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AFSPA Extended in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh:

In News

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)** has extended the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland for another six months.

About

- **Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh** and the areas along the Assam border, are declared as “**disturbed areas**” under **Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958** for a period of six months from October 1, 2022.
- In Tripura the Act was revoked by the MHA in 2015 and in Meghalaya from 1st April 2018.

About Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958

- **Genesis:**
 - The genesis of the law can be traced to the Armed Forces (Special Powers) **Ordinance 1942** which was enacted by the British to subjugate the rebels in the country during the Quit India movement, particularly in Assam and Bengal .
 - The law continues to be enforced in its new format as the Armed Forces
- **Provisions:**
 - Under **Section 3**, the Central Government or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.
 - An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.
 - **Section 4** gives the Army powers to search premises and make arrests without warrants, to use force even to the extent of causing death, destroy arms/ammunition dumps, fortifications/shelters/hideouts and to stop, search and seize any vehicle.

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- **Section 6** stipulates that arrested persons and the seized property are to be made over to the police with the least possible delay.
- **Section 7** offers protection of persons acting in good faith in their official capacity. The prosecution is permitted only after the sanction of the Central Government.

Rationale behind its imposition

- Effective functioning of forces in **counter-insurgency / terrorist operations**.
- **Protection** of members of **Armed forces**.
- Maintaining **Law & Order**.
- **Security & sovereignty** of the nation.

Criticisms

- **Atrocities and human rights violations** by security agencies.
- **Against democratic regime & threat to Fundamental Rights**
- **Ineffectiveness** in countering insurgency.
- **Fake encounters** (Santosh Hegde Committee) & create an atmosphere of impunity among security agencies.

Source: [TH](#)

International Day for Older Persons:

Context

- The **United Nations** marks October 1 as **International Day for Older Persons**, as part of the organisation's efforts to draw **attention to healthy ageing**.

About

- Recently, a report by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), "**World Population Prospects 2022**", has projected big shifts in global demographic patterns in the coming decades.
- **As per the report:**
 - **16% of the world population by 2050** is expected to be made up of people over 65 years.

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- India's population will be **7(one point seven) billion by 2050**, having overtaken China to be the world's most populous country.
- Eight countries — India is among them — will account for more than half of the world's increasing population by 2050.

Composition of the world population

- Between 1950 and 2010, life expectancy worldwide rose from **46 to 68 years**. Globally, there were 703 million persons aged 65 or over in 2019.
- The **region of Eastern and South-Eastern Asia** was home to the **largest number of older persons**, followed by Europe and Northern America.
- Over the next three decades, the number of older persons worldwide is projected to more than **double, reaching more than 1.5 billion persons in 2050**.
- All regions will see an increase in the size of the older population between 2019 and 2050. The largest increase is projected to occur in **Eastern and South-Eastern Asia**.

What are the issues involved?

- This demographic change will have a profound **impact on its health systems**. The prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, or disabilities related to vision, hearing or mobility is higher among the elderly.
- The **change in demographic structure will increase the pressure on public health systems** that are not geared to deliver universal health care along with social security measures such as old-age and disability pensions.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities**, with the past three years intensifying the socioeconomic, environmental, health and climate related impacts on the lives of older persons, especially older women who constitute the majority of older persons.
- The Indian economy still needs to **mitigate the fiscal costs that arise from a rising old-age dependency ratio**.

Eye care and elderly health

- People with **impaired vision had a greater fear, and risk, of falling** (a major cause of disability and hospitalisation among the elderly). This reduced their movement and independence, leading to depression.

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- The way forward can be a package of interventions, including assistive devices for sight, hearing, and mobility, or referrals to psychiatric support for depression or other mental health issues.
- Eye health in India has many cross-subsidy models to help alleviate the **financial burden on individuals**.
- The future of elderly care needs to be long term, comprehensive, and integrated, and must be oriented towards primary care to be accessible.

Need to protect the elderly population

- Older people have a **wealth of skills and experiences**. They contribute on a macro level to the workplace and financially and at a local level to their communities and individual networks in terms of experience.
- They can provide a **vital generational link** for the upcoming generation, such as providing support and stability to families and society at large.
- They help in **transferring values and morals** to the younger generation. Thereby contributing towards bringing up better human beings and responsible citizens.
- Many older people also contribute to the **economy informally – by caring for their grandchildren or other family members**.

Schemes for the welfare of elderly people

- The Government of India is implementing various schemes and programmes to provide healthy, happy, empowered, dignified and self-reliant life to senior citizens, along with strong social and inter-generational bonding.
- **Atal VayoAbhyudayaYojana (AVYAY): It is a Central Sector Scheme** under the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment. AVYAY brings together articulation of each of the current schemes, future plans, strategies and targets and maps it with schemes/programmes, accountabilities, financials and clear outcomes. This Plan takes care of the top four needs of the senior citizens viz financial security, food, health care and human interaction /life of dignity.
- It has the **schemes under it**, namely: 1. Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC), 2. State Action Plan for Senior Citizens (SAPSrC), 3. RashtriyaVayoshriYojana(RVY), 4. Senior Able Citizens for Re-employment in Dignity(SACRED), 5. Action Groups Aimed at Social Reconstruction (AGRASR), 6. Senior-care Aging Growth Engine (SAGE)-

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Silver economy for Senior Citizens, 7. Elderline – National Helpline for Senior Citizens, 8. Channelizing the CSR fund for elderly care.

- **National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP):** Under the Ministry of Rural Development, under this the elderly, widows, and disabled persons belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL) and fulfilling eligibility criteria prescribed in the NSAP guidelines, are provided financial assistance ranging from Rs.200/- to Rs.500/- p.m. and in the case of death of the breadwinner, a lumpsum assistance of Rs.20,000/- is given to the bereaved family.
- **National Programme for the Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE):** Launched during 2010-11 is State oriented program with the basic thrust to provide comprehensive and dedicated health care facilities to the elderly persons above 60 year of age at various levels of primary, secondary and tertiary health care.

International Day for Older Persons

- **About:**
 - **Observed every year on 1st of October.**
- **Background:**
 - On 14 December 1990, the **United Nations General Assembly designated October 1 as the International Day of Older Persons** (resolution 45/106). This was preceded by initiatives such as the **Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing**, which was adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the UN General Assembly.
 - In 1991, the General Assembly adopted the **United Nations Principles for Older Persons (resolution 46/91)**. In 2002, the Second World Assembly on Ageing adopted the **Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**, to respond to the opportunities and challenges of population ageing in the 21st century and to promote the development of a society for all ages.
- **Theme of 2022:**
 - Resilience of Older Persons in a Changing World.
- **Objectives:**
 - To highlight the resilience of older women in the face of environmental, social, economic and lifelong inequalities
 - To raise awareness of the importance of improved world-wide data collection, disaggregated by age and gender.

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- To call on member states, UN entities, UN Women, and civil society to include older women in the center of all policies

Source: [TH](#)

India-US ties: Depth & nuance:

In News

- Recently ,External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said that the relationship between India and US impacts the rest of the world as there are a lot of countries which look to the association individually and bilaterally .

India- US ties

- **Comprehensive global strategic partnership** : India and the United States enjoy a comprehensive global strategic partnership covering almost all areas of human endeavour, driven by shared democratic values, convergence of interests on a range of issues, and vibrant people-to-people contacts.
- **Bilateral Dialogue Mechanisms:** Despite COVID-19 pandemic, India-U.S. cooperation witnessed intense engagement under various bilateral dialogue mechanisms in a wide range of areas including defence, security, health, trade, economic, science & technology, energy and people-to-people ties.
 - India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, led by the heads of Foreign and Defence Ministries of India and the U.S, reviews the bilateral ties in defence, strategic and security domains as well as important regional and global issues.
- **Quad:** The four Quad partners (India, Japan, United States & Australia) first formed a “Core Group” in 2004, to swiftly mobilise aid during the joint response to the 2004 Tsunami. Since 2017, Quad engagements have increased and intensified.
- **Economic Relations:** The rapidly expanding trade and commercial linkages form an important component of the **multi-faceted partnership between India and the United States.**

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- **Counter Terrorism Cooperation:** It has seen considerable progress with information exchange, operational cooperation and sharing of counterterrorism technology and equipment..
- **Cyber Security Cooperation:** The India-US Cyber Framework signed in September 2016, provides for **expanding cooperation in the cyber domain.**
- **Defence:** In 2016, the defence relationship was designated as a Major Defence Partnership (MDP).
 - Bilateral military exercises and defense exchanges are important aspect of deepening military-to-military cooperation.
 - Bilateral and regional exercises include: **YudhAbhyas (Army); Vajra Prahar (Special Forces); RIMPAC; Red Flag.**
 - In November 2020, the Royal Australian Navy joined the **U.S.-India-Japan MALABAR** Naval Exercise held in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
 - Several **defence agreements** have been signed in recent years. These include:
 - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Association (August 2016)
 - Memorandum of Intent between the U.S. Defence Innovation Unit (DIU)
 - the Indian Defence Innovation Organisation – Innovation for Defence Excellence (2018)
 - Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (September 2018)
 - Industrial Security Agreement (December 2019);
 - Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (October 2020).
- **Energy sector:** India and the US have a **strong bilateral partnership in the energy sector.**
 - In 2010, bilateral Energy Dialogue was launched.
- **Science and Technology:** **India-US cooperation in Science and Technology** is multi-faceted and has been **growing steadily under the framework of the India-US Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement** signed in October 2005, which was renewed for a **period of ten years in September 2019.**

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- ISRO and NASA are working together to realise a **joint microwave remote** sensing satellite for Earth observation, named NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (**NISAR**).
- **Education partnership:** It is an important pillar of **India-US ties and both the countries** share strong linkages and history of higher education collaborations.
 - The United States Educational Foundation in India (USEFI) was set up after a bilateral agreement on education exchange was signed between India and the US on February 2, 1950
- **Evolution over two decades:** Indo-US nuclear deal of the George W Bush years elevated Indo-US ties to a higher strategic trajectory.
 - India and the United States have made real progress in elevating their partnership through institutions like QUAD and G20 and international organisations at the United Nations.

Divergences

- **Current geopolitical context: India's consistent neutral position on Russia's invasion** of Ukraine, informed by its choices, has antagonised many countries, including the U.S.
 - The US has been unhappy that India has been buying more oil from Russia than earlier. India argues that it must protect its citizens from the inflationary impact of the war.
 - the U.S., **warned of consequences** for any country, including India, which conducts local currency transactions through Russia's central bank or constructs a payment mechanism that subverts or circumvents the U.S.'s sanctions against Russia.
 - India is concerned about a U.S. decision to provide a sustenance package for Pakistan's fleet of F-16 fighter aircraft.
- **Other issues :** The USA is worried about the **trade deficit** it has with India.
- **Different cases/ disagreements at WTO:**
 - India's **domestic component clause** was a bone of contention.
 - Similarly there is **lack of consensus over the IPR regime** and evergreening of patents.
 - Peace Clause and Public Procurement Policy

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- The US has ramped up **H-1B denials** under the executive order “**Buy American and Hire American**”.
- The US has long demanded greater access to American agriculture and dairy products.
- For India, protecting its domestic agriculture and dairy interests was a major reason to walk out of the RCEP agreement.
- **US-Pakistan Equation:**
 - The US has often shown a soft corner for Pakistan due to dynamic equations in Afghanistan.

Future Prospects

- The partnership between India and US is simply one of the most consequential in the world. Quality of the dialogue can solve existing differences and work closely together is required
- **2+2 meeting** is an opportunity for the two countries to further discuss their **differences over Russia and elaborate** on the bilateral agenda in terms of the progress that has been made on new initiatives.

Source: [IE](#)

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) Meeting:

In News

Recently, The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the policy repo rate by 50 basis points (bps) to 5.9% making loans expensive.

- This is RBI MPC's fourth consecutive rate hike in this financial year.

Major Points

- The MPC lowered the growth projection of FY23 from 7.2% to 7%.
- It retained the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation projection at 6.7 per cent for 2022-23
 - It is only expected to fall below 6 per cent to 5.8 per cent in the last quarter of FY23.

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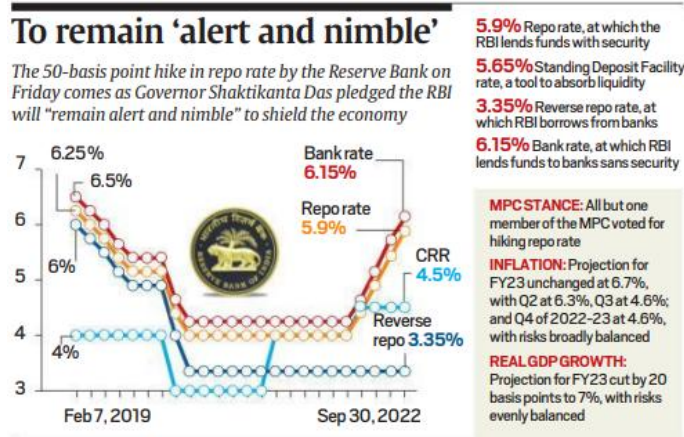


Image Courtesy:IE

Rationale behind the decision

- The enduring effects of the pandemic and the geo-political conflict are manifesting in demand-supply mismatches of goods and services.
- Central banks are charting new territory with aggressive rate hikes, even if it entails sacrificing growth in the near-term.
- Therefore, The MPC was of the view that persistence of high inflation necessitates further calibrated withdrawal of monetary accommodation to restrain broadening of price pressures, anchor inflation expectations and contain the second-round effects.
 - This action will support medium-term growth prospects.
- The MPC's decisions are based on the twin objective, with primacy given to price stability driven by the necessity to keep growth in mind

Experts Opinion

- The overall indicators and today's policy action indicates that India is better placed to handle future economic challenges, while the world is on verge of a possible recession
- On the international front, RBI's assurance to continue its judicious intervention to ensure stability in the foreign exchange market is a welcome sign to curb uncertainties and support long-term revival and resilience of the economy,

What's Next?

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- The Indian economy continues to be resilient and there is macroeconomic stability.
- The country has withstood the shocks from COVID-19 and the conflict in Ukraine. Our journey over the last two and half years, our steely resolve in dealing with the various challenges gives us the confidence to deal with the new storm that we are confronted with
- RBI will continue to withdraw its accommodative stance to ensure that inflation remains within the target going forward while supporting growth.

Will release a discussion paper
on loan loss provisioning based on
expected loss approach that could
impact banks' short-term profits

Proposes to extend regulations
to offline payment aggregators
which could foster regulatory
synergy and convergence

Image Courtesy :[ET](#)

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- Constituted by RBI under **section 45ZB of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934.**
- Chaired by the **Governor of RBI.**
- **Mission:** Fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (repo rate) to restrain inflation within the **particular target level (2% to 6%).**
- MPC conducts meetings **at least 4 times a year.**
- The monetary policy is **published after every meeting** with each member explaining his opinions.

Instruments of Monetary Policy

- **Repo Rate:** The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank provides liquidity under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) to all LAF participants against the collateral of government and other approved securities.
- **Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) Rate:** The rate at which the Reserve Bank accepts non collateralized deposits, on an overnight basis, from all LAF participants. The SDF is also a financial stability tool in addition to its role in liquidity management. The SDF rate is placed at 25 basis points below

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the policy repo rate. With introduction of SDF in April 2022, the SDF rate replaced the fixed reverse repo rate as the floor of the LAF corridor.

- **Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) Rate:** The penal rate at which banks can borrow, on an overnight basis, from the Reserve Bank by dipping into their Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR) portfolio up to a predefined limit (2 per cent). This provides a safety valve against unanticipated liquidity shocks to the banking system. The MSF rate is placed at 25 basis points above the policy repo rate.
- **Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):** The LAF refers to the Reserve Bank's operations through which it injects/absorbs liquidity into/from the banking system.
- **Reverse Repo Rate:** The interest rate at which the Reserve Bank absorbs liquidity from banks against the collateral of eligible government securities under the LAF. Following the introduction of SDF, the fixed rate reverse repo operations will be at the discretion of the RBI for purposes specified from time to time.
- **Bank Rate:** The rate at which the Reserve Bank is ready to buy or rediscount bills of exchange or other commercial papers. The Bank Rate acts as the penal rate charged on banks for shortfalls in meeting their reserve requirements (cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio).
- **Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR):** The average daily balance that a bank is required to maintain with the Reserve Bank as a percent of its net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) as on the last Friday of the second preceding fortnight that the Reserve Bank may notify from time to time in the Official Gazette.
- **Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR):** Every bank shall maintain in India assets, the value of which shall not be less than such percentage of the total of its demand and time liabilities in India as on the last Friday of the second preceding fortnight, as the Reserve Bank may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify from time to time and such assets shall be maintained as may be specified in such notification (typically in unencumbered government securities, cash and gold).
- **Open Market Operations (OMOs):** These include outright purchase/sale of government securities by the Reserve Bank for injection/absorption of durable liquidity in the banking system.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

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Foreigners' Tribunal

In News

The Assam government has decided not to extend the term of members who were appointed for 200 additional Foreigners' Tribunals (FT) that were set up primarily to handle cases related to the [National Register of Citizens \(NRC\)](#).

About Foreigners' Tribunal

- A Foreigners' Tribunal is a **quasi-judicial body** and a member is a designation similar to a judge.
- Judges/Advocates have been appointed as the members of FT under the Foreigners Tribunal Act, 1941 and Foreigners Tribunal ORDER 1964. as per the guidelines issued by the government from time to time.

Source: [TH](#)

Pangasius Icaria

Context

- A new catfish species has been discovered in the river Cauvery near Mettur Dam.

About

- The edible species has been named Pangasius icaria (P. icaria) after the Indian Council of Agricultural Research that discovered the species. The species belongs to the Pangasius genus.
- The genus Pangasius is found in the Gangetic plains but not in peninsular India.
- Through this study, they found that Pangasius specimens from the river Cauvery are different from other species of the genus Pangasius.
- The new species is edible and the locals call it aikeluthi in Tamil.
- Catfish has high commercial value in aquaculture and wild capture fisheries.

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Mettur Dam

- It is the largest dam in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.
- It is situated across the Cauvery River.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

Card Tokenization:

In News

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) signalled that it **would not extend the October 1**, deadline for implementation for **tokenization of card based payments**.
 - This rule is applicable to all stakeholders except card issuers and card networks.

What is Tokenization?

- Tokenization refers to **replacement of actual card details** with an **alternate code called the “token”**, which shall be unique for a combination of card, token requestor (i.e. the entity which accepts request from the customer for tokenization of a card and passes it on to the card network to issue a corresponding token) and device (referred hereafter as “identified device”).

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- By initiating a request on the platform made available by the **token requestor or entity**, the cardholder can have their card tokenized. A token matching to the card details, the token requestor, and the device will be issued by the card network, such as Mastercard, Visa, RuPay, or American Express, with the approval of the card issuer.

Benefits

- Tokenization **not only aids in making the payment transaction experience more secure for the end user** but also aids merchants in **delivering a consistent user experience** and higher transaction approval rates with speed and security.
- Since the **actual card data are not given to the merchant during transaction processing**, tokenized card transactions are regarded to be safer.

Source: [LM](#)

Facts in News:

36th National Games:

Context

- Recently, the **36th National Games** was inaugurated by the Prime Minister in Gujarat.

36th National Games

- The National Games, being held **after seven years**, will witness **India's best athletes compete in**.
- The **Official mascot for the 36th National Games is "SAVAJ"**. The stance of the Mascot clearly portrays a sportsman's most prominent personality traits of self-confidence, vigour, a strong sense of motivation, an inner desire to succeed, a strong sense of focus, a natural leader, and of a goal setter.

National Games of India

- **About:**

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- The **genesis of the National Games** is in the Olympic movement, which gathered momentum in the country in the 1920's. The need to identify national talent that could be picked for the Olympic Games, prompted the initiation of the National Games.
- The **first edition of the Indian Olympic Games at Lahore** in an undivided Punjab **in 1924**.
- The city of Lucknow hosted the National Games in its first post-independence avatar while the first National Games on the **lines of the Olympics** were held in **1985 in New Delhi**.
- **Jurisdiction:**
 - The duration and the regulations of the National Games are entirely within the jurisdiction of the Indian Olympic Association.
- **Significance:**
 - The National Games provide young athletes an opportunity to get a feel of a multi-discipline Games and compete with world-class athletes.
 - India can use the soft power of sports for the country's overall development while for the athletes, the National Games offers a stepping stone to greater progress.
 - It provides a platform in identifying grassroot-level talent and to give a larger platform to sporting talent from the states.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

Black Cocaine:

In News

- Recently, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) arrested a Bolivian woman from Mumbai airport for allegedly **carrying black cocaine**.

What is Black Cocaine?

- “Black cocaine” is a rare drug, is a mixture of regular cocaine base with various substances to camouflage typical appearance (e.g. charcoal), to interfere with colour-based drug tests (cobalt salts form deep red complexes in solution), to make the mixture undetectable by drug-sniffing dogs as activated carbon may sufficiently absorb trace odours.

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- It is being used by drug peddlers coming to India from South American countries.
- It neutralises the smell of cocaine so that it can pass through checkpoints easily.
- The pure cocaine base is then recovered from the mixture by extraction using common organic solvents such as methylene chloride or acetone.

Source: [IE](#)

Facts in News:

World's First CNG Terminal:

In Context

- The Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone of the **World's First CNG Terminal and of the brownfield port at Bhavnagar, Gujarat.**
 - The project was first proposed during the January 2019 Vibrant Gujarat summit.

About

- It will be developed using a public-private partnership (PPP) approach and has a cargo handling capacity of 1.5 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA).
- The terminal will have the fourth largest lock gate system in the world as well as an ultra-modern container terminal, a multipurpose terminal, a Ro-Ro terminal, and a liquid terminal.
- The port will have an ultra-modern container terminal, multipurpose terminal, and liquid terminal with direct door-step connectivity to the existing roadway and railway network.
- The port is already connected to the northern hinterland through a railway line.

Source: Firstpost

Facts in News:

Bannerman's Turaco:

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In Context

- **Bannerman's Turaco bird** has come under serious threat at **Kilum-Ijim Mountain Forest** of Cameroon's northwest region.
 - The Kilum-Ijim Mountain Forest, spanning some 20,000 square kilometers, is one of the last remaining homes of the **endemic Bannerman's Turaco bird**.

About

- Bannerman's turaco is a species of bird in the family **Musophagidae**.
- It is **endemic to Cameroon**. Its scientific and common names honor the ornithologist David Armitage Bannerman.
- This bird has a deep cultural value for the people in the Cameroon grassfields.
- Its natural habitat is subtropical or tropical moist montane forests.
- It is threatened by habitat destruction and the International Union for Conservation of Nature has listed it as an "**endangered species**".
- **Threats: Habitat destruction due to clearing of forests for agricultural land**



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Source: DTE

Melting of Arctic Ice:

In Context

- Recently, a team of researchers has flagged the changing chemistry of the western region of the Arctic Ocean.

More about the research

- **Research observations:**
 - The research discovered that the **acidity levels** in Arctic seas are **increasing three to four times faster** than ocean waters elsewhere.
 - Seawater is **normally alkaline**, with a pH value of around 8.1.
 - The team also identified a strong correlation between the **accelerated rate of melting ice** and the **rate of ocean acidification**.
 - **Reasons:**
 - Scientists Point to sea-ice melt as the key mechanism to explain this rapid pH decrease, because it changes surface water **in three primary ways:**
 - The water under the sea ice, which had a **deficit of carbon dioxide**, now is **exposed to the atmospheric carbon dioxide** and can take it up freely.
 - The **seawater mixed with meltwater** is **light** and **can't mix easily** into deeper waters, which means the carbon dioxide is **concentrated at the surface**.
 - The meltwater dilutes the **carbonate ion concentration** in the seawater, weakening its ability to neutralise the carbon dioxide into bicarbonate and **rapidly decreasing ocean pH**.

Data timeline:

It is the first analysis of Arctic acidification that includes data **from 1994 to 2020**.

Predictions:

Scientists have predicted that **by 2050**, Arctic sea ice in this region will no longer survive the increasingly warm summers.

Consequences:

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The ocean's chemistry will grow more acidic, creating **life-threatening problems** for the diverse population of **sea creatures, plants and other living things** that depend on a healthy ocean.

- **Crabs**, for example, live in a crusty shell built from the calcium carbonate prevalent in ocean water.
- **Polar bears** rely on healthy fish populations for food, fish and sea birds rely on plankton and plants, and seafood is a key element of many humans' diets.

Arctic Region

- **Location:**
 - It is commonly understood to refer to the region above the Arctic Circle, north of latitude 66° 34' N, which includes the Arctic Ocean with the North Pole at its centre.
- **Arctic Council:**
 - **Eight Arctic States**-Canada, Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and USA form the Arctic Council.
- **Resources and inhabitants:**
 - The Arctic is home to **almost four million inhabitants**, of which approximately one tenth are considered as indigenous people.
 - The Arctic Ocean and its surrounding landmass has been a topic of immense interest and a high-priority area of research among the global scientific fraternity as well as of importance to policy makers.
 - The Arctic influences **atmospheric, oceanographic and biogeochemical cycles** of the earth's ecosystem.
 - **Mineral Resources:**
 - The Arctic region has rich deposits of **coal, gypsum and diamonds** and also substantial reserves of **zinc, lead, placer gold and quartz**.
 - **Greenland** alone possesses about a **quarter of the world's rare earth reserves**.
 - **Hydrocarbons:**
 - The Arctic also **contains a wealth of hydrocarbon resources**. India is the **third-largest energy-consuming country** in the world.

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- The Arctic can therefore potentially address India's energy security needs.

Arctic warming

- The Arctic is heating up twice as fast as the rest of the world.
- Global warming, caused by greenhouse gas, is responsible for the decline in Arctic sea ice.
- **Arctic amplification:**
 - The phenomenon, known as Arctic amplification, occurs when the sea ice, which is white, thins or disappears, allowing dark ocean or land surfaces to absorb more heat from the sun and release that energy back into the atmosphere.

Consequences of Arctic warming (on India)

- **Rising Sea Level:**
 - The Greenland ice sheet holds the second largest amount of ice, after Antarctica, and therefore it is **crucial for maintaining the sea level**.
 - According to the **World Meteorological Organization's report, 'State of Global Climate in 2021'**, sea level along the Indian coast is rising faster than the global average rate.
 - One of the primary reasons for this rise is the melting of sea ice in the polar regions, especially the Arctic.
- **Global warming:**
 - The **permafrost in the Arctic is thawing** and in turn releasing **carbon and methane** which are among the **major greenhouse gases** responsible for **global warming**.
- **Biodiversity:**
 - **The warming of the Arctic Ocean and the seas** in the region, the acidification of water, changes in the salinity levels, are impacting biodiversity, including the marine species and the dependent species.
- **Connectivity:**
 - The Arctic's ice meltdown and its geographical location will ensure the shortest sea distance between America, Europe and North East Asia.
 - This will likely transform the **global maritime commerce**, presently conducted through the **traditional East–West route** through the **Malacca Strait and Suez Canal**.

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- **Monsoons:**

- The link between the impact of the changing Arctic and monsoons in India is growing in importance due to the **extreme weather events** the country faces, and the heavy reliance on rainfall for water and food security.

- **Geopolitics:**

- The melting Arctic ice is also raising the geopolitical temperatures.
- In 2018, **China's White Paper on Arctic policy** called itself a 'Near-Arctic State'.
 - The opening of the shipping routes and possibilities of increased resource extraction is leading to the big three—US, China and Russia—and NATO, jockeying for position and influence in the region.

India's Arctic Policy

- In March 2022, Government of India released India's Arctic Policy titled “**India's Arctic Policy: Building a Partnership for Sustainable Development**”.
- **The six pillars of the Policy are as follows:**

**INDIA'S ARCTIC POLICY
RESTS ON SIX PILLARS**



- Implementing India's Arctic policy will involve **multiple stakeholders, including academia, the research community, business, and industry.**

Way Ahead

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- The problem is that **we do not completely understand the factors** that control how rapidly the ice flows and thus enters the ocean.
- One way to approach the problem of not understanding the **process is to study how sea level changed in the past.**
 - Earth is nearly as warm now as it was during the last interglacial period, **about 125,000 years ago.**
- We must act urgently to reduce and mitigate the impact of human-made climate change on the glaciers.

Source: TH

India-UK Business Relations: Issues & opportunities:

In News

- **U.K. India Business Council (UKIBC)** has recently recommended the Indian government on **reducing its red tapism.**

More about the recommendations

- **Legal and regulatory processes:**
 - Legal and regulatory impediments in India continue to be a **source of “frustration”** for investors looking to **set up or expand operations in India.**
 - **Land acquisition and “regular delays” in Customs clearances** remain problematic, the U.K. India Business Council (UKIBC) has conveyed to the Government of India.
 - **Duplication of regulation:**
 - Duplication of regulation wherein **two sets of regulations are administered by two different arms of Government** on the same issue was cited as a key issue.
 - Such duplication **leads to delays and costs**, and are most common in areas on the **Constitution’s concurrent list of legislations**, such as **labour, environment, food and personal care.**
 - The organisation added that there are several grey areas in compliance like **tax or telecommunications.**

Red tapism

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- Red tape refers to **regulations or conformity** to formal rules or standards which are claimed to be **excessive, rigid or redundant**, or to bureaucracy claimed to **hinder or prevent action or decision-making**.
 - It is usually applied to **governments, corporations, and other large organizations**.
 - Things often **described as "red tape" include**
 - Filling out paperwork, obtaining licenses,
 - Having multiple people or committees approve a decision and
 - Various low-level rules that make conducting one's affairs slower, more difficult, or both.
-
- **Reforms:**
 - Reforms to make **greenfield and brownfield acquisition and development** simpler would help businesses to **open more stores, factories, and other facilities**, thus enabling them to expand faster and provide gainful employment.
 - **Priority sector lending norms:**
 - The Council has urged India to take a “broader view” of priority sector lending norms **for foreign banks operating in India**.
 - In certain cases, foreign banks are better able to serve and fully participate towards **cross-border financing, trade finance and sustainable financing** according to UKIBC.
 - **IP issues:**
 - UKIBC also sought **equitable tax treatment**, while flagging **rising instances of counterfeit product sales through e-commerce platforms** as a deterrent for intellectual property (IP) owners.
 - UKIBC also noted that lack of enforcement of IP rights is **problematic and can stifle innovation**.
 - **Corporate tax parity:**
 - The lower corporate tax rates, including a **15% levy for new manufacturing** units incentivises investments.
 - The UKIBC has said there is still a “**significant disparity**” between the effective corporate tax rates for **foreign firms** using a “branch model”, taxed at **43.68%**, compared to **domestic peers who are taxed at 25.17%**.

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- This serves as a **major disincentive** for international businesses using this model, such as banks.
- **India-UK FTA:**
 - With India and the U.K. working to seal a free trade agreement (FTA) soon, the Council has said **making it easier to do business is as important** as the trade pact to **bolster trade and investment flows**.

UK India Business Council (UKIBC)

- The UK India Business Council (UKIBC) is a **membership-based, non-profit organisation** founded in **2007** to **foster trade and business relations** between the **United Kingdom and India**.
- The organisation works with **businesses in both countries**, as well as the UK and Indian governments, to promote and increase bilateral trade.
- The UK India Business Council supports UK businesses with the **insights, networks, policy advocacy, services, and facilities** needed to succeed in India.
- Through a wide variety of events and member-only Sector Policy Groups, they **enable businesspeople** -
 - to meet each other,
 - to identify potential partners, suppliers and customers, and
 - to learn from top business leaders and commentators, including those on the Advisory Council.
- UKIBC is a **sister organisation** to the **UK-ASEAN Business Council**.

Opportunities & potential of India-UK business relations

- **Regional balance:**
 - Britain is tilting to the Indo-Pacific, where India is a natural ally.
 - India, which is looking at a neighbourhood that has been transformed by the rise of China, needs as wide a coalition as possible to restore a semblance of regional balance.
- **Trade, Investment & Jobs:**
 - India-UK trade was worth £23 billion in 2019, and both countries want to double the figure by 2030.
 - Almost half a million jobs are supported across India and the UK through investments in each other's economies.
- **Market for British goods:**

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- A free trade deal of the UK with India - the world's largest democracy, fifth biggest economy, a nation of 1.4 billion people will create a huge market for British goods like whisky, cars and services.
- **Benefits for Businesses:**
 - A trade deal with India will break down barriers and make it easier for British businesses to secure more investments, higher wages and lower prices in Britain.
- **Skilled Labour Access:**
 - India will be looking for concessions on Indian skilled labour accessing UK markets.
- **Defence Strengths:**
 - Britain could also contribute to the strengthening of India's domestic defence industrial base.
 - The two sides could also expand India's regional reach through sharing of logistical facilities.

Way Ahead

- In essence, the recommendations are about reducing bureaucracy, simplifying legal and regulatory complexities and taxation, developing world class IP and infrastructure environments, and enshrining investor protection.
- It is essential for both countries to become proactive and prompt in finalizing the bilateral agreement to rejuvenate the existing bilateral trade between India and the UK.

Source: TH

5G Services Rollout in India:

Context

- The Prime Minister of India has recently launched **5G services in India** on the sidelines of the inaugural ceremony of India Mobile Congress 2022.

About

- **Evolution: 5G is the 5th generation mobile network** or wireless technology. It is a new global wireless standard after 1G, 2G, 3G, and 4G networks.

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- **Network:** 5G enables a new kind of network designed to connect virtually everyone and everything together including machines, objects, and devices.
- **Objectives:** 5G will deliver higher multi-Gbps peak data speeds, ultra-low latency, more reliability, massive network capacity, increased availability, and a more uniform user experience to more users.
 - **Higher performance and improved efficiency** to empower new user experiences and connect new industries.

Benefits of the 5G launch in India

- **Affordability:** Telecom industry players like Reliance Industries Limited, Bharti Enterprises and Aditya Birla Group committed to a speedy roll-out of “affordable” 5G services in India.
- **Superior experience:** Indian mobile phone users will experience ultra-high Internet speeds via 5G wireless technology and bring a new digital era in the country.
- **Socio-economic transformation:** 5G technology will bring transformation in crucial areas including agriculture, health, education, Transport, logistics, smart cities, Industry 4.0 and financial inclusion etc.
- **Global position:** 5G technology will bolster tech revolution domestically and propel India’s position as an economic and tech powerhouse globally.
- **Newer opportunities:** will provide new opportunities for start-ups to come up with innovative solutions to solve existing challenges, create jobs and contribute to India's economic resilience.

