Arabia



South Africa



Türkiye



United Kingdom



United States of America



European Union

Invitees



Bangladesh



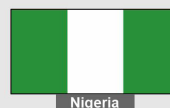
Egypt



Mauritius



Netherlands



Nigeria



Oman



Singapore



Spain



UAE

Invited International Organisations

In addition to the regular International Organisations (UN, IMF, WB, WHO, WTO, ILO, FSB and OECD) and Chairs of Regional Organisations (AU, AUDA-NEPAD and ASEAN), India, as G20 Presidency, will be inviting ISA, CDRI and ADB as Guest IOs.

conomic stability;

- To encourage financial rules that lower risks and stop upcoming financial catastrophes; and
- To create a new international financial architecture.

● **Members & guests:**

- **Members:** Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.
- Spain has also been invited as a permanent invitee.

- Every year, the Presidency invites guest countries to participate fully in the G20 exercise.
- Numerous international and regional groups also take part, giving the meeting a more diverse presence.

● **Presidency of G20 & Troika:**

- The G20 presidency is rotated among members each year.
- The country holding the presidency, along with the previous and future presidency-holders, constitute the 'Troika' to assure the G20 agenda's continuation.
- In 2023, the troika is composed of Indonesia, India, and Brazil.

A Brief Overview of All Previous G20 Summits

Year	Month	Presidency Country	Key Outcomes
2008	November	USA	The first G20 summit was held in Washington DC, focusing on Global Financial Market Reform, Common principles for financial market reform, Action plan
2009	April	United Kingdom	The second G20 summit in London, addressing the global economic crisis, \$5 trillion stimulus to global economy; IMF resources pledge; Strengthening of financial oversight and regulation
2009	September	USA	The third G20 summit in Pittsburgh, designating G20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation.
2010	June	Canada	The fourth G20 summit in Toronto, addressing the fragile global economy and deficit reduction commitments.
2010	November	South Korea	The fifth G20 summit in Seoul, featuring development policy issues known as the 'Seoul Development Consensus.' Inclusion of development policy issues.
2011	November	France	The sixth G20 summit in Cannes, focusing on international monetary system reform; Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) established

2012	June	Mexico	The seventh summit in Los Cabos focussed on Addressing youth unemployment and quality job creation; Link between development, agriculture, and environment
2013	September	Russia	The Eighth Summit led to passing of Agreement on automatic exchange of tax information; Action Plan on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)
2014	November	Australia	The Brisbane summit set ambitious goals to increase collective GDP by 2%; Reducing gender gap in the labor force by 25% by 2025
2015	November	Turkey	The 10th summit focussed on migration and refugee crisis; Financial sector reforms; Support for climate change plans
2016	September	China	The G20 summit in Hangzhou, China, included the digital economy in the agenda for the first time and adopted the 'G20 Action Plan on 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.
2017	July	Germany	The summit in Hamburg, Germany, emphasized counter-terrorism efforts and reaffirmed the importance of the Paris Agreement on climate change.
2018	November-December	Argentina	The summit in Buenos Aires, Argentina, reaffirmed support for the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, addressed climate change, and emphasized multilateral trade and WTO reform.
2019	June	Japan	The summit in Osaka, Japan, focused on combatting the exploitation of the Internet for terrorism and urged online platforms to prevent the spread of extremist content.
2020	November	Saudi Arabia	Held via video conference due to COVID-19, leaders pledged to work together to overcome the pandemic and build a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future.
2021	October	Italy	The Rome summit committed to fighting climate change, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees and achieve global net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century.
2022	November	Indonesia	The Bali summit was the first physical leaders' meeting since the COVID-19 pandemic and condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the use or threats of nuclear weapons.

G20 NEW DELHI LEADERS' SUMMIT DECLARATION

Why in the news?

The **G20 New Delhi Leaders' Summit Declaration** marked a significant achievement as G20 members reached a unanimous consensus during the opening day of the Summit on 9th September 2023.

About G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration:

- The G20 Leaders' Summit Declaration, held in New Delhi under the theme '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**,' emphasises the unity of humanity and our shared responsibility for the planet's future.
- It recognises the world's challenges, including economic headwinds, environmental threats, rising inequalities, and the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups.
- It aims to empower countries to address global challenges in a human-centric manner, fostering prosperity and well-being for all.

Significant Highlights of the New Delhi Declaration:

- **Ukraine War:**
 - All states are urged to adhere to the principles of the UN Charter, refrain from using force for territorial acquisition, and avoid using or threatening nuclear weapons.
 - Peaceful conflict resolution, diplomacy, and dialogue are emphasised.
- **Grain/ Food / Energy Security:**
 - Russia and Ukraine are called upon to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of grain, food, and fertilisers.
 - Maintaining food and energy security is stressed, with a warning about potential market volatility.
- **Economies & Financial Markets:**
 - Commitment to protect vulnerable popula-

tions through equitable economic growth and financial stability is reiterated.

- There's a mention of a previous exchange rate commitment and endorsement of recommendations for regulating crypto-assets.
- Encouragement for fair competition and discouragement of protectionism is included.

- **Climate Change:**

- The need to phase down coal power, support low-carbon transitions in developing countries, and triple global renewable energy capacity by 2030 is highlighted.
- There's also an emphasis on sustainable finance, carbon pricing, and achieving carbon neutrality.
- Financial commitments for climate goals and a call to set a new collective climate finance goal in 2024 are mentioned.

- **Global Debt Vulnerabilities:**

- Commitment to address debt vulnerabilities in developing countries
- A call for swift debt treatment for Ethiopia.

- **Health:**

- Commitment to strengthen global health architecture, enhance the resilience of health systems
- Develop climate-resilient and low-carbon health systems in collaboration with multi-lateral banks.

The declaration symbolises G20 member nations' commitment to a more inclusive, sustainable, and harmonious world, reinforcing the G20's role as a vital platform for global collaboration and action. It also boosts India's leadership in the Global South by welcoming the African Union as a permanent member.

In essence, it reaffirms the G20 nations' dedication to collaborative endeavours for a better and more prosperous global future.

SUMMARY OF G20 NEW DELHI DECLARATION

Chapter Title	Key Topics/Elements
A Strong, Sustainable, Balanced, and Inclusive Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global economic situation Advancing financial inclusion Combating corruption Implementation of the Action Plan against Fugitive Economic Offenders for international cooperation and anti-corruption efforts
B Accelerating Progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating hunger and malnutrition Healthcare collaboration Quality education Concerns about the economic impact of future pandemics Gaps in pandemic response mechanisms Enhancing teachers' capacity, curriculum improvement, digital resources for all children
C Green Development Pact for a Sustainable Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean, sustainable, and inclusive energy transitions Establishing reliable and sustainable value chains for critical minerals and technologies
D Multilateral Institutions for the 21st Century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform of international financial institutions UN Security Council reform Strengthening Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) for greater effectiveness
E Technological Transformation & Digital Public Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building digital public infrastructure Managing crypto-assets Responsible harnessing of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Establishment of a Global Digital Public Infrastructure Repository (GDPIR)
F International Taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to a Globally Fair and Modern Tax System Implementation of Two-Pillar International Tax Package Global Anti-Base Erosion (GloBE) Rules Crypto-Asset Reporting Framework (CARF)
G Gender Equality and Empowering all Women and Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting equal rights for women in economic resources, property ownership, financial services, and inheritance Support for women's organizations Addressing gender gaps in agricultural access Creation of a working group on women's empowerment
H Financial Sector Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for Financial Stability Board (FSB) and standard-setting bodies (SSBs) Convergence in Cyber Incident Reporting G20 Roadmap for Enhancing Cross-border Payments Promoting sustainable capital flows
I Countering Terrorism and Money Laundering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong condemnation of terrorism in all forms Commitment to international peace and security
J Creating a More Inclusive World	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> African Union's permanent membership in the G20 Promotion of respect for religious and cultural diversity Condemnation of acts of religious hatred

PARTNERSHIP FOR GLOBAL INFRA-STRUCTURE INVESTMENT (PGII)

Why in the news?

On September 9, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled the expanded Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor program.

About the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII):

- The PGII emerged from an **announcement made during the G7 summit in the UK in June 2021.**
 - The G7 comprises the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the European Union (EU).
- Initially, the initiative was termed the **Build Back Better World (B3W)** framework, as US President Joe Biden proposed.
- The PGII was officially launched during the **G7 summit in Germany in 2022.**
- It is a collaborative **effort to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries** through public and private investments.
- The PGII was developed in **response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, which finances infrastructure projects on a global scale.
- **Funding Goal:** President Biden aimed to **mobilise approximately \$600 billion from G7 member countries by 2027.**

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

- Under President Xi Jinping, China initiated the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013.
- The BRI aimed to revitalise historical trade routes connecting China to regions as far as Europe, including Rome, in a massive infrastructure development effort.

Criticism of BRI:

- **Debt Sustainability:**
 - China faced criticism from Western countries and others for providing loans for infrastructure projects that could result in unsustainable debt burdens for recipient countries.
 - In many cases, Chinese companies were awarded contracts for the projects.
 - A 2019 World Bank report raised concerns that among the 43 corridor economies examined, 12 could face unsustainable debt situations, potentially leading to the transfer of public assets to foreign contractors or China.
 - **India's Opposition:**
 - India opposed the BRI because it included the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which ran through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.**
 - India emphasised the need for transparency and respect for sovereignty in connectivity initiatives.
 - **Italy's Concerns:**
 - Italy, **the only G7 member involved in the BRI**, also expressed concerns about the benefits of enhanced trade connectivity.
- ### Announcements of PGII Initiatives:
- **Projects in Indonesia:**
 - Recent announcements included various projects in Indonesia, spanning clean energy and telecommunications, among other sectors.
 - **Health Infrastructure Investment in India:**
 - India was also part of the PGII discussions, resulting in investments in its health infrastructure.
 - The **U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** pledged over \$15

million for India's health infrastructure, supporting initiatives such as the expansion of eye clinics and the production of affordable women's hygiene products for underserved areas.

- **EU's Global Gateway Program:**

- The **European Union (EU) unveiled its Global Gateway program**, which aims to activate \$300 billion in investments for critical connectivity projects from 2021 to 2027.
- Half of this funding is allocated to Africa, with over 90 projects identified in various regions, including Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Pacific, and the Western Balkans.

Challenges and Considerations:

- China's Belt and Road Initiative (**BRI**) has been **adapting to address criticisms, focusing on a "Green BRI"** and reducing high-risk overseas infrastructure investments.
- **China's capacity for investment remains substantial** compared to the G7, which must navigate political consensus within their countries and rely on private sector participation.
- **While PGII offers an alternative, it also presents competition with BRI.** Success in diversifying infrastructure options for countries with requirements could lead to mutually beneficial outcomes.

INDIA-SAUDI ARABIA RELATIONS

Why in the news?

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman recently visited New Delhi for the G20 Leaders' Summit and a State Visit.

Diplomatic Relations and Milestones

India and Saudi Arabia established diplomatic relations in 1947. The two countries have enjoyed cordial and friendly relations rooted in their socio-cultural and economic ties that span centuries.

Several significant milestones have contributed to strengthening their bilateral relationship:

- **Delhi Declaration and Riyadh Declaration:**

- In 2006, King Abdullah's visit to India resulted in the signing of the Delhi Declaration, which was followed by the Riyadh Declaration in 2010. These declarations marked the elevation of bilateral ties to a strategic partnership.

- **Visit of Prime Minister Modi:**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Riyadh in 2016 further enhanced cooperation in the political, economic, security, and defence realms.
- His visit was significant as he was **conferred with King Abdulaziz Sash, Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honour**, indicating the importance attached to the relationship.

- **Crown Prince Mohammed's Visit:**

- Crown Prince Mohammed's visit to India in 2019 propelled the momentum further. During this visit, Saudi Arabia announced an approximately \$100 billion investment in India.
- Multiple agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were signed in various fields, including the **kingdom's entry into the International Solar Alliance** launched by the Indian Prime Minister.

- **Strategic Partnership Council:**

- During Modi's visit to Riyadh in October 2019, the **Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Agreement** was signed.
- This agreement established a high-level council with subcommittees on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation, and Economy and Investments.

Key Pillars of the Relationship

- **Economic Ties:**

- India ranks as the second-largest trading partner of Saudi Arabia, while Saudi

Arabia holds the position of being India's fourth-largest trading partner.

- Bilateral trade reached \$52.76 billion in the financial year 2022-23, accounting for 4.53% of India's total trade.
- Numerous Indian companies, such as L&T, Tata, Wipro, TCS, TCIL, and Shapoorji Pallonji, have established a strong presence in Saudi Arabia, with approximately 2,783 Indian companies registered in the kingdom.
- Saudi Arabia's direct investments in India amount to \$3.15 billion.

● Energy Cooperation:

- Saudi Arabia is crucial for India's energy security, being its third-largest source of crude and petroleum products.
- In the financial year 2022-23, India imported 39.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, accounting for 16.7% of India's total crude imports.
- Additionally, Saudi Arabia provided 7.85 MMT of LPG imports to India, constituting 11.2% of its total petroleum product imports.

● Defense Partnership:

- The defence partnership between India

and Saudi Arabia has witnessed significant growth in recent years. Both countries co-operate through the **bilateral naval exercise called Al Mohed al Hindi**.

- Furthermore, they cooperate closely in defence industries, capacity-building, and joint exercises.

● Indian Diaspora:

- The Indian community in Saudi Arabia, consisting of **over 2.4 million individuals**, is widely respected for contributing to the kingdom's development. The Indian diaspora serves as a living bridge between the two countries.
- The Saudi government has taken excellent care of the Indian diaspora, supporting their well-being, evacuating stranded Indian na-



tionals, and assisting Indian Hajj and Umrah pilgrims.

Outcomes of Prince Mohammed's Recent Visit to India

- **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:**
 - During the G20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi, Prince Mohammed of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and President Joe Biden announced the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
 - This massive infrastructure project aims to connect India to Europe via West Asia and could rival China's Belt and Road Initiative.
- **1st Meet of India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council:**
 - Prince Mohammed stayed in India for a State Visit and co-chaired the first meeting of the India-Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council with Prime Minister Modi.
 - The two sides signed eight agreements, upgrading their energy partnership to cover renewable, petroleum, and strategic reserves.
 - They also established a **joint task force for \$100 billion in Saudi investment**, discussed trading in local currencies, and expedited negotiations for a **free trade agreement between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council**.

Challenges in Bilateral Ties:

- **Energy Security:** India's energy security relies heavily on Saudi Arabia, and any instability in the region or shifts in Saudi Arabia's oil policies could have significant consequences for India's energy supply.
- **Geopolitical Considerations:** India's diplomatic relations with other Middle Eastern nations, such as Iran, can potentially influence its interactions with Saudi Arabia, adding complexity to the geopolitical landscape.
- **Economic Factors:** Despite substantial trade volumes and a substantial Indian expatriate popula-

tion in the Gulf region, cross-border investments between India and the Gulf monarchies have remained minimal for many years. Both nations are actively addressing this challenge.

- **Security Challenges:** India has exercised caution when considering security partnerships with Gulf states whose security establishments have historically had close ties to Pakistan.
- **Strategic Competition:** China's increasing presence and influence in the Gulf region challenge India. China's Belt and Road Initiative, which includes the construction of ports and infrastructure projects in the Gulf, could potentially impact India's strategic interests in the region.

Way Ahead for India – Saudi Arabia Relations:

- **Cooperation on Global Platforms:** Both countries need to continue working together on global platforms, such as the United Nations, G20 Summit, and OPEC, to influence decisions on major international issues.
- **Strengthening Economic Relations:** This can be accomplished by focusing on sectors beyond energy, especially since Saudi Arabia plans to diversify its economy under its Vision 2030, which presents an opportunity for Indian businesses.
- **Expanding Energy Partnership:** India should actively participate in the Kingdom's investment plans in the "downstream sectors" of petroleum and petrochemicals.
- **Leveraging Diaspora:** India's diaspora in Saudi Arabia can be instrumental in deepening cultural and people-to-people ties and contribute to mutual understanding and cooperation at societal levels.

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE LAW OF THE SEA (ITLOS)

Why in the news?

A landmark case will be heard by the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), with nine small island states seeking protection for the world's oceans from the devastating effects of climate change.

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS):

● Establishment:

- ITLOS is an independent judicial institution established through the 1982 **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**.
- The Tribunal is headquartered in the city of Hamburg, Germany.
- The tribunal's official languages are English and French.

● Composition:

- The Tribunal comprises **21 independent members elected through a secret ballot** by the States Parties to the UNCLOS.
- Each State Party can nominate up to two candidates for membership.

● Jurisdiction:

- ITLOS holds jurisdiction over **any disputes related to the interpretation or application of the UNCLOS**.
- Additionally, it has authority over **matters specified in other agreements that grant jurisdiction to the Tribunal**.
- Disputes falling within the scope of the Convention can include issues such as
 - demarcation of maritime zones and navigation
 - the conservation and management of marine resources
 - marine environment conservation and protection
 - marine scientific research

● Eligibility:

- ITLOS is accessible to **States Parties** to the UNCLOS, which encompasses both states and international organisations that are signatories to the Convention.

- Furthermore, it is open to **entities beyond States Parties**, including states or intergovernmental organisations that have not ratified the Convention, as well as state-owned enterprises and private entities.

More about the News:

- The nine small island states have turned to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) to **determine whether carbon dioxide emissions absorbed by the oceans can be classified as pollution** and, if so, what obligations countries have to prevent it.
- Ocean ecosystems, responsible for generating half of the world's oxygen and mitigating global warming by absorbing carbon emissions, are under threat due to rising emissions causing warming and acidification of seawater, which harms marine life.
- The countries argue that the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) binds nations to prevent ocean pollution. Still, it does not explicitly classify carbon emissions as pollutants, which the plaintiffs contend should be.

NAGORNO-KARABAKH REGION

Why in the News?

On Wednesday, Armenian separatist forces in the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh area of the South Caucasus surrendered and agreed to a ceasefire, just 24 hours after Azerbaijan launched an offensive to retake complete control of the territory.

About The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

● Historical background

- The Nagorno-Karabakh region is located in the southern Caucasus mountains and has been a contested territory for centuries. The region has been ruled by various empires and kingdoms over the centuries, including the Persian Empire, the Russian Empire, and

the Soviet Union.

- The Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast was founded within the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic by the Soviet Union in 1923. Although the region was granted some autonomy, it remained under the supervision of the Azerbaijani government.

● The rise of nationalism

- In the late 20th century, nationalism began rising in Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- In 1988, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh began demanding the region's transfer to Armenia. This led to regional tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis and eventually to violence.

● The First Nagorno-Karabakh War

- In 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan declared independence from the Soviet Union. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh escalated into a full-scale war from 1991 to 1994. Tens of thousands of people were killed and hundreds of thousands more were displaced as a result of the war.

● The aftermath of the war

- The war ended with a ceasefire agreement 1994, but the conflict remained unresolved. Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories remained under the control of Armenian forces.

● Present Status

- In the years since the war, there have been numerous ceasefire violations and occasional skirmishes between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. The conflict remains a significant source of

tension and a potential for renewed war.

- In September 2020, clashes erupted, quickly becoming the deadliest since the 1990s. Armenia claimed Azerbaijan initiated the conflict by launching a major offensive, while Baku argued it responded to provocations.
- A truce mediated by Russian peacekeepers in 2020 temporarily halted the conflict after Azerbaijan had recaptured areas in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

Recent Developments in Nagorno-Karabakh

- **Azerbaijan's Blockade of Lachin Corridor:** Over the past nine months, Azerbaijan has blocked the Lachin Corridor, the only access to the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave from Armenia.

● Humanitarian Crisis and Accusations:

- Since December 2022, when the embargo was first implemented, residents of Nagorno-Karabakh have accused Azerbaijan of producing a humanitarian disaster.
- They claim it has resulted in the crippling of critical civilian infrastructure, including access to gas, electricity, health services, and internet access.
- Nagorno-Karabakh has also accused Azerbaijan of blocking the import of essential goods, leading to shortages of everyday supplies like food and water.



New Offensive

- A ceasefire was agreed upon in Nagorno-Karabakh on September 20, 2023, after Azerbaijan launched a new military offensive against the local Armenian government.
- The ceasefire was proposed by Russian peacekeepers and accepted by the separatist Armenian forces in Nagorno-Karabakh.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS**Q1. Consider the following statements regarding ASEAN:**

1. ASEAN was established in 1967.
2. The headquarters of ASEAN is located in Jakarta, Indonesia.
3. Myanmar is a member of ASEAN.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding ASEAN:

1. The founding members of ASEAN include Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.
2. India is currently negotiating to sign a Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q3. Consider the following states of India:

1. West Bengal
2. Arunachal Pradesh
3. Sikkim
4. Assam

How many of the above States share boundary with Bhutan:

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q4. Chhukha, Kurichu, Tala, and Mangdechhu hydropower projects that supply significant power to India are in which of the following countries:

- (a) Nepal
- (b) Bangladesh
- (c) Bhutan
- (d) Myanmar

Q5. Consider the following regarding expansion of BRICS:

1. All the new nations admitted to BRICS have robust and stable economies
2. All the new members are from Africa or Asia

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6. The Northern Sea Route (NSR) was recently in the news, which of the following straits are connected by this route?

1. Kerch Strait
2. Kara Strait
3. Bering Strait
4. Strait of Gibraltar

Select the correct code from the code given below:

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

Q7. Consider the following:

Port	Sea/ Ocean
1. Murmansk	- Bering Sea
2. Odessa	- Pacific Ocean
3. Sabang	- Indian Ocean
4. Vladivostok	- Mediterranean Sea

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q8. Consider the following:

1. Globalisation
2. Consultation
3. Chauvinism
4. Protectionism

How many of the above are Characteristics of Multilateralism?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two

- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q9. With reference to G20, consider the following statements:

1. The G20 was formed in response to the financial crisis that struck East Asia and Southeast Asia in the late 1990s.
2. The G20 presidency is rotated among members each year.
3. The current troika is composed of Indonesia, India, and Italy.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q10. Consider the following pairs:

G20 Summit	Description
1. 2008- USA	Focussed on Global Financial Market Reform
2. 2020- Singapore	Aimed to build a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient future
3. 2021- Spain	Committed to fighting climate change, aiming to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees
4. 2022- Indonesia	Condemned the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the use or threats of nuclear weapons

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q11. With reference to the New Delhi Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. The theme of the New Delhi Declaration was Vasushaiva Kutumbakam.
2. The declaration does not specifically mention the Ukraine War and its global impact.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) None

Q12. Consider the following:

1. The New Delhi Declaration calls upon Russia and Ukraine to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of grain, food, and fertilisers.
2. The declaration also calls for UN Security Council reforms, along with reforms in multilateral developmental banks.
3. The African Union's permanent membership in the G20 is confirmed in the Declaration.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q13. With reference to the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII), consider the following statements:

1. The PGII was officially during the G7 summit in the United Kingdom in June 2021.
2. The initiative was first known as the Indo-Pacific Economic framework.
3. PGII is a collaborative effort to finance infrastructure projects in developing countries solely through private investments.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q14. Consider the following:

1. United Kingdom
2. Canada
3. France
4. Australia
5. Italy
6. Spain

How many of the above-mentioned countries are part of G-7?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) Only five

Q15. With reference to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS), consider the following statements:

1. ITLOS has jurisdiction over disputes about interpreting the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
2. ITLOS can hear cases related to marine scientific research.

3. Access to ITLOS is limited to States Parties to UNCLOS and excludes state-owned enterprises and private entities.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) None

Q16. How is the membership of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) determined?

- (a) By appointment by the United Nations Secretary-General
(b) By election through a secret ballot by States Parties to the UNCLOS
(c) By invitation from the United Nations General Assembly
(d) By nomination from non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Q17. With reference to India-Saudi Arabia Ties, consider the following statements:

1. Saudi Arabia ranks as India's fourth-largest trading partner.
2. India holds the position of being Saudi Arabia's second-largest trading partner.
3. Both nations collaborate through the bilateral naval exercise known as MALABAR.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None

Q18. Consider the following:

1. Saudi Arabia is an important partner in the proposed

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

2. Saudi Arabia is a member of the International Solar Alliance.
3. India and Saudi Arabia have signed the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC) Agreement at the G20 New Delhi Summit.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Q19. With reference to Nagorno-Karabakh recently seen in the news, consider the following statements:

1. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is located in the southern Balkan Mountains.
2. It is a disputed area within Armenia that Azerbaijan contests.
3. Armenia and Azerbaijan declared their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None

Q20. Consider the following:

	Corridor	Connecting Regions of
1.	Suwalki Gap	Poland and Lithuania
2.	Lachin Corridor	Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia
3.	Chicken's Neck	India and Bhutan
4.	Berlin Corridor	West Berlin and West Germany

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

ANSWER

S. No.	Answer
1.	c
2.	a
3.	d
4.	c
5.	b
6.	b
7.	b
8.	b
9.	a
10.	b
11.	a
12.	c
13.	d
14.	c
15.	a
16.	b
17.	a
18.	b
19.	c
20.	c

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. How has the strategic partnership between ASEAN and India evolved over time? What key areas of cooperation have been emphasized in their efforts to enhance regional connectivity and foster mutual growth?

Q2. Analyzing the Evolving Dynamics of India-Bhutan Relations, enumerate the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Q3. Discuss the significance of expansion of BRICS. How does it help to create a perception of a multi-polar world order as desired by India?

Q4. Discuss the significance of India's engagement with the Arctic region. How does India's approach align with global sustainable development goals?

Q5. Discuss the significance of multilateralism in India's foreign policy and its role in addressing contemporary global challenges.

Q6. Explain the origin and objectives of the G20. How did the financial crisis of the late 1990s influence its formation?

Q7. Discuss the key objectives and commitments outlined in the G20 New Delhi Declaration 2023. How does this declaration address critical global challenges?

Q8. Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor are responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative. Discuss.

Q9. Discuss the significance of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in addressing the impacts of climate change on the world's oceans.

