

A House Journal of **APTI PLUS**

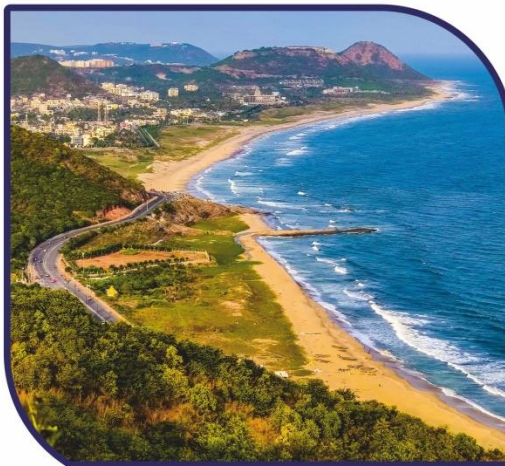
WBCS GAZETTE



APTI PLUS

Academy for Civil Services Pvt. Ltd.

**FEB
2023**



- ✓ Visakhapatnam
- ✓ Earthquakes
- ✓ Marburg Virus Disease
- ✓ FIFA Club World Cup



IAS GYAN
PREDICT THE UNPREDICTABLE

A MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS FOR ASPIRANTS OF WBCS EXAMINATION

INDEX

WEST BENGAL	4
NATIONAL	5
INTERNATIONAL	39
ECONOMICS	50
WEST BENGAL BUDGET 2023-2024	65
DEFENCE and SECURITY	69
SCIENCE	73
SPORTS	80
ENVIRONMENTS	82
OBITUARIES	85
APPOINTMENTS	86
AWARDS	91
BOOKS & AUTHOR	92
BOOSTER DONE	93
PRACTICE QUESTIONS	99



Our Super Achievers in WBCS 2020



MONOJIT CHOWDHURY
RANK 2

GROUP A



MRINMOY MAJI
RANK 45



ABHIK PATLA
RANK 46



ARGHYA BHATTACHARYA
RANK 54



BANANI MAJUMDER
RANK 83



CHANDAN SAHA
RANK 101



DEBNATH MAHATA
RANK 111

GROUP B



AMIT TAMANG
RANK 115



JAGONNATH BISWAS
RANK 161



SUBRATA DAS
RANK 166



UDAYAN
RANK 13



RAJARSHI
RANK 22

Congratulation Toppers!

WEST BENGAL

Visva-Bharti becomes the first living heritage university.

- Visva-Bharati University will soon get the **'heritage' tag from UNESCO**. Normally heritage tag is given to a dead monument. For the first time in the world, a functioning living university will get the heritage tag from UNESCO.
 - **Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakraborty** of Visva-Bharati University stated, "The university is going to be declared a heritage university... it will be the first heritage university in the world."
- The university was named after Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore when it was **established in 1921** on 1,130 acres of land, until the Visva Bharati Society was formed as an organisation in May 1922. Rabindranath gave some of his property, including land and a bungalow, to the society.
- It was a college until Independence, and in 1951 a central act gave it the status of a Central University. Rabindranath Tagore, the son of Rabindranath Tagore, served as the university's first vice-chancellor, while Amartya Sen's grandfather served as the institution's second vice-chancellor.
- The UNESCO website states: "In 1922, Visva Bharati was established as a Centre for Culture with learning in the arts, language, humanities, and music; these are reflected in various institutes that continue in their educational programmes, which are based on the founding principles of excellence in culture and culture studies. These perform the functions of institutes for Hindi studies (Hindi Bhavan), Sino-Asian studies (Cheena Bhavan), the humanities (Vidya Bhavan), the fine arts (Kala Bhavan), and music (Sangit Bhavan)."

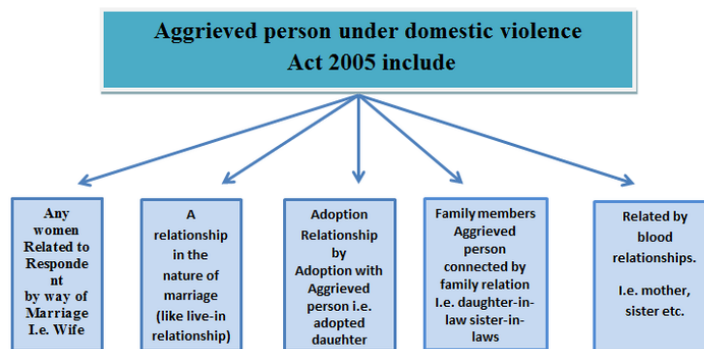
Sarna Religion

- The State Government of West Bengal declared that soon they will introduce a motion in the State Assembly to recognize the Sarna religion of the tribals.
- The state government's decision to recognize Sarna dharma is seen as an attempt to reach out to the tribal population for upcoming Panchayat polls.
- **Sarnaism is a religious belief based on worship at Sarna**, the sacred groves in the Chota Nagpur Plateau region in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
 - The highest number of followers of the Sarna religion is in Jharkhand, followed by West Bengal.
- According to local belief, a village deity resides in the sarna, where sacrifice is offered twice a year.
 - Their belief system is alternatively known as "Sarna Dharma", or "Religion of the Holy Woods".
- The followers of Satanism worship a village deity as the protector of a village called Gaon khunt, Gram deoti, Singbonga, or by other names by different tribes.
 - The Supporters also worship Dharti ayo or Chalapachho Devi, the mother goddess identified as the earth or nature.
- The main festival of Sarnaism is Sarhul, a festival in which devotees worship their ancestors.
- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has suggested that the Sarna religion be accorded an independent category in the religion code of the Census of India.
 - Several tribal organisations and Christian missionaries are demanding a distinct census code for Sarnaism.
- The followers of the Sarna faith believe in "Jal, Jungle, Zameen" and its followers pray to the trees and hills while believing in protecting the forest areas.
- Nearly 50 lakhs tribal in the entire country put their religion as 'Sarna' in the 2011 census, although it was not an officially recognised religion.
 - While many follow the Hindu religion, some have converted to Christianity.
- Recently, the Jharkhand government convened a special session and passed a resolution to send the Centre a letter to recognise the Sarna religion and include it as a separate code in the Census of 2021.

NATIONAL

Domestic Violence Act

- The Delhi High Court ruled that the **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act does not extend to a male member of the family**, notably the husband.
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 was passed by the Indian Parliament to strengthen the protection of women's constitutionally granted rights who become victims of domestic abuse and other similar situations.
- Domestic violence, as defined by the Act, is any act of physical, sexual, verbal, or economic abuse that endangers the safety, life, health, or well-being of the victimised woman. Additionally, it covers any abuse or injury done to the offended woman or a member of her family to force them to fulfil an illegal dowry demand. This definition includes threats of violence as well.
 - The legal definition of "domestic violence" is provided in Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Act of 2005. It applies to all women, regardless of their age, marital status, or religious preferences.
- The Act allows for the appointment of Protection Officers and recognizes the role of Service Providers. Protection Officers work with the police where necessary to carry out the Court's directives.