- For example, demonstrations of 5G solutions, chipsets, networking equipment etc. development by Indian telecom start-ups, MSMEs and large manufacturers

- **Self-reliance:** India was dependent on other countries for 2G, 3G and 4G technologies. However, India has set a global standard in telecom technology for the first time with 5G.
- **Tech Developer, not consumer:** Henceforth, India will play an active role in the development and implementation of 5G related technology rather than being a mere consumer of technology.
- **More Users:** As per the recent Ericsson report, 5G technology might contribute to 39 % of mobile subscriptions in India by 2027 i.e. about 500 million estimated subscriptions.

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- **Foundation/Link Technology:** 5G technology will serve as a link to several science & technology driven application useful in daily lives such as-
- Connected Ambulance (Emergency healthcare)
- Community Clinic (Mass healthcare / treatment)
- Remote Ultrasound Robot Demo (remote healthcare)
- Fixed Wireless Access (FWA) for Rural Broadband Connectivity.
- Indigenously developed 5G core for public networks
- High Security Routers
- AI based Cyber Threat Detection Platform
- Smart-Agri Programme using IoTs, HD Cameras and Drones

Issues with 5G Implementation:

- **Technological Adoption:** Widespread rollout of 5G across India (especially rural areas) will need strong technological backup and capital adequacy on behalf of Indian telecommunication companies.
- **Low Fiberization Footprint:** For an efficient 5G coverage, doubling of Fiber connectivity will be needed for pan-India networks as presently FOC connects only 30% of India's telecom towers.
- **Hardware challenge:** Since India has banned some leading foreign telecom original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), deployment of 5G may face hurdles w.r.t. Indian hardware.
- **Spectrum pricing:** 5G spectrum pricing in India is far costlier than the global average, raising valid concerns over affordability of services by customers eventually.

Role of Digital India Mission in 5G launch

- **Affordable Devices:** With *AtmaNirbhar Bharat* the cost of devices were reduced to a large extent. India is now at second position in the world for manufacturing of mobile and is also a large exporter of mobiles.
- For example, from 2 mobile manufacturing units in 2014, India presently has 200 manufacturing units promoting competition and cost-effectiveness.
- **Digital Connectivity:**

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- **Broadband Users:** From 6 cr in 2014, India now has 80 crore Broadband users.
- **Optical Fibre Cable(OFC):** Now, more than 1,70,000 Gram Panchayats (GPs) are connected with OFC from approx 100 GPs earlier in 2014.
- **Internet users** in the rural areas of the country are growing at a faster rate than the urban area thereby bridging the digital divide.
- **Cost of Data:** The cost of data has reduced from Rs. 300 per GB in 2014 to Rs. 10 per GB in 2022. Average Data used per person is 14 GB per month, and reduction in cost of data has brought considerable savings per month for citizens.
- **Idea of Digital First:** There were apprehensions about adoption of the digital technology by the rural poor, however rural India is fast adopting the digital technologies and internet in their daily lives.

Way Forward

- 5G technology will bring harmony with the Prime Minister's vision to promote '*AtmaNirbhar Bharat*', *Jai Anusandhan* and '*SabkaSaath, SabkaVishwas*'.
- It will pave the way for realization of a vision of bringing that technology to the common people which works for the people, works by connecting with the people.
- 5G should be integrated in the policy domains like Digital India mission to ensure transformational potential on the lives of citizens way beyond simple provision of higher internet speeds. E.g. Telemedicine during COVID-19.
- Promotion of digitalisation, indigenous technology (Make in India), industrial revolution 4.0 will certainly pave the way for Techade (technology decade) of India.

Source: [IE](#)

Sanitation in India:

In News

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- The President of India participated in the event organised by the Ministry of Jal Shakti to celebrate **Swachh Bharat Diwas (October 2, 2022)**.

Key Points

- **Achieved SDG6:**
 - Through this mission, India has achieved the UN's Sustainable Development Goal number-6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), **11 years before** the deadline of 2030.
- **Building More Toilets:**
 - Since the launch of 'Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin' in 2014, more than 11 crore toilets have been constructed and about 60 crore people have changed their habit of open defecation.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin Phase-II:**
 - The Government of India is implementing the second phase of '**Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin**', which aims to make **all 6 lakh villages** of the country **ODF Plus**.
 - Since the beginning of the second phase of 'Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin', more than 1.16 lakh villages have declared themselves as ODF Plus and the work of solid and liquid waste management has also started in about three lakh villages.
- **Quality Drinking Water:**
 - Along with cleanliness, the Government of India is also working on the goal of providing quality drinking water to every household.
 - The 'Jal Jeevan Mission' has set the target of providing regular and quality drinking water to every household by the year 2024.
 - At the time of the launch of Jal Jeevan Mission in 2019, only 3.23 crore rural households had tap water supply, which has reached to about **10.27 crore** in the past three years.

What is ODF+ and ODF++?

- ODF+ and ODF++ are aimed towards proper maintenance of toilet facilities and safe collection, conveyance, treatment/disposal of all faecal sludge and sewage. While ODF+ focuses on toilets with water, maintenance and hygiene, ODF++ focuses on toilets with sludge and septage management.

Significance of Sanitation

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- **Avoids Pandemic:** During the Covid pandemic, everyone realised that toilets, the habit of washing hands with soap, and water supply through taps have acted as a shield against the pandemic.
- **Declining Diseases:** The ODF as well as access to tap water has led to a significant reduction in water-borne diseases in recent years.
- **Healthy India:** More concerted efforts can fulfill India's resolve to build a healthy, clean and self-reliant India.
- **Setting Global Example:** India needs to set an example for the world in the field of water management and sanitation.

Challenges

- **Sludge Management:** There is a time bomb of rural and small town faecal sludge management as tanks and single pits fill up and are difficult to empty.
- **Manual Scavenging:** Despite a ban on manual scavenging, it continues at various places in the country.
- **Modern Technologies:** In achieving this goal, India will face huge challenges as providing basic facilities to such a large population will require modern technology and abundant resources.
- **Maintaining ODF status:** It is important after a village, block or district is declared ODF. Generally, it so happens that once it is declared, there is no pressure on the district administration to do any activity because the goal has been achieved. Also, many people would tend to return to the old practice of open defecation.
- **Inclusion of Public:** The massive task is to include people who still lack toilets, overcome partial toilet use, and retrofit toilets which are not yet sustainably safe.
- **Usage-related Challenges:** Tackling cultural and mind-set issues, providing water in rural areas, addressing the problem of small and dingy toilets, stigma associated with pit-emptying, and making-men use toilets.
- **Open Water Bodies:** Another problem is the presence of open ponds (water pools) in rural and semi-urban areas along road corridors. The ponds are used by people, livestock for various purposes. The poor quality of water in the ponds gives rise to diseases.

Way Ahead

- **Waste Disposal:**

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- Proper facilities for disposal of excreta should be created. People begin to use toilets but the faecal material goes untreated which harms the environment.
- **Converting Waste:**
 - Defining and implementing solutions to convert waste to achieve a remunerative return will not only create hygienic surroundings for the communities but would allow them to become economically self-sufficient in the medium to long term.
- **Role of Trained Workforce:**
 - For behavioural change of the society, a trained workforce is needed that can trigger communities.
 - This involves taking the community through a participatory process of self-analysis where people are informed about the ill effects of inadequate sanitation.
- **Reusing Water:**
 - Recovery of precious grey water through minimal treatment and treatment of sewage will help tackle scarce water resources, encouraging reuse and conserving water bodies.
- **Partnerships at Village Level:**
 - The corporates could team up with the village communities to convert their waste to wealth by utilising simple and cost-effective technologies that can be managed by them independently in the long run.
 - Building the capacity of the gram panchayats in understanding how to manage the various programmes.
 - Managing household and plastic waste as well as wastewater at a village level.
- **Establishing Interlinkages:**
 - The government needs to focus on the thematic interlinkages between WASH and sectors such as health, education, gender, nutrition and livelihoods.

Source: [IE](#)

How can India Reduce its Impact on Global Warming:

In News

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- Recently, the **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** has pointed out that since the **industrial revolution, human activities** have released **large amounts of carbon dioxide (CO₂)**.

About

- **Alarming Increase in Carbon Dioxide:**
 - Atmospheric carbon dioxide levels have increased by over 40%, from 280 ppm in the 18th century to 414 ppm in 2020, and greenhouse gases level by over these 200 years.
 - **Reason:** Due to fuel burning and other ‘greenhouse gases’ such as methane, nitrous oxide, and compounds of sulphur, phosphorous, ozone into the atmosphere, changing the earth’s climate.
- **India Specific Observations:**
 - **Rise in Greenhouse gases:** The industrial revolution started only after India’s Independence 75 years ago which has led to a rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases.
 - **Need to Reduce Carbon Footprint in Farming Sector:** India has a total food-grain production of 275 million tonnes. India is the second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton and groundnuts. It, thus, becomes important that India try and reduce its carbon footprint as much as possible, more in its farming sector.

Innovative Initiatives in Agriculture to Reduce Global Warming

- Farmers are using **solar panels in their fields**, so that they can avoid diesel for groundwater pumps.
- **Climate-friendly agriculture** offers **new income sources and is more sustainable and India’s carbon emissions** could drop by 45-62 million tonnes annually.
- India has about 20-39% vegetarians and 70% of the population eat meat — mainly chicken, mutton and fish. India, with its many rivers, has a vast coastline which is rich in fishes and **fishes have high nutritional value** and help in **reducing carbon footprint**.

India’s Efforts

- **Updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):**

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- India now stands committed to reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP by 45 percent by 2030 from its 2005 levels, as per the updated NDC.
 - The country will also target about 50 percent of cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.
 - To create an additional (cumulative) carbon sink of 2.5-3 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (GtCO₂e) by 2030 through additional forest and tree cover.
 - To further a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, 'LIFE' 'Lifestyle for Environment' as a key to combating climate change" has been added to India's NDC.
 - The update is also a step towards achieving India's long term goal of reaching net-zero by 2070.
- **Adaptation and Mitigation:**
 - The Government has launched many schemes and programs to scale up India's actions on both adaptation and mitigation.
 - Appropriate measures are being taken under these schemes and programs across many sectors, including water, agriculture, forest, energy and enterprise, sustainable mobility and housing, waste management, circular economy and resource efficiency, etc.
 - As a result of the aforesaid measures, India has progressively continued decoupling of economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Focus on Renewable Energy:**
 - The PM has set the targets and reiterated that the Indian government is committed to increasing the share of renewable energy in India's total energy share. Initially, the target for renewable energy was set at 175 GW, but now it has been further revised to **450 GW by 2030**.
 - It will lead to an overall increase in green jobs such as in renewable energy, clean energy industries- in automotives, manufacturing of low emissions products like Electric Vehicles and super-efficient appliances, and innovative technologies such as green hydrogen, etc.
- **Mobilisation of Resources:**
 - India is earmarking a large part of its developmental resources to the fight against climate change.

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- This is a stupendous effort as compared to the western countries, which are already at the advanced stages of development.
- **International Solar Alliance (ISA):**
 - ISA is a global alliance being initiated by India as well as headquartered in India.
 - It is aimed at promoting research to develop **more efficient, low-cost solutions** to the global energy requirements, by leveraging advanced technology as well as providing incentives and regulation of solar power.
 - Currently, it has 88 members.

Challenges

- **Reducing India's Coal Dependency:**
 - According to one estimate, 68% of India's greenhouse gas emissions come from energy production, which remains largely reliant on coal power plants.
 - Given coal's centrality to the country's power, it will be difficult to completely displace it with renewable energy.
- **Climate-insensitive Agriculture Policy:**
 - A significant chunk of India's fiscal resources are directed towards the minimum support price combined with helpful electricity and fertilizer subsidies, encouraging farmers to grow water-intensive crops.
 - Taken together, India's agricultural policies aggravate water shortages, encourage crop burning and do little for climate change mitigation.
- **Impact on Urban Livelihood:**
 - Climate change is already impacting health, livelihood and infrastructure in India's urban areas.
 - The impact will be felt more by economically and socially marginalized urban residents, who live in informal settlements.
- **Balancing Growth and Environment:**
 - Ultimately, tackling climate change is a balancing act between the present and the future.
 - Like governments everywhere, the Indian government will have to strike a balance on inter-generational equity.

Way Ahead

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- **Shift to green economy:** India needs to ensure policies and investments shift from the grey to green economy, giving up fossil fuel and making societies and people more resilient to climate shocks.
- **Decarbonise emission-intensive sectors:** More efforts are required to reduce emissions in heavy industries like iron and steel, chemicals and cement. An ‘ecosystem-based’ approach, which looks at greening both ‘supply’ and ‘demand’, is the way ahead.
- **Climate-smart agriculture:** Considering the rapid population growth and globalization, there is an urgent need to identify and promote sustainable farming practices and tools, using inputs more efficiently and effectively to grow more from less.
- **More Carbon Sinks:** India’s efforts to reduce emissions must be complemented with creation of more carbon sinks, areas that store carbon, like forests, oceans and wetlands. This is where the role of local communities is vital.
- **Role of the indigenous community:** Indigenous communities could play a strategic role in mitigating climate change. It is high time to acknowledge their traditional wisdom on climate variability and deep-knowledge of environmental cycles, which could substantially enrich modern scientific knowledge and reinforce the effectiveness of adaptation activities worldwide.
- **Importance of Private Sector:** Businesses bring investments, innovation and the ability to transform challenges into opportunities — all essential weapons in our fight against climate change. Companies need to come forward and deliver on their responsibility towards the people and the planet.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

SwachhSurvekshan Awards 2022:

In Context

- Recently, the President of India presented the **SwachhSurvekshan Awards 2022**.

About

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- **Cleanest City overall:**
 - **Indore has been adjudged India's cleanest city for the sixth time in a row**, while Surat has retained the second position.
- **Best performing states:**
 - **Madhya Pradesh secured the first position**, followed by Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra in the category of best performing states in 'SwachhSurvekshan Awards 2022'.
 - **Haryana was in the second position** while Tamil Nadu was third.
 - Among smaller states and **Union territories, Andaman and Nicobar secured the first position followed by Dadra and Nagar Haveli** and Daman and Diu and Sikkim.
 - Telangana won the first prize under the **large states category under the SwachhSurvekshanGrameen (SSG) 2022** which looks into the sanitation status of rural areas.
- **Cities with Population:**
 - In the category of cities having a population fewer than one lakh, Maharashtra's Panchgani was ranked number one, followed by Chhattisgarh's Patan (NP) and Maharashtra's Karhad.
 - Haridwar was adjudged the cleanest Ganga town in the category of more than 1 lakh population, followed by Varanasi and Rishikesh.
 - Tirupati received the **best city award in SafaiMitra Suraksha category**.
 - Bijnor was ranked the first among Ganga towns with fewer than one lakh population. followed by Kannauj and Garhmukhteshwar respectively.
 - In the survey, Maharashtra's Deolali was adjudged the country's cleanest Cantonment Board.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

Nord Stream Pipeline Leaks:

In News

- Recently, the **two Nord Stream gas pipelines** linking Russia and Europe have been hit by **unexplained leaks**.
 - There have been four cases of leaks in the pipelines.

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Background

- The pipelines have been at the centre of **geopolitical tensions in recent times** as Russia cut gas supplies to **Europe in suspected retaliation against Western sanctions** following its invasion of Ukraine.

Impact of Leaks

- Disruption in the supply of natural gas to the European nations which can lead to a spike **in the gas price in the region.**
- It will also result in the release of methane gas which will have an **impact on the environment.**

About Nord Stream Pipeline

- Nord Stream is the **1,200 km subsea export gas pipeline that runs under the Baltic Sea carrying gas from Russia to Europe.**
- **Source:** Bovanenkovo oil and gas condensate deposit in Western Siberia.
- The Nord Stream twin pipeline system through the Baltic Sea runs from Vyborg, Russia to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany.
 - The pipelines were built and are operated by Nord Stream AG.
- The Nord Stream route crosses the **Exclusive Economic Zones of Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany, as well** as the territorial waters of Russia, Denmark, and Germany.
 - **Nord Stream 1**, completed in 2011 (From Vyborg in Leningrad to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany).
 - **Nord Stream 2**, completed in September 2021 (From Ust-Luga in Leningrad to Lubmin).

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Nord Stream pipelines from Russia



Source: Gazprom

BBC

Importance of the Pipeline

- Germany is Russia's biggest European gas consumer, and most of it comes through the Nord Stream Pipeline.
 - Its share of Russian gas supplies was 55% in 2021, and currently lies at 35%
- Sustainable Gas Supply to Europe: The pipeline provides Europe with a sustainable gas supply.
- Russia gets more direct access to the European gas market.
- Investment and Employment: It benefits the national governments and local authorities through investments and employment generated due to it.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

Medicinal Fungi:

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In Context

- Recently, an analytical study of medicinal fungi carried out by researchers from the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai (IMSc), shows that some chemicals they secrete may find use as novel drugs.

About

- They used a database, **MeFSAT (Medicinal Fungi Secondary Metabolites And Therapeutics)**, which compiles information on 184 medicinal fungi, including mushrooms.
- **Medicinal fungi** belong to two taxonomic divisions namely, basidiomycota and ascomycota.
 - Mushrooms belong to the basidiomycota division.
 - An example is *Agaricus bisporus*, the button mushroom, which can be consumed.
- Fungi belonging to the ascomycota division are generally **not mushrooms**.
 - Among these are *Isaria cicadae* and *Shiraiabambusicola* which are used in traditional Chinese medicine.



Significance

- Secondary metabolites are chemical compounds that fungi produce when they are stressed.
- These are not strictly essential and hence the name ‘secondary’.

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- They enhance the fungus' ability to survive.
- The work has been published in the preprint server BioRxiv.
- **Cordycepin**, a secondary metabolite produced by Cordyceps species of fungus, is known to have anti-tumour properties.

Source:[TH](#)

Facts in News:

Lal Bahadur Shastri Jayanti:

In News

- The Prime Minister paid tributes to former Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri Ji on his Jayanti.

About Lal Bahadur Shastri

- He was born on October 2, 1904 at Mughalsarai in Uttar Pradesh.
 - His father was a school teacher who died when Lal Bahadur Shastri was only a year and half old.
- **Freedom Struggle :** He became more and more interested in the country's struggle for freedom from foreign yoke.
 - He was greatly impressed by Mahatma Gandhi's denunciation of Indian Princes for their support of British rule in India.
 - He joined the Kashi VidyaPeeth in Varanasi, one of the many national institutions set up in defiance of British rule.
 - He participated in the freedom movement since 1930
- **Post independence :** He was minister in UP cabinet and Minister in Union Cabinet from 1951 to 1956 when he resigned taking responsibility for the railway accident
 - He was known for his simplicity and his commitment to principles.
- He coined the famous slogan 'Jai Jawan-Jai Kisan'
- He was awarded the Bharat Ratna India's highest civilian award posthumously in 1966.

Source:[PIB](#)

Facts in News:

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USOF Launches Telecom Technology Development Fund Scheme:

In Context

- Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) officially launched the Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Scheme.

About Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) Scheme

- Telecom Technology Development Fund (TTDF) aims to **fund R&D in rural-specific communication technology** applications and form synergies among academia, start-ups, research institutes, and the industry to build and develop the telecom ecosystem.
- Additionally, the Scheme aims to **promote technology ownership and indigenous manufacturing**, create a culture of technology co-innovation, reduce imports, boost export opportunities and creation of Intellectual Property.
- Under the scheme, USOF is also **targeting to develop standards to meet countrywide requirements** and create the ecosystem for research, design, prototyping, use cases, pilots, and proof of concept testing, among others.

What is USOF?

- **About:**
 - The **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** was formed by an **Act of Parliament**, and was established in April 2002 under the Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act 2003.
 - It aims to provide **financial support for the provision of telecom services** in commercially unviable rural and remote areas of the country.
 - It is an **attached office of the Department of Telecom**, and is headed by the administrator, who is appointed by the central government.
- **Funding Pattern:**
 - USOF is a **non-lapsable Fund**.
 - The Levy amount is credited to the **Consolidated Fund of India**.
 - The fund is made available to USOF after due appropriation by the Parliament.

Source: [PIB](#)

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Facts in News:

AUKUS Initiative:

Context

- China withdrew a **draft resolution against the AUKUS alliance** at the general conference of the **International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** in **Vienna** due to lack of support.

About the Resolution

- The draft resolution, which argued that the **AUKUS initiative** violated the **responsibilities of Australia, the UK and the US** under the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)**.
- The draft resolution also criticised the **IAEA's role in this regard**.
- The AUKUS partners and the IAEA say the **NPT allows marine nuclear propulsion provided necessary arrangements** are made with the IAEA.

India's Stand on Resolution

- India took an "objective view" of the AUKUS initiative while recognising the soundness of the technical evaluation done by the IAEA.

AUKUS alliance

- Under the AUKUS alliance, Australia plans to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines.
- The alliance has largely been seen as a response by the three countries (Australia, the U.K. and the U.S.) to the increasingly aggressive and assertive behaviour of China across the Indo-Pacific.
- India has close defence and strategic ties with all three members of AUKUS.

International Atomic Energy Agency

- Popularly known as the world's "**Atoms for Peace and Development**" organisation, the IAEA is the international centre for cooperation in the nuclear field.
- It was established on **29th July 1957 as an autonomous organisation**, at

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the height of the **Cold War (1945-1991) between the US and the Soviet Union.**

- Post World War II (1945), the world got divided into two power blocs dominated by two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the US.
- The two superpowers were primarily engaged in an ideological war between the capitalistic ideals of the West versus the communist ideals of the East.
- It came to an end after the **disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.**
- Though established independently of the UN through its own international treaty, the **agency reports to both the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.**
- It works with the **member states and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.**
- **Functions and Contributions:**
 - As the preeminent nuclear watchdog, the **IAEA is entrusted** with the task of upholding the principles of the **Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, 1970.**
 - Deals with the sovereign states and their pursuit of civil and military nuclear programmes.
 - It is also **active in championing civil nuclear solutions to a number of areas like health**, which is one of the main areas of peaceful application of nuclear know-how.
 - In recent years, the **IAEA is also active in dealing with climate change, pandemic containment and in the prevention of Zoonotic diseases.**

Source: [Diplomat](#)

Facts in News:

Light Combat Helicopter:

In News

The Indian Air Force (IAF) inducted its first batch of indigenously-developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) in a major boost to its combat prowess.

- The helicopter will be called **‘Prachand’, which means fierce.**

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About Light Combat Helicopter

- LCH has been developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL).
 - The first prototype of the helicopter took first flight on March 29, 2010 and has since undergone extensive testing and evaluation.
- It is a state-of-the-art modern combat helicopter, primarily designed for deployment in high-altitude regions.
- It is the only attack helicopter in the world which can land and take-off at an altitude of 5,000 m with a considerable load of weapons and fuel.
- It has a range of 550 km and an operational ceiling of 6500 m.
- It is armed with air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, 70 mm rockets and a 20 mm gun.
- **Features:** It is powered by **two Shakti engines** and is equipped with stealth features, all-weather combat capability, armour protection, night attack capability, and crash-worthy landing gear.
 - The narrow fuselage with tandem cockpit configuration makes LCH extremely manoeuvrable and agile.
 - Stealth features like low radar cross section and minimal infrared signature allow it to go behind enemy lines undetected and attack with precision.
 - It boasts of a full glass cockpit, Electronic Warfare suite and helmet-mounted display for the flying crew.
 - It can perform a range of roles, including combat search and rescue, destruction of enemy air defence and counter-insurgency operations in the jungle and urban environments.
- **Significance :** The induction of LCH in the Indian Air Force is expected to provide further impetus to Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors (YUVA) 2.0:

In News

- The Prime Minister's Scheme for Mentoring Young Authors – YUVA 2.0 was launched .

About Young, Upcoming and Versatile Authors(YUVA) 2.0

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- The launch of YUVA 2.0 is in tune with the Prime Minister's vision to encourage the youth to understand and appreciate India's democracy.
- The National Book Trust (NBT), India, under the Ministry of Education as the Implementing Agency will ensure phase-wise execution of the Scheme under well-defined stages of mentorship.
- It aims to promote reading, writing, and book culture in the country.
- **Significance :** It will help to develop a stream of writers who can write on a spectrum of subjects to promote the Indian heritage, culture, and knowledge system.
 - It will also provide a window to the aspiring youth to articulate themselves and present a comprehensive outlook of Indian Democratic values at domestic as well as international platforms.

Source: [Newsonair](#)

Chola Dynasty

In News

- A recently released film has focused on a fictional account of the **10th-century Chola dynasty**.
 - Cholas are known for their progressiveness, the architectural marvels and temples, the social setup of the time, and how cities were named after women.

The era of the Cholas

- **Region of power:**
 - The Chola kingdom stretched across **present-day Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka**.
 - It is one of the longest-ruling dynasties in world history.
 - **Geographical extent:**
 - The heartland of the Cholas was the fertile valley of the Kaveri River.
 - They unified peninsular India, south of the Tungabhadra, and held it as one state for three centuries.

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- The Chola territories stretched from the Maldives in the south to the banks of the Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh as the northern limit.

Capital and important centres:

- Their early capital was at **Thanjavur** and later on at **GangaikondaCholapuram**.
- **Kanchipuram** and **Madurai** were considered to be regional capitals in which occasional courts were held.

Foundation of the dynasty:

The dynasty was founded by king **Vijaylaya**, described as a “feudatory” of the Pallavas.

Despite being a relatively minor player in the region among giants, Vijaylaya laid the foundation for a dynasty that would rule a major part of southern India.

Under **Rajaraja I** and his successors **Rajendra I, Rajadhiraja I, Rajendra II, Virarajendra, and KulothungaChola I**, the dynasty became a military, economic and cultural powerhouse.

Contemporaries:

As one of the Three Crowned Kings of Tamilakam, along with the **Chera and Pandya**, the dynasty continued to govern over **varying territories until the 13th century CE**.

During the period of the Cholas (around the 9th to 12th century AD), other powerful dynasties of the region would also come and go, such as

The **Rashtrakutas of the Deccan** who defeated the Cholas, and

The **Chalukyas of the Andhra Pradesh** region whom the Cholas frequently battled.

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Society under the Cholas:

Agriculture & canals:

There was tremendous agrarian expansion during the rule of the imperial Chola Dynasty all over Tamil Nadu and particularly in the Kaveri Basin.

Most of the canals of the Kaveri River belong to this period.

Trade:

While the extent of this domination is disputed, the Cholas had strong ties with merchant groups and this allowed them to undertake impressive naval expeditions.

A strong army and navy:

One of the biggest achievements of the Chola dynasty was its naval power, allowing them to go as far as **Malaysia and the Sumatra islands of Indonesia** in their conquests.

- The domination was such that the **Bay of Bengal was converted** into a “**Chola lake**” for some time.

The dynasty became a military, economic and cultural powerhouse in South Asia and South-East Asia.

Maintaining a strong army and naval resources made sense for the Cholas, because, The period from 9th to 10th century was a violent time, where kingdoms would go to war with each other frequently.

Art & Culture:

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Temple architecture:

The Cholas built their temples in the traditional way of the Pallava dynasty, who were themselves influenced by the Amaravati school of architecture.

The maturity and grandeur to which the Chola architecture had evolved found expression in the two **magnificent temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikondacholapuram.**

Brihadeeswara temple:

- The grand **Brihadeeswara temple of Thanjavur**, built by the Cholas, was the largest building in India in that period.
- This temple carries on its walls the engraved evidence of the elaborate administrative and financial procedures concerning the day-to-day administration of the temple.

Airavateswara temple:

- The **Airavateswara temple at Darasuram near Thanjavur** built during the reign of **Rajaraja II** is a magnificent structure typical of the stage of architectural development reached in the **12th century CE.**

Sculptures:

The Chola period is also remarkable for its sculptures and bronzes.

Artworks and sculptures were commissioned by Chola kings and queens, including the famous **bronze Nataraja idols.**

Chola period bronzes were created using the lost wax technique.

- [Earlier, the Rashtrakutas had built the Kailasanatha temple in Maharashtra's Aurangabad — the largest monolith structure (carved from a single rock) of its time.]

Blots in the Chola history:

The Chola rulers sacked and plundered Chalukyan cities including Kalyani and massacred the people, including Brahmans and children.

They destroyed Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of the rulers of Sri Lanka.

Source: TH

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Financial Viability of Election Promises

In Context

- Recently, the Election Commission of India asked parties to explain how they plan to finance poll promises.

More about the news

- **About:**
 - The Election Commission of India wrote to parties proposing that they spell out **ways and means of raising additional resources** to finance the promises.
 - EC also asked them to assess the impact it would have on the fiscal sustainability of the state or the Central government.
- **Issue:**
 - Elections are held frequently in India, providing opportunities for political parties to indulge in competitive electoral promises, particularly in multi-phase elections.
 - These promises are made without having to spell out their financial implications more particularly on committed expenditure.
 - **Most states lack the cushion to spend money** as freebie & irrational promises.
 - The states are unable to save state finances from going down into **fiscal deficits**.
 - **Freebies:**
 - The Supreme Court also recently observed that the issue concerning freebies is an important one and requires debate.
- **Detailing the resources, spendings & impact:**
 - The parties will have to detail how they **propose to raise the additional resources** to finance the scheme or schemes if voted to power – like whether they plan an **increase in tax and non-tax revenues, rationalise expenditure, go for additional borrowings or do it in any other manner**.
 - EC, in its letter to **all recognised national and state parties**, has prescribed a **standardised disclosure proforma** for them to

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- Declare quantification of the physical coverage of the schemes promised,
- Financial implications of the promise and
- Availability of the financial resources.

The **impact of the additional resource raising plan** for fulfilling the promises on **fiscal sustainability of the State or the Union Government** will also have to be specified.

Criticisms:

- The EC's move drew a sharp reaction from the main Opposition which said that this is not the business of the EC.
 - Providing electricity, water, schools and other facilities to the people is the core responsibility of any government.
- Critics also quoted that this goes against the very essence and spirit of competitive politics.

Freebies

- Before every election, political parties in India promise certain health and education services, besides free water and electricity up to a limit.
- Many parties also promise what have come to be known as freebies such as television sets, laptops with the internet, bicycles, scooters, monthly petrol quotas, cell phones, and even ghee! If the promises are sincere, the winning party or coalition goes on to distribute these items among the people.
- **Reasons for giving these Freebies:**
- The failure of the parties and governments to deliver development to the ordinary people has led to the increased phenomenon of "freebies" and the parties have to resort to it to win over the voters.
 - If you have done work for five years, then you won't have to resort to it.

Issues with Freebies

- **Financial irregularity:**
 - The reckless spending of the taxpayers' money on freebies is neither a recognised policy/custom nor is sanctioned in a court of law.
 - It is a blatant financial irregularity that amounts to bribing voters using public money solely for gaining an advantage in electoral politics.
- **The burden on Public Exchequer:**

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- If states continue with fiscal profligacy, they will be heading towards unsustainable high debt with catastrophic consequences for macro-economic stability and the ability of India to sustain high growth.
- **Vote bank politics:**
 - Political parties' promises to lure voters in their favour is analogous to bribery and undue influences.
 - Their attitude seems to be – if we lose, we do not have to deliver, but if we win then we shall cross the bridge when we get to it.
 - Hence, they have set out to make promises without a sense of responsibility as to whether it will at all be feasible to deliver on even some of them.
- **Lacking equity or fairness:**
 - Freebies serve even those who are capable of managing on their own at the cost of those who can not pay for their own. This promotes inequality.

Significance of declaring ways of raising resources

- **Impact of poll promises:**
 - Empty poll promises have far-reaching ramifications.
 - View that emerged was that the poll watchdog cannot remain a mute spectator and overlook the undesirable impact of some of the promises on the conduct of free and fair elections.
- **Standardisation & informed choices:**
 - The EC said that disclosure of the promises in a prescribed format will bring in standardisation in the nature of information and help voters compare and make an informed decision.
 - This will help maintain a level playing field for all political parties and candidates.
- **Model Code of Conduct:**
 - To make these steps mandatory, the EC plans to propose an amendment to the relevant clauses in the Model Code of Conduct.

Election Commission India

- The Election Commission was established in accordance with the Constitution on **25th January 1950**.
- The Election Commission of India is an **autonomous constitutional body** responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- The body administers elections to the **Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State**

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Legislative Assemblies, State Legislative Councils and the offices of the **President and Vice President** of the country.

- It is not concerned with the elections to **panchayats and municipalities** in the states.
- For this, the Constitution of India provides for a separate **State Election Commission**.

Source: TH

Parliament Committees

In News

- A recent revamp of the Standing Committees of Parliament **could potentially worsen the relations** between the government and opposition parties.

Committees of Parliament

- **About:**
 - Parliamentary Committees have their origins in the **British Parliament**.
 - A Parliamentary Committee is a **panel of MPs** that is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker, and which works under the **direction of the Speaker**.
 - It presents its **report** to the House or to the Speaker.
- **Derives Authority From:**
 - They draw their authority from Article 105, which deals with the privileges of MPs, and Article 118, which gives Parliament authority to make rules to regulate its procedure and conduct of business.
- **Importance of Heads:**
 - **Preparing the agenda:** The heads of the panels schedule their meetings. They play a clear role in preparing the agenda and the annual report, and can take decisions in the interest of the efficient management of the Committee.
 - **Power to Summon:** The chairperson presides over the meetings and can decide who should be summoned before the panel. However, the chairman should have the support of the majority of the members to summon a witness.

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- **Equivalent to a court:** An invitation to appear before a Parliamentary Committee is equivalent to a summons from a court: If one cannot come, he or she has to give reasons, which the panel may or may not accept.
- **Concerning Changes:**
 - Of the 22 committees announced recently, the Congress has the post of chairperson in only one, and the second largest opposition party, Trinamool Congress, none.
 - The ruling BJP has the chairmanship of the important committees on Home, Finance, IT, Defence and External Affairs.

Various Committees of Parliament

- **Financial Committees:**
 - Include the Estimates Committee, [Public Accounts Committee](#), and the Committee on Public Undertakings.
 - These committees were constituted in 1950.
 - A Minister is not eligible for election or nomination to Financial Committees, and certain Departmentally Related Committees.
- **Departmentally Related Standing Committees:**
 - **Aim:** to increase Parliamentary scrutiny, and to give members more time and a wider role in examining important legislation.
 - Seventeen Departmentally Related Standing Committees came into being in 1993 to examine budgetary proposals and crucial government policies.
 - The number of Committees was subsequently increased to **24** - there are 16 Departmentally Related Standing Committees for Lok Sabha and eight for Rajya Sabha.
 - **Important Lok Sabha Panels:** Agriculture; Coal; Defence; External Affairs; Finance; Communications & Information Technology; Labour; Petroleum & Natural Gas; and Railways. The important Rajya Sabha panels include Commerce; Education; Health & Family Welfare; Home Affairs; and Environment.
 - **Composition:**
 - Each of these Committees has 31 members — 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.
 - Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha panels are headed by members of these respective Houses.
- **Ad hoc Committees:**

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- Appointed for a **specific purpose**.
- They cease to exist after they have completed the task assigned to them, and have submitted a report to the House.
- The principal Ad hoc Committees are the Select and Joint Committees on Bills.
- Other Ad hoc Committees: the Railway Convention Committee, Committee on Food Management and Security in Parliament House Complex, etc. also come under the category of Ad hoc Committees.
- **Other Parliamentary Standing Committees:**
 - The Business Advisory Committee and the Privileges Committee for Each House.
 - Parliament can also constitute a **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** with a special purpose, with members from both Houses, for detailed scrutiny of a subject or Bill.
 - Also, either of the two Houses can set up a **Select Committee** with members from that House.
 - JPCs and Select Committees are usually chaired by ruling party MPs, and are disbanded after they have submitted their report.