Q10. Examine the evolution of India-Saudi Arabia relations. Assess the challenges and opportunities in the relationship in the evolving global context.

Q11. Discuss the historical context, causes, and international implications of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Evaluate the role of major international actors in resolving or exacerbating the conflict.



ROZGAR MELA AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Why in the news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued appointment letters through video conferencing on Monday to new recruits joining as a result of the Rozgar Mela (Employment Fair).

Rozgar Mela

- The Rozgar Mela serves as an expedited approach to connect job seekers with employers. This event brings together multiple employers and job seekers to apply and interview for positions.
- The aim of the Rozgar Mela is to accelerate employment growth, offer significant opportunities for youth empowerment, and encourage their active engagement in national development.

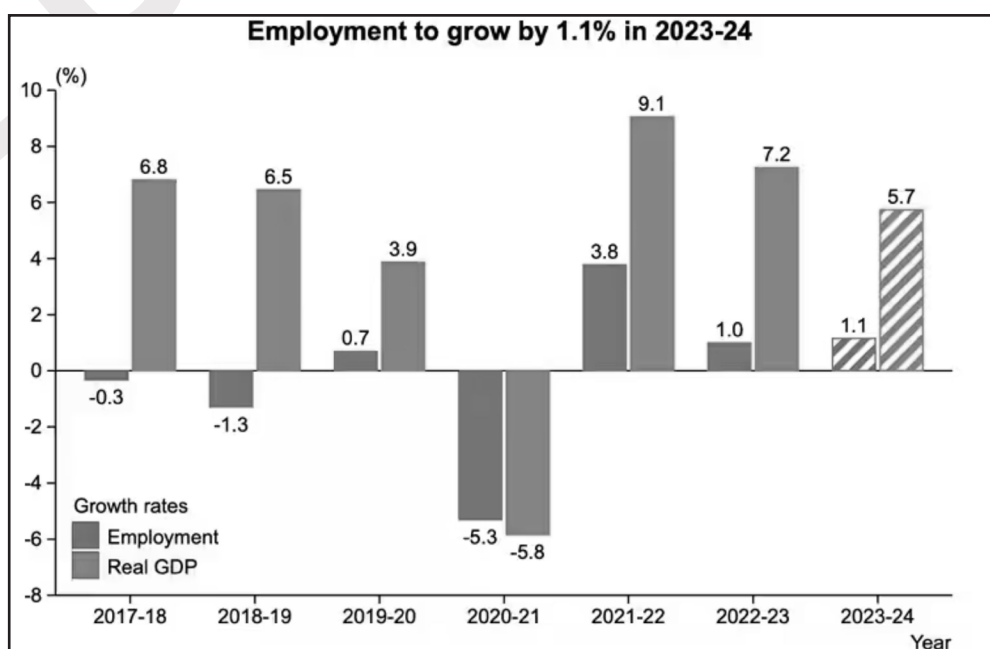
Defining Unemployment

- The unemployment rate is the proportion of individuals without jobs within the labor force.
- The labor force encompasses those who provide or express willingness to provide labor for economic activities, covering both employed and unemployed individuals.

- As per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PFLS) 2017-18, India's labor force exhibited a 6.1% unemployment rate, with 17.8% of youth aged 15-29 facing unemployment.

Reasons of Unemployment

- **Jobless Growth:** A country's GDP can increase without significant job creation or even with job losses. While GDP growth is necessary for job creation, it's not enough.
- **Slow Manufacturing sector growth:** India's growth relies on the service sector, which is less labor-intensive than manufacturing. The manufacturing phase has provided limited well-paid jobs, especially for those with lower education and skills.
- **Skill Mismatch:** There's often a mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the skills demanded by available job opportunities.



ties. This discrepancy results in unemployment even when there are vacancies.

- **Informal Sector Dominance:** A significant portion of India's economy operates in the informal sector, which often lacks stable jobs and social security benefits, leading to underemployment and insecurity.

Types of Unemployment	
Frictional Unemployment	Occurs when individuals are between jobs or transitioning, as they seek better opportunities that match their skills and preferences. Considered a natural part of the labor market.
Structural Unemployment	Arises from a mismatch between job seekers' skills and the skills demanded by available jobs. Can result from technology changes, industry shifts, or evolving consumer preferences.
Cyclical Unemployment	Results from economic downturns, leading to reduced demand for goods and services, causing production cuts and layoffs across industries.
Seasonal Unemployment	Linked to seasonal fluctuations in demand for specific goods and services. Industries like agriculture, tourism, and construction experience temporary job losses during off-seasons.
Natural Unemployment	A combination of frictional and structural unemployment present even in a healthy economy with full employment. Reflects typical unemployment due to job transitions and skills mismatch.

Way Forward

- **Shift to Enabling Environment:** The demand for a substantial number of jobs surpasses the capacity of any government to provide direct employment. Instead, the government's role lies in fostering conditions that empower the economy to generate jobs organically.

- **Elevate Manufacturing Sector:** Prioritize the composition of GDP growth by bolstering the manufacturing sector. A strategic emphasis on labor-intensive manufacturing and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is essential.
- **Revise Industrial Policy:** Rethink the existing industrial policy framework that leans towards capital-intensive industries. A holistic approach involving cluster development can enhance the efficiency of SMEs collectively.
- **Human Capital Investment:** Acknowledge labor as more than a production factor with cost considerations. It's essential to invest in human capital, recognizing the value it adds to the workforce.

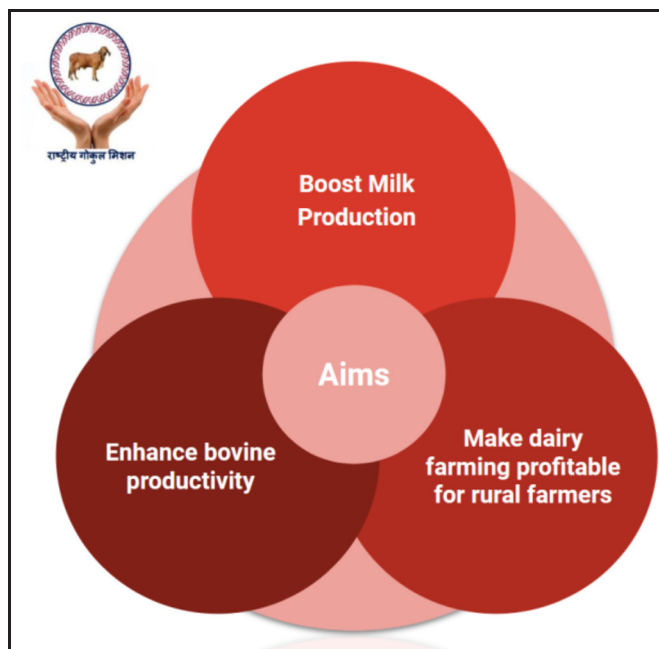
RASHTRIYA GOKUL MISSION (RGM)

Why in the news?

The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) has garnered attention in recent news due to its significant impact on India's agricultural and dairy sectors.

Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)

- The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM), operational since December 2014, focuses on developing and conserving indigenous bovine breeds in India under the **Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying**.
- It aims to **boost milk production, enhance bovine productivity, and make dairy farming more profitable** for rural farmers.
- It was Integrated into the Rashtriya Pashudhan Vikas Yojna in 2021 with a budget of Rs. 2400 crore.
- RGM has the potential to significantly benefit small farmers, empowering women involved in livestock farming.



Conservation of Indigenous Breeds: The Need of the Hour

- **Rich Bovine Population in India:** India is home to the most cattle, followed by Brazil, China, and the United States. India boasts a vast bovine population, with a total of 299.6 million, comprising 190.9 million cattle and 108.7 million buffaloes. Remarkably, approximately 80% of these cattle are indigenous breeds, often referred to as non-descript breeds.
- **Inherent Robustness and Resilience:** Indigenous bovine breeds in India exhibit inherent robustness and resilience. They have adapted to the diverse climates and environmental conditions in their respective breeding regions.
- **Quality of Milk:** Milk from indigenous bovine breeds is characterized by its high fat and Solid-Not-Fat (SNF) content. This quality makes them valuable for dairy production.
- **Climate Change Resilience:** Research indicates that indigenous breeds are likely to be less impacted by climate change compared to exotic breeds. They have evolved to withstand regional climate fluctuations, making them a sustainable choice for the future.
- **Threatened Indigenous Breeds:** Despite their unique advantages, several indigenous breeds,

such as Punganur, are facing the threat of extinction. The overall population of indigenous breeds is declining.

Objectives:

- **Enhancing Productivity with Advanced Technologies**
- **Promotion of High Genetic Merit Bulls**
- **Strengthening Artificial Insemination Services**
- **Scientific Conservation of Indigenous Breeds**

Funding Pattern:

- The Rashtriya Gokul Mission operates on a 100% grant-in-aid basis for most of its components.

Exceptions:

- **Accelerated Breed Improvement Programme:** Farmers receive a subsidy of Rs 5000 per IVF pregnancy as a government share.
- **Promoting Sex Sorted Semen:** Participating farmers receive a subsidy covering up to 50% of the cost of sex-sorted semen.
- **Establishment of Breed Multiplication Farms:** Entrepreneurs can access a subsidy covering up to 50% of the capital cost, with a maximum limit of Rs. 2.00 crore per project.

Components of RGM:

- **Availability of High Genetic Merit Germplasm**
 - Bull Production Programme
 - Support to Semen Stations: Strengthening existing semen stations.
 - Implementation of IVF Technology
 - Breed Multiplication Farms
- **Extension of Artificial Insemination Network**
 - Establishment of MAITRIs
 - Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme
 - Use of Sex Sorted Semen for Assured Preg-

nancy

- Implementation of National Digital Livestock Mission (Livestack)
- **Development and Conservation of Indigenous Breeds**
 - Assistance to Gaushalas, Gosadans, and Pinjrapole
 - Administrative expenditure/operation of Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog
- **Skill Development**
- **Farmers Awareness**
- **Research Development and Innovation in Bovine Breeding**

Duration, Scope and Area of Operation:

- The Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) will be implemented **nationwide** from **2021-2022 to 2025-26**.
- **Scope:** All components related to genetic improvement of the bovine population, as detailed in the program guidelines, are eligible for funding under RGM.

Implementing Agencies (IAs):

- These include state livestock development boards, state milk federations, central frozen semen production and training institutes, central cattle breeding farms, central herd registration schemes, the National Dairy Development Board, Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and its institutes, central universities, and government veterinary universities.

Significant Initiatives under RGM:

- **Awards for Encouraging Farmers and Breeder Societies:**
 - **Gopal Ratna awards** recognize farmers maintaining the best herd of indigenous breeds and practicing optimal management practices.
 - **Kamdhenu awards** are given to institutions,

trusts, NGOs, Gaushalas, or well-managed Breeders' Societies.

● **Gokul Gram:**

- RGM aims to establish **integrated cattle development centers** known as 'Gokul Grams.' These centers focus on the development of indigenous breeds, including up to 40% nondescript breeds.
- **20 Gokul Grams have been sanctioned** for 13 states with an allocated budget of Rs 197.67 crores.

● **National Kamdhenu Breeding Centre:**

- Two "National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres" (NKBC) are being established under RGM as **Centers of Excellence for the holistic and scientific development and conservation of indigenous breeds**.
- Rs. 25 crore each has been released to **Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh** for the establishment of NKBC.

● **"E-Pashu Haat" - Nakul Prajnan Bazaar:**

- E-Pashu Haat is an **e-market portal connecting breeders and farmers**, providing a platform for the trade of disease-free bovine germplasm, including semen, embryos, calves, heifers, and adult bovines. It enhances accessibility to quality breeding materials.

● **Pashu Sanjivni:**

- Pashu Sanjivni is an **Animal Wellness Programme** that involves providing **Animal Health cards** with UID identification. It involves uploading data on a National Database to monitor and improve animal health.

● **Advanced Reproductive Technology:**

- RGM includes advanced reproductive technologies like In-vitro Fertilisation (**IVF**) and Multiple Ovulation Embryo Transfer (**MOET**) techniques. It aims to improve the **availability of disease-free female bovines**.

- **National Bovine Genomic Center for Indigenous Breeds (NBGC-IB):**
 - NBGC-IB will be established to select breeding bulls of high genetic merit at a young age using precise gene-based technology. This technology-driven initiative will contribute to **improving the genetic quality of indigenous breeds.**
- **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF):**
 - It has been introduced to encourage eligible entities (EEs) to invest in various areas, including –
 - dairy and meat processing,
 - animal feed plants
 - breed improvement technology
 - breed multiplication farms
 - technology-assisted model farms
- **Breed Multiplication Farms (BMF):**
 - These farms aim to provide farmers with high genetic merit heifers of cattle and buffalo breeds.
 - Government offers a 50% capital subsidy (up to Rs. 2.00 Crore) to interested entrepreneurs for constructing cattle sheds, acquiring equipment, and procuring elite bull mothers.
- **e-GOPALA**
 - It offers farmers across the country a **platform to effectively manage their livestock.** This includes facilitating the purchase and sale of disease-free germplasm in various forms such as semen and embryos.
 - Additionally, e-GOPALA ensures the availability of high-quality breeding services like Artificial Insemination, veterinary first aid, vaccinations, and treatments for animals.
 - It also provides guidance to farmers on animal nutrition and the use of suitable

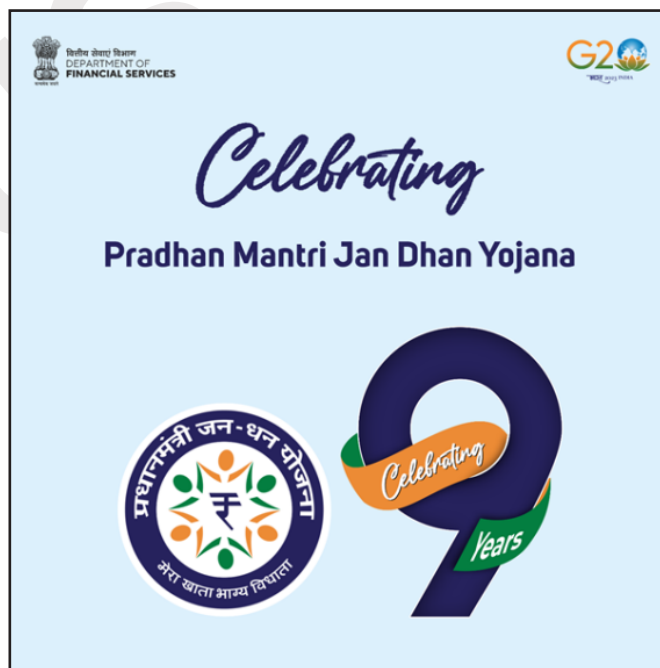
Ayurvedic or ethno-veterinary medicines for animal care.

These initiatives under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission collectively promote the conservation, development, and sustainable management of indigenous bovine breeds, fostering their long-term viability and contribution to India's agriculture sector.

PRADHAN MANTRI JAN DHAN YOJANA (PMJDY)

Why in the news?

The Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) has now completed nine years of successful implementation, marking a substantial milestone in its efforts to promote financial inclusion and provide accessible financial services



About Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

Launched on August 28, **2014**, the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) stands as one of the world's most extensive financial inclusion initiatives. This initiative, led by the **Ministry of Finance**, is dedicated to offering affordable financial services to vulnerable and economically disadvantaged sections of society.

It aims to create a platform for universal access to banking services, ensuring that every household has at least one basic banking account. This program also focuses on promoting financial literacy and providing access to credit, insurance, and pension facilities.

Key features of PMJDY include:

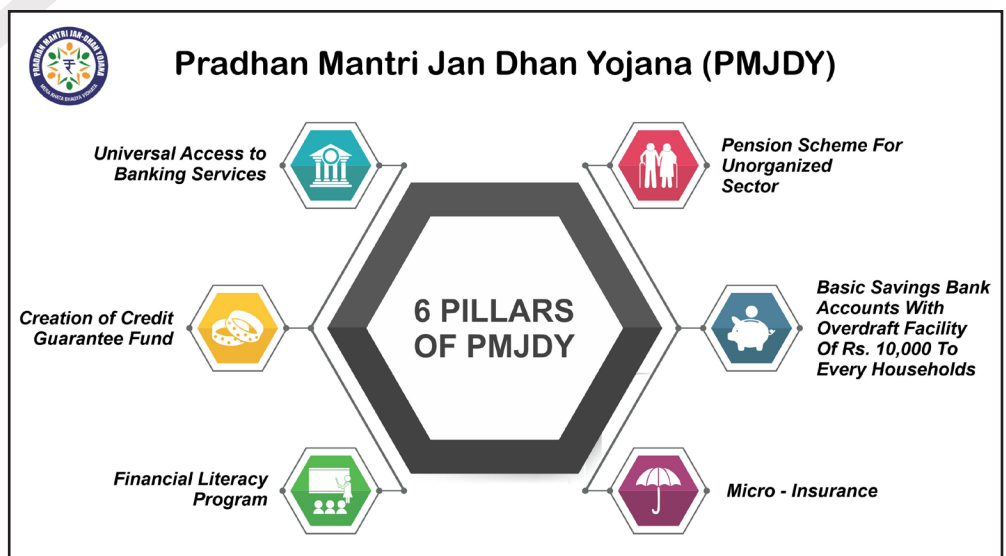
- **Expanding Banking Services:** PMJDY seeks to expand banking services by establishing branches and Banking Correspondents (BCs) to reach both urban and rural areas.
- **RuPay Debit Card:** Individuals who open PMJDY accounts receive an indigenous Debit Card known as the RuPay card.
- **No Minimum Balance Requirement:** There is no requirement to maintain a minimum balance in PMJDY accounts.
- **Accident Insurance Cover:** PMJDY account holders receive accident insurance coverage of Rs. 1 lakh, which was increased to Rs. 2 lakh for new PMJDY accounts opened after August 28, 2018. This coverage is provided through the RuPay card issued to account holders.
- **Overdraft Facility:** Eligible adults can access an overdraft facility of up to Rs. 10,000.
- **Access to Government Schemes:** PMJDY accounts are eligible for various government schemes, including Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), and Atal Pension Yojana (APY).

Significance of PMJDY:

- **Promoting Inclusive Growth:** PMJDY plays a crucial role in promoting equitable growth by facilitating Financial Inclusion (FI). This strategy ensures that affordable financial services are accessible to low-income

and disadvantaged segments of the population, thereby contributing to inclusive economic development.

- **JAM Architecture Benefits:** The Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM) architecture has streamlined the transfer of government benefits directly to the accounts of common citizens. This seamless process ensures that welfare benefits reach the intended recipients efficiently and without intermediaries.
- **Formalizing Savings:** PMJDY has successfully integrated the savings of economically disadvantaged individuals into the formal financial system. This shift has liberated them from the clutches of usurious money lenders, offering them a safer and more secure means to manage their finances.
- **Women's Empowerment:** Notably, approximately 55.5% of Jan Dhan accounts are held by women, contributing significantly to their financial empowerment. This encourages financial independence and greater participation in economic activities for women.
- **Overdraft Accessibility:** PMJDY allows for overdraft facilities, but they are limited to only one account per household, with a preference for the lady of the household. This provision ensures that financial resources are made available to households while promoting responsible financial management.



Achievements of PMJDY:

- **Massive Financial Inclusion:** PMJDY has successfully integrated over 50 crore people into the formal banking system through Jan Dhan accounts. This achievement signifies a significant stride towards financial inclusion in India.
- **Rural and Semi-Urban Reach:** Approximately 67% of these accounts have been opened in rural and semi-urban areas, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in extending financial services to underserved regions.
- **Widespread RuPay Card Issuance:** Around 34 crore RuPay cards have been issued to these accounts, ensuring access to financial services and providing accident insurance coverage of ₹2 lakh to the account holders, enhancing financial security.
- **Guinness World Records Recognition:** PMJDY's remarkable success has earned it recognition from Guinness World Records. It holds the record for the "Most bank accounts opened in one week as part of the Financial Inclusion Campaign," with an astounding 18,096,130 accounts opened, achieving this milestone under the Department of Financial Services, Government of India.

GLOBAL BIOFUEL ALLIANCE

Why in the news?

During the G20 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Global Biofuel Alliance with President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil and President Joe Biden of the United States.

About Global Biofuel Alliance:

- The Global Biofuel Alliance, **founded by India, Brazil, and the United States**, collectively **responsible for 85% of global ethanol production**, is an international initiative to foster collaboration in the biofuel sector. The alliance aspires to influence the global energy landscape and work

toward achieving the net-zero emissions target.

- India, Brazil, and the United States are collectively responsible for 85% of global ethanol production

Membership:

- The core members of the Global Biofuel Alliance are India, Brazil, and the United States.
- To broaden its reach and impact, the Global Biofuel Alliance allows other countries to become members by endorsing its foundational document. The GBA welcomes participation from all interested nations. Currently, 19 additional countries, apart from the founding members, have expressed interest in joining, including nations such as Italy, Kenya, and the UAE.
- The membership structure of the Global Biofuel Alliance comprises **three categories: member countries, partner organizations, and industries**, to bring together diverse stakeholders to collaborate in advancing biofuel initiatives.

Objectives of Global Biofuel Alliance:

- Foster international collaboration and cooperation to promote the adoption and utilisation of biofuels on a global scale.
- Establish robust markets for biofuels and facilitate international trade in biofuels.
- Promote the widespread use of sustainable biofuels within the transportation sector.
- Provide policy guidance and technical support to assist national biofuels programs worldwide, promoting knowledge sharing and capacity building.
- Highlight and build upon the successful best practices and case studies already implemented in biofuels.
- Complement and collaborate with relevant existing regional and international agencies and initiatives focused on bioenergy, the bioeconomy, and energy transition, further enhancing global efforts in these areas.

Significance For India:

- **Increased Technology Transfers:** GBA allows India to access advanced technologies and international climate funds.
- **Higher Blending of Petrol with Ethanol:** India's goal of achieving E-20 (20% ethanol blending with petrol) by 2025-26 can benefit from insights and experiences shared by countries like Brazil, which have achieved higher ethanol blending levels (E-85).
- **Flex Fuel Vehicle Introduction:** India can utilise GBA to collaborate with Brazil in adopting flex fuel vehicle technologies. These vehicles can use a wide range of fuel blends, reducing emissions and curbing India's crude oil import bills.
- **Global Climate Action:** By being a part of GBA, India positions itself at the forefront of global climate action. It strengthens India's role in combating climate change and demonstrates its commitment to sustainability.
- **Promotion of Biofuel Exports:** GBA can aid India in increasing its share of biofuel production, potentially making it a major exporter of biofuels globally.
- **Greater Energy Independence:** GBA supports India's pursuit of greater energy independence by promoting the use of biofuels and reducing reliance on foreign crude oil.
- **Financial Support for Farmers:** Biofuel production has already provided financial relief to sugarcane farmers. GBA can further support farmers, especially those struggling with low sugar prices, by expanding opportunities in the biofuel sector.

Challenges For Global Biofuel Alliance:

- **Technology Transfer:** GBA may encounter challenges related to the transfer of advanced biofuel technologies, as countries, particularly the United States, have historically been cautious about sharing proprietary technology, potentially impeding the alliance's objectives.
- **Geopolitical Friction:** The GBA may face resistance from countries like China and Russia, which may be averse to participating in a platform led by Western countries. China's **debt-trap diplomacy** and foreign policy influence could pose a hurdle to expanding membership and international cooperation.
- **Financial Sustainability:** A robust funding mechanism is imperative for GBA's projects. Economic downturns in the US and resource constraints

Generation	Source	Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Special Characteristics
1st Generation	Edible items (sugar, corn, etc.)	Higher carbon content	Emit greenhouse gases
2nd Generation	Leftover food crops (rice husk, wood chips, etc.)	Lower emissions than 1st generation	Utilizes crop residues
3rd Generation	Microorganisms (algae)	Carbon Neutral	CO ₂ emitted equals CO ₂ sequestered
4th Generation	Genetically engineered crops (GM crops)	Carbon Negative	Advanced genetic modifications

Common Biofuels	Source	Energy Comparison with Petrol	Combustion and Emissions Impact
Bioethanol	Corn and sugarcane (fermentation process)	About 2/3 of petrol energy	Improved combustion, reduced CO and SO emissions Common blend: E10 (10% Ethanol)
Biodiesel	Vegetable oils, waste oils, animal fats (transesterification process)	As an alternative to diesel	Lower harmful gas emissions compared to diesel
Biogas	Organic matter (anaerobic decomposition)	Used for heating, electricity, and automobiles	Utilizes organic waste for energy

faced by global institutions like the World Bank and IMF may challenge the alliance's efforts to secure sustainable financing.

- **Trade Barriers:** Import restrictions on biofuels, such as those outlined in India's National Biofuels Policy 2018, present a significant hurdle for developing a global biofuels market. GBA must focus on eliminating protectionist policies to promote cross-border biofuel trade.
- **Environmental Impact:** The production of biofuels, particularly ethanol derived from crops like sugar, carries substantial environmental consequences. This includes high water consumption, potential shifts in crop patterns, and impacts on water-scarce regions in Africa. Addressing these environmental concerns is vital for GBA to ensure sustainable biofuel production practices.

PM VISHWAKARMA YOJNA

Why in the news?

Recently, Prime Minister reaffirmed government's dedication to improving the lives of artisans on the launch of the PM Vishwakarma Yojana.

About PM Vishwakarma Scheme:

- **Financial Support:** The scheme is funded by the Union Government with Rs 13,000 crore to empower traditional artisans.
- **Registration:** Artisans can register for free via the biometric-based PM Vishwakarma portal.
- **Recognition:** Registered artisans receive PM Vishwakarma certificates and ID cards for eligibility.
- **Skill Upgradation:** The scheme offers skill training for artisan skill enhancement.
- **Toolkit Incentive:** Artisans receive ₹15,000 as a toolkit incentive.
- **Collateral-free Credit:** Eligible for ₹1-2 lakh collateral-free credit at a 5% interest rate.

- **Digital Transactions:** Incentives to promote digital payments for artisans.
- **Marketing Support:** Assistance to expand artisans' reach and boost demand for traditional crafts.