31st Foundation Day celebration of the National Commission for Women

- The Commission has organized a two-day event to celebrate its **31st Foundation Day from 31st January 2023 to 1st February 2023**.
- The **theme of the programme was 'Sashakt Nari Sashakt Bharat'** aimed at acknowledging and celebrating the stories of women who have excelled and paved their journey to leave a mark.
- On this occasion, the President of India highlighted that the low participation of women in the workforce has been a major hindrance to the overall development of the country.
 - The President stated that 'India is the 5th largest economy in the world and now moving towards the goal of becoming a five trillion dollar economy. A more active role of women would help achieve this goal'.
 - The President mentioned that women's empowerment is not just about ensuring social justice but is also important for economic development.
 - While expressing concern over the uneven gender ratio in many parts of the country, the President said that it is the responsibility of both government and society to change this situation.

CONGRATULATIONS MONOJIT!!!

Our Mains Test Series Student
has reached the sky

Monojit Chowdhury

RANK 2, WBCS 2020

You make us Proud. Best wishes for your future.



National Commission for Women (NCW):

- In 1992, the **National Commission for Women** was set up as a statutory body under the National Commission for Women Act, of 1990.
- **The commission was set up to;**
 - Review the Constitutional and legal safeguards available for women.
 - Recommend remedial legislative measures.
 - Facilitate redressal of grievances.
 - Advise the Government on all policy matters affecting women.
- The Commission comprises a Chairperson, a Member Secretary and five other members that are nominated by the Union Government.
 - At least one member belongs to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively.
- The commission **aims to support women to achieve equality and equal participation in all spheres of life by;**
 - Securing her due rights and entitlements through suitable policy formulation.
 - Legislative measures.
 - Effective enforcement of laws.
 - Implementation of schemes/policies.
 - Designing strategies for solutions to specific problems/situations arising out of discrimination and atrocities against women.
- Rekha Sharma is the current chairperson of the National Commission for Women.

Andhra Pradesh New Capital

- The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh has announced that Visakhapatnam (also known as Vizag) will be the new capital of the State.
- The Chief Minister has highlighted that the state needs a new capital since Hyderabad, the capital of undivided Andhra Pradesh is now part of Telangana, and at present, the two states are sharing the capital temporarily.
 - On 2nd June 2014, some area from the northwestern part of Andhra Pradesh was separated to create 'Telangana' as the 29th state of India.
- Earlier the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh announced the development of 3 capitals for the state;
 - Amaravati as the state legislative capital.
 - Visakhapatnam as the state executive capital.
 - Kurnool as the state judicial capital.
- The state legislative assembly also passed the Andhra Pradesh Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, which provided for three different capitals for the state.
 - However, the state government's plan ran into difficulties because hundreds of farmers who had given up their land for the development of the capital city at Amaravati have filed petitions in the Andhra Pradesh High Court, challenging the government's decentralization decision.
- Due to legal difficulties, the state government decided to scrap the decentralization law. However, the state government continues to promote the decentralization plan.

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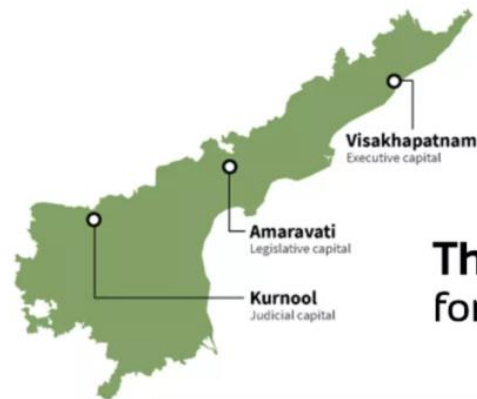
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MONOJIT CHOWDHURY RANK 2	MRINMOY MAJI RANK 45	ABHIK PATLA RANK 46	ARGHYA BHATTACHARYA RANK 54	BANANI MAJUMDER RANK 83
	CHANDAN SAHA RANK 101	DEBNATH MAHATA RANK 111	AMIT TAMANG RANK 115	JAGONNATH BISWAS RANK 161
				SUBRATA DAS RANK 166

Congratulations Toppers!

Visakhapatnam

- It is the largest and most populous city in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is located between the Eastern Ghats and the coast of the Bay of Bengal.
- It is the second-largest city on the east coast of India after Chennai.
- Visakhapatnam was an ancient Port city that had trade relations with the Middle East and Rome.
 - European powers established trade operations in the city, and by the end of the 18th century, it had come under French colonial rule. Control passed to the East India Company in 1804 and it remained under British colonial rule until Indian independence in 1947.
- Visakhapatnam serves as the headquarters for the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command.
- The city is also known as the "City of Destiny" and the "Jewel of the East Coast".



Three Capitals for Andhra Pradesh

Visakhapatnam: new capital of Andhra Pradesh

Justice Rohini Commission

- The Union Cabinet has decided to extend the period of the Justice Rohini Commission to submit its report.
- Many politicians and activities have criticized the move as the decision to extend the time limit was taken without any extension request from the commission.
- The **Justice Rohini Commission on Sub-categorization of OBCs** was set up in 2017 under Article 340 of the Indian Constitution.
- The Commission was tasked with sub-categorization of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and equitable distribution of benefits reserved for them.

Reservation System in India

- The Reservation system is an arrangement of affirmative action where a certain percentage of seats are reserved in Public employment and educational institutions.
- In India, the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and socially and economically backward communities who were earlier poorly represented in the Public sector and educational institutions are now covered under the reservation facility.
- In India, about 60% of seats are reserved for various sections like ST, SC, OBC, and EWS in Government jobs and Higher Education Institutions.
 - 3% of seats are also reserved for differently-abled persons across all categories.
- The reservation policy is also enforced for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for representation in the Indian Parliament.
- The reservation issue has also remained a cause of conflict between the reserved and the non-reserved sections of society.

Reservation Category	Reservation Quota (%)
ST	7.5
SC	15
OBC	27
EWS	10
Total	59.50%

Reservation quota in India for Government Jobs and Higher Educational Institutions

Advantages	Disadvantages
Equal representation from the different sections of society.	It encourages casteism.
Equal opportunities are given to deserving candidates.	Chances of creating more castes in the society instead of eliminating it.
Encourages implementation of justice and human rights.	The dominant class or the creamy layer gets the entire benefit.
Maintains an economic balance in the society.	It opposes meritocracy.
Acts as compensation for the injustice and mistreatment done to the backward classes for centuries.	It provides short-term relief but, in reality, harms the society in the long run.
Levelling of the society for the candidates from every section of the society to compete.	The privileged gets more privileged.
Equality is essential to implement meritocracy.	It acts as a barrier between ethnicities.