Constitution of the Committees

- **Procedure for Heads:**
 - By convention, the main Opposition party gets the post of PAC chairman; it is currently with the Congress.
 - Chairmanship of some key committees has been allocated to opposition parties in the past. However, this pattern has changed in the latest rejig.
- **Procedure for Members:**
 - The Presiding Officer of each House nominates members to these panels.
 - Usually, the composition of a Committee remains more or less the same in terms of representation of the various parties.
 - Presiding Officers use their **discretion** to refer a matter to a Parliamentary Committee, but this is **usually done in consultation** with leaders of parties in the House.
 - MPs **typically** have a **one-year tenure** on Parliamentary Committees.

Significance of Parliamentary Committees

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- **Improves Effectiveness:** Parliamentary Committees act as a mechanism that helps in improving the effectiveness of Parliament.
- **Coordination with Ministries:** The Committees work closely with multiple Ministries, and facilitate inter-ministerial coordination.
- **Important Functions:** The Committees look into the demands for grants of Ministries/departments, examine Bills pertaining to them, consider their annual reports, and look into their long-term plans and report to Parliament.
- **Carries Out Legislative Business:** A great deal of legislative business ends up taking place in the Parliamentary Committees as-
 - The process of lawmaking is often **complex**, and Parliament has **limited time** for detailed discussions.
 - The political polarisation and shrinking middle ground has been leading to **increasingly rancorous and inconclusive debates** in Parliament.
- **Consensus through Experts:** Committees can get inputs from experts and stakeholders on various matters. They also help parties reach consensus on various issues.

Importance of the Recommendations of the Committees

- **Significant Suggestions:**
 - Reports of Departmentally Related Standing Committees are recommendatory in nature. They are not binding on the government, but they do carry significant weight.
 - The suggestions by the Select Committees and JPCs — which have a majority of MPs and heads from the ruling party — are accepted more frequently.
- **Value Addition:**
 - Bills that are referred to Committees often return to the House with significant value-addition.
 - In the past, governments have accepted suggestions given by the Committees and incorporated them into the Bill after it has come back to the House for consideration and passage.
- **Promotes Government's Action:**
 - These panels also examine policy issues in their respective Ministries and make suggestions to the government.
 - The government has to report back on whether these recommendations have been accepted.

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- Based on this, the Committees table Action Taken Reports, detailing the status of the government's action on each recommendation.

Differences between discussions/ debates in the Parliamentary Committees and in Parliament

Debates in the Parliament	Debates in the Parliamentary Committees
MPs often do not get adequate time to put forward their views in Parliament, even if they are experts on the subject.	Small groups with relatively less demands on their time; in these meetings, every MP gets a chance and the time to contribute to the discussion.
Parliament has only around 100 sittings a year.	Committee meetings are independent of Parliament's calendar.
Parliament's proceedings are telecast live and members are often constrained to speak to their constituencies.	The discussions are confidential and off-camera , party affiliations usually do not come in the way of MPs speaking their minds.
" Peripheral discussions " – Congress in session is Congress on public exhibition .	" Real discussions " – Congress in its committee rooms is Congress at work .

Issues with Parliamentary Committees

- **Need Strengthening in Several Areas:** All Bills are not referred to Committees. They are thinly staffed. Some Committees may not seek evidence from experts on important Bills.
- **Limited Support:** Currently, the technical support available to Parliamentary Committees is limited to a secretariat that helps with matters such as scheduling meetings and note taking.
- **Participation of Members:** Parliamentary Committees hold several meetings to conduct an in-depth analysis of various issues through extensive deliberations among Members. The success of the Committee system depends on the participation of Members in these meetings which is generally low.

Way Ahead

- **Scrutiny of All Bills:**

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- Referring all Bills to a Committee would ensure that all laws go through a minimum level of Parliamentary scrutiny.
- **Funding:**
 - Funds should be secured to assist these Committees in conducting inquiries, holding public hearings, and collecting data.
- **Expert Support & Specialist Advisors:**
 - Engaging with experts and stakeholders enables Committee members to better understand the details of complicated issues, and the potential impact of a policy or legislation.
 - Committees in other countries such as the UK, USA, and Canada can retain specialist advisors (such as lawyers, economists, and statisticians) to assist in specific inquiries.
- **Public Opinions:**
 - Committees can also invite comments from the wider public which can help Committees consider the wider implications of a Bill or policy.

Source: [IE](#)

International Year of Millets (IYOM) 2023

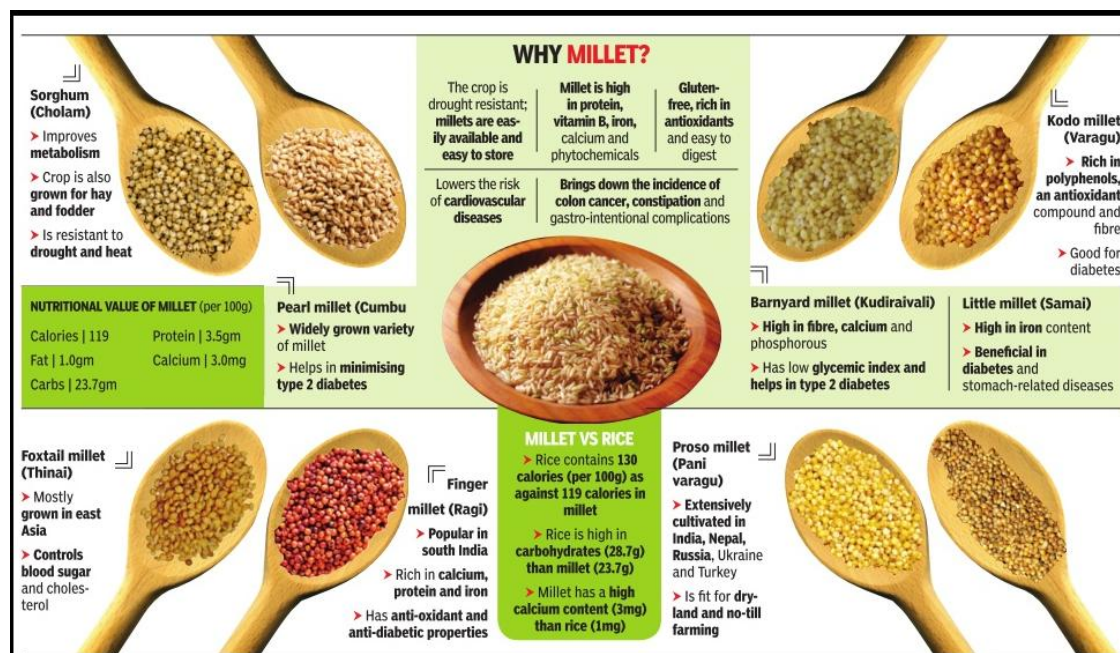
Context

- The department of agriculture & farmers welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to boost the initiative promoting millets towards the celebration of the International Year of Millets (IYOM)-2023.

About Millets

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- **Umbrella term:** Millets is a common term to categorize small-seeded grasses. Millets include sorghum, pearl millet, ragi, small millet, foxtail millet, proso millet, barnyard millet, Kodo millet etc.
- **Growth factors:** Millets can grow in poor soil conditions with less water, minimal fertilizer and pesticides.

Distribution

- **India:** Major producers include Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Haryana.
- **Global:** India, Nigeria and China are the largest producers of millets in the world, accounting for more than 55% of the global production.

Benefits of Millets

- **Hardier and drought-resistant:** They can withstand higher temperatures, thus known to be a suitable choice as ‘climate-smart cereals or dryland-cereals.’
- **Nutri-cereals:** They are high in dietary fiber and known as a powerhouse of nutrients including iron, folate, calcium, zinc, magnesium, phosphorus, copper, vitamins and antioxidants. Thus, they can mitigate nutritional deficiencies in women and children.

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- **Prevent/cure lifestyle diseases:** Millets can also help in tackling health challenges such as obesity, diabetes and lifestyle problems as they are gluten-free, have a low glycemic index and are high in dietary fiber and antioxidants.
- **Inter-cropping:** Fibrous roots of millet plants help in improving soil quality, check water run-off and aid soil conservation in erosion-prone areas, thereby restoring natural ecosystems.
- **Tackles climate change:** As a C4 group of cereals, millets convert more carbon dioxide to oxygen and contribute in mitigation of climate change through a low carbon footprint of 3,218-kilogram equivalent of carbon dioxide per hectare (as compared to wheat and rice).

Concerns /Challenges

- **Production decline:** Due to low remuneration, lack of input subsidies and price incentives, subsidized supply of fine cereals through the public distribution system (PDS) and change in consumer preferences lowering demand.
- **Absence of effective market linkages** for millets and other agricultural produce. Also, millet consumption is restricted to rural areas, bazaars, tourist spots and festivals.
- **Insufficient processing units close to millet fields:** It causes local producers to transport their produce to distant places.
- For example, raw grains of Kodo millets produced in Tamil Nadu, need to be transported to Maharashtra for processing.

India's efforts in Millets promotion

- **Global Map:** India is trying to bring millet back on the global map by-
 - building support, organizing & promoting millets and millet-based commodities market.
 - forging effective market linkages for millet-based products to maximize the value capture.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan:** In 2018, the government decided to mark the national year of millets and had also notified millets as nutri-cereals by including them under the POSHAN Mission Abhiyan.

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- **Rainfed Area Development Programme:** Developing and identifying new areas receiving adequate rainfall for millet farming as a part of the RashtriyaKrishiVikasYojana(RKVY).
- **National Food Security Mission (NFSM):** Millets promoted NFSM to help provide good nutrition to those who are unable to afford it. The government included millets in the public distribution system, to provide a steady market for its produce.
- **APEDA's 'Millet in Minutes' products:** Recently, APEDA launched a variety of products like Upma, Pongal, Khichadi, Noodles, Biryani, etc under the Ready-to-Eat (RTE) category.
- **The 'Integrated Cereals Development Programmes in Coarse Cereals'** was initiated by the government under Macro Management of Agriculture.
- **International Year of the Millets 2023:** India's initiative to promote millets was recognised and in March 2021, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) declared the year 2023 as the international year of the millets.
- **MOU:** The department of agriculture and farmers welfare and the NAFED will collaborate in facilitating advisory support to manufacturers and processors of millet-based products to develop value-added millet-based commodities.

Initiatives to promote Millets

- **Boarding of start-ups** inclusive of startups empanelled with Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR)
- **Formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs)** for developing a range of millet-based products
- **NAFED Bazaar stores** network to promote market millet-based products
- **Installation of millet based vending machines** at various locations across Delhi-NCR.

Way Forward

- The Prime Minister of India has highlighted the benefits of millets to both farmers and consumers in his latest address of his radio programme **Mann kiBaat**.

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- A **multi-pronged strategy** needs to be adopted for the promotion, facilitation and accessibility of the Millets in India and the world. India has taken the right steps in this regard.

Source: PIB

EU's Digital Services Act (DSA)

In News

- Recently, the **European Union (EU)** has given final approval to **online safety focused legislation** which is an overhaul of the region's social media and e-commerce rules.

Key features of the Digital Services Act

- **Faster removal of content:**
 - As part of the overhaul, social media companies will have to add "new procedures for faster removal" of content deemed illegal or harmful.
 - They will also have to explain to users how their content takedown policy works.
 - The DSA also allows users to challenge takedown decisions taken by platforms and seek out-of-court settlements.

Bigger platforms have greater responsibility:

- One of the most crucial features of the legislation is that it avoids a one-size fits all approach and places increased accountability on the Big Tech companies.
- Under the DSA, 'Very Large Online Platforms' (VLOPs) and 'Very Large Online Search Engines' (VLOSEs), that is platforms, having more than 45 million users in the EU, will have more stringent requirements.

Direct supervision by European Commission:

- These requirements and their enforcement will be centrally supervised by the European Commission itself, a key way to ensure that companies do not sidestep the legislation at the member-state level.

More transparency on how algorithms work:

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- VLOPs and VLOSEs will face transparency measures and scrutiny of how their algorithms work, and will be required to conduct systemic risk analysis and reduction to drive accountability about the society impacts of their products.
- VLOPs must allow regulators to access their data to assess compliance and let researchers access their data to identify systemic risks of illegal or harmful content.

Clearer identifiers for ads and who's paying for them

- Online platforms must ensure that users can easily identify advertisements and understand who presents or pays for the advertisement.
- They must not display personalised advertising directed towards minors or based on sensitive personal data.

Significance of the move

- **The law tightly regulates** the way intermediaries, especially large platforms such as Google, Meta, Twitter, and YouTube, function in terms of moderating user content.
- **It will give better protection** to users and to fundamental rights online, establish a powerful transparency and accountability framework for online platforms and provide a single, uniform framework across the EU.

Comparison of EU's DSA with India's Online Laws

- India had notified extensive changes to its social media regulations in the form of the **Information Technology Rules, 2021 (IT Rules)** which placed significant due diligence requirements on large social media platforms such as **Meta and Twitter**.
 - These included **appointing key personnel to handle law enforcement** requests and **user grievances**.
 - **Enabling identification of the first originator** of the information on its platform under certain conditions.
 - One of the reasons that the platform may be required to trace the originator is if a user has **shared child sexual abuse material on its platform**.
 - **WhatsApp has alleged** that the requirement will **dilute the encryption security** on its platform and could compromise personal messages of millions of Indians.

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- Deploying **technology-based measures** on a best-effort basis to **identify certain types of content**.
- One of the most contentious proposals is the **creation of government-backed grievance appellate committees** which would have the authority to review and revoke content moderation decisions taken by platforms.

Way Forward

- India is also working on a **complete overhaul of its technology policies** and is expected to soon come out with a **replacement of its IT Act 2000**, which is expected to look at **ensuring net neutrality** and **algorithmic accountability** of social media platforms, among other things.

Source: [IE](#)

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

Context

- At the sixth anniversary of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) on October 1, the Union Finance Minister voiced concerns over banks taking a hefty haircut on loans that go through the resolution process under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).

About IBC

- **Introduction:** IBC was introduced in 2016 when India's Non Performing Assets (NPA) and debt defaults were piling up and older loan recovery mechanisms were performing badly.
- **Aims:**
 - To overhaul the corporate distress resolution regime in India.
 - To consolidate existing laws to create a time bound mechanism with a creditor-in-control model as against the debtor in possession system.
- **Outcomes:** As per the IBC triggered insolvency, there are just two outcomes: resolution or liquidation.

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- **Three classes of persons** can trigger the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) which are financial creditors, operational creditors and corporate debtors.

Objectives of the IBC Resolution

According to its regulator IBBI, the objectives of the IBC resolution are

- To find a way to save a business through restructuring, change in ownership, mergers etc.
- To maximize the value of assets of the corporate debtor
- To promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit, and balancing of interests.

Challenges for the IBC

- **Lack of proper resolution:** As per the IBBI data of 3400 cases in the last six years, more than 50% of the cases ended in liquidation while only 14% cases found a proper resolution.
- **Huge delays in resolution:** Initially, IBC was touted as a time bound mechanism. The amended IBC act made the total timeline for completion of the resolution process to 330 days from the earlier 180 day deadline (with a permitted 90 day extension).
- However, in FY22, it took 772 days to resolve cases involving companies owing more than ₹1,000 crore. Also, the average number of days taken for resolution of such cases increased rapidly over the past 5 years.
- **Haircuts:** It means the debt foregone by the lender as a share of the outstanding claim.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance in 2021 noted an average haircut of 80% by the creditors in more than 70% of the cases in the 5 years of the IBC.
- As per The Hindu Data Team, almost 33 of 85 companies with more than ₹1,000 crore debt had been given haircuts above 90% by the lenders.
- For example, the Videocon Group was given a haircut of 95.3% by the creditors.

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- **Lack of digitisation** has led to the delays beyond the prescribed statutory limits in the insolvency resolution process.

Achievements

- **Addressing NPA problem:** The IBC was instrumental in reviving India's insolvency regime and successfully addressing the looming threat of NPAs.
- **Credit discipline:** Ease of credit flow is necessary for attainment of Ease of doing business and economic growth. Under the IBC regime, Rs. 2.5-lakh crore has been brought back into the banking system as a result of resolution of insolvencies.
- **The World Bank's report:** India's rank in resolving insolvency went from 136 in 2017 to 52 in 2020, after the implementation of the IBC in 2016.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment)bill, 2021

- **The Pre-packaged Insolvency Resolution Process (PIRP)/'pre-packs'** was proposed as an insolvency resolution mechanism for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
- **Aim:** PIRP process in the Code will address the issues faced by MSMEs due to the impact of the pandemic and the unique nature of their business, duly recognizing their importance in the economy.

Way Forward

- **The Parliamentary Standing Committee** suggested that the timeline of not more than 30 days to admit the insolvency application and transfer control of the company to a resolution process after filing.
- **New yardstick to measure haircuts:** The IBBI suggested that haircuts not be looked at as the difference between the creditor's claims and the actual amount realized. But the difference between what the company offers while entering IBC and the value realized.
- **Optimum budgetary allocations** for upskilling insolvency professionals, improving tribunal infrastructure and for digitisation of the insolvency resolution process.

Source: TH

Genetically Modified Mosquitoes

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In News

- Recently, scientists have genetically modified mosquitoes to **slow the growth of malaria-causing parasites in their guts** which can also help **prevent transmission of the disease** to humans.

About Malaria

- **Parasites**
 - Malaria is a **life-threatening disease** caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of **infected female Anopheles mosquitoes**.
 - The parasite **develops into its next stage in the mosquito's gut and travels to its salivary glands**, ready to infect the next person it bites.
 - Though **only around 10 percent of mosquitoes live long enough** for the infectious parasite to develop.

Symptoms

- People who have malaria usually **feel very sick** with a **high fever** and **shaking chills**.

Distribution

- While the disease is **uncommon in temperate climates**, malaria is still **common in tropical and subtropical countries**.

Vaccine

- It is **preventable and curable**.

Data on Malaria

- Malaria remains one of the **most devastating diseases globally**, putting at risk about half of the world's population.
- In 2021, it infected **241 million people** and **killed 627,000 people**.

Genetic modification in Mosquitoes

- **Lab-bred mosquitoes:** GM mosquitoes are **mass-produced in a laboratory** to carry two types of genes:
 - **A self-limiting gene** that prevents female mosquito offspring from surviving to adulthood.
 - **A fluorescent marker gene** that glows under a special red light. This allows researchers to identify GM mosquitoes in the wild.
 - New tools are increasingly needed as **mosquitoes develop resistance to insecticides and treatments**.

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Shorter life span: The peptides impair the malarial parasite's development and also cause the mosquitoes to have a shorter life span.

Gene drive technology: Gene drive is one such powerful weapon that in combination with drugs, vaccines and mosquito control can help stop the spread of malaria and save human lives.

Pros of Genetically Modified Mosquitoes

- GM mosquitoes have been **successfully used** in parts of **Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Panama, and India** to control **Ae. aegypti** mosquitoes.
- GM mosquitoes **will only work to reduce numbers of target mosquito species** and not other types of mosquitoes.
- There is **no risk to people, animals, or the environment**.
- Scientists say the introduction of GMO mosquitoes will **lower the population of disease-carrying biting insects over time**.
- Reviews suggest the **loss of invasive mosquito species will have little to no effect on local environments** since they didn't belong there to begin with.
- **No pesticides are added to the environment** when using GMO mosquitoes.
- Seeding areas with GMO male mosquitoes is **relatively easy and a low-manpower activity**.

Cons of Genetically Modified Mosquitoes

- GMO mosquitoes may **carry or develop unknown pathogens** that hurt humans.
- Critics say **there has not been enough testing and observation** of the GMO mosquitoes.
- Though the mosquito is an introduced species, **native species are now reliant on these mosquitoes for their diet**.
- GMO mosquitoes **may mutate into a stronger mosquito** that can reproduce, which poses a whole new threat.
- Fear that despite the gene modification, **some of the hatched GMO mosquitoes will survive to adulthood and breed**.
- The cost of producing GMO mosquitoes is **too expensive and too time-consuming**.

Way Forward/ Suggestions

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- **Planning:** It would require extremely careful planning to minimise risks before any field trials.
- **Two separate strains:** there is a need of creating two separate but compatible strains of modified mosquitoes one with the anti-parasite modification and one with the gene drive.
- **Integrated mosquito management:**
 - **Educating the community** about how they can control mosquitoes in and around their homes.
 - **Conducting mosquito surveillance** (tracking and monitoring the number of mosquitoes, and types of mosquitoes in an area).
 - **Removing standing water** where mosquitoes lay eggs.
 - **Using larvicides and insecticides** to control mosquito larvae, pupae, and adult mosquitoes.
 - **Monitoring how effective mosquito programs** are at reducing numbers of mosquitoes.

Source: [IE](#)

Facts in News

'herSTART' Platform

Context

- Recently, the President of India has launched '**herStart**' — a **start-up platform of Gujarat University for women entrepreneurs.**

About

- Besides encouraging the entrepreneurial endeavours of women, the '**HerStart**' initiative will link the **women entrepreneurs with various private and government platforms.**
- It will boost **innovation and start-up efforts** of women entrepreneurs.
- It will provide **resources and training modules free of cost** to aspiring women **entrepreneurs.**
- India has moved from **81st position to 40th position in the Global Innovation Index (GII) of 2022** as a result of the startup program started across the country.

Source: [AIR](#)

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SUBJECT : Facts in News

Nobel Prize in Chemistry

In News

- Recently, the Nobel Prize in chemistry for 2022 was awarded to **Carolyn R. Bertozzi, Morten Meldal and K. Barry Sharpless**.
 - The three have been awarded for their **work in ‘click chemistry’**.

Click Chemistry

- Click chemistry is utilized in the development of pharmaceuticals, for mapping DNA and creating materials that are more fit for purpose.
 - The term “click chemistry” is used to describe **reactions that are fast, high-yielding and clean**, meaning that they do not produce a lot of unwanted side-products.

Significance

- It helps to develop “bioorthogonal” reactions that operate safely inside living organisms without disrupting their biochemistry. Using bioorthogonal reactions, researchers have improved the targeting of cancer pharmaceuticals.
- The breakthrough allowed scientists to track the movement of biomolecules in cells and so tease apart the complex workings of life.
- Replicating reactions that involve bonds between carbon atoms is expensive and often leads to side reactions and loss of material.
- In click chemistry, instead of trying to make carbon atoms react with each other, it focuses on using smaller molecules that already have a complete carbon frame.

Source: [TH](#)

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Nobel Prize in Physics

Context

- Recently, the Nobel Prize in Physics for 2022 was awarded to Alain Aspect, John F. Clauser and Anton Zeilinger for **their work on quantum mechanics.**

About

- The 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics has been awarded “**for experiments with entangled photons, establishing the violation of Bell inequalities, and pioneering quantum information science.**”

Quantum mechanics is a fundamental theory in physics that provides a description of the physical properties of nature at the scale of atoms and subatomic particles.

It is the foundation of all quantum physics including quantum chemistry, quantum field theory, quantum technology, and quantum information science.

Individual Contributions

- **John Clauser:**
 - He built an apparatus that emitted two entangled photons at a time, each towards a filter that tested their polarisation.
- **Alain Aspect:**
 - He developed a setup to close an important loophole.
 - He was able to switch the measurement settings after an entangled pair had left its source, so the setting that existed when they were emitted could not affect the result.
- **Anton Zeilinger:**
 - He researched entangled quantum states.
 - His area of research has demonstrated a phenomenon called quantum teleportation, which makes it possible to transfer a quantum state from one particle to one at a distance.

Source: [TH](#)

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US's No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels (NOPEC) Bill

In News

- Recently, the **No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels (NOPEC) bill** was passed by a Senate committee which intends to protect U.S. consumers and businesses from engineered oil spikes.

Key Points

- **Background:**
 - Several attempts to pass NOPEC over more than two decades have long worried OPEC's de facto leader Saudi Arabia, leading Riyadh to lobby hard every time a version of the bill has come up.
- **Way to fight high prices of fuels:**
 - US legislation and antitrust lawsuits have emerged as a possible tool to tackle high fuel prices.
 - But implementing it could also have some dangerous unintended consequences.

What is the NOPEC bill?

- **Purpose of the Bill:**
 - The bipartisan NOPEC bill would tweak U.S. antitrust law to **revoke the sovereign immunity** that has protected OPEC+ members and their national oil companies from lawsuits.
 - If signed into law, the U.S. attorney general would gain the option to **sue the oil cartel or its members**, such as Saudi Arabia, in federal court.
- **Earlier a similar Bill was introduced but was not passed. What has changed now?**
 - Previous versions of the NOPEC bill have failed amid resistance by oil industry groups, including the top U.S. oil lobby group, the American Petroleum Institute (API).
 - But anger has risen in Congress about gasoline prices that earlier this year helped fuel inflation to the highest level in decades.
- **Issue in the Bill:**
 - It is unclear exactly how a federal court could enforce judicial antitrust decisions against a foreign nation.

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- The United States could also face criticism for its attempts to manipulate markets by its planned release of 165 million barrels of oil from the emergency oil reserve between May and November.
- NOPEC would create further instability in the marketplace and exacerbate existing challenges in international commerce.
- NOPEC legislation could ultimately lead to overproduction by OPEC, bringing prices so low that U.S. energy companies have difficulty boosting output. Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries have some of the world's cheapest and easiest reserves to produce.
- The Bill could lead to unintended blowback, including the possibility that other countries could take similar action on the United States for withholding agricultural output to support domestic farming.
 - In 2019, for example, Saudi Arabia threatened to sell its oil in currencies other than the dollar if Washington passed a version of the NOPEC bill.
 - Doing so would undermine the dollar's status as the world's main reserve currency, reduce Washington's clout in global trade, and weaken its ability to enforce sanctions on nation-states.

OPEC

- It is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the Baghdad Conference on September 10–14, 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- The **OPEC Secretariat** is the executive organ of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). It is located in Vienna.
- In 2016, OPEC allied with other top non-OPEC oil-exporting nations to form an even more powerful entity named OPEC+ or OPEC Plus.
- **OPEC+** came into existence, in part, to counteract other nations' capacity to produce oil, which could limit OPEC's ability to control supply and price.
- Objectives:
 - To coordinate and unify the petroleum policies of its Member Countries .
 - To ensure the stabilization of oil markets in order to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers,

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a steady income to producers and a fair return on capital for those investing in the petroleum industry.

- OPEC+
- OPEC+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies including Russia.
- It agreed to steep production cuts, curbing supply in an already tight market.

Source: [IE](#)

Sugar Production in India

In News

- India overtakes other countries to become the **world's largest producer, consumer** of Sugar, and second largest exporter of sugar.

Key Points

- **Production:**
 - A record amount of sugarcane—more than 5000 Lakh Metric Tons (LMT)—was produced in the nation during the sugar season Oct. to Sep. (2021–22), of which around 3574 LMT was crushed by sugar mills to make about 394 LMT of sugar (Sucrose).
 - Out of this, 359 LMT of sugar was produced by sugar mills, while 35 LMT of sugar was diverted to the manufacturing of ethanol.
- **Exports:**
 - Exports brought in Rs. 40,000 crores in foreign currency
 - The largest exports of 109.8 LMT, which were made without any financial aid and continued through 2020–21, is another achievement of the season.
- It became possible because:
 - This achievement of the Indian sugar industry was made possible by **favourable worldwide prices and Indian Government Policy**.
- **Employment and Jobs:**
 - In addition to having a significant impact on the rural livelihoods of the approximately 5 lakh directly employed individuals in sugar

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mills and the 50 million sugarcane farmers, the sugar industry is a major agro-based sector.

- Additionally, jobs are created in a number of ancillary activities related to transportation, machine repair, and the provision of agricultural inputs.
- **Output from sectors:**
 - The current annual output of the Indian sugar industry is approximately Rs. 80,000 crores. As of 31 July 2017, the country had 732 installed sugar factories with enough crushing capacity to generate around 339 lakh MT of sugar.
 - The capacity is split almost evenly between units in the cooperative and private sectors.
- **No financial aid needed till now:**
 - Without any financial help (subsidy) from the government, sugar mills bought sugarcane worth more than 1.18 lakh crore and released payments totaling more than 1.12 lakh crore during Sugar Season(SS) 2021–22.
 - Therefore, the fact that the cane debt at the end of the sugar season is less than 6,000 crore indicates that **95% of the cane debt has already been paid.**
 - It is also significant that more than 99.9% of the cane dues are paid for SS 2020–21.
- **Revenue from Ethanol sale:**
 - The growth of ethanol as a biofuel sector in the last five years has greatly aided the sugar sector.
 - The conversion of sugar to ethanol has resulted in better financial positions for sugar mills due to:
 - Faster payments,
 - Reduced working capital requirements, and
 - Less fund blockage due to less surplus sugar with mills.
 - Sugar mills/distilleries made around 18,000 crores in revenue from the sale of ethanol during 2021-22, which also played a role in the early settlement of farmers' cane dues.
 - **Expansion predicted:**
 - Sugar diversion to ethanol is predicted to expand from 35 LMT to 50 LMT in the upcoming season, generating approximately 25,000 crores in revenue for sugar mills.
 - The government has been encouraging sugar mills to divert sugar to ethanol and export surplus sugar so that sugar mills

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can pay cane dues to farmers on time and mills can operate in better financial conditions

Sugar

- Pricing policy :
 - The concept of Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) of sugarcane was replaced with the 'Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)' of sugarcane for 2009-10 and subsequent sugar seasons with the amendment of the Sugarcane (Control) Order, 1966 in 2009.
 - Under the FRP system, the farmers are not required to wait till the end of the season or for any announcement of the profits by sugar mills or the Government.
 - The new system assures margins on account of profit and risk to farmers, irrespective of the fact whether sugar mills generate profit or not and is not dependent on the performance of any individual sugar mill.
 - The FRP has been determined on the basis of recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and after consultation with State Governments and other stakeholders.
- Sugar Subsidy:
 - Sugar was distributed through the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) by the States/UTs at subsidized prices for which the Central Government was reimbursing @ 18.50 per kg of sugar distributed by the participating State Governments /UT Administrations.
 - The scheme was covering all BPL population of the country as per 2001 census and all the population of the North Eastern States / special category/ hilly states and Island territories.
 - The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) is now being universally implemented by all 36 States/UTs. Under the NFSA, there is no identified category of BPL; however, the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) beneficiaries are clearly identified.
- Location of Sugar Industry in India:
 - Sugar industry is broadly distributed over two major areas of production- Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Punjab in the north

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and Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh in the south.

- South India has **tropical climate** which is suitable for higher sucrose content giving higher yield per unit area as compared to north India.

Challenges for Sugar Industry in India

- **Dependence on Monsoon:** Apart from irrigation equipped northern states, Sugarcane is largely grown in rainfed regions of central and southern India. So, a good monsoon becomes extremely important.
- **Hurdle for Export of surplus sugar:** The international sugar prices are low compared with India's domestic raw sugar price by almost Rs.12 – Rs.13 a kg, creating low incentive for export of surplus sugar. Due to inadequate exports, farmers are not compensated well for the produce.
- **Low Productivity:** India has the largest area under sugarcane cultivation in the world but the yield per hectare is extremely low and is even lower in North India than in South India.
- **Low Sugar Recovery rate:** Average rate of sugar recovery from the sugar cane is less than 10% whereas in other sugar producing areas like Java, Hawaii and Australia, it is 14%.
- **Government Pricing Policy:** The government policy, based on a dual price system, discourages the entrepreneurs from making investment for further growth and improvement.
- **Short smashing season:** Sugar creation is an occasional industry with a short smashing season-changing regularly from 4 to 7 months in a year. It causes monetary misfortune and occasional work for laborers and absence of full use of sugar plants.

Way Ahead

- In October, 2021, the government announced an incentive to encourage sugar companies to **divert excess sugar cane stock in producing ethanol**, which can be blended with petrol and used as fuel in vehicles.

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- Besides, this is also a **good solution** to address the problem of excess sugar production in the country.

Source: [AIR](#)

Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report 2022

In News

- Recently, the **World Bank** has released the report titled Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course.

Major Highlights of the report

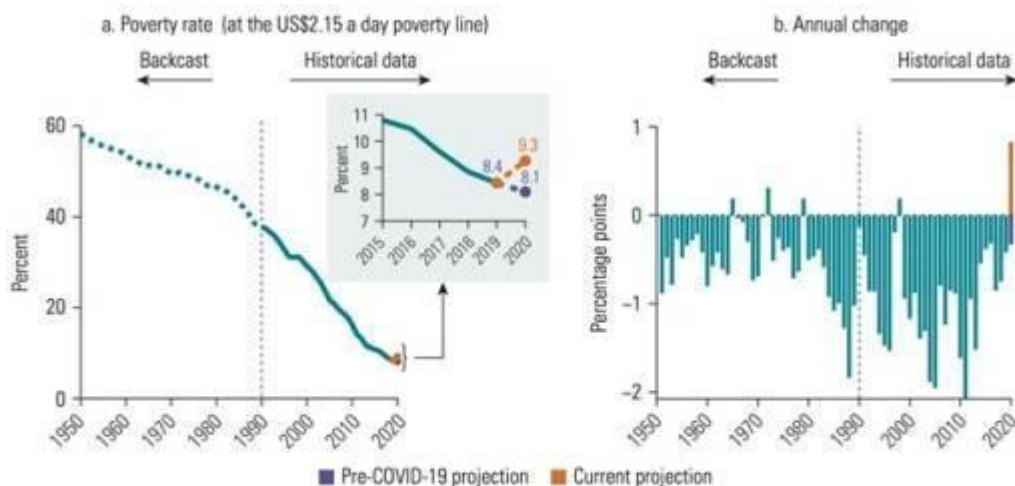
- Poverty
 - The world is unlikely to meet the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030.
 - 70 million people were plunged into poverty in 2020, the largest one-year increase since global poverty monitoring began in 1990.
 - An estimated 719 million people subsisted on less than \$2.15 a day by the end of 2020.