PM Vishwakarma

Central Sector Scheme to support traditional artisans and craftspeople of rural and urban India

- Financial outlay of Rs. 13,000 crore
- Eighteen traditional trades to be covered in the first instance
- Artisans and craftspeople to be provided recognition through PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card
- Credit Support upto Rs. 1 lakh (First Tranche) and Rs. 2 lakh (second Tranche) with a concessional interest rate of 5%
- Scheme to provide Skill Upgradation, Toolkit Incentive, incentive for Digital Transactions and Marketing Support.

Cabinet Decision
16 August 2023



Significance of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme

Preservation of Guru-Shishya Parampara:

- PM Vishwakarma supports the traditional Guru-Shishya parampara, preserving India's cultural heritage. It ensures the transmission of skills from one generation to the next, safeguarding traditional craftsmanship.

Improving Product Quality:

- The scheme focuses on upgrading skills and providing incentives for artisans. This results in improved product quality, enhancing the reputation of Indian traditional crafts.

Integration into Value Chains:

- PM Vishwakarma integrates artisans into domestic and global value chains. Artisans can access broader markets, leading to increased income and sustained livelihoods.

Market Access and Opportunities:

- The scheme supports marketing and digital transactions, expanding artisans' market reach.
- It connects artisans with consumers, boosting demand for traditional crafts and creating growth opportunities.

Challenges in Implementation:

- **Equitable Access:**
 - Ensuring both rural and urban artisans have fair access to scheme benefits.
 - Rural artisans may face tech, infrastructure, and market limitations, requiring efforts to address these disparities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - Ensuring funds are used correctly, and artisans are not excluded.
 - Effective monitoring, audits, and assessments are essential to prevent misuse and discrepancies.
- **Digital Literacy:**
 - Promoting digital literacy among artisans by utilizing digital transaction incentives.
 - Providing necessary training and resources to maximize the scheme's digital impact.
- **Inclusion of Marginalized Groups:**
 - Ensuring marginalized artisans, including women and economically weaker sections, are not left behind.
 - Special efforts may be needed to reach and support these groups effectively.
- **Misuse Prevention:**
 - Preventing misuse of scheme funds and resources.
 - Robust measures are essential to detect and deter fraudulent activities, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Sustainable Impact:

- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of traditional crafts and livelihoods.
- Developing strategies for sustained growth and benefits beyond the scheme's initial phases is crucial.

Way Forward:

- **Robust Monitoring and Evaluation:**
 - Implement thorough monitoring and audits at all levels.
 - Establish feedback channels for issue resolution.
- **Tailored Capacity Building:**
 - Customize training programs to meet artisans' specific craft needs.
 - Empower artisans with skills tailored to their craft.
- **Promotion and Marketing:**
 - Raise awareness through marketing campaigns and exhibitions.
 - Expand reach through partnerships with e-commerce platforms.
- **Technology Adoption:**
 - Encourage digital skills for marketing and transactions.
 - Provide training in e-commerce and online marketing.
- **Sustainability Measures:**
 - Develop long-term strategies, including product diversification.
 - Explore export opportunities and adapt to market changes.
- **Inclusivity and Outreach:**
 - Actively include marginalized groups, like women artisans.
 - Implement targeted outreach programs.

STATE OF WORKING INDIA 2023 REPORT

Why in the news?

The Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment has released the 'State of Working India 2023' report.

About State of Working India 2023 Report

- The 'State of Working India 2023' report examines the effects of India's economic slowdown from 2018 to 2020 and the subsequent impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the labour market.
- The report relies on official datasets such as NSO's Employment-Unemployment Surveys, Periodic Labour Force Surveys, National Family Health Surveys, Annual Survey of Industries, and Economic and Population Censuses to compile its findings.
- Additionally, it incorporates data from a unique primary survey conducted in rural Karnataka and Rajasthan, known as the India Working Survey.
- It employs regression analysis to provide precise estimates of how structural changes affect employment conditions and disparities.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Structural Change Accelerated:** Increase in regular wage/salaried jobs.
- **Upward Mobility Improved:** Sons of casual workers find better quality work.
- **Caste-Based Segregation Reduced:** Decline in SC representation in certain industries.
- **Gender Wage Gap Persists:** Women earn 76% of men's salaries.
- **Weak Link Between Growth and Jobs:** Economic growth doesn't guarantee job opportunities.
- **High Unemployment Rates:** Particularly among young graduates.
- **Rise in Female Workforce Participation:** Due to self-employment surge.
- **Gender Norms Impact Women's Employment:** Husband's income and mother-in-law's influence.
- **Lower Caste Underrepresentation in Entrepreneurship**

Key Highlights from the Report:

- **Faster Structural Change:**
 - Starting in 2004, there was a noticeable increase in the percentage of workers holding regular wage or salaried positions. This shift saw men go from 18% to 25% and women from 10% to 25%.
 - However, since 2019, the creation of such jobs has slowed due to economic stagnation and the pandemic.
- **Upward Mobility:**
 - In 2004, over 80% of the sons of casual wage workers found themselves in similar casual employment situations, irrespective of caste.
 - By 2018, this figure had dropped significantly to 53% for non-SC/ST castes, coinciding with an increase in better-quality work like regular salaried positions.
 - The decline was less pronounced for SC/ST castes.
- **Reduced Caste-Based Segregation:**
 - In the early 1980s, Scheduled Caste (SC) workers were significantly overrepresented in waste-related and leather-related work, with over 5 and 4 times more representation, respectively.
 - While this has decreased over time, some overrepresentation persists as of 2021-22, particularly in the leather industry.
 - However, the representation index declined in the leather industry, reaching 1.4 in 2021.
- **Gender-Based Earnings Disparities:**
 - In 2004, women in salaried positions earned 70% of what men earned. By 2017, this gender wage gap had reduced, with women earning 76% of men's salaries. This disparity remained constant through 2021-22.
- **Weak Link Between Growth and Quality Jobs:**
 - Since the 1990s, there has been no con-

sistent correlation between year-on-year non-farm GDP growth and non-farm employment growth, suggesting that policies fostering economic growth may not necessarily lead to increased job opportunities.

- However, between 2004 and 2019, there was a positive relationship between growth and decent employment, which was disrupted by the pandemic.
- **Unemployment Remains High:**
 - Despite a post-Covid decline, unemployment rates remain high, particularly for graduates, with a concerning 42% rate among graduates under 25 years old.
- **Rising Female Workforce Participation:**
 - Since 2019, female employment rates have increased due to a distress-driven surge in self-employment.
 - Before Covid, 50% of women were self-employed, which rose to 60% after the pandemic.
 - However, this increase in self-employment did not lead to higher actual earnings. Even two years after the 2020 lockdown, self-employment earnings were only 85% of their pre-pandemic levels.
- **Impact of Gender Norms:**
 - Gender norms significantly influence women's employment. Women are less likely to work as a husband's income increases, particularly in urban areas.
 - However, in urban areas, once the husband's income crosses ₹40,000 per month, the likelihood of the wife working increases again, creating a U-shaped relationship.
 - The presence and employment status of mothers-in-law also have a strong impact on married women's workforce participation.
- **Lower Caste Entrepreneurship:**
 - Lower caste (SC and ST) entrepreneurs are

underrepresented in businesses of all sizes.

- Even in the smallest firms, their representation is lower than their share in the overall workforce.
- This underrepresentation becomes more pronounced in larger firms, while upper castes become more overrepresented.

Basic Concepts:

● Labor Force:

- The Labor Force includes individuals who are either employed or actively seeking employment.
- It consists of both the employed and the unemployed individuals within a population who are of working age and are available and willing to work.

● Unemployment Rate (UR):

- The Unemployment Rate is the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed and actively seeking employment.

● Worker Population Ratio (WPR):

- The Workforce Participation Rate measures the proportion of a country's population employed or actively seeking employment.

● Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR):

- The Labor Force Participation Rate is the percentage of the population in the labour force.

BIMA SUGAM

Why in the news?

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) recently organised a steering committee as the ultimate decision-making body

for developing its ambitious Bima Sugam platform.

About Bima Sugam

Bima Sugam is the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI)'s groundbreaking proposition to establish **the world's first comprehensive online marketplace for insurance products and services**.

- This strategy is intended to **eliminate insurance selection and paperwork complexities**, representing a transformative moment for the insurance industry.
- The platform is devised to take customers' decision-making burden by **providing various insurance product options from different companies, including life, health, motor, and travel insurance**.
- It aims to be able to **streamline claim settlements and list policies paperlessly based on policy numbers**.

Operational Framework:

- To lay the foundation for Bima Sugam, IRDAI has expanded the platform's **budget to Rs 200 crore** and **formed a committee**, with the next step being the appointment of a service provider responsible for creating and running Bima Sugam.
- The platform is anticipated to function in real-time, granting insurance companies access to validated data and serving as an interface for intermediaries and agents to sell policies and provide services.

Benefits for Customers:

- Bima Sugam provides an **end-to-end solution for customers**, significantly **reducing paperwork and lowering commission costs**.
- It offers a single platform to **identify suitable insurance schemes and seamlessly manage various aspects** like purchase, service, and settlement.
- **Claim settlements and renewal will be conducted online**.

Timeline:

- While initially planned to be functional by January 2023, the launch of Bima Sugam has been postponed to June 2024.
- When operational, life and general insurance companies will each own approximately 47.5% of the stakes, while brokers and agent bodies will own roughly 2.5% each.

NON-PERFORMING ASSETS (NPAS)

Why in the news?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently proposed that lenders should classify a borrower as a "wilful defaulter" within six months of their account being declared a non-performing asset (NPA).

About Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) are financial assets, typically loans or advances, that have not met their scheduled principal or interest payment obligations for a specified period, usually 90 days or more. Here's a rephrased explanation:

- **Definition of NPAs:** NPAs are loans or advances for which the borrower has failed to make principal or interest payments for a period exceeding 90 days.
- **Asset Status for Banks:** For banks, loans are considered assets because the interest income generated from these loans is a significant source of revenue. When borrowers, whether retail or corporate, are unable to make interest payments, these assets become "non-performing" for the bank as they cease to generate income.
- **RBI's Definition:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) defines NPAs as assets that no longer contribute to a bank's income.
- **Disclosure Requirements:** Banks are obligated to publicly disclose their NPA figures and report them to the RBI regularly.

- **Classification of NPAs:** According to RBI guidelines, NPAs are categorized into three classes:
 - Substandard Assets: Those that have been NPAs for up to 12 months.
 - Doubtful Assets: Assets that have remained substandard for 12 months.
 - Loss Assets: Assets with minimal recovery value, deemed uncollectible, and not considered bankable assets.
- **NPA Provisioning:** Provision for a loan involves setting aside a certain percentage of the loan amount by banks. The standard provisioning rate for loans in Indian banks ranges from 5% to 20%, depending on factors like the business sector and the borrower's repayment capacity. However, under Basel-III norms, 100% provisioning is required for NPAs.
- **GNPA and NNPA:** Two key metrics assess the NPA situation of a bank:
 - **Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA):** It represents the total value of NPAs for a bank within a specific quarter or financial year.
 - **Net Non-Performing Assets (NNPA):** NNPA is derived by subtracting the provisions made by the bank from the gross NPA. It provides the actual value of NPAs after accounting for specific provisions.
- **NPA Ratios:** NPAs can also be expressed as a percentage of total advances, providing insights into the unrecoverable portion of the loan portfolio. For instance:
 - **GNPA Ratio:** This is the ratio of total GNPA to total advances.
 - **NNPA Ratio:** It calculates the ratio of net NPA to total advances, offering a more accurate picture of the NPA situation after accounting for provisions.

Impact of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs):

- **Reduced Lending Capacity:** Banks face constraints in allocating funds for productive economic activities due to the presence of NPAs.

- **Interest Rate Hikes:** To maintain profitability, banks may be compelled to raise interest rates on loans.
- **Unemployment Concerns:** A decrease in investments stemming from NPA issues can potentially lead to an increase in unemployment rates.
- **Handling NPAs:** Banks have two primary options for dealing with NPAs: they can either retain them in their records with hopes of eventual recovery, make provisions for them, or completely write off the loans as bad debt.

Current NPA Situation in India:

- As per the latest RBI Financial Stability Report, the gross NPA ratio for scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) in India reached a 10-year low of 3.9% in March 2023.
- Both gross and net NPA ratios have declined significantly from their peak levels in March 2018, standing at 3.9% and 1.0% in March 2023, respectively.
- A notable reason for the reduction in gross NPA levels in 2022-23 was the substantial write-offs undertaken by banks.

Prediction for India:

- Stress test results suggest that the gross NPA ratio for all SCBs may improve to 3.6% by March 2024.
- However, in scenarios where the macroeconomic environment deteriorates to a medium or severe stress level, the gross NPA ratio could increase to 4.1% and 5.1%, respectively.

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL TAX ON DIESEL VEHICLES

Why in the news?

Recently, Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari emphasised shifting away from petrol and diesel fuels. He mentioned that if the use of diesel vehicles and generators persists, he might suggest a 10% GST increase as a "pollution tax" to the Finance Minister.

However, he later clarified that there is currently no such government proposal.

The Pushback Against Diesel in India

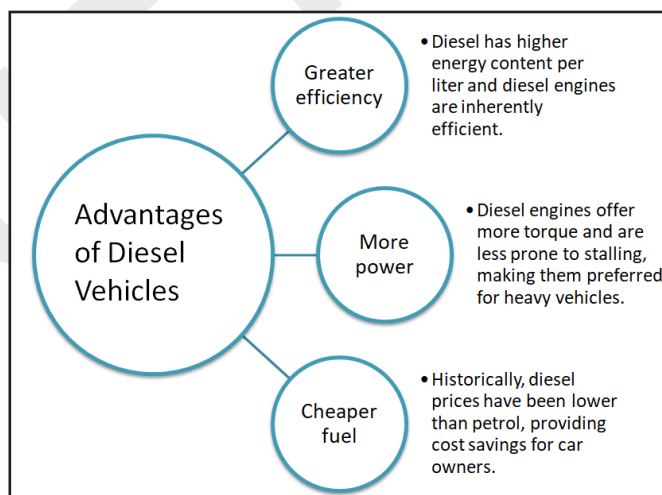
- **Government's Green Goals:** The Indian government aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and generate 40% of its electricity from renewables to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070.
- **Taxation Strain:** The government currently levies a 28% tax on diesel cars, accompanied by additional cess based on engine capacity.
- **Emissions Dilemma:** Diesel engines produce elevated levels of nitrogen oxides (NOx), raising environmental apprehensions. The 2015 Volkswagen scandal further exacerbated diesel's global reputation.
- **Fuel Efficiency Factor:** Although diesel engines provide superior fuel economy and torque, the price distinction between diesel and petrol has shrunk since fuel price deregulation in 2014.
- **Expensive upgrades:** The transition to BS-VI emission norms from April 1, 2020, and the expensive upgrades required for diesel engines to comply with these standards prompted carmakers to exit the diesel market. They argued that skipping from BS-IV to BS-VI made diesel models economically unviable.

Status of Diesel Vehicles in India:

- **Diesel's Significant Share:**
 - Diesel constitutes approximately 40% of India's petroleum product consumption, as per estimates from the Petroleum Planning & Analysis Cell.
- **Transportation Dominance:**
 - Around 87% of total diesel sales serve the transport sector, with trucks and buses making up about 68% of diesel sales in India.
 - Three states, namely Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Haryana, collectively account for nearly 40% of diesel sales in the country.

Impact on Diesel Cars

- Maruti Suzuki, India's largest car manufacturer, ceased production of diesel vehicles on April 1, 2020, and does not plan to re-enter this market.
- Tata Motors, Mahindra, and Honda no longer produce 1.2-litre diesel engines; they now offer diesel options only for 1.5-litre or larger engines.
- While some diesel variants are still available from Hyundai, Kia, and Toyota, most automakers have significantly reduced their diesel offerings since 2020.
- This has led to a decrease in the contribution of passenger vehicles to overall diesel demand, dropping from 28.5% in 2013 to 16.5%.



Way forward:

- **Promote electric vehicles (EVs):** EVs are a clean and efficient alternative to diesel vehicles. The government can offer incentives to encourage people to switch to EVs, such as subsidies, tax breaks, and preferential parking.
- **Improve public transportation:** Public transportation is a more sustainable way to travel than private vehicles. The government can invest in expanding and improving public transportation options, such as buses, trains, and metros.
- **Implement congestion pricing in cities:** Conges-

tion pricing charges drivers a fee to enter certain areas during peak traffic times. This can help to reduce traffic congestion and encourage people to use public transportation or other alternatives.

RBI GUIDELINES ON WILLFUL DEFAULTERS

Why in the news?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued a draft master direction on the treatment of wilful defaulters

About Guidelines:

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has put forth several amendments to its guidelines concerning the classification of “wilful defaulters” and the actions that should be taken against them :

- **Immediate Classification:** Lenders are now required to categorize a borrower as a “wilful defaulter” promptly within six months of their account being designated as a non-performing asset (NPA). This represents a significant change as there was previously no specific timeframe for identifying such borrowers, ensuring a more timely assessment of wilful default.
- **Defining Wilful Default:** The RBI defines wilful defaulters as borrowers or guarantors who have the financial capacity to repay the bank's dues but choose not to do so or divert bank funds. The minimum outstanding amount for a wilful defaulter is set at Rs 25 lakh and above, providing a clear definition of who falls into this category.
- **Identification Committee:** An Identification Committee, established by lenders, will be responsible for evaluating the evidence of wilful default and determining whether a borrower qualifies as a wilful defaulter. This committee ensures a fair and objective assessment process.
- **Publication of Photographs:** If lenders opt to publish photographs of wilful defaulters, they must establish a non-discriminatory board-approved policy outlining the criteria for such publication. This safeguards against unfair or biased publication practices.
- **Credit Facility Restrictions:** No lender can extend additional credit facilities to a wilful defaulter or any entity associated with them for up to one year after their name is removed from the List of Wilful Defaulters (LWD). This prevents wilful defaulters from obtaining additional credit both during and after their default status.
- **New Ventures Restriction:** Following their removal from the LWD, wilful defaulters and related entities are subject to a five-year restriction on obtaining credit facilities for launching new ventures. This prevents them from starting new businesses or taking on additional financial commitments.
- **Restructuring Limitation:** Wilful defaulters are ineligible for credit facility restructuring, meaning they cannot renegotiate their existing debt to make it more manageable.
- **Guarantor Liability:** Lenders can take action against the guarantor without first exhausting remedies against the primary debtor in the event of a default. The guarantor's liability is immediate, and non-compliance with the lender's demands may lead to their classification as a wilful defaulter, holding guarantors accountable for guaranteed loans.
- **Compromise Settlement:** Any account listed in the List of Wilful Defaulters can only be removed from the list once the borrower has fully repaid the compromised amount, ensuring that compromise settlements are honored and settled in full.
- **Credit Facility Transfer:** Lenders must investigate potential wilful default scenarios before transferring credit facilities to other lenders or asset reconstruction companies (ARCs), preventing the transfer of debt without first determining if wilful default was involved.

The RBI has invited feedback on these proposed changes from various stakeholders, with the com-

ment deadline set for October 31. These proposed amendments aim to strengthen the framework for addressing wilful defaulters and provide transparency regarding the procedures and consequences associated with such cases.

WHO ARE WILFUL DEFAULTERS

The central bank has 4 criteria for identifying wilful defaulters:

- Borrower defaults despite having capacity to repay
- Borrower misuses loan funds
- Loan funds have been diverted
- Borrower has dealt with assets without knowledge of lender



Factors Responsible for High number of Defaults:

The current situation of defaults and, consequently high levels of Non-Performing Assets, which are eroding the stability of the banking sector, can be attributed to a set of structural weaknesses:

- **Poor Banking Practices:** Inadequate banking practices have played a significant role in this scenario.
- **Discretionary Authority of Banking Officials:** The discretionary powers vested in banking officials have also contributed to the problem.
- **Influence from Powerful Industrial Groups:** The influence wielded by influential industrial conglomerates has exerted additional pressure, often stemming from political circles, on banks.
- **Intense Competition Among Banks:** The intense competition among banks has led to the issuance of unsecured loans, which has become a cause for concern.

These factors collectively result in banks extending substantial loans without conducting thorough due

diligence or obtaining adequate collateral.

Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)

- **Definition of NPAs:** NPAs encompass loans or advances where borrowers have fallen behind on their scheduled principal or interest payments, exceeding a specified timeframe, typically 90 days.
- **Asset Status for Banks:** Loans serve as assets for banks, generating substantial interest income. When borrowers, be they individuals or businesses, fail to meet interest payments, these assets lose their income-generating status and become “non-performing” from the bank’s perspective.
- **RBI’s Criteria:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) characterizes NPAs as assets that no longer contribute to a bank’s income.
- **Disclosure Obligations:** Banks are mandated to publicly disclose their NPA figures and regularly report them to the RBI.
- **Classification of NPAs:** In accordance with RBI directives, NPAs are classified into three distinct categories:
 - **Substandard Assets:** Those holding NPA status for up to 12 months.
 - **Doubtful Assets:** Assets that have maintained substandard status for 12 months.
 - **Loss Assets:** Assets with minimal recovery potential, deemed uncollectible and unfit for classification as bankable assets.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Unemployment, consider the following statements:

1. A significant portion of India’s economy operates in the formal sector.
2. A mismatch between the skills possessed by job seekers and the skills demanded by available

job opportunities.

3. Uneven distribution of economic opportunities and development across regions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct reasons for Unemployment in India?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

Natural Unemployment	A combination of frictional and structural unemployment.
Long-Term Unemployment	Involves individuals without jobs for an extended period, typically six months or more.
Hidden Unemployment	More people working in an activity or industry than necessary for efficient performance
Disguised Unemployment	Occurs when individuals work part-time or in jobs below their skill level.

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correctly matched ?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All Four

Q3. With reference to Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM), consider the following statements:

1. Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) aims to boost milk production by developing and introducing better foreign bovine breeds in India.
2. India has the largest population of cattle in the world, followed by China.
3. RGM is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 3 only
(d) None

Q4. Consider the following pairs :

Initiative	Aim of the Scheme
1. Gopal Ratna Awards	Acknowledge NGOs for their role in indigenous breed conservation.
2. Kamdhenu Awards	Recognize Gaushalas maintaining the best indigenous breed herds and practising optimal management.
3. Gokul Gram	Establish Centres for holistic and scientific development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
4. National Kamdhenu Breeding Centre (NKBC)	Establish integrated cattle development centres to focus on the development of indigenous breeds

How many of the abovementioned are correctly matched ?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) Only three
(d) All Four

Q5. Consider the following statements regarding Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):

1. Its main aim is to provide finance for setting up of small businesses to disadvantaged sections of society.
2. It excludes high income groups from opening accounts under the scheme.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6. Consider the following statements regarding Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY):

1. It requires a minimum balance of Rs. 1,000 in every account.
2. RuPay cards issued under PMJDY provide a maximum accident insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh.
3. PMJDY offers an overdraft facility of up to Rs. 10,000 to eligible adults.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q7. Consider the following Countries:

1. India
2. Russia
3. China
4. USA
5. Brazil

Which of the above countries are founding members of the Global Biofuel Alliance?

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

Q8. Consider the following statements regarding Biofuels:

1. Biofuels are carbon neutral but can not be carbon negative.
2. India, Brazil, and the United States control over two-thirds of global ethanol production.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q9. Consider the following statements about PM Vishwakarma Yojna:

1. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
2. It supports the traditional Guru-Shishya parampara.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q10. Consider the following statements about PM Vishwakarma Yojna:

1. It provides engineering scholarship for children of impoverished families
2. It is a specially designed scheme for the Scheduled Castes population

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q11. With reference to Employment, consider the following statements:

1. The Labor Force includes exclusively employed individuals and not actively seeking employment.
2. The Unemployment Rate (UR) is the percentage of the labour force that is unemployed and actively seeking employment.
3. The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) measures the proportion of a country's employed population.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q12. Consider the following :

1. The Centre for Sustainable Employment at the United Nations has published the 'Status of Working India 2023' report.
2. According to the report, Women in India are less likely to work when their husband's income rises, particularly in urban regions.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q13. With reference to Bima Sugam, consider the following statements:

1. Bima Sugam is a platform developed by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to serve as an online market-

place for various insurance policies.

2. The Bima Sugam platform will offer an end-to-end solution for customers' insurance needs, including purchase, service, and settlement.
3. The development of the Bima Sugam platform is expected to be completed by June 2024.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q14. Consider the following:

1. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India is a body under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Commerce.
2. Ensuring insurance coverage in rural areas and vulnerable sections of society is one of the objectives of IRDAI.
3. It is an autonomous and statutory body established under the IRDA Act 1999.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q15. Which of the following statements regarding Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in India are correct?

1. NPAs are loans or advances for which interest payment is overdue for a period exceeding 60 days.
2. Net Non-Performing Assets (NNPA) represent the total value of NPAs without accounting for provisions made by the bank.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q16. Which of the following statements regarding Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and their impact in India are true?

- 1. Lower NPAs generally result in banks decreasing interest rates on loans.
- 2. The NNPA Ratio offers a more accurate picture of the NPA situation.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q17. With reference to Diesel Vehicles, consider the following statements:

- 1. Diesel has a higher energy content per litre, making it intrinsically efficient.
- 2. Diesel engines offer more torque, making them better suited for towing and hauling heavy loads.
- 3. Diesel engines are generally less loud when compared to gasoline engines.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q18. Consider the following :

- 1. Taxing the use of fuels, such as biodiesel and ethanol
- 2. Implementing congestion pricing in cities
- 3. Encourage CNG and LPG
- 4. Enforce stringent emission standards

How many of the above measures can help reduce diesel consumption in India?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q19. Consider the following statements regarding Willfull defaulters:

- 1. Only borrowers and not Guarantors can be classified as Willful defaulters.
- 2. The individual banks classify a borrower as willful defaulters and not the RBI.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q20. Consider the following statements regarding Non-Performing Assets (NPAs):

- 1. Substandard Assets are those holding NPA status for up to 6 months
- 2. Loss Assets are those that have maintained substandard status for 12 months.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answer
1.	a
2.	b
3.	d
4.	a
5.	d
6.	a
7.	c
8.	b
9.	d
10.	d
11.	b
12.	b
13.	d
14.	b
15.	b
16.	c
17.	a
18.	c
19.	b
20.	d

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the major types of unemployment prevalent in India. How does each type impact the country's workforce and economy?