PM CARES Fund

- The Union Government has informed the High court of Delhi that the PM CARES Fund was not created under the Constitution or any law made by the Parliament or the state legislature, It was set up as a public charitable trust.
- Recently a petition was made in the court to declare the PM-CARES fund a 'state' under Article 12 of the Constitution to ensure transparency in its functioning.
- Arguments are given by the petitioner;
 - The Prime Minister of India and other Government Ministers have asked the general public for contributions to the PM-CARES fund. Government symbols or a government website were utilized for the donation.
 - PM-CARES "projects itself as the government of India" indicating that it operates on the domain name of the government of India and has the photograph of the Prime Minister as well as the Ashoka Pillar.
 - Public announcements made by the government functionaries, arguing that such persons making the statements are "people of responsibility"
- The Union Government has said that PM-CARES is not a public authority under RTI and it accepts voluntary donations by individuals and institutions and any contributions flowing out of budgetary sources of government are not accepted.
 - The composition of the board of trustees consisting of holders of public office ex officio is merely for administrative convenience and smooth succession to the trusteeship and is not intended to be controlled by the government in any manner.

PM-CARES Fund

- PM CARES Fund has been registered as a Public Charitable Trust under the Registration Act, of 1908.
- **Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund** and the Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, of the Government of India, are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.
- The fund consists entirely of voluntary contributions from individuals/organizations and does not get any budgetary support.
- Donations to the Fund would qualify for 80G benefits for 100% exemption under the Income Tax Act, of 1961.
- Donations to the Fund will also qualify to be counted as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) expenditure under the Companies Act, 2013.
- It has also got an exemption under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), which enables the PM CARES Fund to accept donations and contributions from individuals and organizations based in foreign countries.
- PM-CARES Fund is not a public authority under the Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005.
- The Comptroller and Auditor General's (CAG) clarified that it wouldn't audit the Fund as it is a charitable organization and is also based on donations from individuals and organizations.

- It would be audited by an independent auditor outside of the government.
- PM-CARE covers all children who have lost: Both parents Surviving parents or legal guardians/adoptive parents/single adoptive parents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, starting from 11th March 2020 the date on which WHO declared and characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic till 28th February 2022.
 - To get benefits under this scheme, a child should not have completed 18 years of age on the date of death of their parents.
- The total donation received under the fund is nearly Rs 11,000 crore, while the expenditure made from the fund is about Rs 3,980 crore, according to the latest audited statement.
- Rs 1,000 crore was granted for migrant welfare
- The government has used a part of the fund to buy medical equipment, including ventilators, to support the fight against COVID-19 and has also provided relief to migrants.

Quorum

- The recent Lok Sabha session adjourned due to a Lack of Quorum as Ruling Party MPs Left after the Prime Minister's speech during the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address.
- Quorum is the minimum number of members required to be present in the House before it can transact any business.
 - It is 1/10th of the total number of members of the House (including the presiding officer).
- Constitutional Provision:
 - According to Article 100 of the Indian Constitution, at least 10% of the total number of members of the House must be present to constitute the quorum to constitute a meeting of either House of Parliament.
 - For example, if the House has a total membership of 250, at least 25 members must be present for the House to proceed with its business.
- If there is no quorum during a meeting of the House, it is the duty of the presiding officer either to adjourn the House or to suspend the meeting until there is a quorum.

About Motion of Thanks:

- **According to the Article 87** of the Indian Constitution, "the President should address both Houses of Parliament assembled and tell Parliament of the causes of its summons at the start of the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the start of the first session of each year".
- **Content of motion of thanks**
 - The President's Address is the Government's policy statement, and it is written by the Government.
 - The Address includes an assessment of the government's many actions and accomplishments over the previous year, as well as the policies, projects, and programmes that the current government intends to pursue concerning major national and international issues.
 - The Address also outlines, in broad terms, the items of legislative business that will be brought forward during the year's sessions.
 - The president's message, known as the "speech from the Throne in Britain," is debated in both Houses of Parliament on a resolution known as the "Motion of Thanks."
- The House must approve the Motion of Thanks. Otherwise, it equates to the government's defeat. It is one of the methods by which the Lok Sabha can express its dissatisfaction with the government.

Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act

- Under Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000, the **Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** recently issued orders to **block 138 online betting platforms and 94 money lending apps on an "urgent" and "emergency" basis.**
 - The decision to block these platforms was based on a recommendation of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), which had received inputs from central intelligence agencies that some of the sites and apps were allegedly linked to China and contained "material prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India".
- Several police complaints have been received of extortion and harassment from people who borrowed small amounts through such money-lending apps. For example- The Cyber Police Station of Pune received 699 complaints of loan app crimes in 2020. The number increased to 928 in 2021.

Section 69A of the IT Act 2000:

- Section 69A of the Information Technology (IT) Act empowers the government to restrict access to any online content to protect the interest of;
 - Sovereignty and Integrity of the Nation.
 - Security of the State.
 - Friendly relations with foreign states.
 - Public order.
- All orders to restrict information or content must be recorded in writing.
- Social media intermediaries failing to comply with the rules and regulations are liable to be monetarily penalized along with an imprisonment term which may extend up to 7 years.
- The procedures for executing the provisions of the act are mentioned in the Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009.
 - Step 1: It mentioned that an officer along with an examination committee reviews the content in question within 48 hours of receiving the takedown request.
 - Step 2: Provide an opportunity to the author or originator of the content for clarification.
 - Step 3: The recommendations are then sent to the Secretary of the Dept of Information Technology for approval and then a request is forwarded to the social media intermediary for restricting access.
- Emergency provisions specify that clarification is required within 48 hours after the content has been blocked for specified reasons. Blocking Orders can be revoked after review or examination.
- Rule 16 of the act states that strict confidentiality should be maintained on all requests and actions taken, but without compromising transparency and accountability.
- The Act complies with Article 19 of the Indian Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression. However, Clause 2 of the article allows the state to impose reasonable restrictions for the same reasons as those for Section 69A.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy report

- The 2nd version of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy report was released by the chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM).
- The report underlines the value of language in education and the **use of appropriate evaluations and teaching methods to enhance outcomes**.
- It highlights the **unique difficulties faced in a multilingual environment** and captures the key ideas that kids need to understand to become good learners.
- The report says that **'It is important to understand the importance of integrating the medium of instruction and teaching in children's native languages'**.
- The report specifically focuses on the various projects that are being carried out at the national and state levels in cooperation with public-private groups.
- The report highlighted the initiatives taken at the national and state level to achieve foundational learning goals as outlined in **NIPUN Bharat Scheme**.
- The report's **findings focus on the significance of nutrition, digital technology access, and language-focused training**. Furthermore, it is suggested to carry out a variety of assessments of the linguistic system (including phonology and vocabulary).
- The report mentioned that the **system must include clearly defined outcome-based indicators on the teaching method and education** in India, as well as data monitoring at a national or regional level for measuring outcomes.
- The study serves as a benchmark for states and union territories as they can compare their progress towards achieving universal foundational education by 2026-2027.
- West Bengal maintained its lead while Uttar Pradesh stood at the bottom among large state categories in the second edition of the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Index 2022, an indicator of literacy among children below 10 years of age.
- Among smaller states, Punjab was at the top of the index while Telangana was at the bottom while Puducherry topped the index among union territories while Ladakh was the worst performer.