COVID pandemic and the war in Ukraine

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FIGURE 0.1

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a historic shock to global poverty

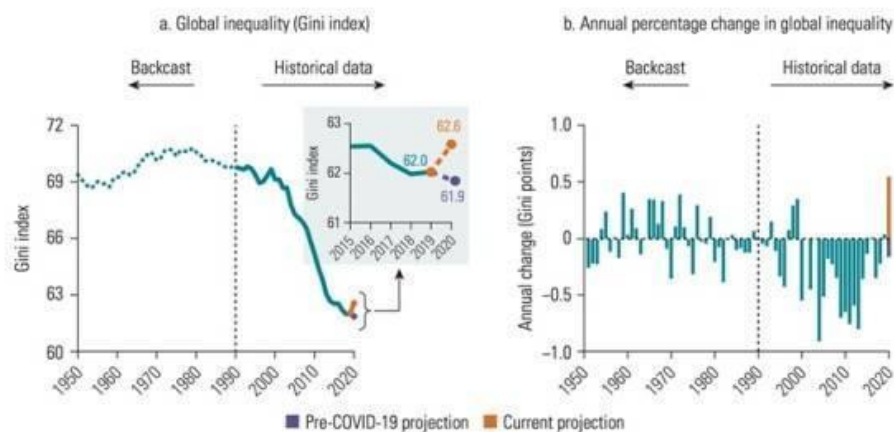


Sources: World Bank estimates based on Mahler, Yonzan, and Lakner, forthcoming; World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform, <https://pip.worldbank.org>; World Bank, Global Economic Prospects database, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/global-economic-prospects>. Note: Panel a shows the global poverty headcount rate at the US\$2.15 a day poverty line for 1950–2020. “Historical data” for the period 1990–2019 are from the Poverty and Inequality Platform. “Backcast” estimates are extrapolated backward from the 1990 lineup using growth in national accounts. National accounts data before 1990 are from World Bank, World Development Indicators database, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>; International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/SPROLLS/world-economic-outlook-databases>; Bolt and van Zanden 2020. “Current projection” uses the nowcast methodology outlined in chapter 1 and a variety of data sources to project the latest 2019 lined-up estimate to 2020. “Pre-COVID-19 projection” extrapolates the 2019 lineup to 2020 using per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecasts from the January 2020 Global Economic Prospects database. Panel b shows the annual percentage point change in the global poverty headcount rate.

- The global poverty reduction has been slowing down since 2015 but the Covid pandemic and the war in Ukraine have completely reversed the outcomes.
- Inequalities

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FIGURE 0.2
Recent global inequality trends were reversed in 2020



Sources: World Bank estimates based on Mahler, Yonzan, and Lakner, forthcoming; World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform, <https://pip.worldbank.org>; World Bank, Global Economic Prospects database, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/global-economic-prospects>. Note: Panel a shows the global Gini index for 1950 to 2020. "Historical data" for the period 1990–2019 are from the Poverty and Inequality Platform. "Backcast" estimates are extrapolated backward from the 1990 lineup using growth in national accounts. National accounts data before 1990 are from World Bank, World Development Indicators database, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>; International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook, <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/SPROLLS/world-economic-outlook-databases>; Bolt and van Zanden 2020. "Current projection" uses the nowcast methodology outlined in chapter 1 and a variety of data sources to project the latest 2019 lined-up estimate to 2020. "Pre-COVID-19 projection" extrapolates the 2019 lineup to 2020 using per capita gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecasts from the January 2020 Global Economic Prospects database. Panel b shows the annual change in the global Gini Index, in Gini points.

- They too **have risen**.
- The poorest people bore the steepest costs of the pandemic: income losses averaged 4 per cent for the poorest 40 per cent, double the losses of the wealthiest 20 percent of the income distribution.
- Global inequality rose for the first time in decades.
- Global median income
 - It declined by 4 per cent in 2020, the first decline since measurements of median income began in 1990.
 - The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median.

India's poverty levels

- Poverty has gone up in India too.
- Previous estimates suggested a poverty headcount rate at the US\$1.90 poverty line of 10.4 percent in 2017.
 - The latest estimate based on **Sinha Roy and van der Weide (2022)** shows that poverty at the US\$1.90 poverty line was 13.6 percent in 2017.

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Major challenges as cited by the report

- **The report uses data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), because there are no official estimates of poverty available since 2011.**
 - The most recent survey data released by the National Sample Survey Office of India used to measure poverty is the 2011/12 National Sample Survey (NSS).
 - The government decided not to release the 2017/18 NSS round because of concerns about data quality.
 - **Biggest poor population**
 - Lack of data could not have left India out of the poverty estimates simply because India is one of the countries with the biggest poor population.
- Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020
- Because of India's size, the lack of recent survey data for the country significantly affects the measurement of global poverty, as was evident in Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2020.

Way forward

- **Fiscal policy**
 - Considering the initial country conditions in terms of fiscal space it does offer opportunities for policy makers in developing economies to step up the fight against poverty and inequality.
 - The average poverty rate in developing economies would have been 2.4 percentage points higher without a fiscal response.

Government spending

- It proved far more beneficial to poverty reduction in the wealthiest countries, which generally managed to fully offset Covid-19's impact on poverty through fiscal policy and other emergency support measures.

Resources

- Developing economies had fewer resources and therefore spent less and achieved less.
- Upper-middle-income economies offset just 50 per cent of the poverty impact.

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- Low- and lower-middle income economies offset barely a quarter of the impact.

What is Poverty?

- It is a multidimensional concept. It can be defined as a **condition in which an individual or household lacks the financial resources** to afford a basic minimum standard of living.
- Economists and policymakers estimate “absolute” poverty as the shortfall in **consumption expenditure** from a threshold called the “**poverty line**”.

Committees in India so far on poverty estimation

- The working group of 1962
- V N Dandekar and N Rath in 1971
- Y K Alagh in 1979
- D T Lakdawala in 1993
- Suresh Tendulkar in 2009
- C Rangarajan in 2014.
 - The government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee; therefore, poverty is measured using the **Tendulkar poverty line**.

Government’s initiatives in this context

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)
- DeendayalAntyodayaYojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)
- DeenDayalUpadhyay – GraminKaushalyaYojana (DDU-GKY)
- Pradhan MantriAwaasYojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)
- Pradhan Mantri Gram SadakYojana (PMGSY)
- Shyama Prasad Mukherjee National RuRBAN Mission (SPMRM) and National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), and programmes of Department of Land Resources, viz., Watershed Development Component of Pradhan MantriKrishiSinchaiYojana (WDC-PMKSY).
- Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana
- Schemes for Financial Assistance:

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- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

Source: [IE](#)

Moonlighting

In News

- Moonlighting has been a controversial topic in recent months after a few companies sacked their employees citing it as a reason.

More about Moonlighting

- What is Moonlighting?
 - Moonlighting — or **employees working for remuneration with entities other than their employers.**
 - Moonlighting is **neither new nor unusual.**
 - The practice has been around for a while with scores of professionals such as **doctors, teachers, and consultants,** routinely doing so for years.
 - Reasons for surge in Moonlighting in recent years:
 - Upcoming work structure:
 - In the last few years, the prevalence of remote working, and hybrid work structures made it more mainstream in certain industries.
 - Pandemic changing the work dynamic:
 - During the pandemic, those with desk jobs had more time on their hands and thus it was easier to take on a few projects outside of work.
 - A private study said that at least 60% of 400 employees surveyed said they themselves had or knew someone who had engaged in moonlighting.

The superfluous employers:

The dispensable attitude that many employers demonstrated during COVID-19 has led to an erosion of job loyalty among employees.

Now more than ever, people are aware that organisations can give up on them, and that they must safeguard their own interests.

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Skill enhancement:

For a lot of professionals, moonlighting has also become a way to upskill, learn new things, and ensure they don't become redundant in their careers.

- Indian companies reacting to moonlighting:
 - Wipro sacked 300 employees following the discovery that they were working for rival firms on the side, leading to a conflict of interest.
 - Infosys has warned staff against moonlighting, saying it could lead to termination.
 - On the contrary, a few other companies like for example Swiggy announced a 'moonlighting policy' that allows employees "to pursue their passion for economic interests alongside their full-time employment."
- Issue:
 - Moonlighting in turn has raised larger questions about issues related to job loyalty, employee satisfaction, employer-employee dynamics, and the future of work in a post-pandemic world.

Legalities concerning Moonlighting

- Statute:
 - Moonlighting is not defined in any of the statutes in India.
 - However, there are enactments that deal with double employment.
 - Factories Act on double employment:
 - Factories Act deals with restriction on double employment stating that "No adult worker shall be required or allowed to work in any factory **on any day on which he has already been working in any other factory**, save in such circumstances as may be prescribed".
 - However, this enactment is applicable **only to employees working in factories**.
- Court judgments:
 - Moonlighting is subject to the law of the land.
 - The sphere of employment cannot be extended by the employer beyond working hours and outside his place of employment, which is the principle laid down in the Supreme Court judgment.

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- In other words, the employee can choose to arrange his affairs as he pleases beyond the working hours of the employer.
- Punitive action against moonlighting:
- Unless an employer is able to prove that an employee acted against the interest of the company, Courts may not uphold severe punishment of termination of employment.

Way Ahead

- The court jurisdiction:
 - The Courts of law in India dealing with employment are Writ Courts and Labour Courts.
 - These Courts exercise jurisdiction based on equity or fairness.
 - The Courts may lean in favour of the employee unless the contravention of the employee has led to serious prejudice and loss to the employer.
- For employers:
 - Eventually, organisations need to understand that they don't own all of their employees' time, nor should they expect to.
 - What they pay for are fixed work hours defined by targets, set out in contracts.
- Call for side gig:
 - Delineating clearly between side gigs for gainful employment versus projects that require data confidentiality, **an ethical moonlighting policy** could be an effective way for both employees and employers to meet midway.

Gig Economy

- About:
 - The gig economy is about individual workers carrying out tasks for clients through the intermediation of a platform attributing those tasks and taking care of the transfer of payment on a **task-by-task basis**.
- Significance:
 - The gig economy is based on **temporary, or freelance jobs**, often involving **connecting with clients or customers through an online**

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platform.

- The gig economy can benefit workers, businesses, and consumers by making work more adaptable to the **needs of the moment** and the **demand for flexible lifestyles**.
 - **Time flexibility:** Workers operating in the gig economy are allowed to work any of the hours they desire.
 - **Income flexibility:** It is an increasingly attractive market due to the sheer flexibility that allows individuals to **earn extra income**.

Platform Company

- **About:**
 - A platform company is a business that creates foundational technology upon which other companies are born and scaled.
 - Companies like **Apple, Google, Amazon** and **Alibaba** have used the model to grow exponentially and grab significant market share from established firms.
 - Platforms represent a big change in the way industries have traditionally been organized.
- **Significance:**
 - Platform companies offer **flexibility and choice of labour** to all workers in general, and women in particular, empowering them to **monetise their idle assets** when and where they want
 - It makes them an attractive opportunity for women and persons with disabilities.
 - Women are more likely to take up platform jobs after their education and marriage.
- **India's Gig Sector:**
 - An estimated 56% of new employment in India is being generated by the gig economy companies across both the blue-collar and white-collar workforce.
 - The gig economy can serve up to 90 million jobs in the non-farm sectors in India with a potential to add 1.25% to the GDP over the "long term".
 - As India moves towards its stated goal of becoming a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025, the gig economy will be a major building block in bridging the income and unemployment gap.

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Source: TH

Strengthening the CSR Framework

Growth and related issues

In News

- Recently, the opinion has emerged that Strengthening the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) framework is a profitable idea.

Data of CSR participation of companies

- Rise in spending:
 - Ever since the establishment of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) regime in India (under Section 135 of the Companies Act 2013), CSR spending in India has **risen from ₹10,065 crores in 2014-15 to ₹24,865 crores in 2020-21**.
 - But there is no data to verify whether this increase is **commensurate with the increase in profits** of Indian and foreign (having a registered arm in India) companies.
- Zero spendings:
 - There were **2,926 companies** in 2020-21 with zero spending on CSR.
- Decline:
 - **Companies spending less than the prescribed limit of 2%** rose from 3,078 in 2015-16 to 3,290 in 2020-21.
 - There was also a **decline in the number of companies participating** in CSR — 25,103 in FY2019 to 17,007 in FY2021.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

- Rationale:
 - Companies are **morally obligated to contribute back to society** in addition to their obligations to consumers or shareholders since they rely on societal assets to operate efficiently.
 - Corporate social responsibility enables businesses to **participate in a variety of socially responsible initiatives**.
- About:
 - The Companies Act encourages companies to **spend 2% of their average**

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net profit in the previous three years on CSR activities.

- It is a management concept whereby companies integrate **social and environmental concerns** in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders.
- Statute:
 - The CSR concept in India is **governed by Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013**, Schedule VII of the Act and **Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014**.
- Monitoring and report filing:
 - Under the existing regulation, monitoring is by a board-led, **disclosure-based regime**, with companies reporting their CSR spends **annually to the Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA)** through **filing of an annual report**.
- Key CSR Areas:
 - Environmental management,
 - Eco-efficiency,
 - Responsible sourcing,
 - Stakeholder engagement,
 - Labour standards and working conditions,
 - Employee and community relations,
 - Social equity,
 - Gender balance,
 - Human rights,
 - Good governance, and
 - Anti-corruption measures.
- Significance of CSR:
 - Helps companies to achieve a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (“Triple-Bottom-Line-Approach”);
 - Companies can make a valuable contribution to poverty reduction;
 - Enhanced access to capital and markets, increased sales and profits;
 - Directly enhances the reputation of a company and strengthens its brand image leading to enhanced customer loyalty.

Issues with CSR spending

- Excess spendings:
 - If a company spends an amount in excess of the minimum 2%, as stipulated, the excess amount is liable to be set off against spending **in the succeeding three financial years**.

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- The latter provision in the Act weakens the former provision since the **requirement of 2% is only a minimum requirement.**
 - Ideally, **companies should be encouraged to spend more** than this.
- Companies' own foundations:
 - Besides, many private companies have registered their own foundations/trusts to which they transfer the statutory CSR budgets for utilisation.
 - It is unclear if this is allowed under the Companies Act/CSR rules.
- Skewed spendings:
 - One of the provisions of the Act is that the company should **give preference to local areas/areas around it where it operates.**
 - This is logical. However, a private report says that
 - 54% of CSR companies are concentrated in **Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Gujarat** (receiving the largest CSR spends)
 - While populous Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh receive little.
 - **A high-level committee observed in 2018** that -
 - Although the emphasis on 'local area' in the Act is **only directionary a balance has to be maintained.**
 - Unfortunately, this ambiguity has left much to the discretion of the boards of these companies in the **absence of clear percentages for local spending** vis-à-vis other area spending.
- No focus on environmental spendings:
 - The Act deals with broader environmental issues to create a countervailing effect.
 - However, an analysis of CSR spending (2014-18) reveals that while most CSR spending is in **education (37%) and health and sanitation (29%)**, only **9% was spent on the environment.**
- Output rather than quality:
 - A major issue with this design is that it focuses on output rather than quality of the expenditure and its impact.

Suggestions & way ahead

- Need of a national-level platform:

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- There is a need to curate a national-level platform centralised by the MCA where
 - All States could list their potential CSR-admissible projects.
 - Companies can assess where their CSR funds would be most impactful across India.
 - Companies can also give preferential treatment to areas where they operate.
- **Invest India's 'Corporate Social Responsibility Projects Repository' on the India Investment Grid (IIG)** can serve as a guide for such efforts.
- Combining with other government schemes:
 - This model would be very useful for supporting deserving projects in the 112 aspirational districts and projects identified by MPs under the Government's SansadAdarsh Gram Yojana.
- Focussing on environmental restoration:
 - Companies need to prioritise environmental restoration in the area where they operate, earmarking at least 25% for environment regeneration.
- Community participation:
 - All CSR projects should be selected and implemented with the active involvement of communities, district administration and public representatives.
- **Recommendations by the high-level committee in 2018:**
 - These recommendations should be incorporated in the current CSR framework to improve the existing monitoring and evaluation regime.
 - The recommendations include:
 - **Strengthening the reporting mechanisms** with enhanced **disclosures** concerning **selection of projects, locations, implementing agencies**, etc.;
 - **Bringing CSR within the purview of statutory financial audit** with details of CSR expenditure included in the **financial statement of a company**, and
 - **Mandatory independent third-party impact assessment audits.**

Source: TH

Facts in News

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Quality Council of India (QCI)

In News

- The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry asked the **Quality Council of India (QCI)** to strive to bring about convergence of all the various quality and standards organisations in the country

About Quality Council of India (QCI)

- It was established as a National body for Accreditation on recommendations of the Expert Mission of EU after consultations in Inter-ministerial Task Force, Committee of Secretaries and Group of Ministers through a Cabinet decision in 1996.
 - Accordingly, QCI was set up through a PPP model as an independent autonomous organisation with the support of Government of India
- It is a non-profit organisation registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.
- Ministry : The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry was designated as the nodal point for all matters connected with quality and QCI to structure and help implement the Cabinet decision.
- Objectives : QCI has been established to create a mechanism for independent third party assessment of products, services and processes.
 - It plays a pivotal role at the national level in propagating, adoption and adherence to quality standards in all important spheres of activities including education, healthcare, environment protection, governance, social sectors, infrastructure sector and such other areas of organised activities that have significant bearing in improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the citizens of India.

Source: [PIB](#)

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Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)

In News

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- The Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) has finalised and recommended quality standards for nutmeg, saffron, chilli-peppers, and paprika during its sixth session.

About CCSCH

- It was formed in 2013 with support of more than a hundred countries with India as the host country and Spices Board as the Secretariat for organising the sessions of the committee.
- **Objectives** : to develop and expand worldwide standards for spices and culinary herbs
 - To consult with other international organisations in the standards development process
- **Achievements** : Since its inception, the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs has been successful in developing harmonised global Codex standards for spices and herbs.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Impossible Trinity

In News

- The Impossible Trinity or trilemma has come under focus recently as the U.S. The Federal Reserve has been raising interest rates to fight rising prices.

About Impossible Trinity

- It refers to the idea that an economy cannot pursue independent monetary policy, maintain a fixed exchange rate, and allow the free flow of capital across its borders at the same time.
- According to economists, any economy can choose to pursue only two out of the three policy options noted above simultaneously in the long-run.
- The idea was proposed independently by Canadian economist Robert Mundell and British economist Marcus Fleming in the early 1960s.

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- RBI : The Reserve Bank of India may face the dilemma of choosing between maintaining the value of the rupee and holding on to its monetary policy independence. As the U.S. The Federal Reserve has raised interest rates, there has been increasing pressure on the rupee, which has depreciated almost 10% against the U.S. dollar this year.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Credit Suisse Crisis

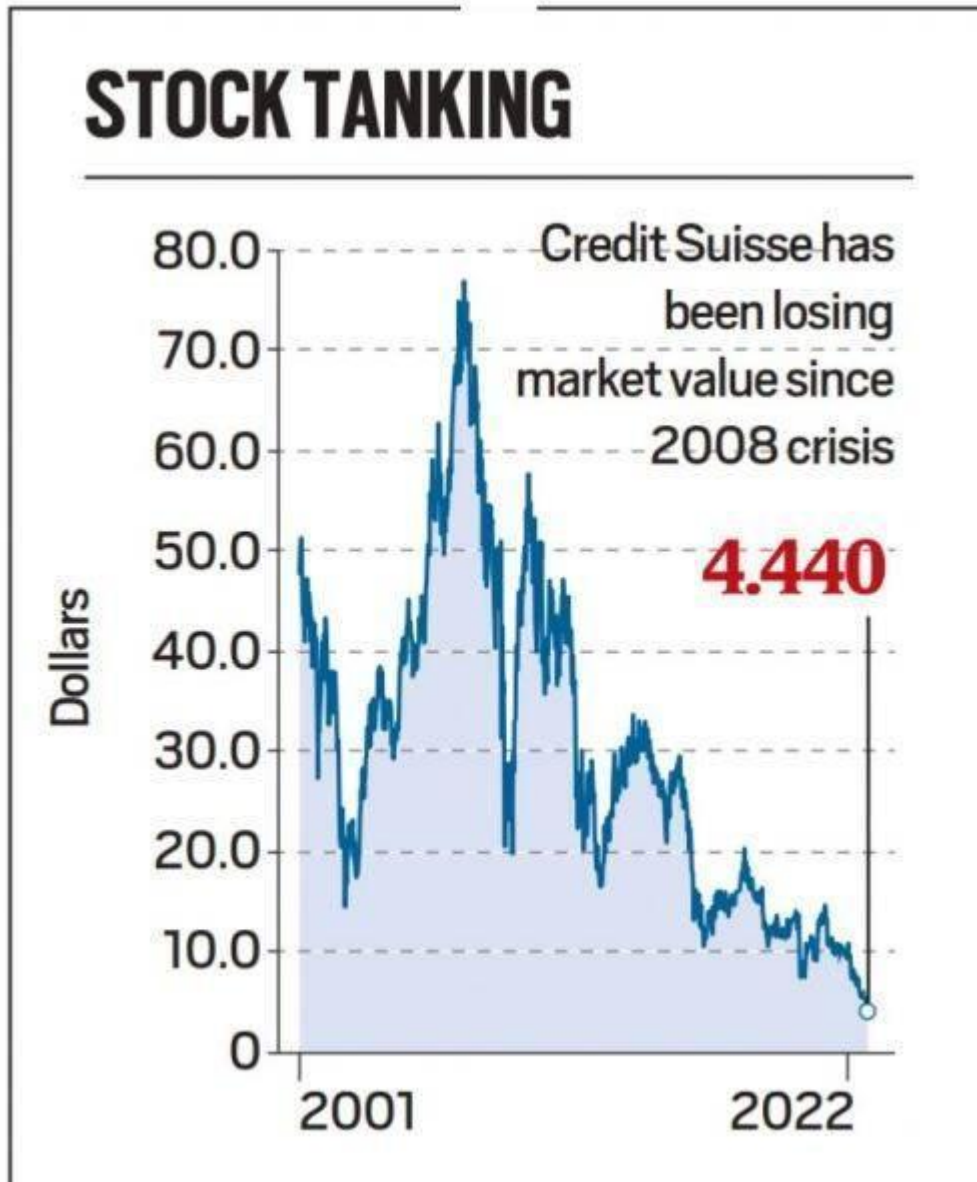
In News

- Recently, the share price of Credit Suisse has hit an all-time low.

About Credit Suisse crisis

- **It was founded in 1856** to fund the development of Switzerland's rail system.
- It is one of the **oldest and historically one of the most influential banks** in the world. It is **based in Switzerland**.
- Credit Suisse is also the primary dealer and Forex counterparty of the FED.

Recent issues



- **Credit Suisse's share price** has fallen close to 60 per cent.
- The spreads on **credit default swaps (CDS)** on Credit Suisse debt have spiked to a 14-year high the highest since the global financial crisis of 2008.
 - A **credit default swap (CDS)** is a **financial derivative** that allows an investor to swap or offset their credit risk with that of another investor.

Source: [IE](#)

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Facts in News

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

In News

- Recently, The PMI data was released which showed that India's service sector activity has lost growth momentum and eased to a six-month low due to slow new business inflows amid inflationary pressures and competitive conditions.

About Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

- The PMI data is released at the beginning of every month.
- It is an **indicator of the overall health of the economy**.
- The purchasing managers' index (PMI) is an **economic indicator** based on **surveys of businesses in a given sector**.
- The most common PMI surveys are the manufacturing PMI and the services PMI.
 - It is based on a **monthly survey of supply chain managers across 19 industries**, covering both upstream and downstream activity.

Source: [IE](#)

Facts in News

Emperor Penguin

In Context

- No evidence of microplastics in emperor penguins, says study which is an important assessment of environmental pollution at the South Pole.

Emperor Penguin

- It is the largest member of the penguin order (Sphenisciformes). It is also the tallest and heaviest of all living penguin species.
- **Geographical Presence:** Endemic to Antarctica
- **IUCN Status:** Near threatened.

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Penguin

- They are a group of **aquatic flightless birds**. Every year the 25th of April is observed as **World Penguin Day**.
- Live primarily in the Southern Hemisphere with only one species, the **Galapagos penguin**, found **north of the equator**.
- Penguins employ physiological adaptations and cooperative behaviors in order to deal with an incredibly harsh environment.
- Penguins are divided into six genera.

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PENGUIN SPECIES	
Genus	Species
Crested group (<i>Eudyptes</i>)	Macaroni, Royal Fiordland, Rockhopper, Snares Crested, Erect-Crested
Banded group (<i>Spheniscus</i>)	Humboldt, Magellanic, African, Galapagos
Brush-tailed group (<i>Pygoscelis</i>)	Chinstrap, Gentoo, Adélie
Large group (<i>Aptenodytes</i>)	Emperor, King
Yellow-Eyed (<i>Megadyptes</i>)	Yellow-Eyed
Little (<i>Eudyptula</i>)	Little (or Fairy)

Source: Smithsonian Institute

Source: [DTE](#)

Facts in News

Koalas

In News

- Recently, the Australian Government announced a list of 110 ‘priority species’ that it will try to save from extinction over the next 10 years which includes koalas.

About Koala

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- Scientific Name:

- Phascolarctoscinereus

- The koala is the only member of the family Phascolarctidae.

Characteristics:

- It is a tree-climbing **animal**.
- It is a **marsupial animal** which means a mammal with a pouch for the development of offspring.
- Koalas usually **don't drink much water** as they get most of their moisture from these leaves.

Habitat, behavior, and diet:

- Koalas live in the eucalyptus forests of southeastern and eastern Australia.
- They rely on the **eucalyptus tree** for both habitat and food.

Threats to survival:

- Koala numbers plummeted in the late 19th and early 20th century from **hunting for their fur**.
- Now they face serious threats from **habitat loss**.
- **Land clearing, logging, and bushfires, especially** the devastating 2019-2020 seasons have destroyed much of the forest they live in.

IUCN Status:

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- In February 2022 the status of the koala was **changed from vulnerable to endangered**.

Conservation:

- Caring and rehabilitating the injured.
- Building koala sanctuaries and reserves.
- Saving eucalyptus trees and planting new ones.
- Researching about koala genetics, mating choices and health.
- The Koala Conservation Plan by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Australia.

Source: [DTE](#)

Facts in News

Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) 'Prachand'

In Context

- Recently, the indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) 'Prachand', meaning fierce was formally inducted into the 143
 - Helicopter Unit 'Dhanush' of the Indian Air Force (IAF) at the Jodhpur Air Force Station. Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) 'Prachand'.

Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) 'Prachand'

- About:
 - The LCH is the only attack helicopter in the world that can land and take off at an altitude of 5,000 metres (16,400 ft), which makes it ideal to operate in the high altitude areas of the Siachen glacier.
 - It was officially renamed "**Prachand**".
- Development:
 - It is designed and manufactured by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under project LCH.
 - It was conceptualised after the 1999 Kargil conflict.
 - The multi-role attack helicopter operates both in desert terrains and high-altitude sectors.
- Features:
 - This twin-engine helicopter is armed with anti-tank guided missile

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‘Dhruvastra’ and air-to-air missile ‘Mistral-2’.

- It is multi-role and can perform roles of Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR),
- Destruction of Enemy Air Defence (DEAD) and Counter Insurgency (CI) operations.
- Flight Ceiling
 - Its flight ceiling is the highest among all attack helicopters in the world.



Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

VyomMitra

In News

- Recently, the humanoid “Vyommitra” was designed and developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

About Vyommitra



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- **Meaning**
 - It is the **'female' AI-enabled robot astronaut**. It is a **half-humanoid** lacking lower limbs.

Characteristics

- It has been designed to **resemble a human with facial expressions** and speech and sight capabilities.

Development

- **IISU** was responsible for the design, development, and integration of the robot, while **ISRO centre Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)** at Thumba developed its fingers.

Significance

- **To fly aboard unmanned test missions** ahead of the Gaganyaan human space-flight mission.
- ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU) has successfully integrated it with a **computer 'brain'** which enables it to **'read' control panels** aboard the unmanned test flights and communicate with the ISRO ground stations.

Regulation of the Online Gaming Market in India

In Context

- A task force set up by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has prepared a final report of its recommendations to regulate the online gaming industry in India.

More about the news

- **The task force, set up by MeitY included:**
 - The CEO of government think tank NitiAayog, and
 - Secretaries of ministries including IT, Home, Finance, Information and Broadcasting, and Consumer Affairs, among others.
- **The task force has suggested:**
 - The creation of a central regulatory body for the sector, clearly defining what games of skill and chance are, and
 - Bringing online gaming under the purview of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

Task force proposals:

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- **A central-level law:**
 - A central-level law for online gaming should apply to **real money and free games of skill**, including **e-sports, online fantasy sports contests, and card games** among others.
 - **Casual games with no real money element** in the form of stakes may be kept outside the scope of such rules.
 - **Unless they have a high number of users** in India, or **permit the publication or transmission of information** in the nature of any inappropriate content like **violence, nudity, addictive content or misleading content**.
- **Formation of a regulatory body:**
 - It has also recommended creating a regulatory body for the **online gaming industry**.
 - This body will determine what qualifies as a **game of skill or chance**, and accordingly certify different gaming formats, seek compliance and enforcement.
- **Dispute resolution mechanism:**
 - **A three-tier dispute resolution mechanism**, similar to that prescribed under **the Information Technology Rules, 2021** for online streaming services, consisting of:
 - A grievance redressal system at the gaming platform level,
 - Self regulatory body of the industry, and
 - An oversight committee led by the government.
- **Online gaming platform as a legal entity:**
 - Any online gaming platform – **domestic or foreign**– **offering real money online games to Indian users** will need to be a legal entity incorporated under Indian law.
 - These platforms will also be treated as **‘reporting entities’ under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002**.
 - They will be required to report suspicious transactions to the Financial Intelligence Unit-India.
- **Ministries:**
 - The task force has suggested that **MeitY may act as the nodal ministry** to regulate online gaming, **except for the e-sports category** on which the **Department of Sports can take the lead**.
 - Certain other aspects of online gaming such as advertisements, code of ethics relating to content classifications etc. could be regulated by **the Information and Broadcasting Ministry**.

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- The **Consumer Affairs Ministry** can regulate the sector for unfair trade practices.

Online Gaming in India

- The country is the biggest market for fantasy sports globally, with over 13 crore users playing across over 200 platforms.
- The government noted that the number of people involved in playing **online rummy** are on rise.
- India mainly puts the games into two broad categories to differentiate them.
 - The two categories are that the game is either a Game of Chance or a Game of Skill.
 - **Game of chance (Gambling):** Games of chance are all those games that are played randomly. These games are based on luck. A person can play these games without prior knowledge or understanding. For instance, dice games, picking a number, etc. Such games are considered illegal in India.
 - **Game of skill (Gaming):** Games of skill are all those games that are played based on a person's prior knowledge or experience of the game. A person will require skills such as analytical decision-making, logical thinking, capability, etc. Some games might also require some initial training to win. Such games are considered legal by most of the Indian states.

How big is the online gaming market in India?

- **Revenue of the industry:**
 - The revenue of the Indian mobile gaming industry is expected to exceed \$1.5 billion in 2022, and is estimated to reach \$5 billion in 2025.
 - **Transaction-based games:**
 - According to a report by EY and FICCI, transaction-based games' revenues grew 26% in India, with the number of paying gamers increasing by 17% from 80 million in 2020 to 95 million in 2021.
- **Growth potential:**
 - The industry in the country grew at a CAGR of 38% between 2017-2020, as opposed to 8% in China and 10% in the US.
 - It is expected to grow at a CAGR of 15% to reach Rs 153 billion in revenue by 2024.
- **User growth:**

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- India's percentage of new paying users (NPU) in gaming has been the fastest growing in the world for two consecutive years, at 40% in 2020 and reaching 50% in 2021.

Significance of a central-level law

- **State subject:**
 - Online gaming so far has been a state subject, but state governments have said **they find it extremely difficult to enforce certain rules like geo-blocking certain apps or websites** within the territory of their state.
 - Also, there is a concern that **rules passed in one state are not applicable in another**, which has caused **inconsistency** in how the online gaming industry is regulated in the country.
- **Blocking orders:**
 - State governments also do not have enough blocking powers like the Centre to issue blocking orders for offshore betting sites.
- **Societal concerns:**
 - Stakeholders have highlighted a number of societal concerns that can arise from **the proliferation of online games in the country**.
 - There have been a number of reported incidents of people losing large sums of money on online games, leading to suicides in various parts of the country.
- **Absence of framework:**
 - There is currently no regulatory framework to govern various aspects of online gaming companies such as
 - Having a grievance redressal mechanism,
 - Implementing player protection measures,
 - Protection of data and intellectual property rights, and
 - Prohibiting misleading advertisements.

Way Forward

- **Licensing and Regulation:**
 - Regulation of online games may be a better and proportionate solution **rather than an outright ban**.
 - One could look at **licensing and regulating** the industry with various checks and balances such as,
 - **diligent KYC and anti-money laundering processes,**

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- **barring minors** from accessing real money games,
- placing **weekly or monthly limits** on the money that can be staked or time that can be spent,
- **counselling** for addictive players and **allowing self-exclusion** of such players etc.
- Realising the **potential of the online gaming sector**, the State and the Union Governments should work together in consultation with industry stakeholders to draw out detailed guidelines.

Source: [IE](#)

Aatmanirbhar in Defence Production

In News

- According to a recent study, **India ranks fourth among 12 Indo-Pacific nations in self-reliant arms production capabilities.**

More about the study

- **SIPRI:**
 - The study was released by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**.
 - SIPRI is a widely respected independent resource on global security.
- **Countries:**
 - The 12 countries in the study were selected because they have the **highest military spending** in the region-
 - **Australia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam.**
- **Results:**
 - **China tops the list, Japan is second, South Korea is in third place, and Pakistan is at number 8.**
 - **China:**
 - China was the world's fifth largest arms importer in 2016-20.
 - **India:**
 - India is ranked as the second largest importer of arms for its armed forces in 2016-20.

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- India is highly dependent on imports of complete foreign major arms, including many produced under licence or as components for its domestic production.
- Of India's total volume of procurement in 2016–20, 84 percent was of foreign origin.
- Domestic arms companies provide only 16 percent of its total procurement.

Indian Companies & suppliers:

- Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd, Indian Ordnance Factories, Bharat Electronics, Mazagaon Docks and Cochin Shipyard are among the major Indian arms servicing companies.
- Ashok Leyland, one of the largest suppliers of trucks to the Indian Army, is the only company ranked in the top 50 in the Indo-Pacific.

Indicators:

- The study, which measures **self-reliance until 2020**, is based on three indicators of self-reliance in each country:
 - **Arms procurement:**
 - Imports, licensed and domestic production as a proportion of the government's total procurement of major conventional arms;

Arms industry:

- The study presents the five largest arms companies in each country, where data are available, ranked by sales of arms and military services in 2020 to both domestic and export customers;

Uncrewed maritime vehicles, the sea equivalent of drones:

- Covering both uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) and uncrewed underwater vehicles (UUVs), meant to provide a qualitative understanding of how countries are engaging domestic research institutes and firms to produce such cutting edge systems.