Q2. Discuss the significance and objectives of the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) in India's agriculture sector. How does RGM address the challenges posed by climate change and declining populations of indigenous breeds?

Q3. Discuss the significance and impact of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) on financial inclusion and economic empowerment in India. How has PMJDY contributed to improving the socio-economic landscape of the country? Provide your insights and suggestions for further enhancing the effectiveness of this flagship financial inclusion program.

Q4. Discuss the key objectives and potential impact of the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana (PMVY) on the livelihoods of traditional artisans and craftspeople in India. Analyze the strategies needed for the successful implementation of this scheme.

Q5. Analyse the gender-based earnings disparities in India's labour market. How has the gender wage gap evolved, and how does this disparity affect gender equality in the workforce?

Q6. Discuss the role of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in developing and regulating the insurance sector in India.

Q7. The management of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) has far-reaching implications for India's banking sector and the broader economy. Analyze.

Q8. Discuss the factors that have led to the push-back against diesel in India and the way forward to reduce diesel consumption in the country.

Q9. What measures can the government and financial regulatory authorities implement to effectively address the issue of willful defaulters in the banking sector, ensuring the recovery of bad loans and maintaining the stability of the financial system?



ISRO'S FUTURE PLANS

Why in the news?

Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi proclaimed that **August 23**, the day when the Chandrayaan-3 Lander successfully landed on the moon, will now be recognized as **National Space Day**.

Additionally, he unveiled the naming of the **Chandrayaan-3 landing site** as "**Shiv Shakti point**" and the location of the unsuccessful **Chandrayaan-2 mission's 2019 crash** as "**Tiranga point**."

About ISRO:

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is India's space agency, focusing on science, engineering, and technology for utilizing outer space's benefits for the nation and humanity.
- Operating under the **Department of Space (DOS)**, ISRO is a key entity responsible for executing the Indian Space Programme.
- **Core objective:**
 - To develop and apply space technology to address various national necessities.

ISRO's Current Objectives:

- **Gaganyaan Human Spaceflight Mission:**
 - The Gaganyaan project is focused on showcasing India's ability to conduct human spaceflight.
 - This involves sending a **3-member crew into a 400 km orbit for a 3-day mission**, safely

returning them to Earth via a landing in the Indian sea waters.

- Astronaut training is in progress alongside a series of tests on the modified Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (HLVM-3) rocket. This comprehensive testing phase aims to ensure the rocket's safety for carrying humans.
- **Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstrator (RLV-TD):**
 - ISRO is actively conducting tests for the Reusable Launch Vehicle Technology Demonstrator (RLV-TD).
 - This innovation is designed to **enable multiple missions with a single launch vehicle**, departing from the traditional model where each rocket is used only once.
- **Semi-cryogenic Engine SCE-200:**
 - This engine employs **highly refined kerosene (known as "Isrosene") and liquid oxygen as propellants**.
 - The engine's capabilities are being evaluated through rigorous testing and development, with the aim of powering the next generation of ISRO rockets.
- **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV):**
 - This compact rocket, distinct from the larger Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), is designed to efficiently transport lighter satellites into low-earth orbit.
 - The SSLV's streamlined design promises **reduced turnaround time between launches, enhancing operational efficiency**.

ISRO's Future Plans

Major Missions	Description
Aditya L1 Spacecraft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India's first solar mission is scheduled to launch in September 2023 and will study the Sun from a point in space called the Lagrange point L1, which is located about 1.5 million kilometres from Earth. The mission's main objectives are to study the coronal heating and solar wind acceleration, and to understand the initiation of coronal mass ejections (CMEs) and flares.
Modified LVM-3 Flights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two flights of modified LVM-3 to test crew escape system for Gaganyaan.
XPoSat Satellite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set to launch in 2023, it is India's first dedicated polarimetry mission, with the goal of exploring the dynamics of astronomical X-ray sources ISRO and the Raman Research Institute (RRI) have collaborated to develop this satellite, positioning it within a low Earth orbit covering 500-700 km.
SSLV Developmental Flight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is capable of launching up to 500 kg satellites to low Earth orbit. The SSLV is a three-stage solid rocket vehicle with a liquid propulsion-based velocity trimming module.
NISAR Satellite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NISAR satellite is a joint project between NASA and ISRO to co-develop and launch a dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar on an Earth observation satellite in Low Earth Orbit (LEO). The satellite will be the first radar imaging satellite to use dual frequencies and will be used for remote sensing, to observe and understand natural processes on Earth
Gaganyaan G1 and G2 Flights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human-rated LVM-3 rocket flights without crew as part of Gaganyaan.
GSAT-20 Satellite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a collaborative effort between the Indian Space Research Organisation Satellite Centre and Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre. Notably, it's set to become ISRO's first satellite to transition from a geostationary transfer orbit (GTO) to a geosynchronous orbit through Electric Propulsion.
Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISRO and JAXA collaboration, an extension of Chandrayaan-3. Involves a sophisticated Lander and rover to study the moon's South Polar Region, including subsurface sample extraction and 'night survival' demonstration. JAXA will provide launch vehicle and rover, while ISRO provides the Lander.
Mars Return Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned return to Mars for further exploration.
Venus Mission Shukrayaan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planned mission to study Venus.
Other Collaborations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISRO's involvement in launching OneWeb satellites (2022) and expected launch of European Space Agency's PROBA-3 satellites (2024) as alternative providers due to sanctions on Russia.

ADITYA-L1 MISSION

Why in the news?

On Friday, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) initiated a countdown lasting 23 hours and 40 minutes for the launch of India's inaugural solar observatory mission, Aditya-L1. This mission is set to be launched aboard the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, with a scheduled liftoff time of 11:50 am today.

About Aditya-L1 mission:

- Aditya-L1, **India's inaugural space mission to study the Sun**, was conceived in January 2008 by the Advisory Committee for Space Research. This spacecraft will be positioned in a special orbit around a point called **Lagrange point 1 (L1)**, which is about **1.5 million kilometers from Earth**.
- What's special about this orbit is that it allows Aditya-L1 to continuously **observe the Sun without any interruptions like eclipses or occultations**. This is a big advantage because it enables real-time monitoring of solar activities and their impact on space weather.
- Aditya-L1 will be launched using the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) XL.** It will take approximately 109 Earth

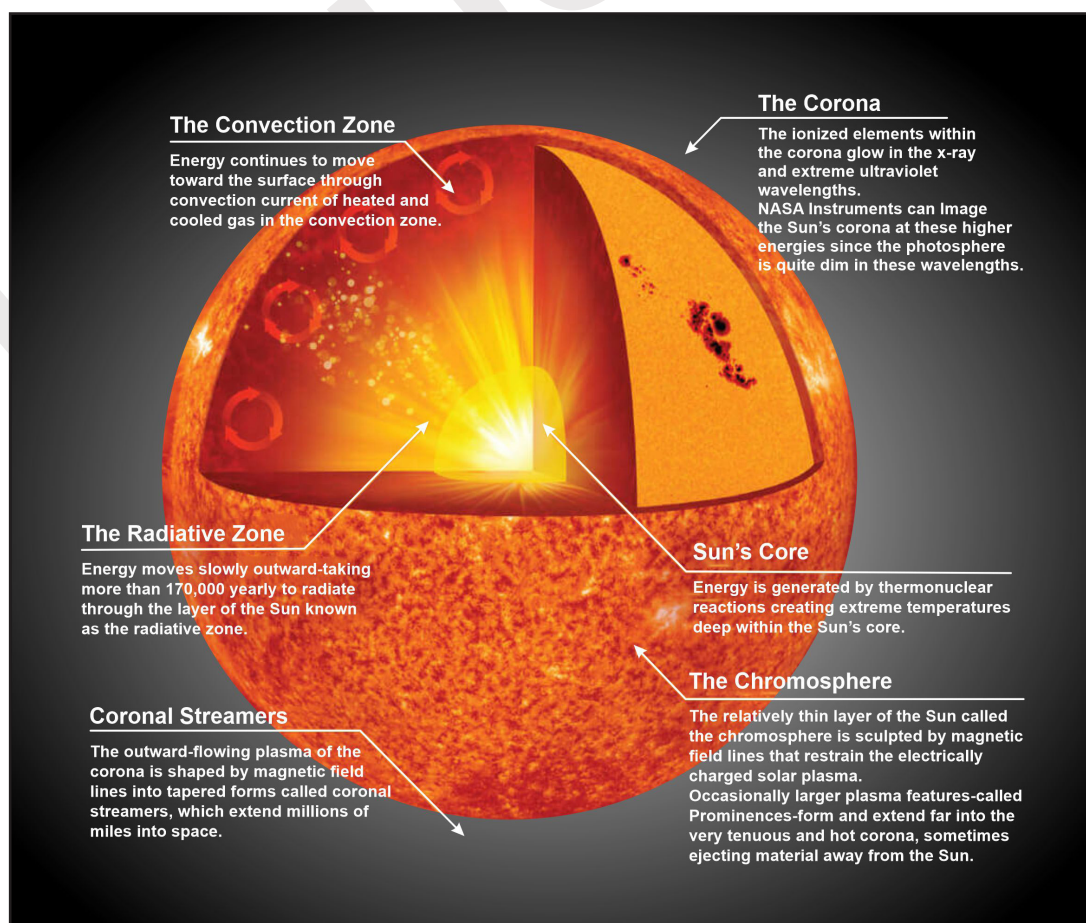
days to reach this special orbit around the L1 point.

Payloads:

The Aditya-L1 spacecraft is equipped with **seven specialized instruments** designed to observe different aspects of the Sun, including its **photosphere, chromosphere, and the outermost layer called the corona**. These instruments utilize various techniques, including electromagnetic and particle detection, as well as magnetic field measurement.

The seven payloads on board Aditya-L1 include:

- Visible Line Emission Coronagraph (VLEC):** Used for imaging and spectroscopy of the corona.
- Solar Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (SUIT):** Captures images of the photosphere and chromosphere in both narrow and broadband ultraviolet.
- Solar Low Energy X-ray Spectrometer (SoLEXS):** Performs soft X-ray spectroscopy, observing the Sun as a star.



- **Aditya Solar wind Particle Experiment (AS-PEX):** Analyzes solar wind and particles, including protons and heavier ions, with directional capabilities.
- **High Energy L1 Orbiting X-ray Spectrometer (HEL1OS):** Conducts hard X-ray spectroscopy to observe the Sun as a star.
- **Plasma Analyser Package for Aditya (PAPA):** Studies solar wind and particles, including electrons and heavier ions, with directional measurements.
- **Advanced Tri-axial High-Resolution Digital Magnetometers:** Measures the in-situ magnetic field in three dimensions (Bx, By, and Bz).

Objectives of Aditya-L1 mission:

- **Investigating the dynamics of the upper solar atmosphere,** specifically the chromosphere and corona.
- Researching the processes related to **chromospheric and coronal heating**, as well as the physics of partially ionized plasma. This involves studying the initiation of phenomena like coronal mass ejections (CMEs) and solar flares.
- Gathering in-situ **data on particles and plasma in the solar environment**, contributing to the understanding of particle dynamics originating from the Sun.
- **Mapping the magnetic field topology** and obtaining magnetic field measurements in the solar corona.
- **Examining the drivers for space weather**, including the origin, composition, and dynamics of the solar wind.

Challenges associated with Aditya-L1:

- **Vast Distance:** The considerable separation between the Sun and Earth poses a significant challenge for the mission in terms of covering such extensive distances.
- **Mechanical Complexity:** The inclusion of moving components in the satellite design height-

ens the risk of potential collisions with other satellites orbiting in space.

- **Extreme Environmental Conditions:** Despite its remote positioning relative to the Sun, Aditya-L1 faces the daunting task of enduring the incredibly intense temperatures and radiation associated with the Sun's vicinity.

These challenges underscore the complexity of this pioneering mission and the need for careful planning and execution to achieve its scientific objectives.

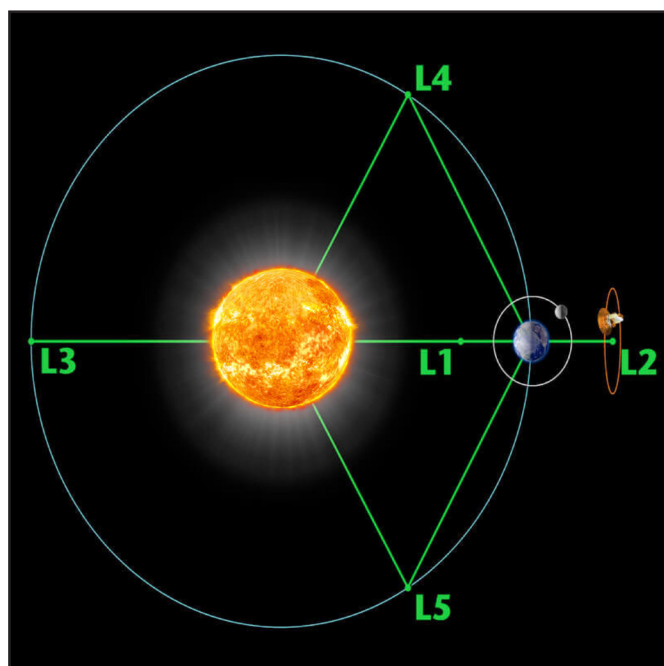
Lagrange Points:

- Lagrange Points, also known as Lagrangian Points or L-points, are specific locations in space where the gravitational forces of two large celestial bodies, such as a planet and a star, create points of equilibrium. At these points, the gravitational pull from each body is balanced in such a way that an object placed there will remain relatively stationary with respect to the two larger bodies.
- The concept of Lagrange Points was developed by the Italian-French mathematician Joseph-Louis Lagrange in the late 18th century. These points are often denoted as L1, L2, L3, L4, and L5.

1. **L1 (Lagrangian Point 1):** This point is located between the two larger bodies, along the line connecting their centers. It is on the side of the smaller body facing the larger one. L1 is significant for its stable position and direct line of sight to both bodies. It's commonly used for space observatories and missions that require continuous observation, such as solar observatories.
2. **L2 (Lagrangian Point 2):** Positioned on the line connecting the two larger bodies but on the opposite side of the smaller body, L2 is also stable and has applications in astronomy and space exploration. Instruments placed here can observe distant objects with minimal interference from Earth's atmosphere.
3. **L3 (Lagrangian Point 3):** Located on the line passing through the two larger bodies but

beyond the larger body, L3 is less commonly used due to its instability. It is often considered for certain types of observations, although the need to deal with the constant movement of spacecraft at this point makes it less practical.

4. **L4 and L5:** These points form an equilateral triangle with the two larger bodies, creating stable regions where gravitational forces create a balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Objects placed at L4 or L5 are in stable orbits and are sometimes called Trojan points.



● Significance of Lagrange Points:

- **Reduced Fuel Consumption:** Spacecraft placed at Lagrange Points can utilize minimal thrust to maintain their position due to the gravitational balance, resulting in reduced fuel consumption and longer mission lifetimes.
- **Space Observatory Locations:** Lagrange Points are used as strategic locations for space observatories, allowing them to observe the cosmos without interference from Earth's atmosphere or magnetic field.
- **Gateway Points:** Lagrange Points can serve as potential "gateways" for future inter-

planetary missions, enabling spacecraft to access different regions of space with less energy.

Other missions to the sun:

Mission Name	Agency	Objective
DISCOVER (2015)	NOAA (USA)	To monitor solar wind and coronal mass ejections from the Sun, as well as to monitor Earth's climate.
Parker Solar Probe (2018-2025)	NASA	To conduct close-range study of the solar corona and gather critical data about the Sun's outer atmosphere and the solar wind.
Solar Orbiter (2020)	ESA	To study solar and heliospheric physics, providing insights into the Sun's behavior and its effects on the solar system.
CuSP (2022)	NASA	To study particles and magnetic fields in the solar environment, contributing to a deeper understanding of the Sun's magnetic dynamics and solar wind interactions.

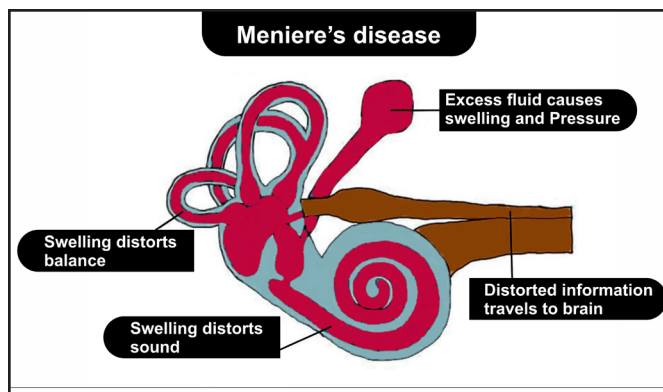
MENIERE'S DISEASE

Why in the news?

Recently, a celebrity fainted on stage due to Meniere's disease.

Causes of Meniere's Disease

Meniere's disease is thought to arise from an accumulation of fluid in the inner ear, referred to as the labyrinth. This buildup of fluid can disrupt the normal transmission of balance and hearing signals between the inner ear and the brain.



Symptoms of Meniere's Disease

- **Vertigo**
 - Vertigo stands out as the most prominent and recognizable symptom of Meniere's disease. It manifests as a sudden and intense sensation of spinning or whirling, creating the perception that either the individual or their surroundings are in motion, even when they are not.
 - Vertigo episodes vary in duration and severity and are frequently accompanied by nausea and vomiting. These episodes can be debilitating and may necessitate individuals lying down until they subside.
- **Hearing Issues**
 - **Tinnitus:** Tinnitus presents as a persistent ringing, buzzing, or roaring sound in the ears. It is a prevalent symptom of Meniere's disease and can be both bothersome and distracting.
 - **Hearing Loss:** Typically, hearing loss in Meniere's disease initially affects low-frequency sounds and may eventually extend to higher frequencies as well.

Affected Population Characteristics

- **Age of Onset:** Meniere's disease can manifest at any age, but it is most frequently diagnosed in individuals between the ages of 40 and 60. However, cases have been reported in younger individuals and, on occasion, in children.
- **Rare Condition:** Meniere's disease is classified as a relatively uncommon condition. This rarity

can pose challenges in diagnosis and management, as healthcare providers may have limited exposure to the condition.

- **Genetic Component:** Approximately 7-10% of individuals with Meniere's disease have a family history of the disorder. This genetic connection implies that inherited factors may contribute to the development of Meniere's disease in specific individuals.

Impact of Meniere's Disease on Individuals

- **Quality of Life:** The unpredictable nature of vertigo attacks can disrupt daily activities, making it challenging to work, travel, or perform routine tasks without the constant fear of sudden dizziness.
- **Emotional and Psychological Effects:** Many individuals with Meniere's disease grapple with anxiety, stress, and depression, particularly because they are often uncertain when the next vertigo attack might occur.
- **Social Isolation:** People with Meniere's disease may experience social isolation. They may avoid social gatherings, public places, and even interactions with family and friends.
- **Hearing Loss:** Hearing loss is a prevalent symptom of Meniere's disease, and it can profoundly affect an individual's ability to communicate effectively.
- **Financial Burden:** Managing Meniere's disease often involves ongoing medical appointments, treatments, and the purchase of hearing aids. These expenses can create a financial burden for individuals and their families.

Cure and Treatment of Meniere's Disease

- **Lack of Cure:**
 - Meniere's disease is a chronic condition for which, currently, there is no cure. Consequently, the primary focus of management revolves around alleviating symptoms and enhancing the overall quality of life for individuals affected by the condition.

Treatment Options

- **Dietary Changes:** Dietary modifications, such as

reducing salt intake, can be crucial in managing fluid retention within the inner ear and decreasing the frequency and severity of vertigo attacks.

- **Medication:** Medications such as anti-vertigo drugs and antiemetics can be prescribed to mitigate vertigo and alleviate nausea during episodes.
- **Hearing Aids:** For individuals experiencing hearing loss, hearing aids or cochlear implants can be highly beneficial.
- **Surgical Interventions:** These procedures are designed to address the buildup of fluid in the inner ear. Available choices comprise procedures such as endolymphatic sac decompression or vestibular nerve section.
- **Emotional and Psychological Support:** Seeking support from mental health professionals, such as counselors, can assist individuals in managing anxiety, depression, and stress related to the condition.
- **Support Groups:** Participation in support groups tailored to Meniere's disease can provide individuals with a valuable sense of community and shared experiences.
- **Individualized Treatment Plans:** Given the unique nature of each person's experience with Meniere's disease, treatment plans should be customized to address their specific needs and symptoms.

SHANTI SWARUP BHATNAGAR AWARDS

Why in the news?

Following a delay of almost a year, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has officially announced the recipients of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) awards for the year 2022.

Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards

- The Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize for Science and Technology (SSB), instituted in 1958 by the

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in honour of Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, its founder director, is among the highest multidisciplinary science awards in India.

- These awards have been instrumental in recognising and nurturing outstanding scientific talent in India and promoting excellence in scientific research.

Eligibility and Criteria:

- **Any citizen of India** engaged in research in any field of science and technology for up to 45 years as of December 31 of the year preceding the year of the Prize is eligible for consideration.
- Additionally, **Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) working in India** are eligible candidates.
- The award is granted based on contributions primarily made within India during the five years leading up to the year of the Prize.
- This ensures that recent and impactful scientific achievements within the country are recognised and celebrated.
- The awardee receives a citation, a plaque, and a cash award of ₹5 lakh. In addition, recipients are granted a **monthly stipend of ₹15,000 until the age of 65** years, providing support for their ongoing scientific endeavours.
- In the 2022 awards, two scientists were chosen in the first five categories, while one scientist each was honoured in earth and planetary and medical sciences.

Award Categories:

- Physical Sciences
- Biological Sciences
- Chemical Sciences
- Mathematical Sciences
- Engineering Sciences
- Earth and Planetary Sciences
- Medical Sciences

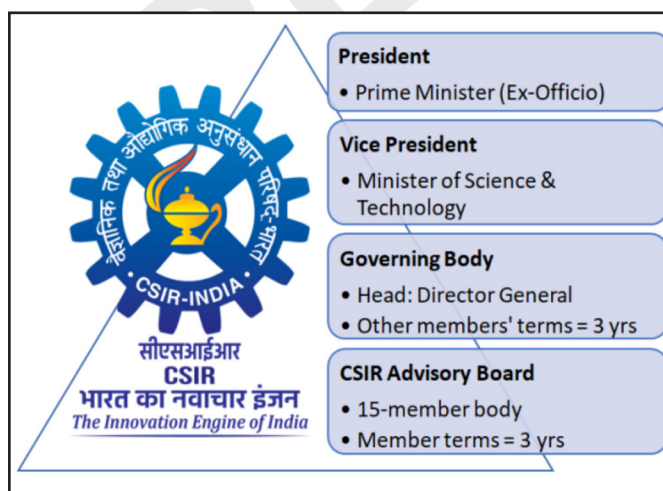
Announcement and Distribution:

- Traditionally, the names of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award recipients are declared by the Director General of CSIR on September 26, which coincides with the CSIR Foundation Day.
- The awards are presented to the recipients by the Prime Minister of India, adding to the prestige and significance of these honours.

Council of Scientific & Industrial Research

- The Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) is a premier national R&D organisation in India.
- Established by the Government of India in September 1942, CSIR has emerged as the largest research and development organisation in India.
- CSIR is an autonomous body funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology and operates under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.
- CSIR has a dynamic network of 37 national laboratories, 39 outreach centres, 1 Innovation Complex, and three units with a pan-India presence.
- It encompasses a broad range of scientific and technological fields, spanning from oceanography, geophysics, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, genomics, biotechnology, and nanotechnology to mining, aeronautics, instrumentation, environmental engineering, and information technology.

Organisational Structure of CSIR:



NIPAH VIRUS

Why in the news?

The viral disease, Nipah infection, has resurfaced in Kerala, with two individuals in Kozhikode district confirmed to have succumbed to the disease.

About the Nipah Virus:

- Nipah virus is a zoonotic disease, i.e., it is transmitted to humans through infected animals or contaminated food.
- Person-to-person transmission can also occur through close contact with infected individuals.
- Symptoms include fever, headache, cough, sore throat, breathing difficulties, and vomiting.
- Severe cases may lead to disorientation, drowsiness, seizures, encephalitis, coma, and death.

Natural Animal Host Reservoir

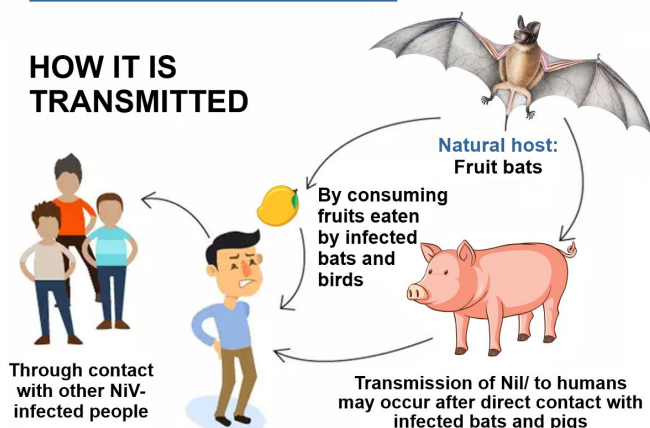
- Fruit bats, commonly known as flying foxes, serve as the primary reservoir for the Nipah virus. These bats transmit the virus to animals such as pigs, dogs, cats, goats, horses, and sheep.
- Human infection mainly results from direct contact with these animals or consumption of food contaminated by their saliva or urine.