- Among north-eastern states, Sikkim was at the top while Meghalaya was at the bottom of the index.

Economic Advisory Council

- **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (PMEAC) is a non-constitutional, non-permanent and independent body that is formed to give economic advice to the Union Government, specifically the Prime Minister.**
- The council serves to highlight key economic issues from a neutral viewpoint.
- It advises the Prime Minister on economic issues like inflation, microfinance, and industrial output.
- **Terms of reference as defined by the PMEAC are as follows:**
 - Analyzing any issue, economic or otherwise, referred to it by the Prime Minister and advising him thereon.
 - Addressing issues of macroeconomic importance and presenting views thereon to the Prime Minister. This could be either suo-moto or a reference from the Prime Minister or anyone else.
 - Submitting periodic reports to the Prime Minister on macroeconomic developments and issues with implications for economic policy.
 - Attending to any other task as may be desired by the Prime Minister from time to time.
- The primary role of the PMEAC is to give a neutral viewpoint on economic policy matters that are referred to it by the Prime Minister. Additionally, it prepares a monthly report of economic developments that need to be highlighted to the PM. For this purpose, it closely monitors national and international economic developments and trends and develops appropriate policy responses for the PM.
- It publishes reports on the annual **Economic Outlook and Review of the Economy of India.**

Aarogya Setu App

- The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology informed the Parliament that the contact-tracing data collected by the Aarogya Setu app has been deleted from the government databases.
- The Union Government announced that the **contact-tracing feature of the Aarogya Setu mobile application (app) has been discontinued and contact-tracing data collected through it has been deleted.**
 - The step was taken as per the provisions mentioned under the Aarogya Setu Data Access and Knowledge Sharing Protocol 2020.
- According to an RTI application, the policy of contact tracing was discontinued in June 2022.
- The Aarogya Setu app raised some privacy concerns since its launch in the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The government stated that the app had helped it identify hotspots in individual districts to quarantine and monitor.
- The app was launched as a contact tracing platform by the Union Government during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The government's insistence on the mandatory use of the app for visiting key public places like railway stations, airports, etc.
- Since the easing of the pandemic restrictions, the app has been integrated with the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission. Aarogya Setu has transformed into a National Health App under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- Now using the Aarogya Setu app people can register for Ayushman Bharat Health Account (i.e., Digital Health ID) and leverage the interaction with healthcare providers and receive their digital lab reports from verified healthcare professionals and health service providers.
- Aarogyasetu helps to schedule online doctor appointments powered by eSanjeevani Application.
- Aarogyasetu helps to schedule/reschedule/cancel appointments for covid-19 vaccination.
- Using Aarogyasetu people can download the vaccination certificate or can request changes in the certificate as well.

About Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

- The mission aims to provide a digital health ID to people which will contain their health records.
- Citizens can create their ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers, to link their digital health records. The National Health Authority is the implementing agency of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).

- The key components of this scheme, which is also called the National Digital Health Mission or the PM Digital Health Mission, are a health identity card for every citizen, a healthcare professional's registry, and healthcare facilities registries.
- It aims to create a National Digital Health ecosystem that supports universal health coverage in an efficient, accessible, inclusive, affordable, timely and safe manner.
- Significance
 - Based on the foundations laid down in the form of Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile (JAM) trinity and other digital initiatives of the government, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission will create a seamless online platform through the provision of a wide range of data, information and infrastructure services, duly leveraging open, interoperable, standards-based digital systems while ensuring the security, confidentiality and privacy of health-related personal information.
 - It will enable access and exchange of longitudinal health records of citizens with their consent.
 - This will ensure ease of doing business for doctors and hospitals and healthcare service providers.
 - This mission will create interoperability within the digital health ecosystem, similar to the role played by the Unified Payments Interface in revolutionizing payments.
 - It will ensure access to quality healthcare by promoting the use of technologies such as telemedicine and supporting the national portability of health services.

All India Annual States' Ministers Conference

- The **1st All India Annual States' Ministers Conference on "Water Vision@2047"** began today in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
 - The two days conference began with the auspicious 'Jal Kalash' ceremony by the Chief Guest and Dignitaries.
- Water Vision @ 2047 is an important dimension of the journey of Amrit Kaal for the next 25 years. It is the responsibility of every state to make water a subject of cooperation and coordination: PM
- Union Minister Jal Shakti said, "There is a direct correlation between economic growth and consumption of electricity & water. Therefore, there is a need to discuss water requirements and its availability at a macro level".

Water Vision 2047:

- India has made major strides in water security. Our Water vision towards 2047 will be a big contribution to Amrit Kaal. The nation is working together to build 75 Amrit Sarovars in every district.
- In our constitutional system, the subject of water comes under the control of the states. States' efforts for water conservation will go a long way in achieving the collective goals of the country.
- Public participation in water conservation has to be awakened in the minds of the public. The more efforts we make in this direction, the more impact will be created. A new chapter of Jan Bhagidari (People's Participation) needs to begin with multiple stakeholders from all sections of society. In the campaigns related to water conservation, we have to involve people, social organizations and civil society as much as possible.
- Industry and agriculture wherein the requirement for water is high, these sectors should run a water conservation campaign together.
- To address the water challenges 5P Mantra is the need of the hour: The '5P' mantra which includes Political will, Public financing, Partnerships, Public Participation and Persuasion for sustainability.

Representation of the People Act

- The Supreme Court of India has refused to comment over a provision in the election law that allows candidates to contest polls from two constituencies simultaneously. The court stated that "It is a policy matter and is related to representation in political democracy. Therefore it is under the power of the Parliament to take a call on this matter".
 - The petitioner has asked the court to invalidate Section 33(7) of the Representation of the People Act. The Petitioner highlighted that "Like one person, one vote, one candidate, one constituency is the core principle of democracy", and Section 33 (7) of the Representation of the People Act goes against the principle of

democracy as it allows a person to contest a general election or a group of bye-elections or biennial elections from two constituencies.

- The court decided to leave the issue to the discernment of Parliament.
- As electoral law stands today, a candidate is permitted to contest an election from two different constituencies. If a person is elected from more than one seat, then the person can only hold on to one of the seats that he/she won.
- Last year the Election Commission of India suggested Government bar people from contesting elections from more than one seat
 - The commission mentioned that when a candidate contests from two seats, it is sure that he has to vacate one of the two seats should he win both.
 - This results in an unavoidable financial burden on the public exchequer and the manpower and other resources for holding a by-election against the resultant vacancy, and it would be an injustice to the voters of the constituency which the candidate is quitting from.