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ARMS EXPORTS & IMPORTS; MILITARY SPENDING IN INDO-PACIFIC REGION

Country	Exporter rank*	Importer rank*	Largest supplier**	Military Spending 2021***	Spending rank****
Australia	3	2	US (69%)	31,754	5
China	1	3	Russia (77%)	293,352	1
India	4	1	Russia (54%)	76,598	2
Indonesia	5	8	US (23%)	8,259	9
Japan	14	6	US (97%)	54,124	3
South Korea	2	4	US (58%)	50,227	4
Malaysia	NA	16	Spain (32%)	3,830	13
Pakistan	13	5	China (72%)	11,305	8
Singapore	7	9	France (43%)	11,115	7
Taiwan	12	15	US (100%)	12,958	6
Thailand	15	10	South Korea (25%)	6,605	10
Vietnam	11	7	Russia (66%)	5,500*****	NA

*Regional rank, 2016-20. Regional ranking is based on 44 jurisdictions in Asia and Oceania as defined in SIPRI databases. **Share of total arms imports. ***Current US\$ mn. ****Regional rank, 2021. *****In 2018 NA: Not applicable.
Sources: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, March 2022; SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, April 2022

Aatmanirbhar in defence production

- **Make-I Category:**
 - **About:**
 - Under the **Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020**, 'Make' Category aims to achieve self-reliance by involving **greater participation of Indian industry**.
 - Projects involving **design and development of equipment, systems, major platforms or upgrades** thereof by the industry can be taken up under this category.
 - **Financial Support:**
 - **The Ministry of Defence** will provide financial support up to 70% of the total cost of prototype development.
- **Make-II Category:**
 - It is funded by industry with assured procurement. The following platform has been listed -
 - **Anti-jamming Systems for Multiple Platforms**
- **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Model:**
 - Under this, private industry will be encouraged to take up the design and development of military platforms and equipment in collaboration with the **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** and other organisations.
 - Following two platforms have been identified under this category.
 - **Long Range Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) [High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE)]**
 - **Indian Multi Role Helicopter (IMRH)**
- **iDEX:**

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- Projects of Start-ups, MSMEs etc. involving high-end innovation would be pursued under the iDEX category and the following platform has been selected under this category -
 - **Low Orbit Pseudo Satellites.**

Significance of the study

- **Maritime importance:**
 - The study's choice of maritime domain was because the Indo-Pacific region is a "maritime theatre", and most of its flashpoints involve navies.
- **Significance of self-reliance in the Indo-Pacific region:**
 - According to the study, understanding and determining the extent of self-reliance in the Indo-Pacific region, which has several ongoing flashpoints, is crucial for trust and confidence-building among states.
 - This region has also seen a growing allocation by states for defence procurement.
 - Eighteen arms manufacturing companies based in the region were ranked among the world's largest arms companies in 2020.
- **China's ranking:**
 - China's arms industry primarily involves nine large state-owned enterprises (SOEs).
 - China also has ongoing projects, in collaboration with universities and other agencies to develop "long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry and equipment".
- **India's position:**
 - According to the study, the significant arms sales of local firms and the high level of licensed production push India to the fourth position in the list.

The Indo-Pacific Region

- **The region comprises of**
 - The Indian Ocean,
 - The western and central Pacific Ocean, and
 - The seas connecting the two in the general area of Indonesia.
 - **It does not include** the temperate and polar regions of the Indian and Pacific oceans, nor the Tropical Eastern Pacific, along the Pacific coast of

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the Americas, which is also a distinct marine realm.

Indo Pacific and QUAD:

- Since the late 2010s, the term "Indo-Pacific" has been increasingly used in geopolitical discourse. It also has a "symbiotic link" with the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or "Quad", an informal grouping between Australia, Japan, India, and the United States.



Source: [IE](#)

Indian Astronomical Observatory

In News

- India's first dark sky reserve is set to come up in **Hanle, Ladakh**, by the end of the year.

About Indian Astronomical Observatory

- Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) is one of the **world's highest observatories**.
- It is located at a height of **14.8k feet in Hanle, Ladakh**.
 - It will come up within the **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary**.

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- Ladakh is also ideal for long-term observatories and dark-sky sites because of its **large arid area, high elevation, and sparse population.**
- **The Department of Science and Technology and Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru** is providing support for the facility.

How many such reserves exist in the world?

- **A dark sky reserve is only one of the designations given by the IDSA,** others being international dark sky parks, communities, reserves, sanctuaries, and urban night sky places.
- **At present, there are 20 dark sky reserves** around the world, seven in the United Kingdom; four in France; two each in the USA and Germany; and one each in New Zealand, Canada, Namibia, and Australia.

What is a Dark Sky Reserve?

- **The International Dark Sky Association (IDSA) defines an international dark sky reserve (IDSR) as** a public or private land of substantial size (at least 700 km², or about 173,000 acres) possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and nocturnal environment, and that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural heritage, and/or public enjoyment.
- A dark sky reserve requires a **“core” area** that has a clear sky **without any light pollution,** which can enable telescopes to see the sky in its natural darkness.
- To support the core, **it should be surrounded by a “peripheral” or “buffer” area** that supports dark sky values in the core while receiving the same benefits.

Other Observatories in India

- Solar Observatory in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu
- VainuBappu Observatory in Kavalur, Tamil Nadu
- Gauribidanur Radio Observatory in Bangalore, Karnataka
- Udaipur Solar Observatory in Udaipur, Rajasthan

Source: TH

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India abstained on UNHRC resolution on Situation in China's Xinjiang

In News

- Recently, **India decided to abstain from a resolution** on the concerns at the UN human rights commission related to rights of people in China's Xinjiang region which was in line with the practice of not voting on country-specific resolutions.

About the draft resolution

- **The draft resolution was pushed by a group comprising** Canada, Denmark, Finland, the UK, the US, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and was co-sponsored by some other countries.
 - **The vote ultimately went in favour of China**, with 19 members of the UNHRC opposing the resolution and 11 members, including India, Malaysia and Ukraine, abstaining.
 - The resolution was supported by France, Germany, Japan and the Netherlands.

It is for the first time that India clearly called for respecting the human rights of the people of Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region.

Who are the Uyghurs?

- **Uyghurs are mostly Muslims** that live in China's Xinjiang which is officially known as the **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)**.
 - **With about 12 million population**, the Uyghurs constitute about half of the population in the region.

They speak a language which is similar to Turkish and consider themselves close to **Central Asian nations**.

In 1953, the Uyghur population was more than 75 percent of the region, according to a census cited in the **UN report**.

- However, the last few years have seen the **Han Chinese**, the country's **ethnic minority**, **migrate** to Xinjiang in large numbers.
- Their numbers have gone up from **seven percent** more than six decades ago to **42 per cent now**.

Do you know?

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- **Xinjiang** is technically an **autonomous region within China**, its largest region, rich in minerals, and **sharing borders with eight countries**, including India, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.

What atrocities are committed against the Uyghurs?

- **Human Rights Violation**

- China has been accused of human rights abuses on a large scale in Xinjiang.

Mass migration of the Han Chinese

- The state has been accused of allegedly orchestrating the mass migration of the Han Chinese to dilute the Uyghur population in Xinjiang.

Attack on the religious practices
[rehttps://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-abstain-human-rights-council-vote-on-xinjiang-mea-says-india-remains-committed-to-upholding-all-human-rights/article65981089](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-abstain-human-rights-council-vote-on-xinjiang-mea-says-india-remains-committed-to-upholding-all-human-rights/article65981089)

- There have been allegations against the government of targeting Muslim religious figures, banning religious practices, and destroying mosques in the region.

Genocide

- The United States and the United Kingdom are among several countries that have accused China of committing genocide, which is described as the intention to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.

Re-education camps

- According to human rights groups, more than one million Uyghurs have been detained and thousands have been sent to prison over the last few years.
- Many Uyghur Muslims have been lodged in what the state calls “re-education camps”.

Shoot-to-kill policy

- Police files obtained by the BBC in 2022 have revealed exploitation in these camps, where armed officers are deployed and there’s a shoot-to-kill policy in place for those trying to escape.

Mass sterilising Uyghur women

- Several media reports suggest that China has been mass sterilising Uyghur women by force to control their population.

Forced Labour

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- Uyghurs inside and outside the camps are exploited for cheap labour and forced to manufacture clothing and other products for sale both at home and abroad.

It is the largest mass internment of an ethnic-religious minority group since World War II.

- The concentration camps are the most extreme example of China's inhumane policies against the Uyghurs, but the entire population is subject to repressive policies.

Allegations of Terrorism

- Individuals suspected of terrorism are held in high-security facilities without due process and for indefinite lengths of time.

Why does China target Uyghurs?

• **Extremist views and separatist ideas**

- China believes that Muslim minorities hold extremist views and separatist ideas.

Eliminate Islamist extremism

- Chinese President warned of the toxicity of religious extremism and advocated for using the tools of dictatorship to eliminate Islamist extremism in a series of secret speeches.

Eliminating threats

- The Chinese government considers these camps as a way of eliminating threats to the country's territorial integrity, government, and population.

Way Forward

- China says that the UN rights office that published a report on serious alleged abuses in Xinjiang was the **thug and accomplice of the US and the West.**

UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR)

- The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also known as the **UN Human Rights Office** is mandated to **promote and protect all human rights established in the UN Charter** and in international human rights laws and treaties.
- **OHCHR works with governments, legislatures, courts, national**

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institutions, civil society, the business community, regional and international organisations, and the UN system to develop and strengthen the protection of human rights, particularly at the national level, in accordance with international norms.

- OHCHR is led by the **High Commissioner for Human Rights**, the principal human rights official of the UN.

Source: **TH**

Appointment Process the CJI

Context

- The Ministry of Law and Justice has sought Chief Justice of India (CJI) U.U. Lalit's recommendation for appointment of his successor.

About

- **The Memorandum of Procedure (MoP):** As per the MoP on appointment of Chief Justice of India and Supreme Court Judges, the Minister of Law and Justice seeks the recommendation of the outgoing CJI about the appointment of next CJI.
 - Memorandum of Procedure(MoP) is an agreement between the Judiciary and the government. It contains a set of guidelines for making appointments to the Supreme Court and High Court.
- The MoP has evolved as the **standard based on three SC decisions** – the **First Judges Case (1981)**, **Second Judges Case (1993)** and the **Third Judges Case (1998)** form the basis of a peer selection process for appointment of judges.
- However, in 2016, the **MoP was re-negotiated**, following the Supreme Court's decision to strike down the constitutional amendment that brought in the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC).
- As per the Second Judges Case(1993) and MoP, the **senior most judge of the SC should be appointed as the CJI.**

Collegium System

- It is a novel mechanism devised for a democratic system of appointment and transfer of the judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court.
 - It evolved through Second and Third Judges Case judgments.

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- The Constitution of India does not mention or define the collegium system nor provides for its establishment.
- **The SC Collegium** is headed by the CJI and includes 4 other senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- **The HC Collegium** is led by its respective Chief Justice and four other senior-most judges of that court.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 124(2):** The Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with such a number of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.
- **Article 217:** The Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President in consultation with the CJI and the State Governor, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

Recent Recommendations of Collegium

- For the first time in a single resolution, the Collegium had recommended three women judges thereby sending a strong signal in favor of women representation in the higher judiciary.
- It continued the trend of recommending direct appointments from the Supreme Court Bar to the Bench of the court.
- It has also recommended six judicial officers and a judicial member of the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal for appointment as judges of the Telangana High Court.

National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)

- **Establishment:** NJAC was established by the government to replace the Collegium System of appointments as per the Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014
- **Aim:** Its aim was to promote transparency in judicial appointments and bring parity of say between judicial and executive members.
- **Membership:** CJI, two senior-most judges, the Law Minister and an eminent person from the public to be chosen by the President in consultation with the CJI.

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- **In a 2015 verdict**, the Supreme Court declared both the Constitution (Ninety-ninth Amendment) Act, 2014 and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014 as unconstitutional as it would undermine the independence of the judiciary.

Way Forward

- To fill vacancies in a timely manner, the government and the Collegium needs to prepare a fixed time frame for the process of appointment of the CJI and the judges to the higher judiciary.
- There should be an institutional mechanism for consideration of names from the Supreme Court Bar in place of a present ad hoc mechanism.

Source: TH

World Cotton Day

Context

- October 7 is celebrated each year as World Cotton Day. Year 2022 marks the third-anniversary celebration of the international event.

About the Day

- **History/ Background:** The first World Cotton Day was proposed by the World Trade Organization on October 7, 2019, by the Cotton Four, four sub-Saharan African cotton producers Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali, collectively known as the Cotton Four (WTO).
 - The Cotton-4 countries' initiative to organise World Cotton Day was welcomed by the WTO on October 7, 2019.
- **Theme:** Weaving a better future for Cotton
 - The focus of the theme is on cotton cultivation that is sustainable in order to better the lives of cotton labourers, smallholders, and their families.
- **Significance:** The day presents a brilliant opportunity to raise awareness about cotton and cotton-related products as well as the need for developing nations to have greater access to international markets in order to sell their cotton-related goods.

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- It promotes ethical trade practices and makes it possible for developing nations to profit from each stage of the cotton value chain.
- The event gives farmers and emerging countries a boost in terms of economic development.

About Cotton Crop

- It is a Kharif Crop that comes from the **natural fibers of cotton plants**, which are **native to tropical and subtropical regions**.
- The **top five cotton producing countries** are **China, India, the United States of America, Brazil and Pakistan**, which together account for more than three-quarters of global production.
- Being renewable and biodegradable, **cotton is the most environmentally friendly raw material** for the textile industry as compared to its synthetic alternatives.
- Cotton plants have a large growing period which can extend up to 200 days. Growing cotton starts between December and March. These plants require a **relatively high temperature (21-30°C) over a long growing season**.
- The **cotton is not a thirsty crop as it is a xerophyte**, which can grow in dry, arid environments.
- **Only 3 percent of the world's land is used for growing cotton**. Yet, it meets 27 percent of the world's textile demands.

Cotton in India

- **India is the largest producer of cotton in the world** and the third largest exporter. It is also the largest consumer of cotton in the world.
- **Top Cotton Producing States in India** are Gujarat, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh.
- India is the country to grow all **four species of cultivated cotton** **G.arboreum and Herbaceum (Asian cotton), G.barbadense (Egyptian cotton) and G. hirsutum (American Upland cotton)**.
 - G.hirsutum represents 94% of the hybrid cotton production in India and all the current Bt cotton hybrids are G. hirsutum.
 - Now India's Cotton would be known as '**Kasturi Cotton**' in the world **cotton Trade**.

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- The **pest-resistant Genetically Modified (GM) Bt cotton hybrids** have captured the Indian market (covering over 95% of the area under cotton) since their introduction in 2002.
 - These now cover over 95% of the area under cotton, with the seeds produced entirely by the private sector.
 - India is the only country that grows cotton as hybrids and the first to develop hybrid cotton back in 1970.

Source: PIB

Facts in News

U.S.-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (USISCEP)

Context

- The Ministerial dialogue of **US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (USISCEP)** was held recently.

About

- The **revamped USISCEP** was launched in accordance with the **U.S -India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership** announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Joe Biden.
- The partnership continues to advance energy security and innovation and deploying technical solutions through **five pillars**.
 - Responsible Oil and Gas Pillar
 - Power and Energy Efficiency Pillar
 - Renewable Energy Pillar
 - Sustainable Growth Pillar
 - Emerging Fuels and technologies

Enhanced bilateral efforts

- These includes:
 - Strengthening the power grid to ensure reliable, affordable, and resilient clean energy supply including through smart grids and energy storage;
 - Assessing grid-integrated buildings, electric vehicles, and other distributed energy resources to support load management;

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- Advancing renewable energy development and deployment, including to support India's goal of achieving approximately 50 percent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030;
- Advancing energy efficiency and conservation in appliances, buildings and the industrial sector

Source: [PIB](#)

Facts in News

Concept note on Digital Rupee (e-rupee)

In News

- The RBI released a concept note on digital rupee (e-rupee).
 - The Government of India had also announced the launch of a CBDC in its 2022 Union Budget.

What is e-rupee (digital rupee)?

- E-rupee or digital rupee is a digital version of the Indian rupee that the RBI is exploring.
- E-rupee is akin to sovereign paper currency but takes a different form, exchangeable at par with the existing currency and will be accepted as a medium of payment, legal tender and a safe store of value.
- It would appear as a liability on a central bank's balance sheet
- According to the RBI, e-rupee can be structured as 'token based' or 'account-based'.
 - A token-based CBDC is a bearer instrument like banknotes, meaning whosoever holds the tokens at a given point in time would be presumed to own them
 - In contrast, an account-based system would require maintenance of record of balances and transactions of all holders of the CBDC and indicate the ownership of the monetary balances
- The RBI has proposed to issue two versions - wholesale for interbank settlement and retail for the public.
- **Benefits:** Transacting in e-rupee can take away the inconvenience of carrying around physical notes and coins.

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- Apart from this, the RBI has outlined some benefits for the country as a whole, such as financial inclusion, innovation and lowering the costs of cash transactions.

Source:[IE](#)

Facts in News

Nobel Peace Prize for 2022

In News

- The 2022 Nobel Peace Prize has been jointly awarded to Belarusian human rights advocate **Ales Bialiatski**, the Russian human rights organisation Memorial, and the Ukrainian human rights organisation Centre for Civil Liberties.
 - The award was announced by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in Oslo.

About Nobel Peace Prize

- The Peace Prize laureates represent civil society in their home countries.
- They have for many years promoted the right to criticise power and protect the fundamental rights of citizens.
- They have made an outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power.
- Together they demonstrate the significance of civil society for peace and democracy.
- The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded 103 times to 140 Nobel Prize laureates between 1901 and 2022, 110 individuals and 30 organizations.

Source:[TH](#)

Facts in News


Cis-gender Women

In News

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- Recently, in a significant judgment the **Supreme Court** said it was **unconstitutional to distinguish between married and unmarried women** while allowing abortion when the foetus is between 20-24 weeks.
 - Going a step further, the court said the term **‘woman’ in the judgment included persons other than cisgender women.**

What is Cisgender?



MORE TERMS

Here's a list of some common gender identifiers

AGENDER: Those not belonging to any gender

BIGENDER: Identify as both man and woman

NON-BINARY: Reject binaries of male and female

GENDERFLUID: Whose gender identity changes

GENDERQUESTIONING: Exploring which gender they identify as

GENDERQUEER: Umbrella term for people not subscribing to traditional genders

AFAB, AMAB: Assigned Female At Birth, Assigned Male At Birth

- The term cisgender is used to **define people whose gender identity and expression match the identity assigned to them at birth.**
- **When a child is born, it is assigned a gender identity based on its physical characteristics.**
 - Many believe that **gender is a social construct**, and growing up, the child may or may not confirm the birth identity.

For transgender people, their sense of gender identity does not match the one assigned to them at birth.

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- Thus, a cisgender woman is a person who was assigned female at birth and continues to identify as a woman.
- On the other hand, a child assigned female at birth can feel it identifies more authentically as a man as it grows up.

Why the word cisgender is important

- If there are ‘transgender’ people, **there should be a word for those who are not.**
- Having distinct words for transgender and cisgender people denotes that **both are equally valid, neutral experiences, with neither being an aberration.**

Source: [IE](#)

Super Apps

In News

- Recently, **Elon Musk** revealed the idea of creating an “everything app”.

What is a super app?

- It has been described as the **Swiss army knife of mobile apps**, offering a suite of services for users such as messaging, social networking, peer-to-peer payments and e-commerce shopping.
 - These mega apps are widely used in Asia because mobile is the main form of access to the internet for many people in the region.

What are some examples of super apps?

- **Chinese super app WeChat** is one of its examples having more than 1 billion monthly users.
 - Users can hail a car or taxi, send money to friends and family or make payments at stores.

Have other US tech companies tried this?

- **Snapchat parent Snap Inc** previously introduced peer-to-peer payments called **Snapcash**, but ended the feature in 2018.

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- **Meta Platform Inc's Facebook and Instagram** have also tried to expand beyond social networking and messaging into e-commerce.

Source: [IE](#)

Stage 1 of Graded Response Action Plan GRAP

In News

- Recently, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said that measures under 'Stage-1' of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) will be enforced in the NCR with immediate effect.
 - The order came after Delhi's AQI deteriorated to be in the 'poor' category.

What is the Graded Response Action Plan?

- **GRAP is a set of emergency measures** that kick in to prevent further deterioration of air quality once it reaches a certain threshold.
 - **Stage 1 of GRAP** is activated when the AQI is in the 'poor' category (201 to 300).
The second, third and fourth stages will be activated when AQI reaches the 'very poor' category (301 to 400), 'severe' category (401 to 450) and 'severe +' category (above 450) respectively.

Who will implement and enforce the GRAP?

- The CAQM has constituted a **sub-committee for the operationalization of the GRAP.**
- **This body includes officials from** the CAQM, member secretaries of pollution control boards of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, the Central Pollution Control Board, a scientist from the IMD and one from the IITM and Health Advisor.
- The sub-committee is required to **meet frequently to issue orders to invoke the GRAP.**
- **The orders and directions of the CAQM will prevail** in case of any conflict between directions issued by the State governments and the CAQM.

How is the GRAP different this year?

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- **Task of implementing the GRAP fell on the now dissolved Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority for the NCR.**

- From 2021 onwards, the GRAP is being implemented by the CAQM.

- In the version of the GRAP that was notified in 2017, measures kicked in after pollution concentrations reached a certain level.**

- This year, measures are pre-emptive and will kick in based on forecasts in an attempt to prevent the AQI from deteriorating further.

- The older version of the GRAP was enforced based only on the concentration of PM2.5 and PM10.**

- This year, GRAP is being enforced based on the AQI, which takes other pollutants also into account, such as ozone, sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen.

- For the first time, it specifies that State governments in the NCR may impose restrictions on BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel four wheelers under Stage-3, or when the AQI is likely to reach the 'severe' category.**

- In the 'severe +' category, GRAP imposes a ban on plying of four-wheelers in Delhi and NCR districts bordering Delhi, except for BS-VI vehicles and those plying for emergency or essential services.

- Restrictions on some construction activities will also set in earlier in the revised GRAP.**

- A ban on construction activities (except for those involving railways, projects of national security, hospitals, metro services, and linear public projects like highways, roads) will be imposed under the 'severe' category.

- In the previous plan, the construction ban was implemented only in the 'severe +' category.

Source: [IE](#)

Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant

In News

- The Ministry of Finance released the 7th monthly installment of Post Devolution Revenue Deficit (PDRD) Grant of Rs.7,183.42 crore to 14 States.
 - The grant has been released as per the recommendations of the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

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About Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant

- They are provided to the States under Article 275 of the Constitution.
- The grants are released to the States as per the recommendations of the successive Finance Commissions to meet the gap in Revenue Accounts of the States post devolution.
- The eligibility of States to receive this grant and the quantum of grant for the period from 2020-21 to 2025-26 was decided by the Fifteenth Finance Commission based on the gap between assessment of revenue and expenditure of the State after taking into account the assessed devolution during this period.

Source: [PIB](#)

Poverty in India & Lessons from China

In News

- Recently the **World Bank** released its latest **report on global poverty**.

Report highlights

- **Economic upheavals & reversal:**
 - Report stated that “**economic upheavals** brought on by **Covid-19** and later the **war in Ukraine**” had produced “**an outright reversal**” in poverty reduction across the planet.
 - The pace of poverty reduction had been slowing down anyway since 2015, thanks to a slowdown in growth rates but the pandemic and war have caused an outright reversal.
 - The reversal is affecting so much that the “**world is unlikely to meet the goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030**”.
- **India’s case:**
 - **Estimated poor in India:**
 - According to the WB, **India is the country with the highest number of poor people**.
 - The World Bank used the data from the **Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)**.

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- It found that the number of people living in abject poverty increased by 56 million (5.6 crore) in 2020.

That's **almost 80% of the total 70 million the world** over that the World Bank estimates to have been pushed into poverty in 2020.

In other words, according to this estimate, **8 out of every 10 people in the world who were pushed into poverty during Covid were in India.**

Poverty & expenditure:

India's problem, however, isn't just that it has the largest number of people in the world living below the extreme poverty line.

According to the Bank, **close to 600 million Indians survive at less than \$3.65 (Rs 84) a day level of expenditure.**

What is extreme poverty? How is it defined?

- **International poverty line:**
 - **The World Bank (WB)** defines extreme poverty by **particular consumption level**. This is called the **poverty line**.
 - The poverty line is **pegged at US\$2.15**.
 - In other words, anyone living on less than \$2.15 a day is considered to be living in extreme poverty.
 - About 648 million people globally were living in extreme poverty in 2019.
- **Determining the poverty line:**
 - The \$2.15 level is based on **purchasing power parity (PPP)**.
 - Simply put, the PPP equivalent of \$2.15 is the number of Indian rupees an Indian would need to buy the same basket of goods in India that an American can buy with \$2.15 in the US.
 - **That equivalent in India is Rs 46.** [not Rs 176 - the value we get if we multiply 2.15 by the rupee's current market exchange rate with the US dollar (around 82)]
- **Reason of this difference:**
 - This difference is because the price of the same goods is different in different countries
 - It is quite likely that a dollar in India buys far more of the same commodity (say, an **egg or banana**) or service (say, a **haircut**) that it buys in the US.
 - So, the international poverty line of \$2.15 implies that any Indian who spends less than Rs 46 a day — in total — is considered to be living in extreme poverty.
- **Revision and evolution of this international poverty line:**
 - This international poverty line is revised periodically to account for rising

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prices of goods and services over time.

- The very first international poverty line — a dollar a day — was constructed in 1990 using the 1985 prices.
- It was then raised to \$1.08 a day in 1993, \$1.25 a day in 2005 and \$1.90 a day in 2011. The \$2.15 one is based on 2017 prices.

What can India learn from China's poverty alleviation programme?

- **Significance of China:**
 - China is not only comparable to India in terms of population size but is also globally recognised to have alleviated poverty at a historically unprecedented speed and scale.
- **Progress of China:**
 - The World Bank found that between 1978 and 2019, China's poverty headcount dropped from 770 million to 5.5 million people.
 - In other words, China lifted 765 million (76.5 crore) people from extreme poverty in the past four decades.
 - It means, on average, every year China pulled 19 million (1.9 crore) poor people out of extreme poverty for the past 40 years.
 - In doing so, China accounted for almost 75 percent of the global reduction in the number of people living in extreme poverty during this period.
- **All round progress:**
 - Decades of progress in China are also reflected in substantial improvements in other measures of well-being like life expectancy at birth, education achievements, etc.
- **The main conclusion is that China's poverty reduction success relied mainly on following pillars:**
 - **Economic growth:**
 - The first pillar was rapid economic growth, supported by broad-based economic transformation, which provided new economic opportunities for the poor and raised average incomes
 - **Government policies:**
 - The second pillar was government policies to alleviate persistent poverty, which initially targeted areas disadvantaged by geography and a lack of economic

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opportunities, but subsequently focused on poor households, irrespective of their location.

- **Effective governance:**
 - “China’s success benefited from effective governance, which was key to the successful implementation of the growth strategy as well as the evolving set of targeted poverty reduction policies,” states the World Bank.
- **Human capital:**
 - China also benefited from some favourable initial conditions at the time of opening up, such as a relatively high level of human capital, which is widely recognised as a critical input for the population to rapidly benefit from new economic opportunities once market reforms set in.

Way Ahead

- India faces three rather acute and growing problems:
 - Widespread unemployment,
 - Widening inequalities and
 - Deepening poverty
- None of these will be resolved by electoral victories. They require actual policy solutions. Without the right policies, India’s demographic dividend is looking more like a demographic bomb.
- Understanding what China did may provide some clues to Indian policymakers.

Source: TH

UN Peacekeeping Forces Fatalities

Context

- ◀ • The UN Undersecretary General reported a growing number of fatalities among United Nations Peacekeeping Forces (UNPKF) in direct attacks.

About

- **Growing Threat:** Two BSF jawans died in a spate of attacks on United Nations Peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) amidst anti-UN protests.

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- **UN Peacekeeping fatalities** due to malicious acts (not illness or accidents) are rising from 13 in 2020 to 25 in 2021 and to 26 till August 2022.
- **Tour Agenda:** The UN Peacekeeping chief has kept the issues of growing fatalities and the lack of clear mandates for the 'blue helmets' at the top of the agenda as part of a tour to India, Pakistan, the UAE and Japan.

Reasons for rising attacks

- **Deteriorating political and security environments** in which peacekeeping operations are mandated. Such a situation in DRC does not entail the political lead conflict resolution.
- **Terrorist or criminal groups threat:** In the big operations in Africa, the efforts to establish peace and stability is threatened by terrorist or criminal groups favoring chaotic environment.
- **Lack of participation in decision making:** India having lost 179 peacekeepers over the past 60 years has criticized peacekeeping operations for not giving adequate say to troops and police contributing countries in the kind of missions they participate in.
- **Gap in mandate and practice:** The mandate is actually for UN peacekeeping, on the ground in foreign missions the mandate changes to peace enforcing for which the forces are not trained.
- **Peacekeeping limitations:** Peacekeeping is neither a war, nor peace enforcement; thereby limiting the scope and potential of peacekeeping operations.

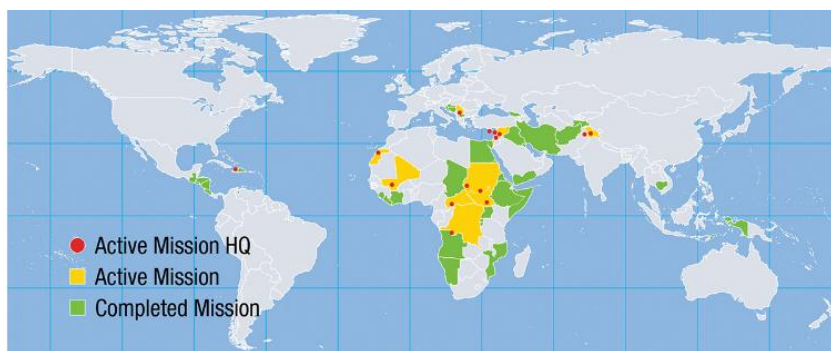
UN Peacekeeping Forces

- **Genesis:** The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in May 1948. The UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a small number of UN military observers to the Middle East.
- It was meant to form the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

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- **Strength of numbers:** Since its genesis, more than 1 million men and women have served under the UN flag in more than 70 UN peacekeeping operations.
- Also, more than 1,00,000 military, police and civilian personnel from 125 countries are currently serving in 14 peacekeeping operations.
- **A symbol of hope and peace:** UN Peacekeepers have been maintaining peace for some of the world's most vulnerable people. Their service and sacrifice and operation under harsh and dangerous conditions has made the Blue Helmet a symbol of hope to millions of people worldwide.
- **A multidimensional role:**
 - Initially, UN Peacekeeping's goals were limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground to aid in the political resolution of the conflict by peaceful means.
 - Those missions consisted of military observers and lightly armed troops with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles in support of ceasefires and limited peace agreements.
 - In addition to the above roles, today's peacekeeping operations also facilitate the political processes, protect civilians, disarm combatants, support elections, protect and promote human rights and restore the rule of law.
- **Demography:**
 - Most of the peacekeepers are serving in the military or police.
 - **14 % are civilians** serving as the civilian leadership of the mission, working in the areas of political and civil affairs, human rights, elections, strategic communications, IT, logistics, transport and administration etc.
 - **Women peacekeepers** are playing an increasingly prominent role while serving as police officers, troops, pilots, military observers, and other uniformed and civilian posts, including in command positions.

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This map shows 70 years of peacekeeping operations spanning across four continents.

Way Forward

- The UN should devise a framework to improve the geographical diversity of troops and police contributing countries.
- Efforts should be stepped up to make peacekeepers better equipped, trained and prepared.
- There is a need for robust mandates that require proactive peacekeepers with the ability to face and counter armed groups.
- India's proposed 10-point plan for more accountability to protect UN peacekeepers should be considered by the UN.
- Crimes against peacekeepers should be treated as war crimes.
- The UN should consider India's suggestion to build a memorial wall to honor the peacekeepers .

Source: TH

Election Commission Freezes Shiv Sena Symbol

In News

- Recently, the Election Commission barred the Shiv Sena factions led by former CM Uddhav Thackeray and current Maharashtra CM EknathShinde from using the party name and its election symbol.

About

- **Reason for doing this:**
 - In order to place both the rival groups on an even keel and to protect their rights and interests.

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- To cover the purpose of the current Bye-elections and to continue till the final determination of the dispute in the matter.
- **Symbols For Now:**
 - For the purposes of the current bye-elections, the two groups shall be allotted such different symbols as they may choose from the list of free symbols.

Election Symbols

- **About:**
 - The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 empowers the EC to recognise political parties and allot symbols.
 - Under Paragraph 15 of the Order, it can decide disputes among rival groups or sections of a recognised political party staking claim to its name and symbol.
 - **The legal status of Paragraph 15 :**
 - Under Paragraph 15, the EC is the only authority to decide issues on a dispute or a merger. The Supreme Court upheld its validity in Sadiq Ali and another vs. ECI in 1971.
- **Types of Symbols:**
 - As per the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) (Amendment) Order, 2017, party symbols are either:
 - **Reserved:** Eight national parties and 64 state parties across the country have “reserved” symbols.
 - **Free:** The Election Commission also has a pool of nearly 200 “free” symbols that are allotted to the thousands of unrecognised regional parties that pop up before elections.
- **Allocation of Symbols to Political Parties:**
 - As per the guidelines, to get a symbol allotted:
 - A party/candidate has to provide a list of three symbols from the EC’s free symbols list at the time of filing nomination papers.
 - Among them, one symbol is allotted to the party/candidate on a first-come-first-serve basis.
 - When a recognised political party splits, the Election Commission decides on assigning the symbol.

Source: [IE](#)

Rise in Direct Tax Revenues

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In News

- India's net Direct tax collections in 2022-23 have risen to ₹7.45 lakh crore, more than half this year's Budget targets.

More about the news

- Based on provisional data, **net personal income tax collections grew 17.35%**.
 - It is rising **faster than corporate income tax collections** that were up 16.29% net of refunds.
- **Securities Transaction Tax (STT) collections** combined with **personal income tax receipts**, grew at a more moderate 16.25%.
- Underlining that Direct Tax collections continue to register steady growth, the ministry said that **tax refunds have jumped 81% over the preceding year** to touch ₹1.53 lakh crore.

What is Direct Tax?