Outbreaks in South and Southeast Asia

- Outbreaks have occurred in South and South-east Asian countries since its identification in 1998-99.
- Bangladesh has experienced at least 10 outbreaks since 2001.
- India has witnessed outbreaks in West Bengal (2001, 2007) and Kerala (2018, 2019, 2021).

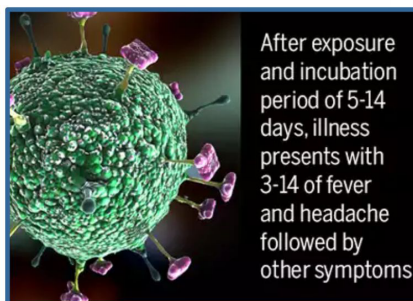
Nipah virus (NiV)

HOW IT IS TRANSMITTED



SYMPTOMS

- Fever
- Headache
- Drowsiness
- Disorientation
- Mental confusion
- Coma
- Potentially death



After exposure and incubation period of 5-14 days, illness presents with 3-14 of fever and headache followed by other symptoms

TREATMENT

No specific treatment for Nipah Virus

Primary treatment is intensive supportive care

Nipah Virus Spread and Mortality

- It spreads more slowly than COVID-19 but has a higher mortality rate.
- Mortality rates in past outbreaks have ranged from 68% to 100%.
- During the 2018 Kerala outbreak, 17 out of 18 confirmed patients died.
- All outbreaks so far have been localized and contained relatively quickly.
- A study observed that the reproductive number (R_0) was approximately 0.48 during previous outbreaks. The R-value serves as an indicator of the virus's rate of spread within the population. **When this value is less than one, it implies that less than one person is getting infected by an**

already infected individual. In such circumstances, the outbreak is anticipated to subside relatively rapidly.

SIR M VISVESVARAYA

Why in the news?

Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya's birthday was recently celebrated on September 15. He was a civil engineer and administrator during colonial India.

Early Life

- Born on September 15, 1861, in Muddenahalli village of Karnataka, he completed his school education in his hometown.
- Visvesvaraya studied for a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Madras and then pursued a diploma in civil engineering at the College of Science in Pune.
- At 22, he accepted an offer to work as an Assistant Engineer in the Public Works Department (PWD) of the Government of Bombay.

Significant Inventions

- Block System for Irrigation:** Sir MV designed and implemented a unique block system for irrigation. This innovative system allowed for better water distribution and control, minimising wastage and maximising efficiency in agricultural irrigation.
- Automated Floodgates:** He developed an automated floodgate system that incorporated a sophisticated mechanism to regulate water flow during periods of heavy rains or flooding. This invention greatly helped flood control and prevention, protecting towns and villages from the devastating effects of excessive water.
- Water Supply and Drainage System:** Sir MV devised efficient water supply and drainage systems, particularly in urban areas. His designs enabled the effective distribution of clean water to households and the proper disposal of

waste, leading to improved sanitation and public health.

- **Block Irrigation System:** Another notable innovation of Sir MV was the block irrigation system. This system utilised a network of canals and dams to distribute water for agriculture in a controlled and systematic manner, enhancing crop productivity by ensuring a proper water supply.
- **Steel Doors:** Sir MV introduced the concept of steel doors in various civil engineering projects. His steel doors were known for their durability, strength, and resilience. They proved highly effective in flood control and protection against water-related disasters.



Legacy

- **Krishna Raja Sagara Dam:**
 - One of his most significant engineering accomplishments was the design and supervision of the Krishna Raja Sagara Dam in Karnataka.
 - Completed in 1931, this dam and its intricate canal system brought about a revolution in irrigation and boosted agricultural productivity in the region.
- **Development of Modern Mysore:**
 - Sir MV served as the Dewan (Prime Minister) of Mysore from 1912 to 1918. During his tenure, he played a pivotal role in shaping the modernisation of the state. His visionary policies and administrative reforms transformed Mysore into a progressive region.
 - Sir MV implemented critical administrative reforms as the Dewan of Mysore. He

focused on health, sanitation, and urban planning, improving the overall quality of life for the people of Mysore. His efforts led to advancements in public health and infrastructure development.

Education:

- Visvesaya believed that the aim of an educational institution should be in line with the "state of the country's civilisation and of its material prosperity".
- Sir MV had a strong belief in the importance of education. He was vital in establishing the Government Engineering College in Bangalore (now the Visvesvaraya Technological University) and the University of Mysore. His emphasis on education and skill development paved the way for future engineers.
- After taking voluntary retirement from state service in 1918, he continued work in various capacities and **established the Sir Jayachamarajendra Occupational Institute Bangalore** in 1943, which was later renamed Sir Jayachamarajendra Polytechnic.

Engineer's Day:

- Sir MV is celebrated as a legendary civil engineer in India, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania. His birthday, September 15th, is celebrated as Engineer's Day in these countries, recognising his immense contributions to the field.

Overall, Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya was a pioneering civil engineer in India who contributed significantly to the country's public works and institutions. He also believed in the importance of education for the country's development and prosperity.

MATSYA 6000

Why in the news?

India is preparing for an ocean expedition after the successful Chandrayan 3 and Aditya L1 missions.

India's First Manned Deep Ocean Mission: Samudrayaan

- India's first manned Deep Ocean Mission, "Samudrayaan", aims to study deep-sea resources and biodiversity without disrupting the ocean ecosystem.
- Samudrayaan plans to send three humans to depths of six kilometres under the sea using Matsya 6000- the first Manned Submersible in India.
- The venture supports the 'blue economy' vision, which focuses on the sustainable use of ocean resources for the country's economic growth, improved livelihoods, job opportunities, and preservation of ocean ecosystem health.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) is the nodal ministry implementing this ambitious, multi-institutional mission.

Matsya 6000: India's First Manned Submersible

- Developed by Chennai's **National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT)**, Matsya 6000 is a **three-person submersible capable of descending 6000 meters underwater**.
- According to news reports, the Matsya 6000 will undergo trials in the Bay of Bengal in early 2024.
- The submersible is part of India's Rs 4,077-crore Deep Ocean Mission, planned to launch by 2026.
- It would make **India** one of just six countries (the **United States, Russia, Japan, France, and China**) to have piloted a crewed undersea expedition deeper than 5,000 meters.

Structure And Design of Matsya 6000

- The Matsya 6000 is a **2.1m-diameter sphere made of an 80mm-thick titanium alloy**, built to **withstand pressure 600 times greater than that at sea level**.
- It **can operate for 12 to 16 hours straight** and has an oxygen supply that extends up to 96 hours.
- For safety purposes, redundancy is applied to all components, excluding the sphere.
- The submersible design was reviewed after the

previous Titan submersible disaster, leading to a change from using Carbon fibre to insisting on titanium enclosures. Given its strength and fracture-resistant properties, titanium is considered the best option for deep-sea exploration.

- The **Matsya 6000** also features a **USBL (ultra-short baseline) acoustic positioning system for optimal safety**. This system facilitates communication with the mothership carrying the transponder above the water surface.

Deep Ocean Mission





पृथ्वी विज्ञान मंत्रालय
Ministry of Earth Sciences



NIOT
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEAN TECHNOLOGY
CHENNAI • KODUNGOTUR

- Development of Technologies for Deep Sea Mining and Manned Submersible
- Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services
- Public Awareness About Earth System Science
- Technological Innovations for Deep-Sea Biodiversity Exploration and Conservation
- Deep Ocean Survey and Exploration
- Energy and Freshwater from the Ocean
- Advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology

Significance of Deep Ocean Mission

- **Adding Value To Biodiversity and Tourism**
 - The Matsya 6000 is expected to explore

chemosynthetic biodiversity in hydrothermal vents and low-temperature methane seeps in the ocean.

- Additionally, it aims to promote tourism and ocean literacy, thereby adding value to India's blue economy.
- **Exploration of Ocean Resources**
 - The Samudrayaan project endeavours to discover precious metals such as cobalt, copper, and manganese. In addition, it aims to catalogue the ocean's biodiversity.
- **India's Vision for Ocean Exploration and Conservation**
 - India strives to play a critical and leadership role in the exploration of the ocean and the sustainable development of resources to maintain a balanced ecosystem.
 - The country's approach to ocean exploration focuses on research, preparing for deep dives, and encompassing land and ocean ecosystems' connectivity.

Way Forward

- The government is actively promoting the blue economy, angling to increase its contribution to the national GDP, currently less than 10%.
- Developing coastal economies and leveraging potential ocean resources, India envisions transforming oceans from a vast, potent canvas to a resourceful powerhouse.

ERG CHECH 002

Why in the news?

In May 2020, researchers came across distinctive rocks in the Sahara Desert containing distinct greenish crystals. These rocks were identified as remnants from the early Solar System.

These particular rock fragments are part of the Erg

Chech 002 meteorite, representing the oldest volcanic rock ever found, with an estimated age dating back approximately 4.56556 billion years.

About Erg Chech 002

- Erg Chech 002 is categorized as an "ungrouped achondrite," and its origin is from melted planetesimals, with the specific parent body unknown.
- Analysis of Erg Chech 002 revealed a high concentration of lead-206 and lead-207, as well as the presence of undecayed uranium-238 and uranium-235.
- Comparisons with other achondrites, particularly volcanic angrites, showed that aluminum-26 dispersion in the early Solar System was irregular.

Key Findings:

- Aluminum-26 has a relatively short half-life of approximately 717,000 years, making it challenging to directly detect in significant quantities within a 4.6-million-year-old space rock like Erg Chech 002.
- However, when Aluminum-26 undergoes decay, it transforms into Magnesium-26, a stable and non-radioactive isotope of Magnesium.
- This conversion process from Aluminum-26 to Magnesium-26 can be employed as a dating method, serving as a clock for space rocks like Erg Chech 002. It helps determine the initial amount of Aluminum-26 in these rocks.
- To effectively use the Aluminum-26-Magnesium-26 decay system as a dating tool, it's crucial to understand whether Aluminum-26 was uniformly distributed throughout the solar nebula responsible for the formation of the solar system's planets, asteroids, and comets.
- The researchers studied Erg Chech 002, an achondrite rock formed from melted planetesimals. They combined their findings with data on angrite meteorites, a rare subset of achondrites. Achondrites are meteorites that exhibit signs of having undergone melting and share

similarities with volcanic rocks found on Earth.

- Detailed examination of rocks containing distinctive greenish crystals has confirmed their extraterrestrial origin, signifying their connection to the early Solar System.
- These rocks are fragments of the Erg Chech 002 meteorite, which is the oldest volcanic rock ever identified.
- Chondrites represent the most common class of meteorites, accounting for more than 85% of all meteorite falls.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to India's Moon Missions, consider the following statements:

1. The Chandrayaan-3 landing site has been named as "Shiv Shakti point" by India.
2. The location of the unsuccessful Chandrayaan-1 mission's crash has been named as "Tiranga point."
3. The Chandrayaan-3 mission consists of an Orbiter, Lander and a Rover Module.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 only
- (d) None

Q2. Consider the following pairs with reference to ISRO's Future Plans:

Missions	Description
1. Aditya L-1	India's first solar mission and a impact probe
2. LUPEX	a joint project between NASA and ISRO

3. NISAR	ISRO and Japanese Space Agency collaboration
4. XPoSat	India's first dedicated polarimetry mission

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q3. Consider the following statements:

1. Lagrange points are locations in space where the gravitational forces of two massive bodies counteract the centrifugal force experienced by a smaller object.
2. In the Earth-Sun system, there exist a total of 5 Lagrange points.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding Aditya L1 Mission :

1. The central objective of the mission is the examination of the lunar and solar atmospheres along with their magnetic fields.
2. The Aditya-L1 mission is a collaborative effort led by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) in partnership with the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only

- (c) Both 1 and 2
(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Which of the following statements is correct regarding Meniere's disease?

1. It is caused by a viral infection in the inner ear.
2. Hearing loss in Meniere's disease primarily affects high-frequency sounds.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6. Which of the following statements is correct regarding Meniere's disease?

1. Vertigo is a common symptom of Meniere's disease.
2. Meniere's disease can be cured with antibiotics.
3. Tinnitus is a symptom of Meniere's disease.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
(b) Only two
(c) All three
(d) None

Q7. With reference to the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards, consider the following statements:

1. Only Indian citizens engaged in research are eligible for consideration.
2. The contributions considered for the award must be based on work primarily conducted in India within the preceding five years.
3. Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) are not eligible for the award.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT

correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) None

Q8. Who is the President of the Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)?

- (a) The Minister for Science and Technology
(b) The President of India
(c) The Director General of CSIR
(d) The Prime Minister

Q9. Which of the following statements regarding the Nipah virus is/are correct?

1. Nipah virus can only be transmitted to humans through infected animals.
2. The reproductive number (R0) for the Nipah is greater than that of SARS-COV-2.

Select the correct codes from the option below:

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

Q10. Which of the following statements regarding the Nipah virus is/are correct?

1. Recently, there was an outbreak in North Indian states
2. Natural hosts for the Virus are Wild Pigs.

Select the correct codes from the option below:

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

Q11. With reference to the Inventions of Sir M. Visvesvaraya, consider the following statements:

1. He developed an automated floodgate system that regulated water flow during heavy rains and flooding, aiding in flood control.
2. Sir MV designed efficient water supply and drainage systems in urban areas, improving sanitation and public health.
3. Sir MV is known for his work in the field of light scattering..

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q12. Consider the following:

1. Sir M Visvesvaraya designed and supervised the Krishna Raja Sagara Dam in Karnataka, which revolutionised irrigation and boosted agricultural productivity.
2. As the Dewan (Prime Minister) of Mysore from 1912 to 1918, Sir MV's visionary policies and administrative reforms transformed Mysore into a progressive region.
3. Sir MV is also known for his work in establishing University of Mysore.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q13. With reference to Matsya 6000, consider the following statements:

1. Matsya 6000 is a three-person submersible developed by Chennai's National Institute of

Ocean Technology (NIOT).

2. The submersible will undergo trials in the Arabian Sea in early 2024.
3. India will be one of the four countries to have piloted a crewed undersea expedition deeper than 5,000 meters.

Which of the statements given above is/are NOT correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q14. Consider the following statements with reference to Matsya 6000:

1. The Ministry of Science and Technology is the nodal ministry implementing this ambitious, multi-institutional mission.
2. Matsya 6000 can operate for 24 to 36 hours straight.
3. It is a three-person submersible capable of descending 6000 meters underwater.
4. It can withstand pressure 6000 times greater than that at sea level.

How many of the statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q15. Recently seen in the news, "Erg Chech 002" is :

- (a) A space mission of ESA.
- (b) A new Russian ICBM
- (c) A meteorite
- (d) USAs new station in Arctic

Q16. With reference to Erg Chech 002, consider the following statements:

1. It represents the oldest volcanic rock ever identified.
2. Its age was identified by using the Aluminium-26-Magnesium-26 decay system as a dating tool.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	a
2.	a
3.	c
4.	d
5.	b
6.	a
7.	c
8.	d
9.	d
10.	d
11.	a
12.	c
13.	b
14.	a
15.	c
16.	c

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Discuss the recent and upcoming initiatives of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in the context of its current and future plans. How do these initiatives align with India's technological and strategic aspirations on the global stage?

Q2. Examine the importance of India's Aditya-L1 mission within the broader context of space exploration. Additionally, assess the potential scientific, technological, and societal advantages that may arise from the successful accomplishment of the Aditya-L1 mission.

Q3. Rare diseases present a complex challenge to healthcare systems worldwide. Analyze the ethical considerations surrounding resource allocation in healthcare for rare diseases compared to common diseases.

Q4. Discuss the significance of Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Awards in recognizing scientific excellence in India and their role in shaping India's future in science and technology.

Q5. Discuss the significant achievements of Sir Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya, particularly focusing on his contributions to civil engineering, administrative reforms, and their impact on regional development.

Q6. Discuss the significance of the Erg Chech 002 meteorite in planetary science, focusing on its role in dating early Solar System events. How does its discovery contribute to our knowledge of celestial body formation and the challenges in studying such ancient space rocks?

Q7. Analyse the significance of the Deep Ocean Mission- Samudrayaan in the context of India's Blue Economy and the exploration of deep-sea resources. Discuss the potential economic and scientific impact of this mission.



WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Why in the news?

In recent years, climate change has manifested its impact worldwide, with the most pronounced effects observed in low-income and emerging countries. These regions are particularly susceptible to the detrimental consequences of climate change, and within them, women face heightened vulnerability due to their reliance on natural resources and labour-intensive occupations.

Impact of Climate Change

Frequent Floods and Droughts

- **Escalating Flooding Events:** Flooding is on the rise due to climate change, with a notable increase in the frequency and intensity of abnormally heavy precipitation events since the early 20th century.
- **Increasing Drought Incidents:** Drought conditions are becoming more common, posing significant challenges.

Food Security

- **Climate's Influence on Food Supply:** The production of food is highly dependent on climate and weather conditions, presenting challenges for farmers and researchers.
- **Challenges to Food Security:** Coping with higher temperatures, drought, water stress, diseases, and extreme weather events presents formidable obstacles to food security.

Human Health

- **Current Effects on Human Health:** Climate change is already impacting human health, with changes in weather and climate patterns putting lives at risk.
- **Health Risks:** Heat is one of the deadliest weather phenomena, and dry conditions lead to more wildfires, which bring various health risks. Increased flooding can also lead to the spread of waterborne diseases, injuries, and chemical hazards.

Impact of Climate Change on Women

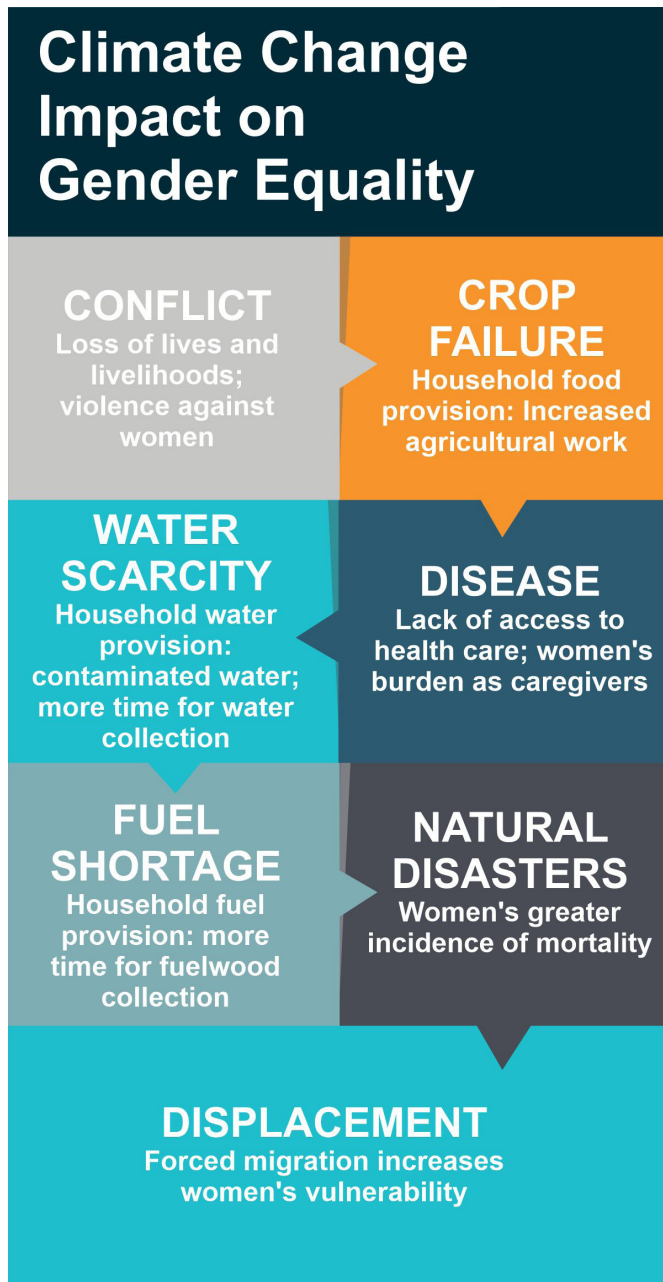
- **Gendered Consequences:** The effects of the climate crisis are not uniform and disproportionately affect women globally, placing their health, safety, and overall well-being at significant risk.
- **Heightened Vulnerability:** Women and girls, in particular, bear the brunt of climate change, exacerbating pre-existing gender inequalities and introducing distinct challenges to their livelihoods, health, and safety.
- **UN Recognition (2009):** In 2009, the United Nations underscored the heightened vulnerability of women and their disproportionate susceptibility to the adverse impacts of climate change compared to men. This recognition emphasizes the urgent need to address these gender-specific challenges in climate-related policies and initiatives.

Vulnerability Due to Labor-Intensive Work:

- Women in low-income and developing countries, particularly impoverished regions, rely heavily on natural resources and engage in

labor-intensive occupations for their livelihoods.

- Many women, especially in South Asian and sub-Saharan African nations, are involved in climate-vulnerable sectors like farming.



Higher Likelihood of Living in Poverty:

- Women are more likely to live in poverty than men, and this socioeconomic disparity is just one of several factors that render them more susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Increased Responsibility:

- Women from low-income households assume greater responsibility for procuring food, water, and other essential unpaid domestic work.
- The climate crisis exacerbates this by requiring more time and effort to access necessities. Rural women are often responsible for ensuring their families have access to clean water, adequate cooking fuel, and nutritious food, which often necessitates long daily journeys.

Underpaid and Overworked:

- A significant proportion of working women in southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over 60%, are employed in agriculture, where they frequently face being underpaid and overworked.
- Despite being the backbone of the food production system, women own only a tiny fraction of the land used for farming.

Lack of Education and Technical Knowledge:

- Women constitute a substantial portion of the agricultural workforce in emerging countries. Yet, they often lack access to quality inputs and possess limited education and technical knowledge.
- Climate change adversely affects agricultural productivity, particularly in regions like South Asia and Africa, where heat stress is a significant concern. Consequently, women engaged in agriculture are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Gender-Specific Challenges Women Encounter During Natural Disasters

Increased Displacement of Women and Girls:

- Women, especially those from vulnerable communities, confront unique challenges after natural disasters.
- According to a UN study, a significant majority (80%) of those displaced by climate-related disasters are women and girls, leading to increased displacement and disruption of their lives.

Heightened Vulnerability to Exploitation:

- Displaced women are particularly susceptible to discrimination and exploitation. For instance, following the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the UNFPA observed that women were more exposed to trafficking and exploitation, illustrating the increased risks they face during and after disasters.

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, there are several other gender-specific issues that women in low-income countries contend with during natural disasters, including

- **Separation from Social Networks:** Disasters can result in the separation of women from their social support networks, making them more isolated and less resilient in the face of adversity.
- **Higher Risk of Gender-Based Violence:** Women face a greater risk of experiencing gender-based violence in the chaotic aftermath of natural disasters, compromising their safety and well-being.
- **Reduced Access to Employment, Education, and Essential Health Services:** Disasters disrupt access to employment and education, limiting economic opportunities for women. Additionally, access to vital health services, such as sexual and reproductive healthcare and psychosocial support, may decrease, adversely affecting their overall health and welfare during a crisis.

Path Forward to Foster Women-Led Climate Action:

Investment in Women's Education and Training:

- Investing in their education, training, and access to resources is imperative to empower women in climate action. Equipping women with knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture, water management, and clean energy generation can mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on livelihoods.
- Initiatives like the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, which educates women farmers on adapting to shifting climate patterns, exemplify the positive impact of such investments.

Gender Parity in Policy Decision Making:

- Ensuring women's active participation in climate policy decision-making processes at all levels is critical to effective climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.
- Given that women are disproportionately affected by climate change achieving gender parity in decision-making bodies is essential.
- Initiatives like the Gender and Climate Change Development Programme in South Asia, aimed at amplifying women's voices in policymaking, provide a model for enhancing gender diversity in leadership roles.

ECOCIDE

Why in the news?

Mexico is contemplating enacting a law that would classify ecocide as a criminal offense.

Understanding Ecocide:

- Ecocide signifies the detrimental impact of human actions on the environment, leading to extensive destruction.

Examples of Ecocide:

- **Environmental Destruction:** Acts of ecocide encompass a wide range of activities, including port expansion projects, deforestation, illegal sand mining, river pollution, and the release of untreated sewage. These actions harm delicate ecosystems and disrupt local livelihoods.
- **Notable Instances:** Prominent instances of ecocide include deforestation during the Vietnam War, environmental damage during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, deforestation in Indonesia and the Amazon rainforest, oil pollution in the Niger Delta, and the Chernobyl disaster.

Historical Context:

- **Olof Palme's Influence:** The term "ecocide" gained prominence when Swedish politician Olof Palme accused the United States of com-

mitting ecocide at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment.

Environmental Crisis:

- **Species Extinction Threat:** Predictions suggest that over a third of the world's plant and animal species could face extinction by 2050, signaling a severe ecological crisis.
- **Extreme Weather Events:** Unprecedented heatwaves have shattered records globally, exacerbating climate-related challenges.
- **Disrupted Climate Patterns:** Changing rainfall patterns have disrupted natural flood and drought cycles, intensifying environmental hazards.

Preventative Potential:

- **Avoiding Environmental Catastrophes:** The implementation of ecocide laws could have averted environmental catastrophes such as Amazon deforestation, deep-sea trawling, and the tragic 1984 Bhopal gas disaster.
- **Environmental Justice:** Ecocide laws also serve as instruments of justice, particularly for low- and middle-income countries disproportionately affected by climate change, providing them with legal recourse.

Global Status of Ecocide Laws:

- **Criminalization in 11 Countries:** Currently, ecocide is recognized as a crime in 11 countries, reflecting the growing recognition of the need to protect the environment.
- **27 Countries in Consideration:** An additional 27 countries are contemplating the introduction of laws to criminalize environmentally destructive activities that deliberately harm humans, animals, and plants.
- **Examples of Legislation:** Countries like Vietnam, Ukraine, and Russia have already criminalized ecocide. Furthermore, the European Parliament penalizes actions including "mass destruction of flora and fauna," "atmosphere or water resource poisoning," and "deliberate acts

capable of causing ecological disasters."