Double Membership:

A person cannot be a member of both Houses of Parliament at the same time. Thus, the Representation of People Act (1951) provides for the following:

- If a person is elected to both Houses of Parliament, he must intimate within 10 days in which House he desires to serve. In default of such intimation, his seat in the Rajya Sabha becomes vacant.
- If a sitting member of one House is also elected to the other House, his seat in the first House becomes vacant.
- If a person is elected to two seats in a House, he should exercise his option for one. Otherwise, both seats become vacant.
- A person cannot be a member of both the Parliament and the state legislature at the same time. If a person is so elected, his seat in Parliament becomes vacant if he does not resign his seat in the state legislature within 14 days.

IEEE C-DOT Certified Telecom Expert Program (ICCTEP)

- The Government launched the 'IEEE C-DOT Certified Telecom Expert Program (ICCTEP)'.
- IEEE C-DOT Certified Telecom Expert Program (ICCTEP) was collaborated by the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) and C-DOT (Centre for Development of Telematics).
- This platform will offer a specially-tailored certification program that aims at providing quality learning in diverse areas of telecom.
- The key focus is on building skills that would accelerate the participation of students, academia, technologists, industry, start-ups, and other relevant stakeholders in developing globally-competitive Telecom technologies and solutions. The first program launched on the platform is on 5G and beyond.

Supreme Court Anniversary

- The Supreme Court of India celebrated the 73rd anniversary of its establishment.
 - **'Sundaresh Menon' the Chief Justice of Singapore (Indian origin) was the chief guest of the event.**
- The Supreme Court of India was inaugurated on 28th January 1950; two days after India became a sovereign democratic republic.
- The inauguration ceremony of the Supreme Court took place in the Chamber of Princes in the Parliament building which was the home to the Federal Court of India for 12 years preceding the Supreme Court's establishment.
- The Parliament House was the site of the Supreme Court for years until the court acquired its present building in 1958.
 - There are 19 Courtrooms in the various wings of the building; Central wing, East wing, and West wing.
 - The Chief Justice's Court is the largest of the Courts located at the Centre of the Central Wing.

More about Supreme Court

- The Constitution of India has established an integrated judicial system with the Supreme Court at the top and the High court below it.
 - Under a High court, there is a hierarchy of subordinate courts.

- The court enforces both Central laws as well as state laws.
- This single system of courts was adopted from the Government of India Act of 1935.
- The Supreme Court of India was inaugurated on 28th January 1950.
 - It followed the Federal Court of India, established under the Government of India Act of 1935.
 - However, the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court is greater than that of its predecessor, because, the Supreme Court has replaced the British Privy Council as the highest court of appeal.
- **Articles 124 to 147 in Part V of the Indian Constitution** deal with the organization, independence, jurisdiction, powers, procedures and so on of the Supreme Court.
 - The Parliament is also authorized to regulate the court.
- Originally, the strength of the Supreme Court was fixed at eight (one chief justice and seven other judges). The Parliament has increased the number of other judges from time to time.
 - At present, the Supreme Court consists of 34 judges (one chief justice and 33 other judges).
- A person shall not be qualified for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court unless he/she;
 - Is a citizen of India, and
 - Has been for at least 5 years a judge of a High Court or two such Courts in succession; or
 - Has been for at least 10 years an advocate of a High Court or two or more such Courts in succession or is, in the opinion of the President, a distinguished jurist.
- Every person appointed to be a Judge of the Supreme has to make and subscribe to an oath before the President, or some person appointed by him according to the form set out in the 3rd Schedule of the Constitution. In his oath, a judge of the Supreme Court swears:
 - To bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of India.
 - To uphold the sovereignty and integrity of India.
 - To duly and faithfully and to the best of his ability, knowledge and judgment perform the duties of the Office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.
 - To uphold the Constitution and the laws.
- The Constitution does not prescribe a minimum age limit for a judge to occupy his/her office.
 - A Judge of the Supreme Court continues to hold the office till he/she attains the age of 65 yrs.
 - A Judge of the Supreme Court may tender their resignation to the President even before he/she reaches the age of 65 years.
- Salaries and Allowances
 - The salaries, allowances, privileges, leave and pension of the judges of the Supreme Court are determined from time to time by the Parliament.
 - They are also paid a sumptuary allowance and provided with free accommodation and other facilities like medical, car, telephone, etc.
 - The retired chief justice and judges are entitled to 50% of their last drawn salary as a monthly pension.
 - A Judge of the Supreme Court, after retirement, shall not do legal practice in any court in the territory of India and shall not plead before any authority under the Government.
- Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed only through the collegium system and the government has a role only after names have been decided by the collegium.
 - Under the Collegium System, appointments/elevation of judges/lawyers to the Supreme Court and transfers of judges of High Courts and Apex Court are decided by a panel of the Chief Justice of India and the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.'
 - The word 'Collegium' is nowhere mentioned in the Indian Constitution, it has come into force as per Judicial Pronouncement.

Youth20

- The first Youth20 (Y20) Inception Meeting 2023 **under G20 started in Guwahati, Assam on 6th February 2023.** This is the first meeting of the 17 meetings which will be held all across the country culminating in the Youth20 Summit in August 2023.
- On this occasion, the Secretary (the Ministry of Youth Affairs) informed that Youth20 will encourage the youth and consult with them for their ideas for a better tomorrow. The Secretary highlighted the 5 themes of discussion at the Youth20 meeting;

- Future of Work: Industry 4.0, Innovation and 21st century.
- Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction: Making Sustainability as a Way of Life.
- Peace Building and Reconciliation: Ushering in an Era of No War.
- Shared Future: Youth in Democracy and Governance.
- Health, Wellbeing & Sports: Agenda for Youth.
- Each theme is linked with people in different regions of the country.
- Around 36 educational institutes of Assam participated in the seminars, debates, workshops, and quiz competitions organized on the 5 themes of Y20.
 - More than 150 Youth delegates from G20 countries are set to participate.
- The Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports will hold a 'Youth dialogue' with Y20 delegates followed by the launch of a white paper on various themes on 8th February.
- Youth20 is a forum for future young leaders from all G20 member countries to discuss, argue, and exchange ideas, to reach a joint agreement regarding the agenda of the G20 Presidency. Since the first Y20 conference was held in 2010, the host of the organizers changed every year based on where the G20 Presidency takes place.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports has published a new draft of the National Youth Policy:

- The new draft of the National Youth Policy presents a roadmap of 10 years for youth development that India would like to achieve by 2030.
- The objectives of the draft policy are aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- It aims to unlock the potential of youth to promote sustainable development in India.
- The draft seeks to ensure youth development in 5 priority areas;
 - Career opportunities and life skills for young people.
 - Employment and entrepreneurship.
 - Youth leadership and development.
 - Health, fitness and sports.
 - Social justice.
- The policy aims to promote the education system in sync with National Education Policy, 2020 to ensure;
 - Career opportunities and life skills for young people.
 - To ensure access to sustainable livelihood opportunities.
 - Encourages youth to revive the rural economy.
 - Generate employment via regional-specific strategies.
 - Promote entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship among youth.
 - Support the informal and emerging gig economy.
- Encourage the inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged youths in volunteering and leadership opportunities.
- Ensure the health and well-being of the youth, especially young women of reproductive age by strengthening preventative healthcare. Special care for mental health and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- Mobilizing technology and data to improve healthcare delivery to ensure access to quality healthcare.
- Empower the youth and ensure their safety.
- Strengthen the legal system for the quick delivery of justice.
- Special efforts to ensure social justice for marginalized and vulnerable youths.