- Direct tax is paid by a person or an organisation responsible for **paying tax directly to the entity that imposed it**.
- An individual taxpayer, for example, pays direct taxes to the government for various purposes, including **income tax, real property tax, personal property tax, or taxes on assets**.
- Direct taxes are based on an economic principle that states that **those who have more resources or earn a higher income should bear a greater tax burden**.

What is Tax Buoyancy?

- Tax buoyancy explains this relationship between the **changes in government's tax revenue growth and the changes in GDP**.
 - It refers to the **responsiveness of tax revenue growth to changes in GDP**.
- When a tax is buoyant, its **revenue increases without increasing the tax rate**.
- There is a strong connection between the **government's tax revenue earnings and economic growth**.
- The simple fact is that as the economy achieves faster growth, the tax revenue of the government also goes up.
- **Benefits of Tax Buoyancy:**

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- **Government being the beneficiary:** The biggest beneficiary of a higher GDP growth rate is the government itself.
- **No need to borrow:** The government may not borrow highly to finance the budget
- **Welfare measures:** New schemes and programmes can be lavished because of high revenue growth.
- **GDP growth:** If the GDP growth rate registers high, direct income tax collection will accelerate. Generally, direct taxes are more sensitive to GDP growth rate.

What is Tax Elasticity?

- A similar looking concept is tax elasticity.
- It refers to changes in tax revenue in response to changes in tax rate.
- For example, how tax revenue changes if the government reduces corporate income tax from 30 per cent to 25 per cent indicates tax elasticity.

Factors responsible in rise in tax collection

- **Stable Government policies:**
 - It is the result of the stable policies of the Government focusing on simplification and streamlining of processes and plugging of tax leakage through effective use of technology.
- **Effective filing of income tax returns:**
 - There has been a remarkable increase in the speed of processing of income tax returns filed during the current financial year.
 - The IT department has successfully used technology to reach out to assesses in non-intrusive ways; for instance, sending email reminding them to file return if not already.
- **Economic recovery:**
 - GST collection increased 28 percent year-on-year to Rs 1.43 trillion on better compliance, revival in consumption, and elevated inflation.
 - The level of economic recovery can also be seen from the value of e-way bills generated which has improved from 16.9 lakh crore in 2021 to 25.7 lakh crore in 2022.
- **Corporate tax:**
 - Corporate tax as of now is growing about 25-26 percent.
- **Efficient assessment of incomes:**

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- Intensive and extensive use of data analytics and artificial intelligence has prompted assessments to report people's income accurately.

Indirect Taxes - Goods and Service Tax (GST)

- Goods and Services Tax is an indirect tax used in India **on the supply of goods and services**.
- It is a value-added tax levied on most goods and services sold for domestic consumption.
- It was launched in India in 2017 as a comprehensive indirect tax for the entire country.
- It is a comprehensive, multistage, destination-based tax- comprehensive because it has subsumed almost all the indirect taxes except a few state taxes.
- It is paid by the consumers and is remitted to the government by the businesses selling the goods and services.
- It is of three types i.e.
 - CGST to be levied by the Centre,
 - SGST to be levied by the States and
 - IGST a tax levied on all Inter-State supplies of goods and/or services.
 - All these taxes are levied at rates mutually agreed upon by the Centre and the States.

The GST Council headed by the Union Finance Minister is the governing and key decision-making body for GST.

Source: TH

Programming Languages of Cryptocurrencies

In News

- Programming languages help crypto platforms and protocols run effectively.

Key Points

- The crypto ecosystem sits on top of distributed ledgers, which are broadly called **blockchains**.

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- **Smart Contract:**

- Apart from recording and verifying transactions, some crypto blockchains like Ethereum let users launch agreements or special actions that execute on their own.
- These are known as smart contracts and to create them effectively, **programming languages** are a must.

Important Programming Languages

- **C++:**

- C++ is a programming language commonly associated with **Bitcoin**.
- While the Bitcoin whitepaper explaining the peer-to-peer electronic cash system is written largely in English, the Bitcoin Core software, which makes transactions possible, uses C++.
- It is **maintained by a community** anyone can join by running Bitcoin Core full nodes.
- It is also one of the most used programming languages, playing a role in the development of operating systems like MacOS and Windows, gaming devices, search engines, and even machine learning.
- C++ is a major influence for many other programming languages in use today.

- **Solidity:**

- Solidity is the programming language mainly used on the blockchain platform **Ethereum**.
- Some of its developers are Ethereum co-founders.
- The language is influenced by C++, Python, and JavaScript.
- It is also known as a '**curly bracket language**' as it uses the flower bracket special character.
- In recent times, with the Ethereum transition to a **proof-of-stake model**, programming skill in Solidity is expected to be in high demand.
- Parts of the Ethereum ecosystem also support several other programming languages such as Python, Ruby, Rust, Java, and more.

- **Rust:**

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- Rust has the unique distinction of being called the “perfect programming language” in 2021 by Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey.
- In the crypto world, Rust is commonly associated with the **Solana blockchain**, which is known for its high speeds and relatively low transaction fees.
- The **Polkadot blockchain**, which helps to better connect blockchains with each other, also uses Rust.
- However, developers have complained that Rust is too difficult to learn.
- A 2018 survey showed that more than 22% of users did not feel productive using the programming language.
- **Python:**
 - Created by Dutch programmer Guido van Rossum, Python is a general-purpose programming language.
 - Cryptocurrency is just one of its many use cases.
 - It is used by developers who are interested in the Bitcoin Core as well as non-Bitcoin cryptocurrencies, known as **alt coins**.
 - Python’s detailed library and graphic user interface options make it ideal for blockchain developers who are just entering the space to develop dApps. The programme can also be used widely by both Web3 and non-crypto-related app developers.
- **Haskell:**
 - Cardano is a blockchain that takes pride in its academic rigour and scholarly approach to the crypto sector.
 - Its smart contract programming language is based on **Haskell**.
 - The Cardano Foundation itself admits that Haskell is not well-known, and that it is not a popular programming language for beginners.
 - Haskell is classified as a purely functional programming language, and is hard to learn. But it is said to be well-suited to deliver accurate crypto projects due to its immutability feature.

Significance of Programming Language in Crypto

- **Efficiency:** Crypto exchanges, decentralised apps (dApps), the automated buying or selling of orders, and even NFT-based games often rely on smart contracts to run smoothly. A smart contract failure can cause

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platform outages, and exploitation of the codes could devalue the entire ecosystem.

- **Understandability of C++:** It is hailed for being an accessible programming language that users of Java, C, and C# can easily learn due to existing similarities.

Cryptocurrency

- It is a **digital currency** that can be used in place of conventional money.
- In cryptocurrencies, cryptography is used to **secure and verify transactions**. It is also used to control the supply of cryptocurrencies.
- It is supported by a **decentralized peer-to-peer network** called the blockchain.
- First cryptocurrency: Bitcoin, launched in 2009 by Satoshi Nakamoto.

Benefits of Cryptocurrency

- **Inherent security:** Use of pseudonyms and ledger systems conceals the identities.
- **Low transaction cost:** Very low fees and charges for transactions.
- **Lack of interference from the banking system:** Outside ambit of banking systems.
- **Lower Entry Barriers:** No entry barriers, unlike conventional banking systems.
- **Universal recognition:** Lots of cryptocurrencies and acceptable in many nations.

Concerns with Cryptocurrency

- **Security risks:** Cyberattacks on wallets, exchange mechanism (Cryptojacking).
- **Shield to Crime:** Used for Illicit Trading, Criminal Activities, & organized crimes.
- **Threat to the Indian rupee:** If a large number of investors invest in digital coins rather than rupee-based savings like provident funds, the demand of the latter will fall.
- **Lack of Liquidity and Lower Acceptability:** Outside the traditional banking systems.
- **Price Volatility:** Prone to price fluctuations & waste of computing power.

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- **Lack of Consumer Protection:** No Dispute Settlement Mechanisms and control of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Modhera Sun Temple

In News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Modhera which is famous for its Sun Temple.

About

- [Modhera is known for the Sun temple](#) situated on the bank of the Pushpavati river.
- The temple was built after 1026-27 CE during the reign of **Bhima I of the Chalukya dynasty**.
- The remains of the **Sun Temples at Modhera** are relics of times gone by when reverence of the natural elements fire, air, earth, water and sky were at their peak sharing space with myriad manifestations of Vedic gods.
- It is one of the major tourist destinations in North Gujarat.

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Source:[LM](#)

Facts in News

National Conference on Project Mausam

In News

- Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) organised a two-day **National Conference on Project Mausam - Jaladhipurayatra**.

About Project Mausam

- It was launched in 2014.
- It is the initiative of the **Ministry of Culture** and is being administered by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as the nodal agency with research support of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and National Museum.
- This project aims to **explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world'** – collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of **cultural, commercial and religious interactions** in the Indian Ocean.

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- The main objective of the project is to inscribe places and sites identified under Project Mausam as trans-national nomination for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Source: [PIB](#)

Facts in News

Rubber Board

In News

- Recently, the **182nd meeting** of the Rubber Board was held in **Kottayam**.

About Rubber Board

- The Rubber Board is a **statutory body** constituted **under the Rubber Act 1947**, for the overall development of the rubber industry in the country.
- The Board has a **Chairman appointed by the Central Government**.
- **The Executive Director** who is the **administrative head** of the Board exercises control over all the Departments/Divisions.

Functions

- Undertaking, assisting or encouraging **scientific, technological or economic research**.
- **Training students** in improved methods of planting, cultivation, manuring and spraying.
- The supply of **technical advice to rubber growers**
- **Improving the marketing** of rubber.
- **The collection of statistics** from owners of estates, dealers and manufacturers.
- **Securing better working conditions** and the provision and improvement of amenities and incentives to workers.
- **Carrying out any other duties** which may be vested with the Board as per rules made under this Act.

Duties

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- To advise the Central Government on all matters relating to the **development of the rubber industry, including the import and export of rubber.**
- To advise the Central Government with regard to **participation in any international conference or scheme relating to rubber.**
- To submit to the Central Government and such other authorities as may be prescribed, **half yearly reports on its activities and the working of this Act.**
- **To prepare and furnish such other reports** relating to the rubber industry as may be required by the Central Government from time to time.

Do you know?

- **Commercial cultivation of natural rubber** was introduced in India by the British, although the experimental efforts to grow rubber on a commercial scale in India were initiated as early as **1873 at the Botanical Gardens, Calcutta.**

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Parboiled Rice

In News

- Recently, almost 1,000 tonnes of parboiled rice are reportedly held up at the ports in Tamil Nadu since last month following the Central government order that levied **20% duty on raw rice exports and banned export of broken rice.**

About Parboiled Rice

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**PARBOILED RICE STOCK
WITH FCI (LAKH TONNES)**

STATE	STOCKS
Andhra Pradesh	0.66
Telangana	16.52
Chhattisgarh	1.49
Odisha	2.07
Jharkhand	2.98
Kerala	3.00
Tamil Nadu	12.09
West Bengal	0.43
Karnataka	0.1
Bihar	1.09
Haryana	0.11
Punjab	0.04
TOTAL	40.58

As on April 1. Source: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution

- Parboiled rice refers to rice that has **been partially boiled at the paddy stage, before milling.**
 - However, **there is no specific definition** of parboiled rice of the Food Corporation of India or the Food Ministry.

Parboiling of rice is **not a new practice, and has been followed in India since ancient times.**

Are all rice varieties suitable for parboiling?

- Generally, **all varieties can be processed into parboiled rice**, but it is ideal to use **long slender varieties** to prevent breakage during milling.
- However, **aromatic varieties should not be parboiled** because the process can make it lose its aroma.

Benefits

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- **Parboiling makes rice tougher:** this reduces the chances of the rice kernel breaking during milling.
- Parboiling also **increases the nutrient value of the rice.**
- Parboiled rice has a **higher resistance to insects and fungi.**

Disadvantages

- **The rice becomes darker** and may **smell unpleasant** due to prolonged soaking.
- Setting up a parboiling rice milling unit requires a **higher investment than a raw rice milling unit.**

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Chandrayaan-2 Gauges Sodium Content on Moon's Surface

In News

- Scientists from Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) have mapped out the global distribution of sodium on the Moon's surface.

About

- Scientists used the **CLASS instrument** (Chandrayaan-2 large area soft X-ray spectrometer) carried by the second Indian Moon mission, Chandrayaan-2.
 - This is the first effort to provide a global-scale measurement of sodium on the lunar surface using X-ray fluorescent spectra.
- **Methodology :** X-ray fluorescence is commonly used to study the composition of materials in a non-destructive manner. When the sun gives out solar flares, a large amount of X-ray radiation falls on the moon, triggering X-ray fluorescence.
 - The CLASS measures the energy of the X-ray photons coming from the moon and counts the total number.
- **Relevance :** The new findings from Chandrayaan-2, provide an avenue to study surface-exosphere interaction on the moon, which would aid development of similar models for mercury and other airless bodies in our solar system and beyond

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- The amount of volatiles on the moon today can be used to test formation scenarios of the Earth-Moon system.
- Sodium can be used as a tracer of the volatile history of the moon,

Chandrayaan-2 Mission

- It was successfully launched in 2019 by GSLV MkIII-M1 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- **Mission Objectives:**
 - To develop and demonstrate the key technologies for end-to-end lunar mission capability, including soft-landing and roving on the lunar surface.
 - To expand the lunar scientific knowledge through detailed study of topography, mineralogy, surface chemical composition, thermo-physical characteristics and tenuous lunar atmosphere leading to a better understanding of the origin and evolution of the Moon.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Vultures

In News

- Recently, a study by the **University Of York in the UK** has noted that the Vultures mostly forage **outside Protected Areas (PAs)** and if threats such as poison-laced carcasses are removed from these places, the decline in vulture populations can be stemmed.

About Vultures

TYPES OF VULTURES

Old World Vultures



New World Vultures



Animal Spot

- **Vultures are scavenging birds** found throughout the world **except for Australia and other oceanic islands.**
- **These birds are generally classified into two different types:** the Old World vultures and the New World vultures.
- They have played a beneficial role in the ecosystem by **consuming carcasses and rotting flesh, keeping the disease transmission rate low.**
 - Some parts of the world, especially **Asia, allow carcasses of domestic animals to be disposed of by these birds.**

IUCN Status: Out of the 22 vulture species, 9 are “Critically Endangered”, 3 are “Endangered”, 4 are “Near Threatened”, and 6 are “Least Concern”.

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VULTURE AWARENESS DAY

Vulture population has experienced a sharp decline in the last three decades.



Vultures are useful scavengers and they play a critical role in the ecosystem as by feeding on carrion, they dispose off the carcasses of dead animals that would otherwise be a breeding ground for infectious diseases.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE
Himalayas, Rajasthan, Gange Plain and north side of Indian Subcontinent



THREATS

- Use of toxic veterinary drugs like Diclofenac and pesticides.
- Habitat loss, fragmentation and lack of food availability.
- Electrocutation, collision with power lines.
- Illegal wildlife trade and hunting.
- Injuries caused by manjha (glass-coated kite strings).

+ Wildlife SOS Rapid Response Unit receive several calls about vultures injured by kite manjhas, telephone lines, heat exhaustion or electrocution.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Educate yourself and others around you.
- Report the use of toxic drugs and pesticides.
- Spread the word. Share the post with your friends and families.

Cinereous vulture is the largest vulture with a wingspan of over 3m.

Slender billed vultures have become the rarest of all with population estimated at 1000-2500.

Out of the **9** species of vultures found in India **4** are listed as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red Data list.



WILDLIFE SOS

Source: **DTE**

Facts in News

Kerch Strait

In Context

- Recently, the **Kerch Bridge** which connects the Russian mainland with the Crimean peninsula, caught fire due to an explosion sparked by a truck bomb.

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About

- The Kerch Strait is a strait in Eastern Europe.
- It connects the **Black Sea and the Sea of Azov**, separating the **Kerch Peninsula of Crimea** in the west from the Taman Peninsula of Russia's Krasnodar Krai in the east.
- The most important harbor, the **Crimean city of Kerch**, gives its name to the strait, formerly known as the **Cimmerian Bosphorus**.
- It has also been called the **Straits of Yenikale** after the **Yeni-Kale fortress in Kerch**.

Significance for Russia

- Since it is the only direct link between Russia and Crimea, it plays a major role in supplying fuel, food and other key goods to Crimea, which hosts the port of Sevastopol – the historic home base of Russia's Black Sea Fleet.
- It became a major supply route for Russian Forces after the military campaign against Ukraine was launched on February 24, 2022.

Source:[LM](#)

Address Stigma and Discrimination in Mental Health

In News

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- **The Lancet** recently released a new report calling for **radical action to end stigma and discrimination in mental health.**
 - **World Mental Health Day** was also celebrated on **October 10th.**

About

- **The new Lancet Commission:**
 - It is a **grouping of over 50 contributors** across the world, including **people, academics, policymakers with lived experience of mental health.**
- **Report highlights:**
 - The report indicated that 90% of people living with mental health conditions **feel negatively impacted by stigma and discrimination.**
 - Further, 80% said stigma and discrimination **can be worse than the condition itself.**
 - Additionally, 90% of those surveyed felt that **media could play a major role** in reducing stigma.
 - **On 'stigma' associated with mental health:**
 - As per the commission, stigma can cause **social exclusion and disempowerment of people** with mental health conditions leading to discrimination and human rights violations, including problems in accessing healthcare, challenges in securing employment, and increased likelihood of health complications leading to early death.
 - **Women with a diagnosis of severe mental disorder** and their family members do **face more stigma** which has **ramifications for marriage and employment** preventing social inclusion.
- **Report recommendations:**
 - Putting the involvement or participation of people with mental illness at the centre of the matrix, the commission has urged **governments, international organisations, schools, employers, healthcare, civil society and media** to take action immediately.
 - For instance, it has been recommended that **all countries take action to decriminalise suicide**, therefore reducing the stigma around suicide and leading to fewer occurrences.

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Determinants of Mental Health

- Multiple social, psychological, and biological factors determine the **level of mental health of a person at any point of time.**
- For example, **violence and persistent socio-economic pressures** are recognized risks to mental health. The clearest evidence is associated with sexual violence.
- Poor mental health is **also associated with:**
 - rapid social change,
 - stressful work conditions,
 - gender discrimination,
 - social exclusion,
 - unhealthy lifestyle,
 - physical ill-health and
 - human rights violations.
- There are **specific psychological and personality factors** that make people vulnerable to mental health problems. Biological risks include genetic factors.

Mental health in India

- WHO estimates that about **7.5 percent of Indians suffer from some mental disorder** and predicts that by the end of this year roughly 20 percent of India will suffer from mental illnesses.
- WHO states that there is a **huge shortage of psychiatrists and psychologists in India.**
- According to the numbers, 56 million Indians suffer from depression and another 38 million Indians suffer from anxiety disorders. India also accounts for 36.6 percent of suicides globally.
- A report published in The Lancet Psychiatry in February 2020 indicates that in 2017, there were 197.3 million people with mental disorders in India.

Government of India Initiatives

- **Constitution and Legal Provisions:**
 - **Article 21:** The right to a dignified life extends to the right to seek Mental Health care.
 - **Article 47:** Duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.
- **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) in 1982:**

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- To ensure the availability and accessibility of minimum mental healthcare for all in the foreseeable future, particularly to the most vulnerable and underprivileged sections of the population.
- **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:**
 - It was passed in 2017, came into effect in May 2018 and replaced the Mental Health Act of 1987.
 - To the joy of most Indian medical practitioners and advocates of mental health, the act decriminalised suicide attempts in India.
 - It also included WHO guidelines in the categorisation of mental illnesses.
 - The most significant provision in the act was “advanced directives”, which allowed individuals with mental illnesses to decide the course of their treatment and also appoint someone to be their representative.
 - It also restricted the use of electro-convulsive therapy (ECT), and banned its use on minors, finally introducing measures to tackle stigma in Indian society.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2017:**
 - The Act acknowledges mental illness as a disability and seeks to enhance the Rights and Entitlements of the Disabled and provide an effective mechanism for ensuring their empowerment and inclusion in society
- **Manodarpan Initiative:**
 - An initiative under Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan aims to provide psycho-social support to students for their mental health and well-being.
- **Kiran Helpline:**
 - The helpline is a giant step towards suicide prevention and can help with support and crisis management.
 - The helpline aims to provide early screening, first-aid, psychological support, distress management, mental well-being, and psychological crisis management and will be managed by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD).
- **SAATHI:**
 - It is a South-Asian Mental Health Outreach Program of ASHA International that aims to:
 - Promote awareness about mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - Improve access to care.

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About World Mental Health Day

- It was **first observed on October 10, 1992** as an **annual activity** of the World Federation for Mental Health.
- The Day provides an **opportunity for all stakeholders** working on mental health issues to talk about their work, and what more needs to be done to make mental health care a reality for people worldwide.
- Overall Objectives:
 - To raise awareness of mental health issues around the world and to mobilize efforts in support of mental health.

Way Ahead

- There is a need for more promotive programs & campaigns on mental health.
- The government should press more on allocating more funds in Mental Health Organisations.

Source: [TH](#)

International Girl Child Day

Context

- Every year on 11th October the International Child Day is observed.

About the Day

- 11th October 2022 commemorates the **10th anniversary of the International Day of the Girl (IDG)**.
- The **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995**, proposed an action plan to advance the rights of girls.
- In 2011, the **United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/170** to declare **11th October as the International Day of the Girl Child**.
- **Theme of 2022:** ‘Our time is now—our rights, our future.’
- **Positive impact:** In the last 10 years, there has been increased attention and provision of opportunities on girls’ specific issues amongst governments, policymakers and the general public.

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Status of Girl Child in India

As per the “Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India Report 2021” by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB):

- West Bengal and Odisha feature in the list of top five states along with Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh accounting for close to half of the total crimes committed against children (47.1 %) across the country.
- In a large country like India, many cases of crimes against children go unrecorded, especially in remote areas. Hence, the actual number may be much higher than those reported.
- Vulnerability of children is increasing in the post-pandemic era, despite the efforts and initiatives to strengthen child protection in the states.
- **Grim Picture of Eastern States:** Sikkim has the highest rate of sexual offences against children followed by Kerala, Meghalaya, Haryana and Mizoram.

Challenges faced by women and girls

- Lack of sensitization on behalf of police personnel
- Investments in girl's rights remain limited.
- Lack of time bound investigation of the reported cases
- Adequate laws, inadequate implementation
- Female infanticide and Sex-selective Abortions
- Meta-son preference driven gender stereotyping and discrimination
- Lack of education and awareness about women's rights and legal grievance redressal mechanisms
- Human trafficking and forced prostitution with the lure of jobs
- Online Abuse and harassment-like rape threats, online harassment, cyber-stalking, blackmail, trolling etc.
- Sexual harassment at workplace and glass ceiling.
- Girls' challenges in fulfilling their potential are worsened by concurrent crises of climate change, COVID-19 and humanitarian conflict.

Measures Taken

- **Global:**

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- **1995 World Conference on Women** adopted the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** for advancing the rights of the women and the girls
- **The Spotlight Initiative of UN and EU** to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** is also in tune with the Spotlight initiative to ensure centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment.

- **India:**
 - Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
 - **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013**
 - Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
 - **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2018** based "Investigation Tracking System for Sexual Offences" to monitor and track time-bound investigation in sexual assault cases
 - **National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO)** to facilitate investigation and tracking of sexual offenders across India by law enforcement agencies

Way Forward

- Despite adversity, the **world's 600 million adolescent girls** have shown that given the skills and the opportunities, they can be the changemakers driving progress in their communities, building back stronger for all, including women, boys and men.
- Further, boosting **community-based child protection mechanisms** such as village-level child protection committees can play a critical role.
- Urgent measures should be taken to strengthen the country's **child protection system** and make the police, judicial and legal systems more proactive.
- Government should formulate an **Information Education and Communication (IEC) strategy** on laws, mechanisms, schemes and best practices for the protection and welfare of women and children.

Source: TH

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Space Bill & Potential of India's Space Sector

In Context

- A new space Bill — a **legal framework for commercial use of space** will soon be released.

More about the new bill

- **The 2017 Bill:**
 - The previous Bill (of 2017) provides for **imprisonment of up to three years and fine of over Rs 1 crore** if
 - any activity is **undertaken without prior licensing**,
 - **false information is furnished**, or
 - it **pollutes earth, airspace, outer space or celestial bodies**.
 - **Issues with the bill (2017):**
 - This bill was criticised for being a little harsh.
 - Also, Imprisonment was a very major disincentive for the industry, so the government sought to remove it.
- **About the new bill:**
 - **Leniency:**
 - It will do away with provisions for imprisonment.
 - The bill will be lenient when it comes to criminal charges.
 - **Insurance mechanism:**
 - It will also create mechanisms for insurance damages.
 - **Significance of insurance:**
 - The cost of insurance (for space activities) is very high.
 - Today, ISRO does not pay for it because it is a government commitment, but when a private player is there, they will need insurance.

Potential of India's space sector

- Recently, a **joint report** was prepared by **EY and the Indian Space Association (ISpA)**.
 - **Report highlights:**
 - **Indian space economy:**

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- The Indian space economy is set to reach \$13 billion by 2025, according to this joint report.

Space launch segment:

- The report also said the space launch segment would grow fastest at a CAGR of 13% spurred by growing private participation, latest technology adoption and low cost of launch services.

Satellite services and application segment:

- This segment would form the largest share of the space economy accounting for 36% of the space economy by 2025, as per the study.
- On the country's satellite manufacturing opportunity, it said in 2020 it was \$2.1 billion and this would reach \$3.2 billion by 2025.
- Also, by 2025, satellite manufacturing would be the second fastest-growing segment in the Indian space economy.

Space tech start-ups:

- There are over 100 space tech start-ups in the country and investments in space tech start-ups increased 196% y-o-y in 2021, the survey said.

Space parks:

- Space parks that are coming up across the country would give a fillip to companies operating across the space value chain, especially manufacturing, found the study.

India's upcoming commercial launch:

Marking the shift towards the private sector, India's heaviest rocket, **GSLV Mk III**, will launch **36 satellites OneWeb global communication satellite** constellation.

This is the **first commercial launch by the vehicle**, so far having **carried two ISRO communication satellites** for two of its **development flights** and the **Chandrayaan-2** for its first **operational flight**.

Significance of the Space industry

- **Assessing & recording weather information:**
 - Satellites provide **more accurate information on weather forecasts**.

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- It can also **assess (and record)** long-term trends in the **climate** and **habitability** of a region.
 - **For example**, by monitoring the long-term impact of climate change at regional, territorial, and national scales, governments would be able to **devise more pragmatic and combative plans** of action for farmers and dependent industries.
- **Real-time tracking :**
 - Satellites can serve as **real-time monitoring and early-warning solutions** against natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, wildfires, mining etc.
 - Real-time tracking can also serve multiple purposes in **defence**.
- **Communication and connectivity:**
 - As for connectivity, satellite communication **can reach more remote areas** where conventional networks would require heavy complimenting infrastructure.
 - Additionally, as to the reliability, the **World Economic Forum(WEF)** stated that satellite communication **can help connect 49% of the world's unconnected population**.
 - In this light, it must be noted that satellite communications, which are used to **facilitate telecommunication services**, are among the major categories for investment in the space technology sector.
 - Other prominent categories include spacecraft and equipment manufacturing.
- **Benefits to other sectors:**
 - The space avenue is an integration of the **aerospace, IT hardware** and **telecom sectors**.
 - It is thus argued that investment in this arena would foster positive **carryover effects** to other sectors as well.

About Indian Space Association (ISpA)

- **Aim:**
 - To supplement the Centre's efforts in commercial space exploration and space-based communication.
- **Members:**
 - Various stakeholders in the Indian space domain with members comprising the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Bharti Airtel, OneWeb, Tata Group's Nelco, L&T, MapMyIndia among

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others.

- **About:**
 - ISpA is an industry association for private players in space.
 - It is an organisation meant to represent the interests of the space sector with government and private sector bodies across the board.
 - It will support start-ups and will work towards facilitating and enabling private players to work in tandem with ISRO.
 - The industry association will act as an independent and “single-window” agency for enabling the opening up of the space sector to start-ups and the private sector.
- **The progress:**
 - While ISpA has grown from seven members to more than 50 members in a year, the number of space sector start-ups in the country has also boomed from just a handful two years ago, before the space sector was opened up, to over a hundred now.

Source: TH

United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress

In News

- Recently, the PM addressed the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress in **Hyderabad**.

United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

- The first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress was held in **Deqing, Zhejiang Province, China in 2018**.
- **The United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)** organizes the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC) every four years.
- **The objectives are** enhancing international collaboration among the Member States and relevant stakeholders in Geospatial information management and capacities.
- **The theme of the 2nd conference:** It is ‘Geo-enabling the Global Village: No one should be left behind’.

India’s geospatial Sector

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- **Data:**
 - India's geospatial economy is expected to cross 63,100 crore by 2025 at a growth rate of 12.8%.
 - Geospatial technology has become one of the key enablers in socio-economic development by enhancing productivity, ensuring sustainable infrastructure planning, effective administration, and aiding the farm sector.

What is Geospatial Technology?

- Geospatial technology innovations allow us to **determine the exact location of an object or person on our planet.**
- **We apply them in multiple spheres** from geospatial technologies for maps like GPS navigators for drivers to vast-scope remote sensing by satellites orbiting Earth.

Types of Geospatial Technologies

- Remote Sensing
- Electromagnetic impulses
- Filmed or digital aerial imagery
- Radars and lidars
- Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
- Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Applications of Geospatial Technology

- **Logistics:** Tracking goods and ensuring their quality.
- **Transportations:** Identifying location and time of arrival, route making, and navigation.
- **Meteorology:** Referring weather forecasts to particular territories.
- **Forestry:** Detecting forest fires and deforestation & preventing large-scale wildfires.
- **Agriculture:** Assessing vegetation state on a selected terrain.
- **Healthcare:** Monitoring areas of epidemic outbreaks.
- **Ecology:** Tracing species populations in certain areas, preventing and addressing calamities.
- **Marketing and advertising:** Targeting ads to relevant regions.
- **Real estate:** Visualizing and analyzing real estate objects remotely.

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- **Insurance:** Managing risks in questioned areas via historical georeferenced data analysis.

New Guidelines on Geospatial Policy of India

- **Free access to geospatial data**
 - The Geospatial data will be made available in the open public domain by the Department of Science and technology.

Self Certification

- Startups don't need pre and post-approval certificates for adherence to guidelines. A self-declaration will work.

Promotion of New Technologies

- The government will promote the latest map-making technologies.

Applicability

- The Guidelines are applicable to geospatial data, maps, products, solutions and services offered by government agencies, autonomous bodies, academic and research institutions, private organizations, non - governmental organizations and individuals.

Negative List of sensitive attributes

- The Guidelines provide for a negative list of sensitive attributes to be notified by the DST to require regulation before anyone can acquire and/or use such sensitive data.

Significance of this sector

- **Robust ecosystem**
 - The Survey of India (SoI), the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), remote sensing application centres (RSAC)s, and the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in particular, and all ministries and departments, in general, using geospatial technology.

Acquiring Data

- Geospatial technology enables us to acquire data that is referenced to the earth and use it for analysis, modelling, simulations and visualization.

Informed decisions

- Geospatial technology allows us to make informed decisions based on the importance and priority of resources most of which are limited in nature.

Intelligent maps and models

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- Geospatial technology may be used to create intelligent maps and models that may be interactively queried to get the desired results in a STEM application or may be used to advocate social investigations and policy-based research.

Issues/ Challenges in this sector

- **Negligible contribution**
 - The full benefits have yet to percolate to the public and neither are there many contributions to the nation's GDP.

Absence of market

- Among the most prominent hurdles is the absence of a sizable geospatial market in India.

There is no demand for geospatial services and products

- It is due to the lack of awareness among potential users in the government and private sectors.

Lack of skilled manpower

- Across the entire pyramid is also a major issue.

There are still no ready-to-use solutions

- Especially built to solve the problems of India.

Related Initiatives

- **SWAMITVA**
 - Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas scheme uses drones to map properties in villages.
 - People in rural areas now have clear evidence of ownership.

The South Asia satellite

- It is facilitating connection and communication in India's neighbourhood.

Drone sector

- India gave a major boost to its drone sector as well as opened its space sector to private entities and 5G technology.

Real-time digital payments

- India is the world's number 1 in real-time digital payments. Even the smallest vendors accept and prefer digital payments.

PM Gati Shakti Masterplan

- It is building multimodal infrastructure. It is being powered by geospatial technology.

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- **Digital Ocean platform**
 - It is using geo-spatial technology for management of our oceans. This is crucial for our environment and marine ecosystem.

Way Forward

- **Open access to all:** India's geospatial sector had been opened up for its young bright minds. Data collected over 200 years had been made open and accessible to all.
- **Vision of Antyodaya:** This means empowering the last person at the last mile, in a mission mode. It is this vision that has guided us in last mile empowerment at a massive scale.
- **India is ensuring no one is left behind:** Banking 450 million unbanked people, a population greater than that of the USA, Insuring 135 million uninsured people, about twice the population of France, Taking sanitation facilities to 110 million families and tap water connections to over 60 million families.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Manesar Anti-Terror Exercise Under SCO RATS

In News

- Pakistan has been invited to the closing ceremony, on October 13, of the ongoing Joint **Anti-Terror Exercise (JATE)**.

About Manesar Anti-Terror 2022

- The National Security Guard is hosting the multinational **JATE 'Manesar Anti-Terror 2022'** under the framework of the **SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure(RATS)** at the NSG Manesar Garrison.
 - JATE is an annual counter-terrorist exercise held within the framework of the **SCO RATS**.
- The exercise is aimed at **exchanging expertise and best practices**, and build synergy between the Counter Terrorism Forces of the **SCO RATS member countries** to enhance capabilities for conducting anti-terrorist operations and countering other security threats collectively.

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- The exercise will provide a platform to the **participating member countries to enhance their operational capabilities and exchange experience** in combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, which are common regional security challenges.

SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)

- **About:** It is a **permanent body of SCO**. It aims to counter extremism, terrorism, and separatism in the region. Its headquarters is in **Tashkent, Uzbekistan**.
 - **India assumed chairmanship of the RATS SCO** on October 28, 21.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- **About:**
 - It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation of Eurasian Nations with a secretariat in Beijing.
 - It is a political, economic and military organisation that aims at maintaining peace, security and stability in the region.
 - **Origin:**
 - **Shanghai Five emerged in 1996** from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks between 4 former USSR republics and China.
 - Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five.
 - With the accession of Uzbekistan to the group in 2001, the Shanghai Five was renamed the SCO.
 - The SCO Charter was signed in 2002 and entered into force in 2003.
- **Inclusion of India & Pakistan:**
 - India and Pakistan both were initially observer states.
 - Both were given full membership in 2017.
- **Members:**
 - Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan.
 - Iran has been admitted as a **permanent member of the SCO at the Samarkand summit**.