Status in India:

Legal Recognition of Nature:

- **Rivers as Legal Entities:** Indian courts have affirmed the legal personhood of nature by recognizing rivers as legal entities with intrinsic rights, including the right to preserve their essence, identity, and integrity.
- **The inception of the Concept:** While not yet a mainstream legal doctrine, the concept of recognizing nature's rights is gaining traction in India's legal landscape.

Notable Judgments and Legal References:

- **Chandra CFS and Terminal Operators Pvt. Ltd. v. The Commissioner of Customs and Ors (2015):** The Madras High Court acknowledged the ongoing activities that could be categorised as ecocide, particularly the uncontrolled removal of valuable timber resources.
- **T.N. Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union of India & Ors (Ongoing Case):** The Supreme Court, in an ongoing case, criticized the "anthropogenic bias" in environmental considerations. It argued for a shift from an anthropocentric perspective to an ecocentric one, highlighting the need for environmental justice.

Environmental Laws in India:

- **Environmental (Protection) Act 1986:** This act serves as a foundational piece of environmental legislation in India, focusing on protecting and improving the environment.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972** safeguards wildlife and their habitats.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (CAMPA) 2016:** CAMPA addresses afforestation and forest conservation issues.
- **Rules for Pollution Prevention:** India has established separate rules to combat air and water pollution, emphasizing the importance of environmental preservation.

HEAT INDEX

Why in the news?

Recently, Iran experienced a scorching heat index of 70°C, causing extreme survival issues. The country had to declare public holidays due to the heat.

Heat Index

- The heat index also called the **apparent temperature**, combines **air temperature and relative humidity** to describe how the temperature feels to the human body.
- It's crucial for human comfort because when the body overheats, it starts sweating to cool down.
- Sweating's cooling effect depends on the evaporation of perspiration.
 - High humidity slows down this evaporation process, making the body feel warmer.
 - Conversely, lower humidity speeds up perspiration, making the body more relaxed.
- Therefore, there's a **direct relationship between air temperature, relative humidity, and the heat index**.
 - As air temperature and humidity increase, the heat index also increases, making it feel even hotter.
 - Conversely, as air temperature and humidity decrease, the heat index decreases, resulting in a cooler sensation.

Calculating Heat Index

- **Dr. Robert Steadman**, a professor at Colorado State University, introduced a complex formula for calculating the heat index in 1979.
- His research considered an average adult human, with specified height and weight, to derive this formula.
- The heat index calculation incorporates the

dew point, the temperature at which air reaches its saturation point and condenses into water droplets.

- Dr Steadman used a **dew point of 14 °C** as a parameter in his calculations.
- Countries like **Canada and the United States** have developed heat index measures like the Humidex and NWS Heat Index, respectively.
- **India plans to launch its heat index in 2024** to assess the heat's impact on its population and issue location-specific heat wave alerts based on this index.

Importance of Calculating Heat Index

- It is essential to measure the heat index because it can help us to understand the risk of heat-related illnesses.
- High temperature and humidity can cause heat stress, causing symptoms like fatigue, cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke, which can be life-threatening when the body's temperature reaches 104°F or higher.
- The National Weather Service's heat index chart indicates risk levels for heat-related illnesses, with 95°F or higher being dangerous and urging precautions to avoid such risks.
- The heat index is crucial for public health officials to issue heat advisories and warnings, ensuring safety during hot weather.

With climate change, humans are likely to see more extreme heat events. This means that it is more important than ever to understand the heat index and to take steps to stay safe during hot weather.

GLOBAL STOCKTAKE REPORT

Why in the news?

In the lead-up to the recent G-20 summit, the UN climate secretariat published a comprehensive analysis of climate action commitments.

Global Stocktake Report

- The 'Global Stocktake' report is a periodic assessment of countries' efforts to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius and preferably below 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.
- It is named so because it reviews and evaluates the progress made by individual countries in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources.
- **Purpose:**
 - The primary purpose of the 'Global Stocktake' report is to periodically assess and take stock of the efforts made by countries to combat climate change.
 - This assessment occurs every five years to track progress towards the Paris Agreement's objectives.
- **Influence on Climate Discussions:**
 - The findings of the 'Global Stocktake' report hold significant importance in international climate discussions.
 - It shapes discussions and decisions during events like the UN Climate Conference of Parties (COP).
 - This report influences countries to consider increasing their ambitions in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adopting more sustainable energy systems.
- **Connection to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):**
 - While countries have already submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining their climate action plans, the 'Global Stocktake' encourages them to reassess and potentially enhance their commitments before the next set of NDCs are published in 2025.

About the Report

- The report, spanning 45 pages, presents 17 cru-

cial findings that convey that the world is not making sufficient progress to achieve the targets outlined in the Paris Agreement.

- However, it underscores a rapidly closing opportunity for nations to take coordinated action. The synthesis report does not represent a significant departure from the UN Synthesis Report 2022, published ahead of COP 27 in Egypt.
- This prior report analysed the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of 166 countries and concluded that they fell short of meeting the objectives set by the Paris Agreement.

Key Findings:

- **Paris Agreement Progress:** The report highlights that overall global progress toward achieving the Paris Agreement targets is currently inadequate.
- **Narrowing Window of Opportunity:** It emphasises that while progress is lacking, there is still a rapidly diminishing timeframe within which countries can align their actions with the Paris Agreement.
- **Ambitious Emissions Reduction:** Significantly greater ambition is necessary to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by 43% by 2030 and 60% by 2035, ultimately achieving global net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050.
- **Need to Scale Up Renewable Energy:** To meet climate goals, there is a need to expand renewable energy sources while swiftly phasing out 'unabated fossil fuels,' such as coal plants without carbon capture and storage mechanisms.
- **Combatting Deforestation and Land Degradation:** Efforts must be made to stop and reverse deforestation and land degradation, while also promoting agricultural practices that play a critical role in reducing emissions and enhancing carbon storage.
- **Addressing 'Loss and Damage':** Urgent action across climate and development policies is required to comprehensively manage the risks associated with 'loss and damage' from climate change and support affected communities.

Impact of the Global Stocktake Report:

- The report had a notable resonance in the G20 Leaders Declaration.
- The G20 Leaders Declaration recognises the substantial financial requirements for transitioning to a renewable energy economy.
- The Declaration acknowledges the need for USD 5.8-5.9 trillion in the pre-2030 period for developing countries. It also emphasises the requirement of USD 4 trillion per year for clean energy technologies by 2030 to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

STUMP-TAILED MACAQUE

Why in the news?

The stump-tailed macaque, also known as the bear macaque, is a remarkable primate species that calls South and Southeast Asia home. In this article, we will explore the various aspects of this intriguing species, from its geographical range to its dietary habits and unique physical characteristics.



STUMP-TAILED MACAQUE

Macaca arctoides

Geographical Range:

- **Habitat:** The stump-tailed macaque is native to the lush forests of South Asia and Southeast Asia.

- **Indian Presence:** In India, this species thrives in the evergreen forests of South Asia, including regions in Northeast India located south of the Brahmaputra River.
- **Indian Range:** Its range in India spans from Assam and Meghalaya to the eastern reaches of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura.

Dietary Habits:

- **Frugivorous Lifestyle:** The stump-tailed macaque is primarily a frugivore, with fruits comprising a significant portion of its diet.
- **Varied Vegetation:** Besides fruits, this macaque species consumes a wide array of vegetation, including seeds, leaves, and roots.
- **Hunting Behavior:** Interestingly, the stump-tailed macaque also exhibits omnivorous tendencies, preying on freshwater crabs, frogs, bird eggs, and insects to supplement its diet.

Physical Characteristics:

- **Fur and Bald Features:** It has dense, dark brown fur covering its body. However, its face and its notably short tail are devoid of hair.
- **Age-Related Changes:** As infants, these macaques are born with a white coat that gradually darkens as they mature. Their bright pink or red faces evolve into shades of brown or nearly black as they age, accompanied by a loss of most of their hair.
- **Sexual Dimorphism:** Males of this species are larger in size compared to their female counterparts.

Conservation Status:

- **Vulnerable Classification:** The stump-tailed macaque is currently listed as "vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List of species, signifying the need for conservation efforts to protect this remarkable primate.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Consider the following statements regarding the impact of climate change on women:

1. Women in low-income countries are more vulnerable to climate change due to their dependence on natural resources and labour-intensive work.
2. Women in urban areas are more vulnerable to climate change than those in rural areas.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding ecocide:

1. Ecocide refers to the deliberate actions causing substantial and lasting harm to the environment.
2. India has fully incorporated the concept of ecocide into its legal framework.
3. The term "ecocide" gained prominence at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q3. Who among the following has popularised the term 'ecocide'?

- (a) Olof Palme
- (b) Greta Thunberg
- (c) David Brower
- (d) M. S. Swaminathan

Q4. With reference to Heat Index, consider the following statements:

1. The heat index, also known as the apparent temperature, is determined solely by air temperature
2. High humidity accelerates the evaporation of perspiration, leading to a cooler sensation in the human body.
3. Dr. Robert Steadman introduced the concept of the heat index by incorporating factors like dew point.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q5. Consider the following:

1. Lower humidity levels slow down perspiration, resulting in a more comfortable feeling.
2. The heat index varies directly with air temperature and humidity, increasing as these factors rise and decreasing as they fall.
3. The dew point represents the temperature at which air becomes saturated with moisture and condenses into water droplets.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Answer: (b)

Q6. With reference to the Global Stocktake report, consider the following statements:

1. The 'Global Stocktake' report evaluates countries' efforts to achieve the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius.
2. The report directly determines the specific greenhouse gas reduction targets for individual countries.
3. The report's findings significantly influence international climate discussions and decisions during events like the UN Climate Conference of Parties (COP).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 3 only

(d) 1 and 3 only

Q7. Consider the following statements:

1. The 'Global Stocktake' report directly determines the specific greenhouse gas reduction targets for individual countries.
2. The report highlights that overall global progress toward achieving the Paris Agreement targets is inadequate.
3. The 'Global Stocktake' report was published by the United Nations Security Council.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q8. With reference to stump-tailed macaque, consider the following statements:

1. The stump-tailed macaque is native to South and Southeast Asia.
2. In India, this species can be found in forests of South India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q9. With reference to stump-tailed macaque, consider the following statements:

1. The stump-tailed macaque is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
2. The stump-tailed macaque is exclusively nocturnal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	a
2.	b
3.	a
4.	c

5.	b
6.	d
7.	b
8.	a
9.	a

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Write an essay: "Women Empowerment, a key to Climate Resilience".

Q2. Discuss the concept of ecocide and its significance in the context of environmental protection

and justice. Evaluate the existing legal frameworks and international perspectives on ecocide.

Q3. Discuss the gender-specific challenges that women in low-income countries face in the context of climate change. How can policies and initiatives be designed to empower women as key actors in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies?

Q4. Examine the importance of measuring the heat index and its relevance in understanding the impact of high temperatures on human health and the environment.

Q5. Analyse the findings of the recent 'Global Stocktake' report published by the UN climate secretariat. Discuss its impact on international climate discussions.



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WHO TRADITIONAL MEDICINE GLOBAL SUMMIT 2023

Why in the news?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently issued the “**Gujarat Declaration**,” the outcome document of the first **WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023**.

WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit

Aim and Theme

- The summit aims to gather political commitment and evidence-based actions regarding traditional medicine.
- The WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit 2023 theme was “***Towards health and well-being for all.***”

Hosts and Stakeholders

- The event was co-hosted by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** and the **Ministry of Ayush**, Government of India, which holds the G20 presidency in 2023.
- The summit served as a platform for stakeholders, including traditional medicine practitioners, users, communities, policymakers, international organisations, academics, private sector entities, and civil society organisations.
- These stakeholders shared best practices, evidence, data, and innovations related to traditional medicine’s contribution to health and sustainable development.

Historical Significance of Traditional Medicine

• Integral Resource:

- Traditional and complementary medicine has been crucial in household and community healthcare for centuries.
- It has contributed to the foundations of modern medicine and science, influencing conventional medical practices.

• Pharmaceutical Impact:

- Approximately 40% of pharmaceutical products today are based on natural products.
- Several landmark drugs, such as aspirin, artemisinin, and childhood cancer treatments, originated from traditional medicine.

• Evolving Research:

- Ongoing research, including genomics and artificial intelligence, is expanding the field of traditional medicine.
- Industries related to herbal medicines, natural products, health, wellness, and travel are experiencing growth.

WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine:

- In March 2022, WHO established the **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar** under the Ministry of AYUSH, GoI.
- The centre serves as a knowledge hub with a mission to blend ancient wisdom and modern science to benefit people and the planet.
- It enhances WHO’s existing capacity in traditional medicine, supplementing core functions across regional offices and headquarters.

● Focus Areas of WHO Traditional Medicine Centre

- **Partnership and Collaboration:** The centre emphasises partnerships to optimise the role of traditional medicine in global health and sustainable development.
- **Evidence-Based Approach:** A commitment to evidence and data guides the centre's activities.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** The centre acknowledges the importance of biodiversity in traditional medicine.
- **Innovation:** It fosters innovation in traditional medicine practices.
- **Respect for Local Heritages and Rights:** The centre operates with respect for local heritages, resources, and rights.



Gujarat Declaration

- The Gujarat Declaration reiterates global commitments to **indigenous knowledge, biodiversity, and traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM)**.

- WHO emphasizes the need for rigorous scientific methods to understand, assess, and apply holistic, context-specific, and personalized health and well-being approaches.

Key Points of the Gujarat Declaration

● Supporting Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

- The declaration calls for efforts to implement evidence-based TCIM interventions and approaches to achieve UHC and health-related SDGs.
- It underscores the role of multi-regional, multi-disciplinary, and multi-stakeholder collaborations demonstrated at the summit, aligned with WHO's work.

● Promoting Research and Regulation:

- Accelerating the production, regulation, and formal utilisation of scientifically proven TCIM products and practices is emphasised.
- Policies promoting standardised TCIM documentation are advocated, including using the WHO International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) for data integration.

● Establishing a Global TCIM Network:

- The declaration proposes establishing a global network of TCIM reference clinical centres for standardised data collection and monitoring using WHO ICD-11 coding.

● Harnessing Digital Health and AI:

- Special attention is given to developing and applying digital health technologies, focusing on artificial intelligence, to advance TCIM resources for health and well-being.

● Biodiversity and Indigenous Rights:

- Actions are urged at all levels to safeguard, restore, and sustainably manage biodiversity.
- The declaration underscores the importance of fair and equitable benefit-sharing

from biodiversity resources and indigenous knowledge.

- It emphasises the recognition, respect, and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples as per the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- **Ethical Considerations:**
- Ethical methods and processes are encouraged in TCIM research and practice.

Additional Information:

Term	Description
Traditional Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extensive historical background ● Encompasses collective wisdom, expertise, and cultural customs ● Used for maintaining overall health and addressing physical and mental ailments.
Complementary Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diverges from a specific country's established medical tradition ● Not fully integrated into the dominant healthcare system of that region.
Integrative Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Involves the deliberate integration of complementary and alternative medicine components ● Incorporated into comprehensive treatment plans ● Combined with conventional methods for diagnosis and treatment.

ULTRA PROCESSED FOOD

Why in the news?

A joint report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations revealed that the Ultra-Processed Food Sector in India experienced a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 13.37%

in terms of retail sales value between 2011 and 2021.

What is Ultra Processed Food?

- Ultra-processed food is a category of **highly transformed food products** that goes beyond regular processing. It typically involves adding salt, sugar, and fat for enhanced flavour, but what sets it apart is the incorporation of **five or more additional ingredients into the original product**.
- These extra components often include flavour enhancers, emulsifiers, colours, and preservatives, all **aimed at improving taste, prolonging shelf life, and providing convenience**.

Examples:

- **Unprocessed:** Raw atta (flour).
- **Processed:** Dalia (porridge) with added salt and sugar.
- **Ultra-processed:** Cookies made from atta with various additional ingredients.

Concerns with Ultra-Processed Food:

Health Problems:

- Regular consumption of foods with added salt, sugar, and fat can lead to health issues. Health risks include **obesity, hypertension, cardiac problems, and lifestyle diseases**.
- Artificial chemicals in ultra-processed foods can negatively impact gut health. Gut imbalance can result in neurological problems, stress, mood swings, and obesity.

Addictive Nature:

- Many ultra-processed foods use taste enhancers, contributing to addiction. People can become automatically addicted to these foods due to their enhanced flavours.
- These foods are designed to be broken down quickly and absorbed efficiently. This rapid absorption can lead to a swift increase in blood sugar levels, triggering **a release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter** associated with pleasure and reward.

Sugar's Role:

- The rapid insulin release in response to high sugar intake can lead to a subsequent drop in blood sugar levels. This drop in blood sugar can increase hunger and a desire to eat more. This is often referred to as a **"sugar crash."**
- Repeated consumption of sugary foods can lead to a **desensitization of the brain**, making you crave even more sugar to achieve the same pleasurable feelings. This can contribute to a cycle of consumption and cravings.

Temporary Disruption and Rebounded:

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused a temporary disruption in the Indian ultra-processed food sector.
- Annual growth rate dropped from 12.65% in 2019 to 5.50% in 2020 due to the pandemic's impact.
- The industry rebounded remarkably, with an impressive 11.29% growth recorded in 2020-2021.

Dominant Categories and Sales Volume:

- Notable ultra-processed food categories include chocolate and sugar confectionery, salty snacks, beverages, ready-made and convenient foods, and breakfast cereals.
- In the period from 2011 to 2021, beverages held the largest share in terms of retail sales volume. This was followed by chocolate and sugar confectionery and ready-made and convenience foods.

Health Consciousness and Changing Consumption Patterns:

- Health-conscious consumers shifted their preferences during the pandemic.
- Carbonated sugar-sweetened beverages saw decreased demand, while fruit and vegetable juices gained popularity, possibly due to perceived immune-boosting properties.
- However, alternative beverages like fruit and

vegetable juices might also contain high free sugars.

Stricter Advertising and Marketing Regulations:

- Implement stricter regulations on advertising and marketing, especially for products like sweet biscuits that attract children.
- Address the health risks posed by high salt content in salty snacks through regulatory measures.

Clear Definition of High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) Foods:

- Collaborate with stakeholders to establish a precise definition of High Fat Sugar Salt (HFSS) foods.
- Link the tax structure to the HFSS definition via the GST Council to promote healthier options by imposing higher taxes on products surpassing recommended fat, sugar, and salt levels.

Way forward:**Comprehensive National Nutrition Policy:**

- Develop a comprehensive national nutrition policy that addresses both under- and over-nutrition.
- Ensure the policy's objectives and targets are well-defined and achieved through extensive stakeholder consultations.
- Enhance policies like Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 to encompass overnutrition and diet-related diseases comprehensively.

Nutritional Transition and Long-Term Goals:

- Encourage a shift toward healthier lifestyles by advocating reduced consumption of ultra-processed foods and increased intake of whole grains.
- Recognize the low intake of whole grains as a primary dietary risk factor for noncommunicable diseases in India.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q.1 Which of the following characteristics are associated with ultra-processed foods?

1. Typically contain only three main ingredients.
2. High content of added salt, sugar, and fat.
3. Quick breakdown in the body, leading to slow absorption of nutrients.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q2. With reference to the Gujarat Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. It is the outcome document of the inaugural WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit.
2. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare co-hosted the Summit.
3. The declaration emphasises the significance of equitable and fair benefit-sharing from biodiversity resources and indigenous knowledge.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q3. Consider the following:

1. WHO has established the WHO Global Centre

for Traditional Medicine (WHO-GCTM) in New Delhi.

2. The Government of India supports WHO-GCTM through the Ministry of Ayush.
3. The centre is a knowledge hub combining ancient wisdom and modern science to benefit humanity.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	c
2.	b
3.	b

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Explain the differences between traditional, complementary, and integrative medicine (TCIM). Analyse the role of the WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in advancing TCIM practices.

Q2. Discuss the concept of ultra-processed foods and their implications on public health. Examine the factors that contribute to the addictive nature of such foods, and suggest policy measures to address the challenges posed by their consumption.



SECURITY

C-295 AIRCRAFT

Why in the news?

India has received its first C295 transport aircraft from Airbus Spain, following a 2021 agreement to acquire 56 such aircraft from the aviation giant.

C295 Aircraft Overview

- The C295, as described by Airbus, is a **versatile tactical transport aircraft** capable of fulfilling a wide range of missions, including:
 - Carrying troops and cargo
 - Maritime patrol
 - Airborne warning
 - Surveillance and reconnaissance
 - Armed close air support
 - Medical evacuation
 - VIP transport
 - Airborne firefighting
- This aircraft can **transport up to nine tonnes of payload** or **accommodate a maximum of 71 personnel**, achieving a maximum cruise speed of 260 knots.
- Notably, it is **equipped for air-to-air refuelling** and is compatible with fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.
- Powered by two Pratt & Whitney turboprop engines, the C295 can cruise at altitudes of up to 30,000 feet and can swiftly take off from and

land on unpaved, soft, sandy, or grassy airstrips.

- These aircraft have accumulated an impressive 500,000 flight hours, attesting to their reliability and effectiveness in various operational contexts.

C295 Aircraft: Versatile Tactical Transport

Missions: Carrying troops and cargo, Maritime patrol, Airborne warning, Surveillance and reconnaissance, Armed close air support, Medical evacuation, VIP transport, Airborne firefighting.

Payload Capacity: Up to 9 tonnes or 71 personnel.

Maximum Cruise Speed: 260 knots.



Air-to-Air Refuelling: Compatible with fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters.

Engines: Powered by two Pratt & Whitney turboprop engines.

Altitude Range: Cruises at altitudes of up to 30,000 feet.

Versatility: Swift takeoff and landing on unpaved, soft, sandy, or grassy airstrips.

Reliability: Over 500,000 flight hours in various operational contexts.

India's Aircraft Purchase

- In September 2021, India agreed to buy **56 Airbus C295 aircraft** for Rs 21,935 crore.
- The **first 16 C295s will come from Spain**, with the second arriving in May 2024, followed by 14 more by August 2025, all in flying condition.

- The **remaining 40 will be made in India, and assembled in Gujarat with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL).**
- Indian Air Force (IAF) pilots and maintenance crews are receiving training.
- Indian deliveries of these locally-made aircraft will begin in 2026.

Significance of the Acquisition

- **Replacement of the ageing Avro fleet**, dating back to the 1960s, boosts IAF's transport capabilities.
- It's **India's first private sector 'Make in India' Aerospace program**, challenging the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- Expected to **create 15,000 high-skilled jobs and 10,000 indirect jobs** in the aerospace sector over a decade.

Indigenous Components

- While major components such as engines and avionics are sourced from the United States, Airbus will transfer technology for most other components.
- Indigenous radar warning and missile approach warning systems will be developed by Bharat Electronics Limited, and the countermeasure dispensing system will be provided by Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- The airframe consists of over 14,000 parts, with Tata gradually increasing indigenous production.
- It is anticipated that the 32nd aircraft, scheduled for delivery in 2029, will be almost entirely Indian-made.

Manufacturing Progress

- The manufacturing process involves the Hyderabad factory, which handles major components such as the fuselage and tail, starting production in July.
- After assembling these major sections, they will be transported to the Vadodara facility in the

following year, where they will be fitted with engines, avionics, and other critical components sourced by Airbus from global firms.

- Subsequently, they will undergo testing before being delivered to the IAF. The Vadodara facility can produce 12 aircraft per year.
- Airbus's involvement extends beyond aircraft manufacturing. The company will provide spare support for 10 years and a performance-based logistics contract for five years, ensuring that 85 per cent of the aircraft fleet remains available to the IAF at any given time.
- Additionally, a training facility in Agra is set to become operational in late 2023.

KHALISTAN MOVEMENT

Why in the news?

India has refuted the Canadian claim that a well-known pro-Khalistan activist was assassinated by Indian agents "on Canadian territory."

The Khalistan Movement:

- The Khalistan movement represents a long-standing struggle for the **establishment of a separate and sovereign Sikh state in the region of Punjab, encompassing parts of both India and Pakistan.**
- The movement faced severe repression in India, mainly through military operations like **Operation Blue Star in 1984 and subsequent operations known as Operation Black Thunder in 1986 and 1988.**
- Operation Blue Star was initiated on June 1, 1984, with the primary objectives of flushing out militants from the Golden Temple and neutralizing **Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale**, a prominent leader associated with the Khalistan movement.
- In India, the Khalistan movement and its affiliated groups have been outlawed, with govern-

ment authorities regarding them as a significant national security threat.

- Despite its suppression in India, the Khalistan movement retains a degree of support, particularly in North India and among the Sikh diaspora living in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom.

Khalistan and Canada:

- Canada hosts a substantial Sikh population, making Sikhs the fastest-growing religious group, accounting for 2.1 percent of the country's population as per the 2021 Canadian census. Canada boasts the world's second-largest Sikh population, following India.
- In 2002, a Toronto-based Punjabi-language publication, Sanjh Savera, marked Indira Gandhi's death anniversary with a cover illustration depicting her assassination. The magazine received government advertisements and has since become a prominent daily in Canada.
- Furthermore, in Brampton, which is home to Canada's largest Sikh population, a pro-Khalistan organization known as Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) conducted what they termed a "referendum" on Khalistan in recent years.

The Khalistan Movement: Origins And Causes

- The Khalistan movement traces its roots back to the period surrounding India's independence and the subsequent Partition in 1947, which resulted in the division of the Punjab province between India and Pakistan. This division brought about some of the most severe communal violence in history and created millions of refugees.

Partition's Impact on Sikhs

- Lahore, the historical capital of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's vast Sikh Empire, became a part of Pakistan during the Partition. Additionally, several holy Sikh sites, including Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak (the founder of Sikhism), also fell within Pakistan's borders. This left a significant portion of Sikhs in India, but they constituted only a small minority, making up ap-

proximately 2 percent of India's population.