Appointments and Transfers of Governor

- The President of India appointed new Governors in 12 states and the Union Territory of Ladakh. This includes both first-time appointments as well as transfers of Governors from one state to the other.
- New appointments;
 - Lt Gen KT Parnaik as Governor of Arunachal Pradesh.
 - Lakshman Prasad Acharya as Governor of Sikkim.
 - C P Radhakrishnan as Governor of Jharkhand.
 - Shiv Pratap Shukla as Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

- Gulab Chand Kataria as Governor of Assam.
- Justice (Retd.) S Abdul Nazeer as Governor of Andhra Pradesh.
- **Transfers of Governors;**
 - Biswa Bhusan Harichandan (Governor of Andhra Pradesh) has been appointed Governor of Chhattisgarh.
 - Anusuiya Uikye (Governor of Chhattisgarh) has been appointed as Governor of Manipur.
 - Ganesan (Governor of Manipur) has been appointed as Governor of Nagaland.
 - Phagu Chauhan (Governor of Bihar) has been appointed as Governor of Meghalaya.
 - Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar (Governor of Himachal Pradesh) has been appointed as Governor of Bihar.
 - Ramesh Bais (Governor of Jharkhand) has been appointed as Governor of Maharashtra.
 - B D Mishra (Governor of Arunachal Pradesh) appointed as Lt Governor of Ladakh.
- **Part VI of the Indian constitution** deals with the state executive under Articles 153 to 167.
 - The Governor, the chief minister, the council of ministers, and the state's attorney general comprise the state executive.
- Article 153 of the Indian constitution requires that there shall be a Governor for each State. Normally, each state has its governor, but the 7th constitutional Amendment Act of 1956 made it easier to appoint the same individual to serve as governor of two or more states.
- Article 154 vests the executive power of the State in the Governor.
- Article 155 says that the Governor of a State shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
- Article 156 provides that –The Governor shall hold office at the pleasure of the President.
- Article 157 lay down two qualifications for the office of the Governor:
 - He should be a citizen of India.
 - Must have completed the age of 35 years.
- The term of the Governor is prescribed as 5 years. He can quit at any time by writing the President a letter of resignation.
- Article 158; Conditions of the Governor's office as the following:
 - Shall not be a member of either House of Parliament or State Legislature, and if such a member is appointed Governor, he shall be deemed to have vacated his seat in that House on the date on which he enters upon his office as Governor.
 - Shall not hold any other office of profit.
- The Governor has to take oath/affirmation before entering upon his office, in the presence of the Chief Justice of the High Court exercising jurisdiction to the State, or, in his absence, the senior-most Judge of that Court available to faithfully discharge the functions.

Executive Powers of Governors

- The Governor is the chief executive of the state; all executive actions must be conducted in his or her name.
- The executive power of the state is vested in the Governor.
- He exercises it either directly or through officers subordinate to him.
- It has been held that ministers are officers subordinate to them.
- The executive power of the state extends to all matters concerning which the State Legislature has the power to make laws.
- All executive is expressed to be taken in the name of the Governor.
- All orders, instruments, etc are authenticated in the manner specified in the rules made by the Governor.
- Appoints the Chief Minister and other ministers are appointed by him on the advice of the Chief Minister.
- Appoints the Council of Ministers, Advocate General, Chairman and the members of the State Public Service Commission.
- He has the power to nominate 1/6th of the members of the Legislative Council of State.
- The persons to be nominated are required to have special knowledge and practical experience in respect of Literature, Science and Arts etc.

Legislative Powers of Governors

- The Governor is a part of the state legislature (Art. 168). He undertakes the following legislative tasks in this capacity:
 - The legislative Assembly is summoned, prorogued, and then dissolved.
 - Right to speak to and send messages to the legislature.
- No Bill can become law unless it receives the Governor's approval.
- He has the option of giving his consent, withholding his assent, or exercising his pocket veto over a state bill.
- He lays the reports of the State Finance Commission, the State Public Service Commission and the Comptroller and Auditor General relating to the accounts of the state, before the state legislature.
- He has the power to decide on the question of disqualification of members of the state legislature in consultation with the Election Commission.
- Without his recommendation, no demand for a grant can be made by the legislature.
- May reserve Bills for the assent of the President made by the Legislature.

Financial Power of Governors

- The annual financial statement is put before the legislature (Art-202).
- Without the Governor's permission, a money bill cannot be introduced in the State Legislative Assembly.
- In the name of the Governor, the annual and supplemental budgets are introduced in the Assembly.
- No grant request can be made unless he recommends it.
- The State Contingency Fund is under the jurisdiction of the Governor, and it cannot be used without his approval.

Judicial Power

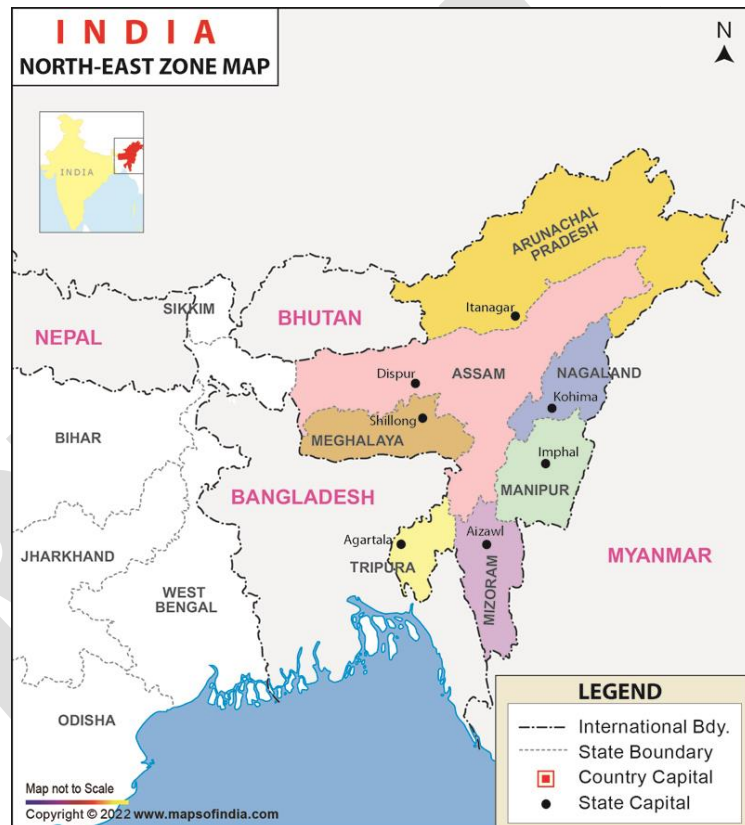
- When the president appoints judges to the State High Court, he consults him.
- According to Article 161, the Governor has the authority to suspend, remit, or commute the sentence of anyone guilty of violating the law that the state's executive power extends.
 - Pardon: the accused is fully free of any consequences.
 - Reprieves are temporary halts in the execution of the punishment.
 - Respite is a reduction of the severity of a penalty for a specific reason.
 - Remission: a reduction in the length of a sentence without changing its nature.
 - Commutation is the process of substituting one form of punishment for a less severe one.