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- Iran will attend the **SCO as a full member from the Summit to be hosted by India in 2023.**
- **Structure:**
 - SCO Secretariat in Beijing & Executive committee in Tashkent.

Source: [TH](#)

Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences

In News

- The **Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences** was awarded to **Ben S Bernanke**, the former chair of the US Federal Reserve, and two other academics (**Douglas W. Diamond and Philip H. Dybvig**) for research into banks and financial crises.

About

- The work for which **Ben Bernanke, Douglas Diamond and Philip Dybvig** are being recognised has been crucial to subsequent research that has enhanced our **understanding of banks, bank regulation, banking crises and how financial crises** should be managed.
- **Ben Bernanke's Contribution:**
 - He analysed the **Great Depression of the 1930s**, the worst economic crisis in modern history.
 - Among other things, he showed how bank runs were a **decisive factor in the crisis becoming so deep and prolonged.**
 - Using historical sources and statistical methods, Bernanke's analysis showed which factors were important in the drop in gross domestic product. He found factors that were directly linked to failing banks accounted for the lion's share of the downturn.
- **Douglas W. Diamond and Philip H. Dybvig's Contributions:**
 - They developed **theoretical models that explain why banks exist, how their role in society makes them vulnerable to rumours** about their impending collapse and how society can lessen this vulnerability.
 - They presented a solution to bank vulnerability, in the form of deposit insurance from the government. When depositors know

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that the state has guaranteed their money, they no longer need to rush to the bank as soon as rumours start about a bank run.

Unlike the other prizes, the economics award wasn't established in **Alfred Nobel's will of 1895** but by the **Swedish central bank in his memory**. The first prize in **economic sciences** was awarded to **Ragnar Frisch and Jan Tinbergen in 1969**.

Source:[BS](#)

History

LoknayakJayaprakash Narayan & NanajiDeshmukh Jayanti

In News

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to Bharat RatnaNanajiDeshmukh and LoknayakJayaprakash Narayan on their birth anniversary.

About:

- **LoknayakJayaprakash Narayan:** He was born on October 11, 1902, in the remote village of Sitabdiara, Bihar.
 - He was marxist in his youth and founder general secretary of the Congress Socialist Party and the Socialist Party.
 - He was a hero of the 1942 Quit India movement
 - He declined to join Nehru's cabinet and after 1955 quit active politics.
 - He became a Gandhian and was involved in the Bhoodan movement.
 - He was leader of the Bihar movement and he became the symbol of opposition to Emergency and was the moving force behind the formation of Janata Party.
 - **Total Revolution: It** was put forward by Jayaprakash Narayan in the wake of Bihar Movement in Patna on June 5, 1974.
 - It is a further extension of Gandhi's thought on socio-economic problems and technique of change in the context of contemporary social, economic and political reality.
- **NanajiDeshmukh :** He was born on October 11, 1916.

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- He was social reformer and politician from India
 - He was a founder member of the Janata Party and one of the senior most members of the Bharatiya Janata Party.
- He worked in the fields of education, health, and rural self-reliance.
- His stellar contribution towards rural development showed the way for a new paradigm of empowering those living in our villages.
- He was an active participant of the Bhoodan Movement launched by Acharya VinobaBhave.
- He also extended his support to Jayaprakash Narayan's call for 'Total Revolution'.

Source: [PIB](#)

Facts in News

International Finance Corporation (IFC)

Context

- International Finance Corp has launched the **Global Food Security Platform** to support the private sector for sustainable production and delivery of food stocks to countries affected by food instability.
 - This **6 billion USD financing facility will help boost the flow of food supplies** and other important commodities like fertilizers to vulnerable communities.

International Finance Corporation (IFC)

- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is an international financial institution that offers investment, advisory, and asset-management services to encourage private-sector development in less developed countries.
- The IFC is a member of the World Bank Group and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. in the United States.

Source: [ET](#)

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

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In News

- World Post Day is annually observed across the globe on 9th October to mark the establishment of the **Universal Postal Union(UPU)**.
 - The theme of World Post Day 2022 is “**Post for the Planet**”.

About Universal Postal Union (UPU)

- Established in 1874, the **second oldest** international organization worldwide.
- **Headquarters:** the Swiss capital Berne
- **Functions:**
 - The **primary forum for cooperation** between postal sector players.
 - It helps to ensure a truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
 - Fulfils an advisory, mediating and liaison role;
 - Provides technical assistance where needed.
- **Member countries:**
 - Any member country of the United Nations may become a member of the UPU.
 - Any non-member country of the United Nations may become a UPU member provided that its request is approved by at least two-thirds of the member countries of the UPU.
 - The UPU now has **192 member countries**.
- **Consists of 4 bodies:**
 - **The Congress-** the supreme authority; meets every four years.
 - **The Council of Administration-** supervises its activities and studies regulatory, administrative, legislative and legal issues.
 - **The Postal Operations Council-** the technical and operational mind of the UPU
 - **The International Bureau-** provides logistical and technical support

Source: [HT](#)

Facts in News

Foreign Direct Product Rule (FDPR)

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In News

- Recently, the US Commerce Department is tightening export controls to limit China's ability to get advanced computing chips, develop and maintain supercomputers, and make advanced semiconductors.

About The foreign direct product rule (FDPR)

- **Background:**

- It was first introduced in **1959** to control trading of **US technologies**.

Objective:

- It essentially says that if a product was made using American technology, the **US government has the power to stop it from being sold including products made in a foreign country**.

Significance of this law:

- This application will **stop advanced chip use in Chinese supercomputers** which can be used to develop nuclear weapons and other military applications.
- The United States had already placed a number of Chinese supercomputing companies on a **restricted entity list**, cutting them off from buying US chips.

Examples:

- It was used against China telecom company **Huawei Technologies Co Ltd in 2020**.
 - American officials had tried to cut off Huawei's supply of semiconductors but found that companies were still shipping Huawei chips made in factories outside the United States.
- US regulators used it on **Russia and Belarus** after the invasion of Ukraine to cut off chips.

Source: [IE](#)

MahakalLok Corridor

In News

- Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the **MahakalLok corridor** built at the **Mahakaleshwar temple**.

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More about the news

- The **Mahakaleshwar temple** is dedicated to Lord Shiva and houses one of the 12 Jyotirlingas (representation of Lord Shiva) in India.
- **The MahakalLok corridor project:**
 - **The Mahakaleshwar Temple Corridor Development Project** will provide better amenities for those visiting the temple.
 - The corridor has around **108 aesthetically ornate pillars** made of **intricately carved sandstones** that depict the **AnandTandavSwaroop** (Lord Shiva's dance form), 200 statues and murals of Lord Shiva and goddess Shakti.
 - It also has gushing **fountains surrounded by artistic sculptures of the deity** as well as 53 illuminated murals depicting stories from the Shiv Puran.
 - **First phase:**
 - The first phase of the project is expected to significantly boost tourism in this city of Madhya Pradesh.
- **MahakalMaharajMandirParisarVistarYojna:**
 - MahakalMaharajMandirParisarVistarYojna is a plan for the **expansion, beautification, and decongestion** of the Mahakaleshwar temple and its **adjoining area in Ujjain district**.
 - Under the plan, the Mahakaleshwar **temple premise** of around **2.82 hectares** is being increased to **47 hectares**.
 - This will be developed in **two phases** by the Ujjain district administration.
 - This will include the **17 hectares of Rudrasagar lake**.
- **Major temple upliftment projects:**
 - After **Vishwanath temple in Varanasi and the Kedarnath shrine in Uttarakhand**, Mahakal temple is the third 'jyotirlinga' site to see a major upliftment exercise.
 - The Mahakal corridor is four times the size of the Kashi Vishwanath corridor, which was inaugurated late last year.

Significance of Mahakaleshwar temple in Hinduism

- **History:**
 - **Mahakaleshwar, which means the 'Lord of time'**, refers to Lord Shiva.

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- As per Hindu mythology, the temple was constructed by Lord Brahma and is presently located alongside the holy **river Kshipra**.
- **Jyotirlingas:**
 - Puranas say that Lord Shiva pierced the world as an endless pillar of light, called the jyotirlinga.
 - There are **12 jyotirlinga sites in India**, considered a manifestation of Shiva.
 - Besides **Mahakal, Somnath** and **Nageshwar** in Gujarat,
 - **Mallikarjuna** in Andhra Pradesh,
 - **Omkareshwar** in Madhya Pradesh,
 - **Kedarnath** in Uttarakhand,
 - **Bhimashankar, Triyambakeshwar** and **Grishneshwar** in Maharashtra,
 - **Viswanath** at Varanasi,
 - **Baidyanath** in Jharkhand, and
 - **Rameshwar** in Tamil Nadu.
- **Characteristic features of the temple:**
 - Mahakal is the **only jyotirlinga facing the south**, while all the other jyotirlingas face east.
 - This is because the direction of death is believed to be the south. In fact, people worship Mahakaleshwar to prevent untimely death.
- **References of the temple:**
 - The Mahakal temple finds a mention in **several ancient Indian poetic texts**.
 - **Meghadutam:**
 - In the early part of the Meghadutam (PurvaMegha) composed in the **4th century**, **Kalidasa** gives a description of the Mahakal temple.
 - It is described as one with a stone foundation, with the ceiling on wooden pillars.
 - There would be no shikharas or spires on the temples prior to the Gupta period.

More about Ujjain City

- **History:**

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- The city of Ujjain was also one of the primary centres of learning for Hindu scriptures, called Avantika in the **6th and 7th centuries BC**.
- Later, astronomers and mathematicians such as **Brahmagupta** and **Bhaskaracharya** made Ujjain their home.
- **Significance of the city:**
 - **Geography:**
 - Also, as per the **Surya Siddhanta**, one of the earliest available texts on Indian astronomy dating back to the 4th century, Ujjain is geographically situated at a spot where the **zero meridian of longitude and the Tropic of Cancer intersect**.
 - In keeping with this theory, it is believed that many of Ujjain temples are in some way connected to time and space, and the main Shiva temple is dedicated to Mahakal, the lord of time.
 - **Observatory:**
 - In the 18th century, an observatory was built here by **Maharaja Jai Singh II**, known as the **Vedh Shala or JantarMantar**, comprising **13 architectural instruments** to measure astronomical phenomena.

Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

- **About:**
 - It is a 400-metre long corridor that will facilitate the pilgrims and devotees of Baba Vishwanath, who had to encounter congested streets and surroundings with poor upkeep, when they practised the age-old custom of taking a dip in the holy river, collecting Gangajal and offering it at the temple.
 - The architect of this project is Mr Bimal Patel who is also the architect for the Central Vista project.
- **Significance:**
 - It will provide easy access for the disabled and old age people with the provision of ramps, escalators, and other modern facilities.
 - Heritage Preservation
 - Boost to Local Economy

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Source: TH

RTI: Pendency of Cases

Context

- The transparency regime set up by the **Right to Information (RTI) Act** has nearly 3.15 lakh pending complaints or appeals with 26 information commissions across India.

RTI Pendency in India

- **Pendency and delays:**
 - As per the data obtained from several information commissions (ICs), the backlog of appeals or complaints with them is steadily increasing every year (reference period 2019-2022) resulting in a long waiting time for disposal.
 - States with the highest number of pending cases and appeals were Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar etc.
 - RTI cases filed till now-4.2 crore RTIs and 26 lakh second appeals with average waiting period of two years.
- **Functioning Issues:**
 - **Completely defunct ICs:** 2 ICs in Jharkhand and Tripura (out of total 29) are completely defunct for 29 and 15 months respectively
 - **Lack of transparency** in the functioning of ICs causes tardy disposal rates thereby violating the mandate of safeguarding and facilitating people's fundamental right to information.
 - **Personnel Management:** ICs are becoming parking lots for retired bureaucrats.
 - **Behavioral traits:** Casual attitude by PIO/First Appellate Authority while rejecting RTI applications.
 - **Gender disparity:** Only 5% of the positions of Information Commissioners are occupied by women.
 - **Imposition of penalties:** The commissions did not impose penalties in 95% of the cases where penalties were potentially imposable.
 - **Vacancies:**

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- As per the report by the Transparency International, one-fourth (42 of the total 165) information commissioner posts are vacant.
- Four ICs in Manipur, Telangana, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh are without chiefs or heads.

Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005

- **Mandate:** The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005, was enacted by Parliament to empower citizens, promote accountability and transparency in the working of the government while containing corruption.
- **The Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019:** This amendment changed the tenure of the CIC and ICs from five years and provided for the central government to notify the term of office for the CIC and the ICs. Accordingly, tenure of the commissioners has been cut to 3 years.
- **‘Public Authorities’** are institutions of self-government established under the Constitution or under any law or government notification.
- They include Ministries, public sector undertakings and regulators.
- They also include any entities owned, controlled or substantially financed and non-government organizations substantially financed directly or indirectly by government funds.

Functioning of Right to Information Act

Under the RTI Act 2005, a three-tier structure has been set up for enforcing the right to information.

- **Public Information Officers:** The first request for information goes to the Assistant Public Information Officer and Public Information Officer, designated by the Public Authorities.
- They are required to provide information to an RTI applicant within 30 days of the request.
- **Appellate Authority:** It caters to the appeals against decisions of the Public Information Officer.
- **State Information Commission or the Central Information Commission (CIC):** They are mandated to hear appeals against the order of the Appellate Authority.

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- Information Commissions consist of a Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and up to 10 Information Commissioners (ICs).

Utility of RTI

- RTI helps in addressing the matters of constitutional rights and empowers people to seek answers from the government establishment, which forms the very basis of democracy.
- RTI has been instrumental in preventing policy paralysis and institutionalization of a more informed, equitable and robust decision-making process.

Way Forward

- There is an urgent need for the transparency watchdogs to function in a more effective and transparent manner.
- The entire system of RTI is in need of digitisation for better record management. e-filing facility for RTI applications or appeals should be made functional in every ICs.
- The digital RTI portal (website or mobile app) can deliver more efficient and citizen-friendly services and minimize the issues of pendency and delays substantially.
- PIOs can be trained by experts in-house mechanisms for efficient management and disposal of cases.

Source: [BS](#)

Indian Cough Syrup & Deaths in Gambia

In News

- Recently, the Haryana state government decided to “completely stop” the production of medicines that caused deaths in Gambia.

More about the news

- **WHO Alert:**
 - WHO has issued a **medical product alert** for **four contaminated medicines** identified in The Gambia.

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- The four medicines are cough and cold syrups produced in India.
- **Issue:**
 - These medicines have been potentially linked to **66 deaths among children in Gambia**.
 - The drug has been identified as containing a significant amount of a toxin that damages kidneys irreversibly.
- **India's probe:**
 - The cough syrups manufactured by the pharmaceutical company was approved for export.
 - It is not available for sale or marketing within the country.
 - India's drug regulator – The Drugs Controller General of India had also initiated a probe.

Indian Pharmaceutical industry

- **The Pharmacy of the World:**
 - The Indian Pharmaceutical industry is the **third largest in the world by volume**.
 - The Indian Pharmaceutical Industry has been using its powers very responsibly.
 - It has made a name for itself and India is being called “The Pharmacy of the World” in some circles.
- **Export:**
 - India exported pharmaceuticals worth Rs 175,040 crore in the financial year 2021-22, including Bulk Drugs/Drug Intermediates. Also, India is one of the major producers of Active Pharma Ingredients (API) or bulk drugs in the world.
 - India exported Bulk Drugs/Drug Intermediates worth Rs 33,320 crore in the financial year 2021-22.
- **Imports:**
 - However, the country also imports various Bulk Drugs/ APIs for producing medicines from various countries.
 - Most of the imports of the Bulk Drug/APIs being done in the country are because of economic considerations.
- **What is driving the growth?**
- **Talent pool:**

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- India has a huge talent pool with trained pharmaceutical professionals having degrees in B Pharmacy, D Pharmacy, M Pharmacy.
- **Generic drugs:**
 - The ability of the pharmaceutical industry to develop generic drugs at a much-reduced price is mainly due to trained professionals in the industry.
- **Manufacturing:**
 - India has a huge manufacturing base of pharmaceutical products giving it way more flexibility in producing generic drugs.
 - India is home to 3000 drug companies and more than 10,000 manufacturing units.

Potential of the Indian Pharmaceutical Industry

- According to the **Indian Economic Survey 2021**, the pharmaceutical industry in India is expected to reach USD 120-130 Billion by 2030.
- **Industries related to the pharmaceutical sector:**
 - The other industries related to the pharmaceutical sector like biopharmaceuticals, bio-services, bio-agriculture, bio-industry, and bioinformatics are likely to reach USD 150 Billion in 2025 as compared to USD 70 Billion in 2020.
- According to **EY and FICCI**, Innovation and R&D, Healthcare Delivery, Manufacturing & Supply Chain, and Market Access are the opportunities that will drive growth in the years to come.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940

- The Act regulates the import, manufacture, and distribution of drugs in India.
- The primary objective of the act is to ensure that the drugs and cosmetics sold in India are safe, effective and conform to state quality standards.

New Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill, 2022

- For the first time, regulations for conduct of clinical trials for new drugs and medical devices have been brought under the draft New Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill, 2022
 - The bill seeks to replace the existing Drugs and Cosmetics Act of

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1940.

- **New definitions:**

- The draft bill introduces various new definitions or provisions like bioequivalence study, bioavailability study, clinical trial, clinical investigation, controlling authority, manufacturer, medical device, new drugs, over the-counter (OTC) drugs, adulterated cosmetics, etc. for more clarity and smooth functioning and implementation.

- **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and Medical Devices Technical Advisory Board (MDTAB):**

- It proposes the constitution of a separate Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) and Medical Devices Technical Advisory Board (MDTAB), comprising experts from various associations to advise the central government in technical matters.

- **Central Licensing Authority:**

- In the interest of public health or extreme urgency of drugs, the central government is empowered to make provisions for Central Licensing Authority to waive the requirement of conducting clinical trials for manufacture or import of new drugs or investigational new drugs in the country.

Drugs Controller General of India

- Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) is the head of department of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization of the Government of India
- It is responsible for approval of licences of specified categories of drugs such as blood and blood products, IV fluids, vaccines, and sera in India.
- Drugs Controller General of India, comes under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- DCGI also sets standards for manufacturing, sales, import, and distribution of drugs in India.

Source: TH

Surrogacy in India

In News

- The recent announcement by Tamil film director Vignesh and his wife, actor Nayanthara, that they had become parents to twin boys is building

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up into a controversy, with speculations that the couple opted for surrogacy.

What is Surrogacy?

- **Meaning**

- Surrogacy is defined as a practice wherein one **woman bears and gives birth to a child with the intention to thereafter hand it over** to the intending couple.

While commercial surrogacy is not allowed in India such procedures are allowed only for altruistic purposes with many restrictions on the person seeking to apply under the law.

- **No other monetary consideration** will be permitted.

The Surrogacy Laws

- **The parliament in 2021 passed two laws:**

- **The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act**

- It governs the practice and process of surrogacy in India.
- It provided a gestation period of ten months from the date of coming into force to existing surrogate mothers' to protect their well being.

- **The Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act**

- It was enacted for regulation and supervision of the assisted reproductive technology clinics and banks.
- Under the Act, the services can be made available to a woman above the age of 21 years and below the age of 50 years and to a man above the age of 21 years and below the age of 55 years.
- ART procedures include gamete donation, intrauterine insemination, and in-vitro fertilisation or IVF.

Major provisions of the Law

- **Eligibility:** According to the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, only a married couple who has a medical condition necessitating gestational surrogacy can avail it. They have to first obtain a certificate of recommendation from a District Medical Board.
 - **Gestational surrogacy' means:**

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- **She has no uterus or missing uterus** or abnormal uterus or if the uterus is surgically removed due to any medical conditions such as gynaecological cancer.
- Intended parent or woman who has **repeatedly failed to conceive after multiple In vitro fertilization or Intracytoplasmic sperm injection attempts.**
- **Multiple pregnancy losses** resulting from an unexplained medical reason, unexplained graft rejection due to exaggerated immune response;
- **Any illness that makes it impossible for a woman to carry a pregnancy** to viability or pregnancy that is life threatening.

An intending woman who is a widow or divorcee between the age of 35 to 45 years- can also avail the surrogacy.

The intending couple where the woman is of the age of 23 to 50 years and a man between 26 to 55 years- is eligible under the law.

- Only such intending couples can apply **who have not had any surviving child biologically or through adoption** or earlier surrogacy.
- **An exception has been provided** for the couples whose child is "mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness with no permanent cure".
- **The intending couple or intending woman is not allowed to abandon the child**, born out of a surrogacy procedure, for any reason whatsoever.
 - A child born out of a surrogacy procedure is **deemed to be a biological child** of the intending couple or intending woman.

Eligibility to be a surrogate mother

- **A married woman of the age of 25 to 35 years** on the day of implantation, with a child of her own, can be a surrogate mother.
- She can act as a surrogate mother **only once in her lifetime** and with only **three attempts of procedure is allowed.**
- The woman has to give a **written informed consent** for the purpose and also be medically and psychologically fit.
- **No charges other than medical expenses** can be given to the surrogate mother or her dependents or her representative by the intending couple or woman.

Abortion

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- A surrogate mother can be **allowed abortion** during the process of surrogacy **only in accordance with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.**
- She also **cannot disclose the identity of the couple** seeking the surrogacy.

Penalty

- Offences under the Act include **commercial surrogacy, selling of embryos, exploiting, abandoning a surrogate child etc.**
- These may invite up to **10 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to Rs. 10 lakh.**

Regulation of Surrogacy Clinics

- **No Surrogacy Clinic can conduct or associate** with or help in any manner in conducting the surrogacy procedure unless it is registered under the law.

Major Challenges

- **The two Acts have been described as discriminatory** against the single man who may desire to become a father via surrogacy or the married woman who already has a child and is desirous of expanding her family through the procedure.
- **Disqualifying** other persons on basis of nationality, marital status, sexual orientation or age **does not pass the test of equality.**
- **Reproductive autonomy:** inclusive of the right to procreation and parenthood, is not within the domain of the State.
- **Infertility cannot be compulsory to undertake surrogacy:** the certificate to prove infertility is a **violation of privacy as part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution.**
- **India as Surrogacy hub:** India has emerged as a hub for infertility treatment, attracting people from the world over with its state-of-the-art technology and competitive prices to treat infertility.

Way forward

- **Surrogacy is legal in India.** But, making it **commercial is illegal.** It is a humanitarian act and is recognized by law.
 - Surrogacy comes under the reproductive choices of women and it is included as a fundamental right **under the purview of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.**

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The law on surrogacy came into effect from January 25 and provides a **gestation period of ten months** to existing surrogate mothers' to protect their well being.

Prior to the coming into effect of the laws, the **Indian Council of Medical Research had issued a 'Code of Practice, Ethical Consideration and Legal Issues'** for clinics involved in such procedures.

The guidelines said surrogacy by assisted conception should normally be considered only for patients for whom it would be physically or "medically impossible" to carry a baby to term and that a surrogate mother should not be over 45 years of age.

Source: [IE](#)

Facts in News

World Economic Outlook : Countering the Cost-of-Living Crisis

In News

- Recently, the International Monetary Fund released World Economic Outlook, October 2022: Countering the Cost-of-Living Crisis.

Major Findings

- **Globally**
 - Global economic activity is experiencing a broad-based and sharper-than-expected slowdown, with inflation higher than seen in several decades.
 - The cost-of-living crisis, tightening financial conditions in most regions, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the lingering COVID-19 pandemic all weigh heavily on the outlook.
 - Global growth is forecast to slow from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2023.
- **India** : It trimmed its FY23 growth forecast for India by 60 basis points from its July projection of 7.4% to 6.8%
 - IMF expects India's retail inflation to shoot up to 6.9% in FY23 before easing to 5.1% in the next fiscal, compared with 5.5% in FY22.

Growth cut

The chart shows India's economic growth forecast for the current financial year. The IMF's cut in growth forecast comes after the RBI and the World Bank revised their forecast for FY23



Suggestions

- Monetary policy should stay the course to restore price stability, and fiscal policy should aim to alleviate the cost-of-living pressures while maintaining a sufficiently tight stance aligned with monetary policy.
- Structural reforms can further support the fight against inflation by improving productivity and easing supply constraints, while multilateral cooperation is necessary for fast-tracking the green energy transition and preventing fragmentation.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News:

G7 Grouping:

In News

The Ukrainian President appealed to leaders of the Group of Seven nations for more air defence capabilities .

- The G7 pledged continued “financial, humanitarian, military, diplomatic and legal support after Russian forces launched mass strikes

About The G7

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- It is an informal forum of leading industrialised nations, which include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
 - As of 2022, G7 countries make up 10% of the world's population, 31% of global GDP, and 21% of global carbon dioxide emissions.
- **Origin** : The Grouping began as the Group of Six in 1975- with a meeting of leaders of US, UK, West Germany, Italy, France and Japan, as a result of the Oil crisis and global currency exchange issues that decided to meet annually.
 - Canada joined in 1976- making it the G-7. The EU leadership is always invited to G-7 meets.
- **G 8**: In the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union and reunification of Germany, Russia was added to make it the G-8.
 - However, after Russian wars with Georgia in 2008, and the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the club ousted Russia permanently.
- **India**: India has been a special invitee to the G-7 on several occasions in the past two decades- including 5 consecutive years from 2005-2009 during the global economic crisis.
 - This year PM Modi spoke about climate change, energy transitions and food security.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Principle of Seniority & Collegium System

In News

Chief Justice of India (CJI) U U Lalit has written to the government recommending his successor in the post, and as per the convention of seniority, Justice D Y Chandrachud will take over as the next CJI on November 9.

About

- The collegium which Justice Chandrachud will head , will potentially make as many as 18 recommendations for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court.
 - It will be an unusual collegium: instead of five members, it will have six.

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What is the Collegium?

- The collegium system of appointing judges evolved through three significant verdicts of the Supreme Court, known as the [First, Second, and Third Judges Cases.](#)
- The Constitution of India does not mention the collegium system; however, these three cases established that the collegium headed by the Chief Justice of India will have primacy in the appointment of judges to the higher judiciary.
- The Supreme Court collegium is headed by the CJI and comprises four other senior-most judges of the court.
- This collegium makes recommendations to the government for appointment of judges to the SC and of Chief Justices of High Courts, and the transfers of HC judges.
- A separate three-member collegium, headed by the CJI and comprising the two senior-most judges of the SC makes recommendations for appointment of judges to HCs.

Who is in the collegium?

- The ruling in the Third Judges Case, which gave legal backing to the current system of appointment of judges and created the collegium of the CJI and four senior-most judges, stated: “The principal objective of the collegium is to ensure that the best available talent is brought to the Supreme Court Bench.
- The Chief Justice of India and the senior-most puisne Judges, by reason of their long tenures on the Supreme Court, are best fitted to achieve this objective.”
- Generally, one or more of the four senior judges in the collegium would be a potential CJI candidate. The next in line is considered important to ensure continuity of decision-making.
 - For example, Justice Chandrachud, the senior-most judge after CJI Lalit, is part of the current collegium.
- “Ordinarily, one of the four senior-most puisne Judges of the Supreme Court would succeed the Chief Justice of India, but if the situation should be such that the successor Chief Justice is not one of the four senior-most puisne Judges, he must invariably be made part of the collegium.
 - The Judges to be appointed will function during his term and it is right that he should have a hand in their selection.

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- However, in the two-year tenure of Justice Chandrachud as CJI, a potential CJI candidate is unlikely to be in the collegium until May 2023.

What is a 5+1 collegium?

- Given the order of seniority, a potential CJI will enter the Chandrachud collegium only in May 2023. However, Justice Khanna will be the sixth member of the collegium from November 9, 2022 itself.
- This happened earlier in 2007 — when then CJI K G Balakrishnan took the top office, the collegium he headed did not have a potential CJI candidate.
- Justice S H Kapadia, who was next in line to be CJI, was invited to the collegium as the sixth member.

Source: [IE](#)

Doom Loop

Context

- There is a risk that **Britain's economy** could end up in a "**doom loop**".

What is Doom Loop?

- The doom loop is the **circle of vulnerability where a country's banking system can be severely hurt by volatility** in the price of the sovereign bonds they hold for reserves resulting in a contraction in lending provided by the banks.
- This contraction in credit, in turn, **slows the domestic economy, resulting in a further deterioration in the price of the sovereign's bond issues** as the government is forced to increase its borrowing to maintain services in a period when tax receipts are falling.
- The loop can also begin with the **banking sector if a contraction in bank lending due to liquidity or non-performing loan** problems sparks volatility in the government bond prices by slowing the economy and eroding confidence in the sovereign credit.
- The circle can also be activated by external forces such as a slowdown in global economic activity due to natural recession or trade friction

Source: [ET](#)

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Facts in News

Merger of Amul with Cooperative Societies

In News

- Amul will be merged with five other cooperative societies to form a **multi-state cooperative society** (MSCS).

About

- **Formed in 1946.** Amul is an **Indian dairy state government cooperative society**, based at **Anand, Gujarat**.
 - **The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd** markets its products under the Amul brand.**Amul spurred India's White Revolution** which made the country the world's largest producer of milk and milk products.
 - **Verghese Kurien (father of the white revolution in India)** is credited with the success of Amul's marketing.

Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel under the guidance of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** became the founding chairman of the organization.

The Amul Model of dairy development is a three-tiered structure with the dairy cooperative societies at the village level federated under a milk union at the district level and a federation of member unions at the state level.

Significance

- **The MSCS will ensure the export of the products after its certification** so that profit can go directly into the bank accounts of the farmers.
- **India has a huge opportunity to deliver milk to countries** like Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, and to explore this world market.
- India is the **top milk producer and has the highest cattle population** in the world. **Uttar Pradesh** is the highest milk-producing state in India

Source: [ET](#)

Business 20 (B20)

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Context

- Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) hosted a Conference on B20 Indonesia Global Dialogue in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industry.

Business 20 (B20)

- Formed in 2010, is the official **G20 dialogue forum with the global business community**.
- B20 aims to deliver concrete actionable policy recommendations on the priorities by each rotating presidency to spur economic growth and development.

G 20 Group

- G 20 is a group of 19 Countries + EU, together representing around 85% of global GDP, 75% of global trade, and 60% of the world's population.
- The members of the G20 are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union.
- Indonesia is currently holding the Presidency of G20.

Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE)

In News

- The Union Cabinet has recently approved the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for the North East Region (PM-DevINE).

More about the news

- **About:**
 - Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) is a new scheme for the Northeastern states which was announced in the Union Budget.

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- The scheme will be operational for the remaining four years of the 15th Finance Commission, from 2022-23 to 2025-26, and will have an outlay of Rs 6,600 crore.
- **PM-DevINE will target:**
 - The creation of infrastructure,
 - Support industries,
 - Social development projects and
 - Create livelihood activities for the youth and women, with a focus on job creation.
- These projects will include basic infrastructure in all primary healthcare centres and government schools.

Funding and implementation:

- It is a central sector scheme with **100% central funding**.
- PM-DevINE will be implemented by the **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)**, through the North Eastern Council or central ministries and agencies.

Time constraints:

- Efforts will be made to complete the PM-DevINE projects by 2025-26 so that there are no committed liabilities beyond this year.

Significance of bringing the scheme:

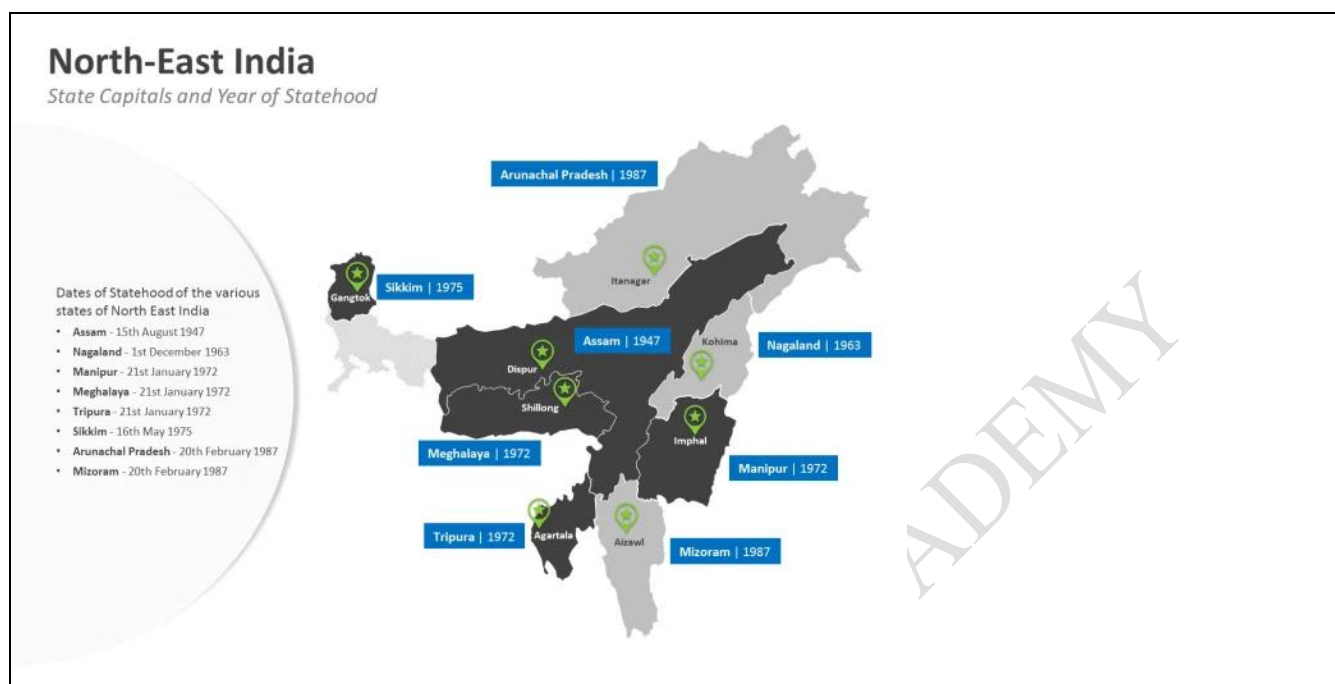
- The parameters of N-E states in respect of Basic Minimum Services (BMS) are well below the national average and there are critical development gaps as per the **NER District Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index 2021-22** prepared by NITI Aayog, UNDP and MDoNER.

Northeast India

- Northeast Region or The 'seven sisters' of Northeast India comprise **Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura**.
- **Sikkim** is also a part of the Northeast but is not included in the Seven Sisters because while the other seven states are contiguous, Sikkim is sort of a neighbour, divided by the **Siliguri Corridor**.
- Sikkim is also referred to as the 'Brother' of the Seven Sisters.