Struggle For Autonomy And States Reorganisation

- The political struggle for greater autonomy for Sikhs began in the post-independence period, with the emergence of the Punjabi Suba Movement, which advocated for the creation of a Punjabi-speaking state. However, the 1955 report of the States Reorganisation Commission rejected this demand.
- Years of persistent protests finally led to a significant development in 1966, as the state of Punjab was reorganized to accommodate the Punjabi Suba demand. The erstwhile Punjab state was divided into three parts: **Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, which were Hindi-speaking and Hindu-majority states, and the Punjabi-speaking, Sikh-majority Punjab.** This move aimed to address the linguistic and cultural aspirations of the people of Punjab, particularly the Sikhs, who sought greater autonomy and recognition. However, it also laid the foundation for ongoing demands for an independent Sikh state, Khalistan.

The Anandpur Sahib Resolution: A Catalyst For The Khalistan Movement

- In 1973, leaders of the Akali Dal convened in Anandpur Sahib, a sacred town and the birthplace of the Khalsa, and unveiled a significant document known as the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. This resolution outlined a series of demands that would shape the political trajectory of the Akali Dal, a Sikh political party.

Key Demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution:

- **Autonomy for Punjab:** It sought greater political autonomy for the state of Punjab.
- **Identification of Regions:** The resolution identified specific regions that would form part of a potential separate Sikh state.
- **Right to Frame Constitution:** It aimed to secure the right for Punjab to frame its internal constitution.

Building on the Punjabi Suba Movement:

- The Akali Dal, through the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, aimed to capitalize on the growing demand for autonomy that had been brewing alongside the Punjabi Suba movement. This demand for autonomy had gained international attention by 1971 when an advertisement appeared in The New York Times declaring the birth of Khalistan.

The Emergence of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale:

- Within Punjab, the quest for autonomy evolved into something more profound. One influential figure in this transformation was Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a charismatic preacher who positioned himself as the authentic voice of the Sikh community. Bhindranwale garnered a substantial following, particularly among the youth, including those from marginalized backgrounds.



Operation Blue Star was initiated on June 1, 1984, with the primary objectives of flushing out militants from the Golden Temple and neutralizing Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a prominent leader associated with the Khalistan movement.

Shift to Radical Action:

- By 1982, Bhindranwale had taken up residence inside the Golden Temple and began orchestrating demonstrations and clashes with the police.

The movement aligned itself with the objectives outlined in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. However, amidst growing religious polarization, sectarian violence, and Bhindranwale's inflammatory rhetoric against Hindus, the Indian government deemed the movement tantamount to secession.

Aftermath of Operation Blue Star:

- The culmination of this tension was Operation Blue Star in 1984, which aimed to flush out militants from the Golden Temple and neutralize Bhindranwale. This operation not only wounded the Sikh community worldwide but also intensified the demand for Khalistan.
- Following Operation Blue Star, Punjab became the epicenter of a protracted insurgency that lasted until 1995, characterized by violence, political turmoil, and the enduring struggle for Khalistan.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. With reference to Airbus C295, consider the following statements:

1. The Airbus C295 aircraft is primarily designed for civilian use and is unsuitable for military missions.
2. The C295 can transport up to nine tonnes of payload or accommodate a maximum of 71 people while cruising at 260 knots.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) None

Q2. Consider the following:

1. Airbus C295 aircraft is equipped for air-to-air refuelling and is compatible with both fixed-wing

aircraft and helicopters.

2. All the C295 aircraft will be manufactured and assembled in India in collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems Limited.
3. This aircraft represents India's first private sector 'Make in India' Aerospace program, challenging the state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q3. Operation Black Thunder is related to:

- (a) Khalistan Movement
- (b) Maoist Movement
- (c) Naga Movement
- (d) Bodoland Movement

Q4. Consider the following statements regarding the Demands of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution:

1. The resolution identified specific regions that would form part of a potential separate Sikh nation, Khalistan.
2. It aimed to secure the right of Punjab to frame

its internal constitution.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answers
1.	b
2.	b
3.	a
4.	b

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Examine the role of indigenous aerospace manufacturing in bolstering India's national security. Discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with India's 'Make in India' Aerospace programs.

Q2. Separatist movements are a result of lopsided federalism. comment

HISTORY OPTIONAL

FOR UPSC 2023-24

3rd

October
2023

2:00 PM

ANCIENT

📍

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SEETHAKALI FOLK DANCE

Why in the news?

For the first time, the 20-member ensemble from the Perinad Seethakali Sangham is gearing up to present the Seethakali art form outside of the home state of Kerala.

Seethakali: A Historical Dance Form:

- Seethakali, a centuries-old dance form, is distinguished by its fusion of **rhythmic movements, narrative storytelling, and musical accompaniments**.
- Originating in **Perinad, Kollam district**, this art form traces its roots back approximately **150 years**. It was traditionally **performed by the Vedar and Pulayar communities** as part of the **Onam festivities**.
- **Thematic Basis:** At its core, **Seethakali draws inspiration from episodes within the epic Ramayana**. It encapsulates the **journey of Seetha, encompassing her exile to the forest (vanayatra) and her symbolic descent into the earth (andardhanam)**. Key mythological characters such as Rama, Seetha, Ravana, and Hanuman bring this narrative to life.
- **Melodic Companions:** Central to Seethakali performances are the enchanting folk songs that accompany the dancers. **Passed down through generations, these oral traditions enrich the storytelling aspect of the dance.**
- **Traditional Instruments and Props:** Seethakali embraces nature in its instruments and props,

crafted from materials like bamboo and palm leaves. Musical accompaniments include instruments such as the **ganjira, manikatta, chiratta, and kaimani**.

- **Vibrant Attire and Visual Elements:** Costumes and makeup in Seethakali are notable for their vividness. Characters like **Rama and Laxmana are adorned in green attire**, as this hue symbolizes divinity in line with traditions seen in Kathakali.



- **Perinad Seethakali Sangham:** The Perinad Seethakali Sangham stands as the sole registered performing group dedicated to Seethakali within Kerala. Recognized by the Kerala Folklore Akademi in 2018, this group's affiliation has played a pivotal role in reviving this distinct art form, which was once on the brink of fading into obscurity.

By expanding beyond its native region, the Perinad Seethakali Sangham not only showcases the artistic and cultural richness of Seethakali but also contributes to preserving and sharing a piece of Kerala's

cultural heritage on a broader stage.

MITAKSHARA AND DAYABHAGA

Why in the news?

The Supreme Court ruled that a child born from a marriage that is either void or voidable has the right to inherit the parent's portion of a joint Hindu family property governed by the Mitakshara law.

About Mitakshara and Dayabhaga

In the area of Hindu family law in India, two prominent schools of thought govern the principles of succession within the Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) – the Dayabhaga School and the Mitakshara School. These legal systems have distinct regional and doctrinal variations that influence how inheritance and succession are handled.

Key Points:

- **Regional Divide:** While the Dayabhaga School prevails in Bengal and Assam, the Mitakshara School is followed in all other regions of India. The Mitakshara School further subdivides into various schools such as the Benares, Mithila, Maharashtra, and Dravida schools.
- **Key Interpreters:** Vijnaneshwar and Jeenu-tavan are renowned scholars associated with interpreting the Mitakshara and Dayabhaga Schools, respectively.
- **Mitakshara School:** In this school, property allocation is based on the principle of possession by birth. A person can bequeath their self-acquired property through a will. Joint family property is inherited by coparceners, typically extending to the next three generations. The partition can convert joint family property into separate property. Sons have a birthright in joint family property under this school.
- **Dayabhaga School:** In this school, property inheritance occurs upon the death of the possessor. Birthright and property devolution by survivorship have limited significance. Each coparcener has the right to separate their share in the joint family property.
- **Division in Dayabhaga:** In this school, property division is relatively straightforward. If a man dies intestate, his property is evenly divided among his sons. If he shares common property with brothers, a share equal to his portion is separated, and his share is divided among his sons.
- **Principle Basis:** The Dayabhaga School's law of succession is rooted in religious value or divine profit, whereas the Mitakshara School relies on the principle of blood-relationship.
- **Mitakshara School Restrictions:** The Mitakshara School imposes restrictions, such as excluding females from inheritance and prioritizing agnates (paternal relatives) over cognates (maternal relatives). For instance, if a Hindu man leaves behind a son and a daughter, the daughter is excluded entirely, and the son inherits the entire property.
- **Hindu Succession Act, 1956:** The Mitakshara School influenced the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, which governed succession and property inheritance. However, it primarily recognized males as legal heirs. The Act applied to individuals who were not Muslims, Christians, Parsis, or Jews by religion, including Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, followers of Arya Samaj, and Brahmo Samaj, as Hindus for legal purposes.

INDIA, THAT IS BHARAT

Why in the news?

There is ongoing speculation regarding a potential official Change in the country's name from "India" to "Bharat."

About the different names:

The Indian subcontinent has long been known by two names: India and Bharat. Article 1 of the Constitution of India acknowledges this duality, referring to the nation as "India, that is Bharat." This dual

nomenclature has historical roots, with “Bharat” tracing its origins to ancient texts such as the Mahabharata.

- **Historical Significance of Bharat:** The name “Bharat,” or “Bharata,” has deep historical and cultural significance in India. It is derived from Puranic literature and is prominently featured in the epic Mahabharata. According to the Puranas, Bharata refers to the land between the southern sea and the northern abode of snow.
- **Bharat in the Constitution:** Article 1 of the Indian Constitution recognizes both “India” and “Bharat” as names for the nation. It states, “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States.” This constitutional provision reflects the nation’s dual identity, acknowledging both its modern and ancient names.
- **Hindi Variants:** Several government institutions and organizations in India already incorporate the name “Bharatiya” in their Hindi variants. Examples include the Reserve Bank of India and the Indian Railways, which highlight the coexistence of both names.

The name “**Bharat**” has deep historical and cultural roots in India, tracing its origins to ancient texts and legends.

- **Puranic Literature and the Mahabharata:** The name “Bharat,” along with variations like “Bharata” and “Bharatvarsha,” finds its earliest references in Puranic literature, a body of ancient Hindu texts. It is also prominently featured in the epic Mahabharata, one of the most important and revered texts in Indian literature.
- **Geographical Description:** The Puranas describe “Bharata” as the land situated between the southern sea and the northern abode of snow. This geographical reference is one of the earliest associations with the name.
- **Religious and Socio-cultural Significance:** Social scientists have explained “Bharata” in the context of a religious and socio-cultural entity rather than a purely political or geographical one. It refers to a “supraregional and subcontinental territory where the Brahmanical system

of society prevails.” This highlights the cultural and religious significance of the name.

- **Ancient King Bharata:** “Bharata” is also the name of an ancient king from legend who is considered the ancestor of the Rig Vedic tribe of the Bharatas. Consequently, he is seen as the progenitor of all the peoples of the Indian subcontinent.
- **Jawaharlal Nehru’s Perspective:** In January 1927, Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister, emphasized the “fundamental unity of India” that has existed from the “remote past.” He saw this unity as a result of a common faith and culture. According to him, India was synonymous with “Bharata,” the holy land of the Hindus. Nehru pointed out that significant Hindu pilgrimage sites were located in various corners of India, reinforcing the unity of the land.

Hindustan:

- **Etymology:** The term “Hindustan” is believed to have originated from the Persian word “Hindu,” which is the cognate form of the Sanskrit word “Sindhu,” meaning the Indus River. This term gained currency during the Achaemenid Persian conquest of the Indus Valley, which began in the 6th century BC. During this time, it referred to the northwestern parts of the Indian subcontinent.
- **Evolution:** The Achaemenids initially used “Hindu” to identify the lower Indus basin. Over time, the suffix “-stan” was added to create “Hindustan.”
- **Mughal Era:** During the early Mughal period in the 16th century, “Hindustan” came to describe the entire Indo-Gangetic plain. It was used to refer to the territories of the Mughal emperor, which encompassed a significant part of South Asia.

India:

- **Etymology:** The Greeks, who learned of “Hind” from the Achaemenids, transliterated it as “Indus.” By the 3rd century BC, “India” had come to be associated with the region beyond the Indus River.

- **Usage:** The name “India” became more prominent from the late 18th century onwards, particularly during British colonial rule. British maps increasingly used the name “India,” and “Hindustan” began to lose its association with the entire South Asian region.
- **Reasons for Adoption:** The adoption of the name “India” by the British may have been influenced by its Graeco-Roman associations, its long history of use in Europe, and its adoption by scientific and bureaucratic organizations like the Survey of India. It signalled a shift in perspective and helped establish the subcontinent as a single, bounded British political territory.

The inclusion of both “Bharat” and “India” in the Constitution of India was the result of significant deliberations and discussions during the Constituent Assembly debates:

- **Deliberations in the Constituent Assembly:** The discussion regarding the name and territory of the Union took place in the Constituent Assembly on September 17, 1949. This was crucial in determining how the nation would be officially referred to in the Constitution.
- **Reference to “India, that is Bharat”:** The phrase “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States” was included in Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. This reflects the decision to officially recognize both names, “India” and “Bharat,” as being synonymous and representative of the nation.
- **Division among Constituent Assembly Members:** During these discussions, there were differing opinions among the members of the Constituent Assembly. Some members expressed reservations about using the name “India” because they believed it reminded them of the colonial past and British rule. This sentiment was rooted in the desire to move away from colonial associations and establish a distinct national identity.
- **Incorporation of Both Names:** Ultimately, the Constituent Assembly chose to incorporate both names, “Bharat” and “India,” in Article 1 of the Constitution. This decision aimed to respect the historical and cultural significance of

“Bharat” while acknowledging the more modern and widely recognized name, “India.” The phrase “that is Bharat” was included to emphasize the dual identity and cultural heritage of the nation.

- **Jawaharlal Nehru’s Perspective:** Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister and a prominent member of the Constituent Assembly, had referred to “India,” “Bharata,” and “Hindustan” in his book “The Discovery of India.” However, when it came to the Constitution, “Hindustan” was dropped, and both “Bharat” and “India” were retained.

ANCIENT RED SEA TRADE ROUTE

Why in the news?

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, unveiled during the G20 Summit, evokes the historical trade route that once connected the Indian subcontinent with the Roman Empire.

Recognition of Ancient Red Sea Trade Route:

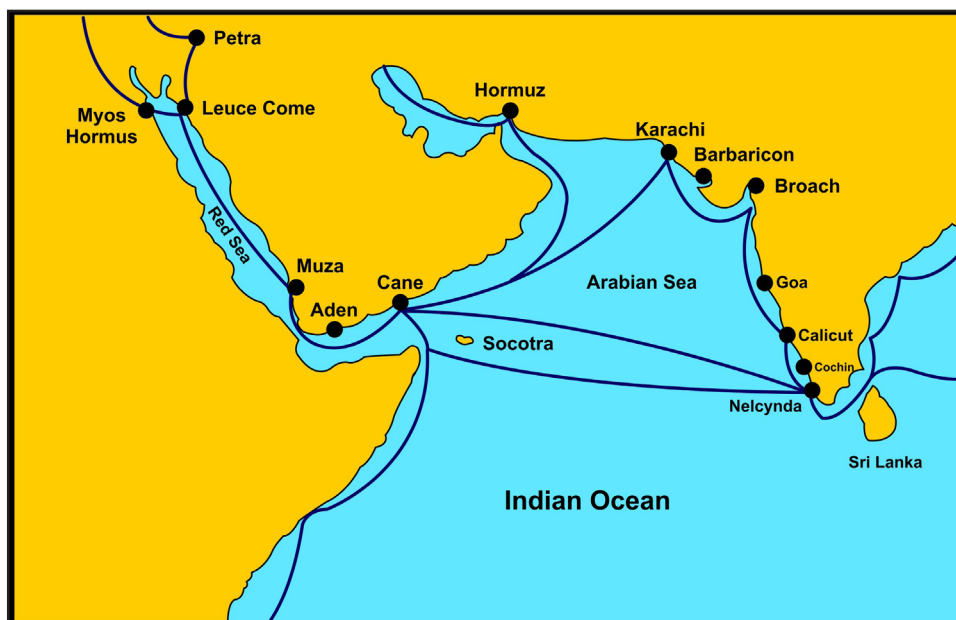
- Historians have long acknowledged the existence of trade between Rome and India in ancient times.
- Sir Mortimer Wheeler’s excavations during the 1930s and 40s at Arikamedu, near modern-day Pondicherry, provided concrete evidence of Indo-Roman trade during the 1st century CE.

Underappreciation of Indian Merchants and Ship Owners:

- Indian merchants and ship owners played a pivotal role in this historical exchange. Unfortunately, their contributions have often been overlooked in historical accounts.

Immense Scale of the Trade:

- Recent revelations have shed light on the enormous scale of this trade route. Current estimates indicate that custom taxes from Red Sea trade with India, Persia, and Ethiopia accounted for up to one-third of the Roman exchequer’s income.



- In the opposite direction, trade involved the export of gold to India, leading to a trade imbalance.

- Historical records also suggest that Indians developed a taste for Roman wine.

Organization and Duration of the Trade:

- Agreements between merchants from Kerala and ship-pers from Alexandria suggest the existence of a well-organized trade network.

- Goods were transported in containers resembling modern cargo vessels.

Source of Revelation:

- The remarkable insight into the trade's magnitude comes from the Muziris Papyrus. This document was authored by an Egypto-Roman financier based in Alexandria and provides details about goods obtained from an Indian merchant located in distant Muziris, situated on the Kerala coast.

Economic Impact on the Roman Empire:

- The Muziris Papyrus reveals import taxes exceeding two million sesterces on cargo valued at nearly nine million sesterces.
- Indian imports into Egypt by the 1st century CE may have surpassed a billion sesterces annually, significantly bolstering the Roman Empire's finances.
- These revenues were vital for sustaining the vast Roman Empire, surpassing the incomes of entire subjugated nations.

Trade Commodities on the Red Sea Route:

- Luxuries from India, including malabathrum (similar to cinnamon), ivory, pearls, gemstones, and especially pepper, were highly sought after throughout the Roman Empire.
- Indian pepper, in particular, became a staple, appearing in approximately 80% of the recipes found in the Roman cookbook of Apicius.

- Indian mariners skillfully harnessed monsoon winds, allowing for a journey of six to eight weeks from India to Egypt.

Indian Involvement in the Trade:

Indians, including dynasties, showed a keen interest in seafaring. Indian sailors left their mark in locations such as the Hoq caves on the Socotra island, highlighting their active participation in the trade.

Red Sea Trade vs. Silk Road:

- Contrary to contemporary perceptions, the Red Sea trade route during the Roman era held greater historical importance than the Silk Road.
- The concept of the Silk Road, as we understand it today, did not exist in ancient times, and interactions between China and Europe were limited.

Ongoing discoveries continue to shed light on the significance of the Red Sea trade route. Questions about India's impact during this period, its role in global trade, and its influence on ideas remain open. While Indian scholars have made substantial contributions to this field, efforts to disseminate these findings more broadly are essential for a deeper understanding of history.

OPERATION POLO

Why in the news?

September 13, 2023, commemorates the 75th anniversary of Operation Polo, a significant military operation initiated by the Indian Army on September 13, 1948, aimed at integrating the princely state of Hyderabad into the Indian Union.

Background:

- Hyderabad State, ruled by the Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, was one of the largest princely states in British India. Despite its predominantly Hindu population, the Nizam, a Muslim ruler, sought to maintain Hyderabad's independent status as India gained independence in 1947.

Controversial Status:

- The Nizam's desire for independence clashed with the Hindu majority's aspiration to merge with the Indian Union.
- This conflict was exacerbated by communal tensions, particularly between the Hindu majority and the Muslim ruling elite represented by the Razakars, a private militia accused of committing atrocities against Hindus.
- These events fueled the demand for Hyderabad's integration into India.

Sardar Patel's Diplomacy:

- Initially, the Indian government, led by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, attempted peaceful negotiations to integrate Hyderabad.
- However, the Nizam's reluctance and the deteriorating communal situation thwarted these efforts.

Operation Polo:

- Operation Polo was initiated due to the Nizam of Hyderabad's desire to maintain his state's independence following India's independence in 1947.

- The Nizam exploited India's focus on the Kashmir conflict with Pakistan, diverting resources and attention away from Hyderabad.
- In November 1947, a standstill agreement was signed between the Nizam and India, postponing Hyderabad's immediate integration into India for a year while maintaining existing conditions.

OPERATION POLO

Operation polo is the code name for the police action against the Princely State of Hyderabad in September 1948 by the newly independent republic of India.

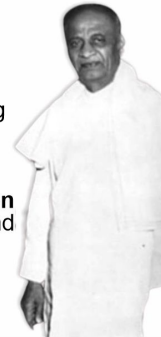
BACKGROUND

- By 1948 Hyderabad had chosen to join neither Pakistan nor India.
- Hyderabad ruler, Nizam Mir Sir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII presided over a largely Hindu population with an irregular army known as the Razakars.
- Seeing the events happening at Telangana & with the Razakars, the Indian Govt. undertook the military operation to annex Hyderabad.

AFTERMATH



- The Indian military detained thousands of people, including Razakars, Hindu militants, and communists.
- The Nizam had abdicated upon the surrender of Hyderabad and signed an instrument of accession, joining India.



Several factors prompted the launch of Operation Polo on September 13, 1948:

- Escalating Tensions:** During the standstill agreement period, the Nizam's administration in Hyderabad bolstered the Razakars, an irregular force led by Maj Gen SA El Edroos, which targeted the predominantly Hindu population in the state.
- Border Incursions:** The Razakars engaged in cross-border raids, causing tensions along Hy-

derabad's borders.

- **Overtures to Pakistan:** The Nizam hinted at the idea of establishing an independent entity within India's borders by making diplomatic overtures to Pakistan.
- **Threat of Secession:** The Nizam's actions, along with the presence of the Razakars, raised concerns about Hyderabad attempting to secede from India, posing a threat to India's unity.
- In response, the Indian government took "Police Action" to prevent Hyderabad's secession and ensure its integration into India. The Nizam's forces numbered fewer than 25,000, with only a fraction being well-trained. Although the Razakars were numerous, they were not a formidable military opposition.
- Hyderabad's resistance crumbled within the first two days of Operation Polo, which was primarily conducted by Maj Gen Jayanto Nath Chaudhuri's 1 Armoured Division, with additional thrusts from the north, south, and east of the state.
- Operation Polo achieved success. Recognising the futility of resistance, the Nizam surrendered on September 17, 1948, by signing an Instrument of Accession, officially integrating Hyderabad into the Indian Union.

Aftermath:

- Operation Polo marked the end of princely rule in India and led to the reorganization of Hyderabad into Andhra Pradesh, along with portions in Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- Many Razakars and Nizam's government officials were arrested and tried for their roles in the conflict.
- The operation's legacy remains a subject of historical debate, with some criticizing the use of force while others argue it was necessary to prevent further communal violence and secure Hyderabad's integration into India.

Cultural Integration:

- Hyderabad's integration into India brought to-

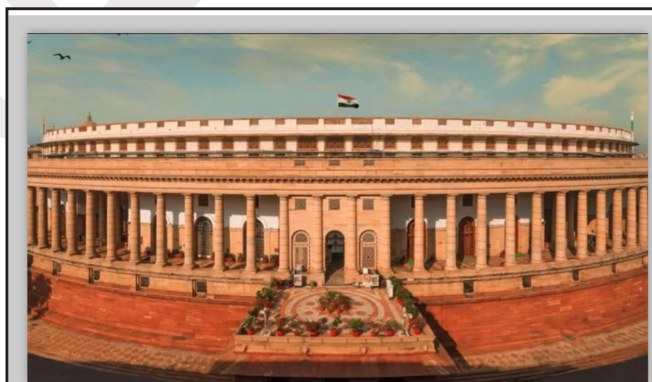
gether people from diverse linguistic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, initiating a process of cultural assimilation and integration.

Operation Polo played a pivotal role in India's early post-independence history, facilitating the integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union. It was a multifaceted event marked by political, religious, and cultural tensions, leaving a lasting impact on the region's history and the broader narrative of Indian unity.

CHAUSATH YOGINI TEMPLE

Why in the news?

Starting September 19, the current special House session will move to the new Parliament building. The old Parliament Building, which will be converted into a museum, is thought to be inspired by the Chausath Yogini temple.



Chausath Yogini Temple

- The **Chausath Yogini Temple, also known as Ekattarso Mahadeva Temple**, is located in Mitaoli village near Padaoli in Morena district, approximately 40 kilometres from Gwalior in **Madhya Pradesh**.
- This temple was built by the **Kachchhapaghata king Devapala** during his reign around 1055-1075 CE, according to an inscription dated 1323 CE.
- The Chausath Yogini temples of India are ancient, **roofless shrines** built from the 9th to the 12th century as embodiments of yoginis, female masters of yoga in Hindu tantra.
- These sacred spaces are deeply rooted in worshipping the divine feminine force, mainly embodied by goddesses like Parvati.

Temple Structure and Significance:

- The Chausath Yogini Temple at Mitaoli (M.P) is a characteristic example. Set atop a rocky hill, this open-air temple is **circular in shape and houses niches for 64 yoginis**, hence earning the name 'Chausath', which means 64 in Hindi.
- However, not all temples follow this number; some house 42 or 81 niches, suggesting different sets of goddesses.
- The temple's extant structures are scattered across central and northern Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha.
- Lost temples have also been identified across the subcontinent, from north to south and east to west.

Yoginis:

- Yoginis are goddesses or adept individuals in tantra. They come from different groups and are often shown as female figures with animal heads.
- Each Yogini has unique abilities, like changing into female animals, changing others, and flying.
- They use symbolic objects like skulls and work

in unique places, showing their intense and risky nature. They share secret tantric knowledge and have extraordinary powers known as 'siddhis'.

Rediscovery:

- Although the significant existing shrines of the 64 Yoginis in Odisha and Madhya Pradesh were described by Alexander Cunningham in the 19th century, they were primarily forgotten afterwards.
- In the late 20th century, these temples' cultural and spiritual significance was revived and gradually recognised by scholars and devotees.
- While there is no concrete evidence that the architects of the Indian Parliament visited the temple, it is speculated that they may have drawn inspiration from its unusual shape.
- Historians suggest that Lutyens and Baker, the architects of the Indian Parliament, were sent on a tour to study Indian architecture and may have seen photographs of ancient monuments collected by the Archaeological Survey of India.