Greater Tripaland

- A political party in Tripura announced that they are ready to ally with any political party that gives a written assurance to support their demand for Greater Tripaland.
- In Tripura, the demand to create Greater Tripaland includes the region under the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council and 36 villages, within the State boundaries.

- Many people are demanding that this area should be carved out as a State or a Union Territory.
- The objective is to secure the rights of indigenous communities in the state.
- In 2009, the demand for Greater Tipraland was raised by the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT) after it broke away from the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT).
 - The demand was to create a separate State for the tribal population of Tripura from the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC)
- The present demand goes beyond the TTAADC areas and includes nearly 36 more villages where the tribal population is in the range of 20 to 36%.
- According to the 1941 Census, the ratio of the population of tribals and non-tribals in Tripura was almost 50:50.
 - However, by the 1951 Census, the tribal population was reduced to nearly 37% due to the huge influx of refugees from East Pakistan.
 - According to official data, between 1950 and 1952, nearly 1.5 lakh refugees entered Tripura for shelter.
- The large population of refugees led to bitter differences and resulted in conflict between the tribals and the non-tribals, which escalated in 1980 and took the shape of an armed insurgency.
 - During this period, the demand for autonomous regions or separate statehood metamorphosed into sovereignty and independence.
 - However, after a political ceasefire was reached between the government and the rebel groups, the demand for statehood was revived.
- The issue has polarized an already tense relationship between the tribals and the nontribals.



Right to be Forgotten

- The Delhi High Court is set to hear a doctor's petition for the enforcement of his "Right to be Forgotten," which includes the removal of news stories and other offensive content related to his "wrongful arrest" in response to a "fabricated FIR" that he claims is endangering his life and personal freedom.
 - The doctor requested the Court to issue orders to respondents like Google, the Press Information Bureau, and the Press Council of India ordering them to remove all "irrelevant" news content harming his reputation and dignity and to issue any other orders or directions necessary to protect his dignity, including exercising his "Right to be Forgotten."

- The '**Right to be Forgotten**' is a **fundamental right granted to individuals in some countries and regions around the world**. It allows people to request the removal of personal information from public records that have been published online, such as on social media platforms, search engines and other websites.
- This right is seen as a way for individuals to protect their privacy and secure their data from unwanted access. It also provides people with a way to control how much of their data is accessible on the internet.
- The Right has become increasingly important in recent years due to the vast amount of data being published online and the potential for it to be misused or abused by those with malicious intent.
- The right helps to protect individuals' privacy by allowing them greater control over their data and ensuring that it is not used without their permission or consent.
- It helps in promoting digital privacy overall, as it encourages companies and organizations to take more responsibility for how they handle personal information.
- With this right, individuals can protect their privacy and prevent potential harm caused by outdated, inaccurate, or irrelevant information being easily accessible online.

Legal Status of the Right to be Forgotten in India

- According to Section 43A of the Information Technology Act of 2000, organizations that have sensitive personal data but fail to keep it secure enough to prevent loss or unjust benefit to anybody may be required to make compensation to the victim.
- In 2019, the Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology introduced the Personal Data Protection Bill in the Lok Sabha. Clause 20 under Chapter V of the bill titled "Rights of Data Principal" mentions the "Right to be Forgotten" as the right to restrict or prevent the continuing disclosure of personal data by a "data fiduciary". This bill is yet to be passed by the parliament,
- **The IT Rules, 2021 do not include this right**, but they outlined the process for making complaints to the appointed grievance officer to remove online material that contains personal information about a complainant.
- In the case of "K.S.Puttaswamy v. Union of India," a nine-judge bench noted the European Union Regulation of 2016 that recognised "the right to be forgotten," or the ability of an individual to request the removal of personal data from a system when "he is no longer willing of his data to be processed or stored" or when "its no longer necessary, relevant, or is incorrect and serves no legitimate interest". However, the court also recognized that such a right can be restricted in case of;
 - Right to freedom of expression and information.
 - Compliance with legal obligations.
 - Performance of tasks in the public interest.
 - Public interest in the area of "public health" or "scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes,
 - Establishment" and "exercise or defence of legal claims".
- After the Supreme Court's decision in the "K.S.Puttaswamy vs. Union of India," case (2017) the right has consistently been declared to be inherent to an individual's Right to Privacy under Article 21. However, it is not officially recognised by Indian law.

Vibrant Village Programme

- The Union Cabinet has approved the 'Vibrant Village Programme' for financial years 2022-23 to 2025-26).
 - It is a **centrally-sponsored scheme under which holistic developmental works are to be undertaken in northern bordering villages** and with an outlay of ₹4,800 crores. Out of the financial allocation of Rs. 4800 Crore 2500 crore rupees will be used for roads.
 - In the first phase, the programme will cover 662 villages, where job opportunities will be created to curb migration of the local population and sustainable economic activities will be encouraged.
- The Home Minister highlighted that Indian borders can be permanently secured only when border villages are populated by patriotic citizens; he also asked the border-guarding forces to use the Vibrant Village Programme (VVP) for the development of Border area villages.
 - The Programme was announced by the Union Finance Minister in her 2022 Union Budget speech.
 - Overall Administrative Control: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

- The Minister stated that the border-guarding forces need to strengthen the implementation of the Vibrant Village Programme on the ground to achieve the objective of securing the Indian borders.
 - The scheme must be used to encourage tourism in border villages, to make them self-reliant and vibrant.
- **Vibrant Village Action Plans will be created by the district administration with the help of Gram Panchayats.**
- **The program aims to;**
 - Improve infrastructure in border villages along India's border with China.
 - Improve infrastructure in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh.
 - To construct residential and tourist centres.
 - Improve road connectivity.
 - Develop decentralized renewable energy sources.
 - Provide direct access to Doordarshan, education-related channels, and broadband connections.
 - Create employment and livelihood opportunities
 - Reduce poverty and ensure socio-economic development.
- Existing schemes will be converged and their outcomes will be defined and monitored constantly.

Border villages with sparse population, limited connectivity and infra often get left out. Such villages will be covered under a new **Vibrant Villages programme**.

The activities will include construction of infra, housing, tourist centres, road connectivity, and support for their livelihood generation. Additional funding for these activities will be provided.