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Challenges to the Development of the NER

- **Difficult Terrain:**
 - North Eastern Region is majorly a mountainous region, except the state of Assam, which has plains as a major part of its area. This makes it difficult for the government schemes to be implemented in the area, because of the problem of access to the remote areas.
- **Backward Areas:**
 - Unlike the mainland, people of the North East Region are still content with a simple lifestyle and lack of technology in their day-to-day lives. The standard of living continues to be low, due to the absence of high-income generation opportunities.
 - For e.g., the farmers practice primitive methods of agriculture, with the tribals still practising Shifting agriculture in the country.
- **Connectivity:**
 - As stated above, the North Eastern Region is a landlocked region. Therefore, it has limited access to the sea. Similarly, it has a difficult terrain that renders expressways and wider roads infeasible.
 - This is complicated by the absence of railway infrastructure in the region.
- **Lack of Physical and Social Infrastructure:**

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- NER has complained of step motherly treatment from the mainland, especially in the context of development projects in the region.
- **Insurgencies:**
 - One of the major regions for the lack of development in the region is the lack of political and social stability in the country. The artificial boundaries of the British legacy have not been fully accepted by the tribal communities of the region, which is compounded by political opportunism.
 - The region is still caught in the vicious circle of violence due to political reasons and the diversion of youth towards the insurgent groups, which leads to a lack of skill enhancement and consequent lack of opportunity.

Government initiatives for the development of NER

- **North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS):**
 - The aim of the scheme is to enhance the physical infrastructure related to power, connectivity and water supply, and social infrastructure in the form of health infrastructure. It is a Central Sector Scheme.
- **Northeast Desk:**
 - Under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, a dedicated Northeast Desk has been set up within Invest India, which supports the Northeast States in their outreach activities to the investors as well as in facilitating and handholding select companies.
- **NITI Forum for North East:**
 - In collaboration with the NITI Aayog, the 'NITI Forum for North East' constituted for accelerated, inclusive and sustainable development in the North East Region has identified 5 focus sectors, viz. Tea, Tourism, Bamboo, Dairy and Pisciculture.
- **Mission Organic Value Chain Development (MOVCD-NER):**
 - The program has been implemented in the North-Eastern states since 2017. The aim of the mission is to promote organic farming in the region. It seeks to replace traditional subsistence farming with a cluster-based approach.
- **Sub Mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSP):**

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- It aims to increase the availability of seeds of the High Yielding Varieties of crops. The overall objective is to double farmers' income by 2022, as envisioned by the Government. The scheme is run alongside other support programs like KrishiVigyanKendras (KVKs), integrated farming systems etc.
- **Connectivity Projects:**
 - To create alternate routes to the region and decrease its dependence on the Chicken's Neck, the Indian government has planned additional routes through South East Asia like **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor, etc.**
 - **India's Look-East connectivity projects connect Northeast India to East Asia and ASEAN.**
- **Creation of separate ministry for the region:**
 - The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region is a Government of India ministry, established in September 2001.
 - It functions as the nodal Department of the Central Government to deal with matters related to the socio-economic development of the eight States of Northeast India.

Source: [BS](#)

Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022

Context

- Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022** after the announcement by the Union Cooperation Minister.

Objectives/provisions of the Amendment Bill 2022

- **Incorporation of provisions of the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act 2011:**

Regarding constitutional status and protection to cooperatives and guarantees democratic and independent functioning of the cooperative societies.

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- **Democratic governance:** The bill has provisions for setting up of cooperative election authority, cooperative information officer, cooperative ombudsman etc. to make governance of multi-state cooperative societies more democratic, transparent and accountable.
- **Reform electoral processes:** The cooperative election authority will ensure fair, free and timely elections and reduce electoral complaints and malpractices.
 - The Bill also provides for debarring offenders for three years, hence will bring in more electoral discipline.
- **Grievance redressal: The cooperative ombudsman** will set up a mechanism for grievance redressal of the cooperative societies members in a structured fashion.
- **Strengthen monitoring mechanisms:** The bill empowers the Central government to suspend the Board of a MSCS for fraud or embezzlement of funds or failure to conduct elections within a stipulated time.
 - It will also debar relatives of a sitting director to be recruited as an employee in the same cooperative.
- **Improved composition of the Board:** For promoting the professional management of the cooperatives, the bill has provisions-
 - To bring in co-opted directors with experience in the field of banking, management, cooperative management and finance.
 - The option of including the members having specialization in any field relating to the objects and activities undertaken by such multi-state cooperative society.
- **Enhance transparency and accountability:** The Bill proposes to appoint a **Cooperative Information Officer** who will enhance the transparency in functioning by providing the members timely access to information.
- **To promote equity and facilitate inclusiveness,** the bill includes provisions relating to representation of women and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe members on the board of multi-state cooperative societies
- **Improve ease of doing business:** The amendment Bill proposes-
 - To reduce the period of registration, with a provision for the applicants to seek additional time of two months for rectification of mistakes.
 - For electronic submission and issuance of documents, thus providing for a comprehensive digital ecosystem.

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- **Simpler registration:** Presently, India has nearly 800,000 cooperative societies of which around 1,600 are MSCS thus serve the interest of members in more than one state. For example, IFFCO, Kribhco and NAFED.
- **Increase financial discipline:** The bill provides for the Rehabilitation Fund for the revival of sick cooperatives and enables raising of funds in multi-state cooperative societies.
- **Regulation:** For cooperative banks, the banking functions will be governed by the Banking Regulation Act. However, all other operational issues will be regulated by the MSCS Act and its new amendments.

What are Cooperative Societies?

- About:
 - A co-operative society is a voluntary association of individuals having common needs who join hands for the achievement of common economic interest.
 - Its aim is to serve the interest of the poorer sections of society through the principle of self-help and mutual help.
- 97th Constitutional Amendment Act 2011:
 - It established the right to form cooperative societies as a **fundamental right (Article 19)**.
 - It included a new **Directive Principle of State Policy** on the Promotion of Cooperative Societies (Article 43-B).
 - It added a new **Part IX-B** to the Constitution titled "**The Co-operative Societies**" (Articles 243-ZH to 243-ZT).
 - It authorizes the Parliament to establish relevant laws in the case of multi-state cooperative societies (MSCS) and state legislatures in the case of other cooperative societies.
- **Important Statistics:**
 - Of the 1600 odd MSCS, the majority are in Maharashtra (570), followed by UP (150) and New Delhi (133).
 - Credit cooperatives constitute the bulk of the MSCS (610), followed by agriculture-oriented MSCS (244).
 - There are around 100 multi-state cooperative diaries and 70 multi-state cooperative banks.

Ministry of Cooperation

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- The Union Ministry of Cooperation was formed in 2021, its mandate was looked after by the Ministry of Agriculture before.
- **Objectives of creation** of the new ministry:
 - To realize the vision of "Sahakar se Samridhhi" (prosperity through cooperation).
 - To streamline processes for "Ease of doing business" for co-operatives and enable development of Multi-State Co-operatives (MSCS)
 - To provide a separate administrative, legal and policy framework for strengthening the cooperative movements in the country.
 - To deepen the cooperative as a true people-based movement reaching up to the grassroot level.

Way Forward

- The Bill is expected to be introduced during the winter session of Parliament.
- The bill if passed will enhance transparency, accountability and improve ease of doing business for the cooperatives.
- The Union Cooperation Minister had also announced bringing in a new national cooperative policy for holistic management and success of cooperatives movement in India.

Source: TH

Examining Demonetisation

In News

- The Supreme Court recently said that it will have to examine the 2016 demonetisation decision.

More about the news

- **Petitions:**
 - The petitions are challenging the demonetisation of Rs 500 and 1000 currency notes by the government.
- **Government's stand:**

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- Centre has taken the stand that in view of the subsequent developments and passage of time, it has now become an academic issue.
- **Court's opinion:**
 - The court wants to examine the 2016 demonetisation decision to decide whether the issue has become a mere "academic" exercise.
 - The court has asked the Centre and the Reserve Bank of India to submit their response to the petitions.
 - **Judicial review:**
 - The Supreme Court said that it is aware of the "**LakshmanRekha**" (limitations) on **judicial review of government policy decisions**.
 - But the manner in which it is done and the procedure is something which can be examined.

More about demonetization

- **About:**
 - On 8th November 2016, the Government of India announced the demonetisation of all ₹500 and ₹1,000 banknotes of the Mahatma Gandhi Series.
 - It also announced the issuance of new ₹500 and ₹2,000 banknotes in exchange for the demonetised banknotes.
 - **There were three main economic objectives behind demonetisation:**
 - Fighting black money,
 - Fake notes and
 - Creating a cashless economy by pushing digital transactions.
- **Outcomes of the exercise:**
 - **Black money:**
 - Among those targets, the biggest one was tackling black money.
 - Black money refers to cash that is not accounted for in the banking system or cash for which tax has not been paid to the state.
 - According to RBI data, almost the entire chunk of money (more than 99 percent) that was invalidated came back into the banking system.

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- Of the notes worth Rs 15.41 lakh crore that were invalidated, notes worth Rs 15.31 lakh crore returned.
- Thus, data suggests that demonetisation was a failure in unearthing black money in the system. Meanwhile, instances of black money seizures continue.
- **Fake Notes:**
 - RBI's annual report, submitted that ₹15.44 lakh crore worth of currency was demonetised.
 - The withdrawn money amounted to 86.4% of the currency in circulation at the time. Only ₹16,000 crore out of the ₹15.44 lakh crore was not returned.
 - Only .0027% fake currency was “captured” following demonetisation.
- **Digitisation of economy:**
 - As per RBI report, demonetisation has made India a lesser cash-based economy.
 - In the initial days of trouble conducting business in the face of an acute cash crunch, more and more entities had to shift to digital to do business.
 - After return of the cash, the growth in digital payment had been modest.

Supported in the Pandemic:

- The creation of digital infrastructure post-demonetisation helped India in coping with the pandemic.
- As the tools for faceless transactions were mostly in place, it became easier to move towards contact-less transactions.

Major Issues associated with the demonetization exercise:

No separate Acts:

Demonetisation in 1946 and 1978 were implemented through separate Acts debated by Parliament.

In 2016, it was done through a mere notification issued under provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.

Central Bank had rejected key justifications:

Central Board of the RBI gave its approval to the scheme but also rejected, in writing, two of the key justifications — black money and counterfeit notes.

Other:

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11 crore people stood in queue to change their own money.
Farming community was at a loss. It was sowing season.
Wholesale markets shut down. Prices crashed. Retail saw a “calamitous” drop in sales.
Industry halted and 15 crore daily labourers were left without work.
Some say demonetisation broke the back of rural economy where cash was dominated and disrupted supply chains.
It is estimated that 1.5 million jobs were lost.

Way ahead

- Debates still rage about whether the note ban was a prudent step in the Indian economic context.
- **Failure at large:**
 - An analysis of the data reveal that demonetisation has failed to meet its stated goals except in certain areas such as encouraging more digital transactions and more formalisation of the financial system.
- **The pain associated with the exercise has far outweighed the gains:**
 - While there certainly has been a discernible uptick in digital payments, it is doubtful whether the elaborate exercise to unearth black money — the stated and primary goal of demonetisation — was worth it.
- We as a Nation may not be able to undo something that has happened, but whether in the future such power can be exercised or not can be looked into.

World Economic Outlook Report: IMF

In News

- Recently, the International Monetary Fund has released its latest edition of World Economic Outlook Report (WEO) 2022.
 - It is a comprehensive report published **twice a year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).**

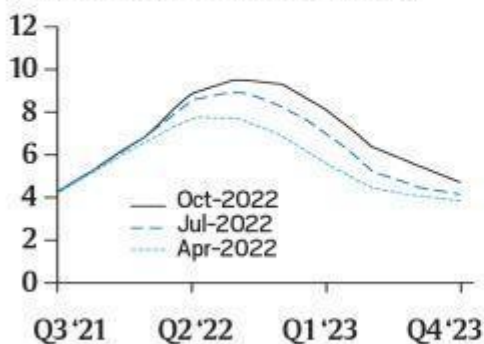
Major Highlights of the Report

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GRAPH 1

PROJECTED INFLATION PATH

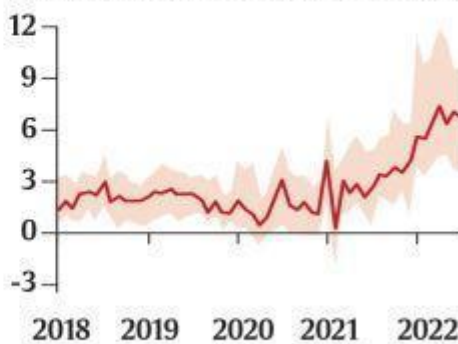
(for the world) per cent; year-over-year



GRAPH 2

CORE INFLATION

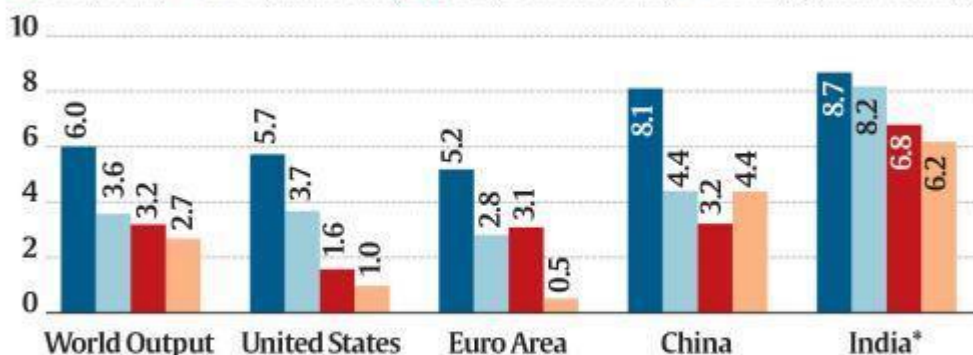
median; %; annualised month-over-month



GRAPH 3

OVERVIEW OF THE WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK PROJECTIONS

■ 2021 (actual) ■ 2022 (April forecast) ■ 2022 (October forecast) ■ 2023 (figures in % change)



Note: The band indicates 25-75 percentile range for each month. Group represents 89.4% of GDP of advanced economies, 75% of emerging market and developing economies, and 81% of world GDP based on purchasing power parity weights. *Apr-Mar financial year; Source: Haver Analytics, IMF, World Economic Outlook; and IMF staff calculations

- **The IMF has sharply cut the forecast for global growth from 6.0 per cent in 2021 to 3.2 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023.**
- It stated that more than a third of the global economy will contract this year or next.

Inflation: Global inflation is now expected to peak at 9.5 per cent in late 2022.

- It is expected to remain elevated for longer than previously imagined and is likely to decrease to 4.1 per cent only by 2024.

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Core inflation: that is the inflation rate when prices of food and fuel are taken away. Core inflation typically rises and falls more gradually than inflation in food and fuel.

- Global core inflation, measured by excluding food and energy prices, is expected to be 6.6 per cent on a fourth-quarter-over-fourth-quarter basis, reflecting the pass-through of energy prices, supply chain cost pressure, and tight labour markets, especially in advanced economies.

The three largest economies: the United States, the European Union, and China will continue to stall and that increasing price pressures remain the most immediate threat to current and future prosperity by squeezing real incomes and undermining macroeconomic stability.

High inflation and stalling growth is possibly the toughest policy challenge available.

- That's because policy measures to contain inflation typically drag down growth even further while measures taken to boost growth tend to spike inflation.

Geopolitical risks: The global economy continues to face steep challenges, shaped by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a cost-of-living crisis caused by persistent and broadening inflation pressures, and the slowdown in China.

India's picture:

- India appears **better placed**.
- **India's GDP growth rate is better and inflation is not as high.**
 - But these **metrics hide that in absolute terms**, India is barely out of the contraction suffered in 2020, that it was home to the most people (5.6 crore, according to World Bank) pushed below abject poverty in 2020 or that crores are unemployed.
- **If the RBI cuts its growth rate forecast** in April (7.2 per cent) by the same measure as the IMF has (1.4 percent points), **India's growth in 2022-23 will be 5.8 per cent.**
- **The threat to India comes from at least four sources:**
 - **Higher crude oil and fertiliser prices** will spike domestic inflation
 - **Global slowdown will hurt exports**, dragging down domestic growth and worsening the trade deficit
 - **A strong dollar will put pressure on the rupee's exchange rate**, which will likely result in reducing our forex reserves

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and reducing our capacity to import goods when the going gets tougher.

- **Low demand among most Indians**, the government might be forced to spend more towards providing basic relief in the form of food and fertiliser subsidies. This will **worsen the government's financial health**.

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- It was **established in 1944** in the **aftermath of the Great Depression** of the 1930s.
- IMF and the World Bank are also known as the **Bretton Woods twins** because both were agreed to be set up at a conference in Bretton Woods in the US.
- It is **governed by and accountable to the 190 countries** that make up its near-global membership.
 - **India** became a **member in December 1945**.

Aim: To ensure the stability of the international monetary system (the system of exchange rates and international payments) which enables countries and their citizens) to transact with each other.

- Its mandate was updated in 2012 to include all macroeconomic and financial sector issues that bear on global stability.

Financing: The IMF's resources mainly come from the money that countries pay as their capital subscription (quotas) when they become members.

- Each member of the IMF is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative position in the world economy.
- Countries can then borrow from this pool when they fall into financial difficulty.

Publications:

- World Economic Outlook
- Global Financial Stability Report
- Fiscal Monitor
- Global Policy Agenda

Source: [IE](#)

Living Planet Report 2022

In News

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- Recently, the **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)** released Living Planet Report 2022.

About Living Planet Report



NEED TO STRIVE FOR A BETTER FUTURE

WHAT IS LPR | Living Planet Report is **WWF's flagship** publication, released every two years, is a comprehensive study of trends in **global biodiversity** and health of planet

ABOUT LPI | Living Planet Index tracks changes in the relative abundance of **wild species populations** across the globe

- The LPI is continually changing with **838 new species** and **11,011 new populations** being added to the dataset since the 2020 LPR was released
- Populations in the freshwater LPI have been hit the hardest, **declining by an average of 83%**, with the addition of a large amount of new data confirming the results shown in previous reports.
- Only **37% of rivers** longer than

1,000km remain free-flowing over their entire length.

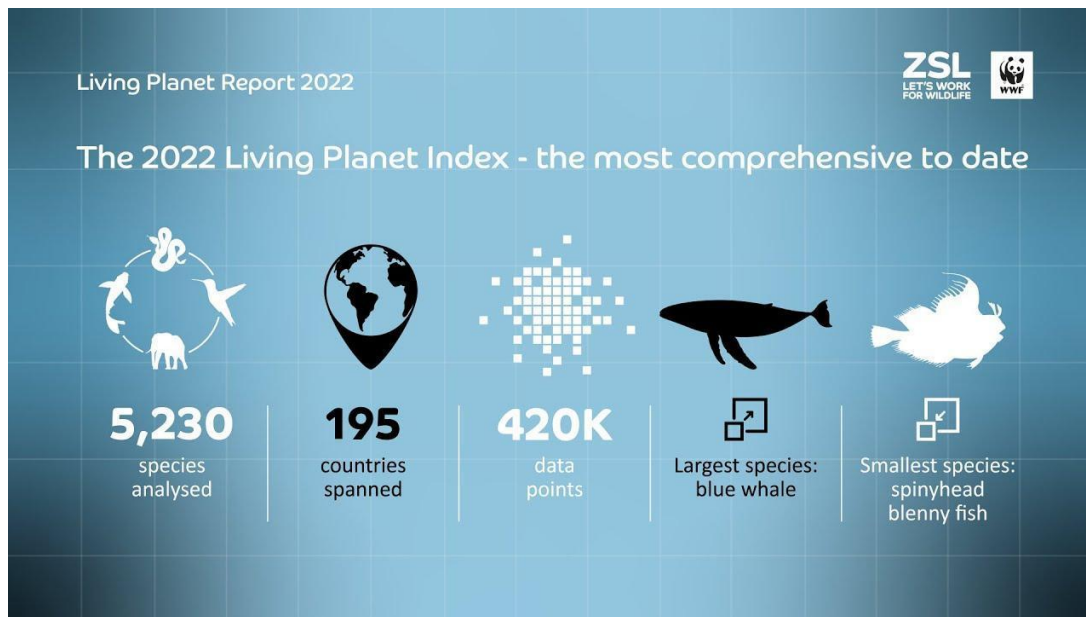
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPECIES & POPULATIONS
| Species and populations are **two levels of classification** of organisms in ecology. A specie interbreeds with each other, whereas a population is a group of one species that live within the same geographic area.

- Report says action is needed to reverse **biodiversity loss by 2030** and keep global warming to 1.50C.
- **41% land-use change** is the biggest current threat to nature.
- By moving to **sustainable, healthy, and culturally appropriate diets** we can reduce agricultural land use by 41% and wildlife loss by up to 46%

- Living Planet Report is **WWF's flagship publication**.
- It is **released every two years**.
- It is a **comprehensive study** of trends in global biodiversity and health of the planet. It tracks **changes in the relative abundance of wild species** populations across the globe.
- **The LPI is continually changing** with 838 new species and 11,011 new populations being added to the dataset since the 2020 LPR was released.
- There has been a **significant increase in the number of fish species (481)** that have been added to the Living Planet Report.

Major outcomes of the report

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- **Decline in Population**

- There has been a **69 percent decline** in the wildlife populations of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish, across the globe in the last 50 years.
- The **freshwater populations have declined the most**, with an average 83% decline between 1970 and 2018.
- The IUCN Red List shows **cycads, an ancient group of seed plants, are the most threatened species**, while corals are declining the fastest, followed by amphibians.

Region wise assessment

- The highest decline (94 percent) was in **Latin America and the Caribbean region**.
- **Africa** recorded a 66 per cent fall in its wildlife populations from 1970-2018.
- **Asia Pacific's** monitored populations fell by 55%.
- **Southeast Asia** is the region where species are most likely to face threats at a significant level.
- **The Polar Regions and the east coast of Australia and South Africa** showed the highest impact probabilities for climate change, driven in particular by impact on birds.

Mangroves

- Mangroves continue to be lost to aquaculture, agriculture and coastal development at a rate of **0.13 percent per year**.

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- Mangrove-loss represents **loss of habitat for biodiversity** and the loss of ecosystem services for coastal communities.
- Around 137 square kilometres of the **Sundarbans mangrove forest in India and Bangladesh** has been eroded since 1985, reducing land and ecosystem services for many of the 10 million people who live there.

Corals

- About **50% of warm water corals have already been lost** and a warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius will lead to a loss of **70-90% of warm water corals**.
 - **The Bramble Cay melomys**, a small Australian rodent, was declared extinct after sea-level rise.

Sharks

- The global abundance of **18 of 31 oceanic sharks has declined by 71% over the last 50 years** and the report said that by 2020 three-quarters of sharks and rays were threatened with extinction.

Others

- Only 37% of **rivers** longer than 1,000km remain free-flowing over their entire length.
- 41% **land-use change** is the biggest current threat to nature.
- Report says action is needed to **reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and keep global warming to 1.5°C**.
- By moving to sustainable, healthy, and culturally appropriate diets we can **reduce agricultural land** use by 41% and wildlife loss by up to 46%.

India specific study

- **The Himalayan region and the Western Ghats** are some of the most vulnerable regions in the country in terms of biodiversity loss, and where increased biodiversity loss is expected in future if temperatures are to increase.
- India has seen a **decline in population of the likes of honeybees and 17 species of freshwater turtles** in this period.

Difference between species & populations

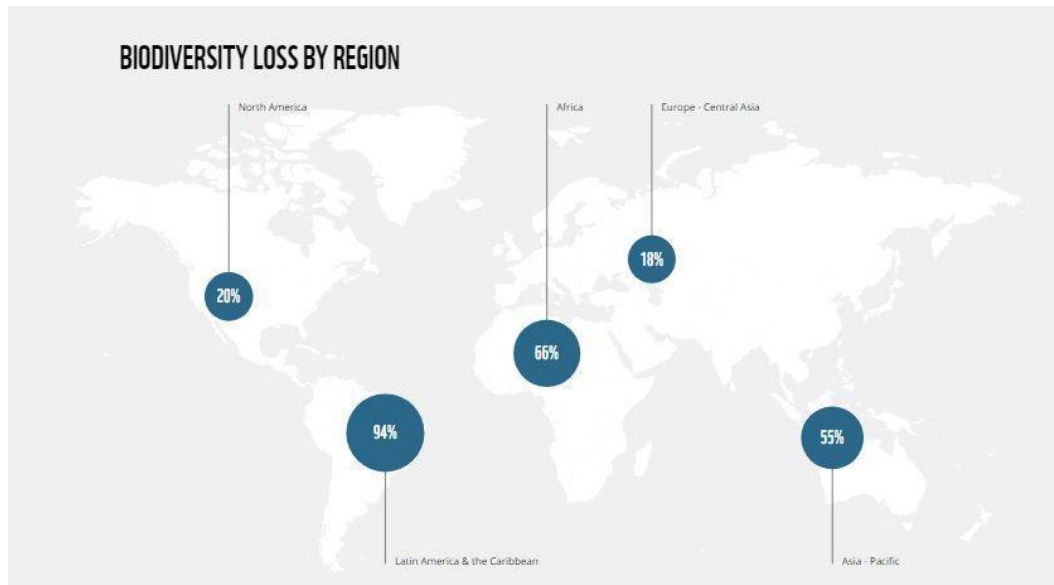
- Species and populations are two levels of classification of organisms in

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ecology.

- Species interbreeds with each other, whereas a population is a group of one species that live within the same geographic area.

Challenges cited by the report



- **Habitat loss and barriers to migration routes** were responsible for about half of the threats to monitored migratory fish species.
- **WWF identified six key threats to biodiversity:** agriculture, hunting, logging, pollution, invasive species and climate change to highlight 'threat hotspots' for terrestrial vertebrates.
- **Land-use change is still the biggest current threat to nature:** destroying or fragmenting the natural habitats of many plant and animal species on land, in freshwater and in the sea.
- **We are facing the double emergencies of human-induced climate change and biodiversity loss:** threatening the well-being of current and future generations.
- **Many mangroves are degraded** by overexploitation and pollution, alongside natural stressors such as storms and coastal erosion.
- **Climate change in India** will impact key areas, such as water resources, agriculture, natural ecosystems, health and the food chain.
- **Agriculture is the most prevalent threat to amphibians** (animals that live both on land and in water), whereas **hunting and trapping are most likely to threaten birds and mammals.**

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Way Forward

- **Interlink-age**
 - The international wildlife conservation organisation said that the biodiversity loss and climate crisis should be dealt with as one instead of two different issues as they are intertwined.
- **A nature-positive future**
 - It needs transformative, game-changing shifts in how we produce, how we consume, how we govern and what we finance.
- **All-inclusive collective approach**
 - There is a need for an all-inclusive collective approach that can put us on a more sustainable path and ensures that the costs and benefits from our actions are socially just and equitably shared.

Source: [DTE](#)

Facts in News

Interpol

In News

- Recently, the Interpol has rejected a second request by India to **issue a Red Corner Notice** against the Canada-based founder and legal advisor of the pro-Khalistan outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ).

Red Notice

- It is a request to **law enforcement worldwide to locate and provisionally arrest a person pending extradition**, surrender, or similar legal action.
- It contains two main types of information:
 - Information to identify the wanted person, such as their name, date of birth, nationality, hair and eye colour, photographs and fingerprints if available.
 - Information related to the crime they are wanted for, which can typically be murder, rape, child abuse or armed robbery.
- Red Notices are published by INTERPOL at the request of a member country, and must comply with INTERPOL's Constitution and Rules.
- A Red Notice is not an international arrest warrant.

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TYPES OF INTERPOL NOTICES



RED NOTICE: To seek the location and arrest of wanted persons with a view to extradition or similar lawful action.



YELLOW NOTICE: To help locate missing persons, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.



BLUE NOTICE: To collect additional information about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a crime.



BLACK NOTICE: To seek information on unidentified bodies.



GREEN NOTICE: To provide warnings and intelligence about persons who have committed criminal offences and are likely to repeat these crimes in other countries.



ORANGE NOTICE: To warn of an event, a person, an object or a process representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.



INTERPOL-UN SECURITY COUNCIL SPECIAL NOTICE: Issued for groups and individuals who are the targets of UN Security Council sanctions committees.



PURPLE NOTICE: To seek or provide information on modus operandi, objects, devices and concealment methods used by criminals.

Source: www.interpol.int

NATION GRAPHICS

Interpol

- Its full name is the **International Criminal Police Organisation** and is an intergovernmental organisation .
- It has **195 member countries** and it helps police in all of them to work together to make the world a safer place.
- It is headquartered in **Lyon, France**.
- In each country, an INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB) provides the central point of contact for the General Secretariat and other NCBs.
 - An NCB is run by **national police officials and usually sits** in the government ministry responsible for policing.
 - The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** is designated as the **National Central Bureau of India**.

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Source: [IE](#)

Facts in News:

SALT Project:

In News

- Recently, the World Bank extended an unconditional loan of \$250 million for the SALT project in Andhra Pradesh.

SALT Project

- **About:**
 - **Supporting Andhra's Learning Transformation (SALT)** is a project undertaken by the **Government of Andhra Pradesh** with support from the **World Bank**.
 - The SALT is the **first project in the school education sector** to be funded by the **World Bank without any precondition**.

Aim:

- **To transform the state's school education system** by strengthening the **quality of foundational learning** through various pathways including improving teacher professional development, classroom-based assessments and early childhood education.
- Establishing and strengthening foundation schools is in tune with the **National Education Policy, 2020**.

Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Revised 'BetiBachaoBetiPadhao' Scheme

In News

The Central government announced the inclusion of skilling of girls in non-traditional livelihood (NTL) options in the 'BetiBachaoBetiPadhao' scheme.

About

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- The BetiBachaoBetiPadhao scheme has been revised and Some of the new aims for the scheme include
 - Ensuring 1% increment in enrolment at the secondary level and skilling of girls and women every year
 - Raising awareness about safe menstrual hygiene
 - Promulgating elimination of child marriages.
- **Focus:** The scheme will now also focus on increasing the enrolment of girls in secondary education, particularly in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects. Women have been historically under-represented areas such as technology.
- Through this initiative, girls will be given skill training in non-traditional vocations, thereby making them torchbearers of a women-led Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)

The BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (BBBP) Scheme

- It was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2015 at Panipat in Haryana With the objective of bringing behavioural change in the society towards birth and rights of a girl child.
- **Objective :** To improve CSR (number of girls per 1000 boys within the age group of 0-6 years) in the country and create an enabling environment for the all-around development of the girl child.
- Focus areas are:
 - Preventing sex selection
 - Ensuring survival and protection of a girl child
 - Ensuring education of the girl child
- It has resulted in increased awareness and sensitization of the masses regarding the prevalence of gender bias and role of community in eradicating it.

Source:TH

Facts in News

Slender Loris

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- In a first in the country, the Tamil Nadu government notified Kaduvur slender loris sanctuary covering 11,806 hectares in Karur and Dindigul districts.



Image Courtesy : [TH](#)

About

- The Kadavur slender loris sanctuary is to cover Vedesandur, Dindigul East and Natham taluks in Dindigul district and Kadavur taluk in Karur district.
- The government notified 'Kadavur slender loris sanctuary' under Section 26 (A)(1)(b) of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

About Slender Loris

- They are small nocturnal mammals that are arboreal in nature as they spend most of their life on trees.
- The species acts as a biological predator of pests in agricultural crops and benefits farmers.
- It has a wide range of ecological roles to play in the terrestrial ecosystem.
- The survival of the species depends on its habitat improvement, conservation efforts and mitigation of threats

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Source: [TH](#)

Facts in News

Flexi-Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV)

In News

- The Union minister for Road, Transport and Highways recently launched Toyota's first of its kind pilot project on **Flexi-Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV) in India.**

Flexi-Fuel Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (FFV-SHEV):

- **Characteristic features:**
 - An FFV SHEV has a flex-fuel engine and an electric powertrain.
 - It thus provides a dual benefit of **higher ethanol use and greater fuel efficiency**, as it can run for a significant time period on its EV mode, wherein the engine is shut off.
 - These vehicles will run on 100% petrol as well as 20-100% blended ethanol and electric power.
- **Significance:**
 - **Pollution:**
 - Pollution is a big concern in India and the transport sector is contributing to pollution.
 - Therefore, there is a need to encourage use of electric vehicles and vehicles that run on biofuels like ethanol and methanol.
 - **AtmaNirbhar Bharat:**
 - 6% to 8% increase in agricultural growth rate is necessary for 'AtmaNirbhar' Bharat.
 - It is important to convert surplus foodgrain and sugar into ethanol to boost the rural economy.
 - **Ecosystem of electric vehicles:**
 - Success of this pilot project will create an ecosystem of electric vehicles.
- **Global availability:**
 - Flex-fuel vehicles are available in Brazil, the USA and Canada.

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- Ethanol is a major alternate fuel used globally and Brazil has the highest average blending of 48 per cent.

More about Ethanol & Ethanol blending

- **What is Ethanol?**
 - Ethanol can be produced from crops that have high starch content like sugarcane, maize, wheat, etc.
 - It is primarily produced from molasses, a derivative of sugar production.
 - It is among the most important biofuels
- **Ethanol blending:**
 - Ethanol can be mixed with gasoline to form different blends.
 - This blending is done by the oil marketing companies in their terminals. Once blended, the ethanol cannot be separated from the petrol.
 - **Benefits:**
 - As the ethanol molecule contains oxygen, it allows the engine to more completely combust the fuel, resulting in fewer emissions and thereby reducing the occurrence of environmental pollution.
 - Since ethanol is produced from plants that harness the power of the sun, ethanol is also considered a renewable fuel.

Source: TH

Facts in News

Section 66A of IT Act

In News

- ◀ • Recently, the Supreme Court directed that **no person should be prosecuted** under Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which has been struck down.

Key Points

- **Court's Stand:**

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- The SC ordered not to register any complaint with respect to violation of Section 66A.
- It said that in all cases where citizens are facing prosecution for violations of Section 66A, the reference and reliance upon 66A shall stand deleted.
- Section 66A was held **unconstitutional** by the court in the **Shreya Singhal case** in 2015.
- **About Section 66A of IT Act:**
 - Introduced in 2008 by the amendments to the IT Act, 2000
 - It provided the government with **power to arrest and imprison** an individual for allegedly “**offensive and menacing**” **online posts**.
 - **Punishment:** It prescribed that a conviction could fetch a **maximum of three years** in jail.
 - **Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India:** In 2015, the SC struck down the law calling it **open-ended and unconstitutionally vague**, and thus expanded the contours of free speech to the Internet.

Source: [IE](#)