MEGALITHIC DOLMEN SITE IN KARNATAKA

Why in the news?

Recent archaeological excavations near Moodbidri in Dakshina Kannada have unearthed a diverse collection of terracotta figurines. These findings are accompanied by bone and iron fragments, shedding light on the historical significance of the megalithic dolmen site at Mudu Konaje.

About the Megalithic Dolmen Site

- The megalithic site at Mudu Konaje was initially **discovered** and reported by historian and researcher **Pundikai Ganapayya Bhat in the 1980s**. Situated approximately 8 km from Moodbidri, it was **once the largest megalithic dolmen site, comprising nine dolmens** on the slope of a stone hill.

- Unfortunately, **only two dolmens remain** intact, while the rest of the burials have been ruined over time.

Understanding Dolmens of Megalithic Culture

- Megalithic culture in India is characterised by various types of burials and the use of iron. Megalithic culture constructed **large stone monuments, such as dolmens, menhirs, and cairns.**
- Dolmens consist of large stone slabs, known as orthostats, arranged clockwise to create a square room.
- A massive stone slab serves as a capstone to close the square chamber. Typically, a round or U-shaped entrance, known as a port-hole, is created on the eastern slab.
- These structures are known by different names in South India, such as Kalmane, Pandavara Mane, Moriyara Mane, Moriyara Betta, Panara Arekallu, Madmal Gunda, Kandi Kone, Kottya, Toonth Kal, Pandavara Kal, and more.



Significance of Terracotta Figurines

- Out of the eight figurines discovered at the site, they include two **cow bovines**, one **mother goddess**, two **peacocks**, a **horse**, the **hand of a mother goddess**, and an unidentified object.
- These figurines were found inside the dolmens, though they had been disturbed by treasure hunters.
- Notably, the cow bovines found in the dolmens are **crucial for determining the chronology of these structures.**
- The presence of terracottas in megalithic burials

als provides valuable insights into the **Bhoota cult or Daiva Aradhane of coastal Karnataka.**

- Cow bovines or Cow goddess figurines in this context find parallels in the terracotta figurines of Malampuzha in Kerala and Egypt.
- The terracotta figurines from Mudu Konaje have been dated to the period of 800-700 BC.

HOYSALA SACRED ENSEMBLES

Why in the news?

The Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

About Hoysala Dynasty

- Early Emergence:** The Hoysala dynasty is thought to have been established around the 10th century by Nripa Kama I, initially serving as vassals under the Western Ganga dynasty.
- They governed from their capital, which was initially in Dwarasamudra (present-day Halebidu) but was later relocated to Belur.
- The Hoysalas held strong devotion to both Vaishnavism and Shaivism, two prominent sects within Hinduism, and their enthusiastic support for temples and artistic endeavors reflected their deep religious commitment.
- Emergence as a Major Force:** The Hoysalas rose to prominence during the rule of King Vishnuvardhana, who reigned from approximately 1110 to 1152 CE. Under his leadership, the Hoysalas transitioned into an independent kingdom, relocating their capital from Belur to Halebidu (Dwarasamudra). This period witnessed a significant upsurge in prosperity and cultural development.
- Cultural Apex:** The Hoysala dynasty reached its cultural zenith during the reign of King Ballala II, who ruled from around 1173 to 1220 CE. This era witnessed the construction of some of South India's most magnificent temples and monuments.

- **Gradual Decline:** In the late 13th century, the Hoysalas encountered invasions from the Delhi Sultanate and other neighboring powers, leading to a gradual erosion of their authority. By the early 14th century, the dynasty had substantially diminished in power and influence.

Architectural Characteristics of Hoysala Architecture:

The architectural style of Hoysala sacred complexes is celebrated for its distinctive blend of Nagara and Dravidian influences, enriched with unique Hoysala elements. Here are the key architectural attributes:

- **Stellate Ground Plans:** Hoysala temples are renowned for their star-shaped ground plans, known as “stellate.” These designs feature multiple projecting points, and some of the most famous instances can be observed in the Chennakesava Temple in Belur and the Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebidu.
- **Exquisite Sculptural Artistry:** Among the most remarkable aspects of Hoysala temples are their intricate and finely detailed sculptures. These sculptures grace the exterior walls and depict a wide range of subjects, including scenes from Hindu mythology, everyday life, and the Hoysala royal court. The craftsmanship is truly exceptional, characterized by delicate filigree work and lifelike expressions.
- **Turned and Polished Pillars:** Hoysala temples are distinguished by their lathe-turned pillars, which are meticulously polished and exhibit diverse designs. Each pillar is a unique work of art that contributes to the overall interior aesthetics of the temple.
- **Deity Representations:** The primary sanctum of Hoysala temples often houses a deity, and the vimana (tower) above it is intricately adorned with depictions of the presiding deity or relevant mythological narratives. These vimanas possess a pyramid-like shape and are adorned with miniature shrines on their surfaces.
- **Elaborate Entrances:** The entrances of Hoysala temples showcase ornate door frames adorned with intricate carvings of deities, celestial beings, and floral motifs. These doorways are con-

sidered as masterpieces of Hoysala artistry.

Prominent Hoysala Sacred Complexes:

- **Chennakesava Temple in Belur:** This temple, devoted to Lord Vishnu, stands as an exemplary masterpiece of Hoysala architecture. It is renowned for its breathtaking sculptures, especially the bracket figures that depict various dance poses.
- **Hoysaleswara Temple in Halebidu:** Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple is celebrated for its intricate wall panel sculptures that narrate tales from the epics, Puranas, and Hindu mythology.
- **Kesava Temple in Somanathapura:** Situated near Mysore, this temple is another splendid representation of Hoysala architecture. It is acclaimed for its exquisitely detailed and symmetrically arranged sculptures.
- **Kedareshwara Temple in Halebidu:** This temple showcases a distinctive architectural style known as “Vesara,” a harmonious fusion of Nagara and Dravidian influences. Notably, it features twin sanctums and finely detailed carvings.

SANTINIKETAN

Why in the news?

During the 45th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Saudi Arabia on a Sunday, Santiniketan, a town in West Bengal, was granted a place on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Overview

- Santiniketan, situated in West Bengal’s Birbhum district, is a renowned center of culture and education, celebrated for its association with Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel laureate poet, philosopher, and polymath.
- Its name, “Santiniketan,” translates to “Abode of Peace,” and it was founded by Tagore as an experimental hub for education and art, leaving an enduring impact on generations of artists, scholars, and thinkers.

1 HIMACHAL PRADESH
Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area

2 UTTARAKHAND
Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks

3 CHANDIGARH
The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement

4 DELHI
Humayun's Tomb, Qutub Minar and its Monuments, Red Fort Complex

5 BIHAR
• Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda
• Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya

6 SIKKIM
• Khangchendzonga National Park

7 ASSAM
• Kaziranga National Park
• Manas Wildlife Sanctuary

9 ODISHA
• Sun Temple, Konark

8 WEST BENGAL
• Sundarbans National Park
• Santiniketan

10 UTTAR PRADESH
• Agra Fort
• Taj Mahal
• Fatehpur Sikri

11 RAJASTHAN
• Hill Forts of Rajasthan
• 1. Jaisalmer Fort, 2. Chittorgarh Fort, 3. Kumbhalgarh Fort, 4. Gagron Fort, 5. Ranthambore Fort, 6. Amber Fort
• Keoladeo National Park
• The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur
• Jaipur City, Rajasthan

12 GUJARAT
• Dholavira: a Harappan City
• Historic City of Ahmadabad
• Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park
• Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan

13 MAHARASHTRA
• Ellora Caves
• Ajanta Caves
• Elephanta Caves
• Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus)
• Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai

14 GOA
Churches and Convents of Goa

15 KARNATAKA
• Group of Monuments at Pattadakal
• Group of Monuments at Hampi

16 MADHYA PRADESH
• Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi
• Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka
• Khajuraho Group of Monuments

17 TELANGANA
Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramapo) Temple

18 TAMIL NADU
• Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
• Great Living Chola Temples

Mountain Railways of India
• Darjeeling Himalayan Railway - West Bengal
• Nilgiri Mountain Railways — Tamil Nadu
• Kalka Shima Railways - Himachal Pradesh

Historical Roots

- Santiniketan's origins date back to 1901 when Rabindranath Tagore relocated to this serene environment, disenchanted with the conventional educational system.
- His vision was to create an institution that offered holistic education, blending arts, culture, and nature. Under his guidance, Santiniketan evolved into a distinctive educational and cultural center.

Visva-Bharati University

- In 1921, Rabindranath Tagore established Visva-Bharati University within Santiniketan, with the aim of promoting universal, non-sectarian, and holistic education.
- Today, Visva-Bharati is a prestigious institution renowned for its focus on arts, literature, and social sciences, comprising various schools and centers dedicated to diverse disciplines.

Cultural Significance

- Santiniketan has played a pivotal role in nurturing Indian art and culture. It was instrumental in the development of the Bengal School of Art, a significant movement that emphasized traditional Indian art forms, nature, and the essence of the land.
- The annual Poush Mela and Basanta Utsav (Holi festival) celebrations attract visitors from across India, showcasing the nation's rich cultural heritage through music, dance, theater, and more.

Landmarks and Attractions

- **Upasana Griha (Prayer Hall):** Designed by Tagore, this red-brick structure serves as a space for meditation and prayer.
- **Kala Bhavana:** Visva-Bharati's art college, carrying forward the legacy of the Bengal School of Art.
- **Patha Bhavana:** The institution where Rabindranath Tagore's educational principles are actively implemented.
- **Sangeet Bhavana:** The music school, dedicated to

the study and practice of Indian classical music.

- **Rabindra Bhavan:** A museum and archive housing Rabindranath Tagore's personal belongings, manuscripts, and artistic works, offering insights into his life and creative process.
- **Khoai:** A nearby natural red soil ravine that provides picturesque beauty to the region.

Santiniketan is a testament to Tagore's vision of an integrated and harmonious approach to education and culture, continuing to inspire and enchant visitors worldwide.

STATUE OF ONENESS

Why in the news?

Recently, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan revealed a monumental statue of Adi Guru Shankaracharya on the Mandhata Island in the Khandwa district.

About the Statue of Oneness

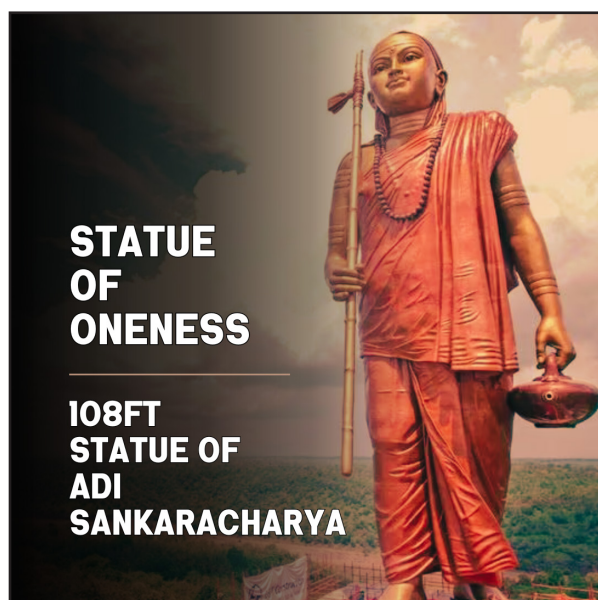
- This colossal statue, named the "Ekatmata ki Murti" (Statue of Oneness), stands at 108 feet.
- It magnificently depicts the 8th-century Indian philosopher and theologian who played a pivotal role in consolidating the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta.
- This unveiling ceremony marks a significant milestone within the ambitious "Ekatma Dham" project, spearheaded by the State government.
- This ceremony represents the commencement of its inaugural phase. The government envisions the development of this site along the lines of the renowned Mahakal Trek corridor, aiming to establish it as a prominent and revered destination.

Adi Shankaracharya: The Advaita Vedanta Philosopher

- Adi Shankaracharya was an Indian philosopher and theologian who expounded the doctrine of

Advaita Vedanta.

- He renounced worldly pleasures at a young age and advocated the unification of the soul with the Supreme Soul.
- Shankaracharya's important work was the **synthesis of the six sub-sects, known as 'Shanmata'**, which worships six supreme deities. He explained the existence of one Supreme Being (Brahman) and founded '**Dashanami Sampradaya**', emphasizing a monastic life.
- Shankaracharya traveled and debated with philosophers, fine-tuning his teachings of 'Advaita Vedanta' and 'Dashanami Sampradaya'.



The Four Disciples

- Shankaracharya's four main disciples were Padmapada, Totakacharya, Hasta Malaka, and Sureshvara.
- They founded monasteries (mathas) and carried forward his teachings in Thrissur, Kerala.

Advaita Vedanta

- Advaita Vedanta is a school of Hindu philosophy known for its **radical nondualism**. This means that Advaitins believe **there is only one ultimate reality, Brahman, and everything else is an illusion**.
- The Upanishads are ancient Hindu scriptures

considered the foundation of Advaita Vedanta. The Upanishads teach that Brahman is the ultimate reality and that the **atman (individual self) is identical to Brahman**.

- Advaitins believe that the **atman is pure non-intentional consciousness**. Any thoughts, emotions, or physical sensations do not limit it. It is simply awareness.
- The fundamental thrust of Advaita Vedanta is to help people realise their true identity as Brahman. This is done through various practices, such as meditation and inquiry.

Works and Legacy

Brahmasutrabhasya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renowned commentary on the 'Brahma Sutra'. • The oldest surviving commentary on the 'Brahma Sutra'
Commentaries on Bhagavad Gita	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita, an essential Hindu scripture.
Commentaries on Ten Principal Upanishads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commentaries on the ten principal Upanishads, pivotal texts in Vedanta philosophy
Upadesasahasri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical work known as 'a thousand teachings'. • Holds great importance in his body of work.

Monastery (Matha)	Location	Basis of Formation
Sringeri Sharada Peetham	Sringeri, Karnataka	Yajur Veda
Dvaraka Pitha	Dwarka, Gujarat	Sama Veda
Jyotirmatha Peetham	Garhwal, Uttarakhand	Atharva Veda
Govardhana Matha	Puri, Odisha	Rig Veda

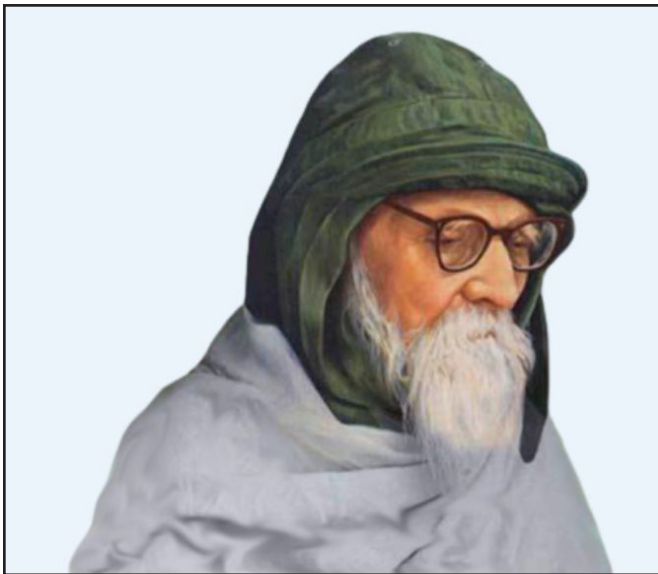
VINOBA BHAVE

Why in the news?

Prime Minister on recently paid tributes to Acharya Vinoba Bhave on his birth anniversary

About Vinoba Bhave:

- Vinoba Bhave, originally named Vinayak Narahari Bhave, was born on September 11, 1895, in Gagoji (now known as Gagode Budruk), Maharashtra, India.
- His father, Narahari Shambhu Rao, was a skilled weaver employed in Baroda, while his mother, Rukmani Devi, was a deeply religious woman.
- Bhave's upbringing was characterised by a family that embraced modern rationalism, fostering a mindset of critical thinking and pragmatism.



Spiritual Awakening

- At a young age, Vinoba Bhave was exposed to spiritual concepts and discussions, primarily influenced by his mother's religious beliefs.
- His profound spiritual awakening occurred when he read the Bhagavad Gita, a sacred Hindu scripture, which had a lasting and transformative effect on his life.

Association with Mahatma Gandhi

- In 1916, Vinoba Bhave's life took a momentous turn when he came across Mahatma Gandhi's speech at Banaras Hindu University. Deeply moved, he decided to discontinue his studies and reached out to Gandhi through a letter, leading to their eventual meeting at the Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad.

Role in India's Freedom Struggle

- Vinoba Bhave actively participated in civil disobedience movements and endured imprisonment. During the 1940s, he was incarcerated for five years due to his nonviolent resistance against British colonial rule.
- In 1940, Mahatma Gandhi selected him as the first individual Satyagrahi, emphasising his growing national stature.

Religious and Social Work

- **Sarvodaya Movement:** He championed the Sarvodaya movement, aiming to uplift the lives of ordinary Indians in villages by integrating strong spiritual foundations.
- **Bhoodan Movement:** Initiated in 1951, the Bhoodan Movement focused on soliciting land donations from landowners to distribute to landless individuals, addressing land reform issues and rural poverty.
- **Advocate for Nonviolence and Compassion:** Vinoba Bhave actively campaigned against cow slaughter, promoting nonviolence and compassion as central societal principles.

Literary Contributions

- Vinoba Bhave was a prolific writer and translator known for his efforts to make Sanskrit texts accessible to the ordinary person.
- He translated the Bhagavad Gita into Marathi, making the revered scripture more understandable for a wider audience.
- His work "**Talks on the Gita**" has been translated into multiple languages and continues to serve as a source of inspiration for readers worldwide.

Later Life

- In his later years, Vinoba Bhave resided at his **Brahma Vidya Mandir ashram in Paunar, Wardha district, Maharashtra**, where he continued his spiritual and social work.
- Vinoba Bhave passed away on November 15, 1982. His death came after he embraced "**Samadhi Maran**" or "**Santhara**," a practice in Jainism where an individual voluntarily refrains from consuming food and medicine.

Criticism

- Vinoba Bhave faced criticism from certain quarters, including acclaimed author V.S. Naipaul, who questioned his rationality and noted what he considered an excessive imitation of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals.
- Bhave's support for Indira Gandhi's government during the Indian Emergency (1975-1977) drew controversy. It earned him the nickname "**Sarkari Sant**" (Government Saint), as some saw his stance aligning with the government's actions during that period.

Awards and Recognition

- **Ramon Magsaysay Award:** In 1958, Vinoba Bhave became the first recipient of the international Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, recognizing his outstanding contributions to society.
- **Bharat Ratna:** He was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honor, in 1983, acknowledging his significant and enduring impact on the nation's social and spiritual landscape.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS

Q1. Seethakali, a traditional Dravidian dance form that combines songs, storytelling, and dynamic movements is associated with:

- (a) Kerala

(b) Karnataka

(c) Tamil nadu

(d) Andhra Pradesh

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The dance form Seethakali draws inspiration from episodes within the epic Ramayana.
2. Seethakali dancers wear monochrome costumes during performances.
3. Folk songs accompany Seethakali performances and are passed down orally through generations.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q3. Consider the following statements about the Mitakshara School of Hindu law :

1. Mitakshara is primarily followed in Bengal and Assam regions of India.
2. In Mitakshara, property allocation is based on possession by birth.
3. Under Mitakshara law, a person can leave their self-acquired property through a will.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

(a) Only one

(b) Only two

(c) All three

(d) None

Q4. Which of the following statements about the Dayabhaga School of Hindu law is/are correct?

1. Dayabhaga is predominantly followed in most

regions of India except Bengal and Assam.

2. Birthright and property devolution by survivorship have limited significance in the Dayabhaga School.
3. Dayabhaga law divides property uniformly among a man's sons if he dies intestate.

How many of the above statement/s is/are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q5. Consider the following statements:

1. Preamble of the Indian Constitution acknowledges the dual name for India as "India, that is Bharat."
2. "Bharata" referred to the entire Indian subcontinent in Puranic literature.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q6. Consider the following statements:

1. The term "Hindustan" originated from the Persian word "Hindu," associated with the Indus River.
2. "Bharat" is associated with an ancient king who is considered the ancestor of the Rig Vedic tribe of the Dasayu.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q7. Consider the following statements about Arikamedu:

1. Arikamedu is an archaeological site near Pondicherry that has revealed evidence of Indo-Roman trade during the 1st century CE.
2. Sir Mortimer Wheeler conducted the excavations at Arikamedu.
3. Arikamedu was a major centre for bead production.

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q8. Consider the following statements about the Ancient Red Sea Trade Route:

1. The Ancient Red Sea Trade Route was a significant trade link between Rome and India in ancient times.
2. Custom taxes from the Red Sea trade with India, Persia, and Ethiopia accounted for up to one-third of the Roman exchequer's income.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q9. "Operation Polo" is related to:

- (a) Ascension of Hyderabad
- (b) Liberation of Goa

- (c) Assimilation of Sikkim
- (d) Integration of Junagadh

Q10. Consider the following statements regarding Operation Polo and integrating Hyderabad into the Indian Union:

1. Operation Polo was initiated due to the Nizam's desire to integrate with Pakistan.
2. Hyderabad's integration into India led to its re-organization into Andhra Pradesh, parts of Maharashtra, and Karnataka.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q11. With reference to Chausath Yogini temples, consider the following statements:

1. The Chausath Yogini Temple is in Mitaoli village in Uttar Pradesh.
2. The temple was built by the Kachchhapaghata king Devapala during his reign around 1055-1075 CE.
3. The Chausath Yogini temples were designed as open-air circular structures to worship only Parvati.

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q12. Consider the following:

1. The architects of the Indian Parliament, Lutyens and Baker, visited the Chausath Yogini Temple and drew inspiration from its unique shape.
2. The Chausath Yogini temples in India are age-

old, Latina-style roofed temples constructed between the 9th and 12th centuries.

3. The temple's extant structures are scattered across central and northern Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q13. How many of the following are characteristics of Megalithic Culture:

1. Use of Iron
2. Cairns
3. Menhirs
4. Urban Civilization

Select the correct code from the options given below:

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Q14. Consider the following :

1. Dolmens are made up of large stone slabs, that are arranged clockwise to form a square chamber.
2. A triangular entrance, known as a port-hole, is typically created on the eastern slab of dolmens.
3. The megalithic structures are known by the name dolmen, throughout South India.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

Q15. Consider the following statements regarding Hoysala architecture:

1. Hoysala temples are primarily characterised by their Vesara architectural style.
2. They used a distinct star-shaped ground plan.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q16. Consider the following:

1. Chennakesava Temple
2. Hoysaleswara Temple
3. Brihadishwara Temple
4. Meenakshi Temple

How many of the above Temples were built by the Hoysala dynasty?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All four

Q17. Visva-Bharati University is related to:

- (a) Rabindranath Tagore
- (b) Subhash Bose
- (c) Aurobindo Ghosh

- (d) Anand Mohan Bose

Q18. Consider the following statements regarding Santiniketan:

1. It was instrumental in the development of the Bengal School of Art.
2. It was established to promote scientific and engineering education.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Q19. With reference to Statue of Oneness, consider the following statements:

1. It is a monumental statue of Adi Guru Shankaracharya in recently unveiled in Uttarakhand.
2. Advaita Vedanta is a school of Hindu philosophy known for its radical dualism.
3. Shankaracharya's significant contribution involved synthesizing the six sub-sects into what is known as 'Shanmata.'

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Q20. Consider the following:

Monastery (Matha)	Location
1. Sringeri Sharada Peetham	Karnataka
2. Dvaraka Pitha	Gujarat

3. Jyotirmatha Peetham	Odisha
4. Govardhana Matha	Uttarakhand

How many of the abovementioned pairs are correct?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q21. Vinoba Bhave is related to which of the following:

- 1. Sarvodaya Movement
- 2. Bhoodan Movement
- 3. Tibhagha Movement

Choose the correct answer:

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

Q22. With reference to Vinoba Bhave, consider the following statements:

- 1. One of his famous literary work is "Talks on the Gita".
- 2. He performed Santhara.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

ANSWERS

S. No.	Answer
1.	a
2.	b
3.	b
4.	b
5.	a
6.	a
7.	c
8.	a
9.	a
10.	b
11.	b
12.	a
13.	c
14.	d
15.	c
16.	b
17.	a
18.	a
19.	c
20.	b
21.	b
22.	c

MAINS QUESTIONS

Q1. Examine and compare the principles and implications of the Dayabhaga and Mitakshara Schools of Hindu law with regard to property inheritance and succession.

Q2. Discuss the historical and constitutional significance of the dual nomenclature "India, that is

Bharat" in the Indian Constitution.

Q3. The Ancient Red Sea Trade Route was a significant link between Rome and India. Comment.

Q4. Discuss the challenges and strategies employed by the Indian government in integrating princely states into the Indian Union after gaining independence in 1947. How did this process impact India's territorial integrity, governance, and nation-building efforts?

Q5. There is speculation that the old Parliament building in India may have drawn inspiration from the Chausath Yogini temple. Discuss the architecture and significance of the Chausath Yogini temples in India.

Q6. Discuss the key characteristics of Megalithic culture in India. Analyze the significance of megalithic

burials as a source of information about ancient Indian societies.

Q7. Examine the distinctive features of Hoysala architecture and its cultural significance in the context of Indian art and heritage. How did Hoysala temples contribute to the rich cultural tapestry of South India?

Q8. Shantiniketan was a centre of excellence in unconventional learning. Discuss the relevance of unconventional education systems in the present times

Q9. Discuss the central tenets of Advaita Vedanta as propounded by Adi Shankaracharya and their philosophical implications.

Q10. Discuss the life, contributions, and legacy of Vinoba Bhave in the context of India's struggle for independence and social reform.

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