Jaadui Pitara

- To **improve the foundational skills of children (age group of 3-8 years)** to meet the target set under the National Education Policy the Union Government has prepared a curriculum framework which includes classroom learning based on toys, puppets and story cards.
- The Union Minister for Education has released learning and teaching material – called the *jaadui pitara* or magical box – to strengthen the foundational stage of schooling. The material also utilises technology and provides QR codes to enable teachers to access teaching resources such as poems, storybooks and flash cards.
- The Minister stated that the teaching material released will support the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Skills 2022 for students in *balvatika* (pre-primary) and Classes 1 and 2.
- The Minister highlighted that children between 3 and 6 years learn best through doing activities “such as talking, listening, using toys, working with materials, painting, drawing, singing, dancing, running, and jumping.
- The Minister announced that the NCERT will prepare the teaching material through a process of teacher engagement and the material will also include “conversations, storytelling, toy-based learning, songs and rhymes, music and movement, arts and craft, indoor and outdoor games, spending time with nature, and field trips”.
- Jaadui Pitara has been developed as a model of content that is needed in any school for the Foundational Stage; it has toys, games, puzzles, puppets, posters, flashcards, story cards, playbooks for students, and handbooks for teachers.
- It will improve the Poor state of learning; Recently a study carried out jointly by the Union Ministry of Education and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has found that;
 - 37% of Class III students have “limited” foundational numeracy skills, such as identifying numbers.
 - 11% “lack the most basic knowledge and skills”.

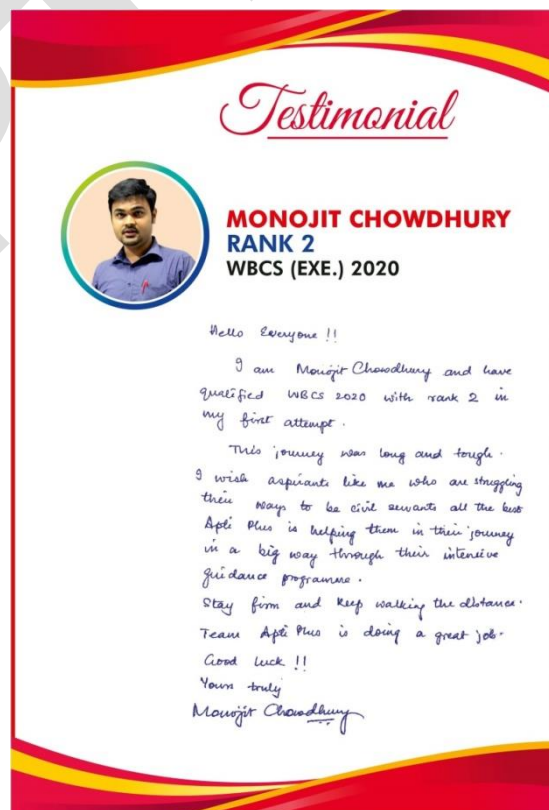
- 15% lacked “basic skills” in English.
- 30% were found to have “limited skills”.
- The Union Education Minister stated that “80-90% of the brain develops by the time a child is 6-7 years old. That is why the focus on building a strong foundation for better growth, development and learning in early years becomes one of the most important indicators for the development of a productive and efficient human capital”.

Anubhuti Inclusive Park

- The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways has laid the Foundation Stone of the **world's largest Divyang Park - Anubhuti Inclusive Park in Nagpur, Maharashtra.**
- The Minister said that the park is being developed to promote the Prime Minister’s vision of building an inclusive society. He said instead of sympathy, this park will show empathy; hence this park has been named Anubhuti Divyang Park.
- The Minister highlighted that the park will have facilities for all 21 types of disabilities, it will have facilities like a touch and smell garden, hydrotherapy unit, water therapy, and independent room for mentally challenged children and mothers.
- The Minister said that the Union government passed the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 for protecting the promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and to give the disabled the right to live with dignity.

6 Plus Admission

- The Union Education Ministry released guidelines to the States and the Union Territories that children must be admitted to Class 1 at the age of “six-plus”.
- The guidelines are in line with the government’s priority on improving foundational learning by bringing early childhood care and education under formal schooling and moving it from the aegis of the Women and Child Development Ministry to the Education Ministry under the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.
- The Education Ministry mentioned that the Department of School Education and Literacy of the Education Ministry has reiterated directions to all the State governments and U.T. administrations to “align their age to admission with the policy and provide admission to Grade-I at the age of 6+ years”.
- The Minister highlighted that under the NEP, the foundational stage consists of 5 years of learning for all children (between 3 and 8 years) which includes 3 years of preschool education and 2 years of early primary: Class 1 and 2.



PRAGATI

- The **Prime Minister of India chaired the 41st edition of the PRAGATI meeting.**
- In the meeting, 9 key infrastructure projects were reviewed;
 - 3 projects of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.
 - 2 projects of the Ministry of Railways.
 - 1 project each was from the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- These 9 projects have a combined cost of over Rs. 41,500 crores and they are related to the developmental work in 13 states.
- The Prime Minister urged the Ministries and State Governments to utilize the PM GatiShakti portal for the planning of infrastructure projects.
 - He insisted on the expeditious resolution of land acquisition, utility shifting and other issues for the timely completion of projects.
 - He emphasised promoting and ensuring proper coordination between central government ministries and state governments.
- The Prime Minister also reviewed 'Mission Amrit Sarovar'. He advised all Ministries and State Governments to complete Amrit Sarovar's work in mission mode before the onset of the monsoon.
 - Prime Minister suggested block-level monitoring for the timely completion of the target of 50,000 Amrit Sarovars.

PRAGATI Platform

- PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) Platform was **launched in March 2015.**
- The main objective of the initiative is **to introduce e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence** and exchange among the key stakeholders to develop a culture of Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation of developmental projects.
- The platform aimed at addressing the common man's grievances and simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the Government of India and projects selected by State Governments.
- The PRAGATI platform works based on three technologies:
 - Digital data management.
 - Video-conferencing.
 - Geo-spatial technology.
- It also boosts the principle of cooperative federalism, as it brings on one stage the Secretaries of the Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.
- With the help of this platform, the Prime Minister discuss the issues with the concerned Central and State officials with full information and the latest visuals of the ground-level situation.
- It is a 3-tier system (Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States)
- Prime Minister holds a monthly programme to interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries through Video-conferencing enabled by data and geo-informatics visuals.
 - The programme is generally held on the Fourth Wednesday (known as PRAGATI Day).
- Issues to be presented before the PM are selected from the available database regarding Public Grievances, ongoing Programmes and pending Projects.
 - The selected issues are uploaded 7 days before the PRAGATI day. These issues can be viewed by the Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries.
 - Union Government Secretaries and Chief Secretaries have to put their comments and updates about the flagged issues within three days.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) presented a report in the Lok Sabha that disclosed that currently, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is functioning with less than 50% of its approved strength.

- The report highlighted that the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) rules provide for the ST panel to have one Chairperson, one Vice-Chairperson, and 3 Members (2 among VC and Members must be from the ST community), but currently the commission is functioning with just a Chairperson and one Member, with all other positions, are vacant for the last 3 years. As on 31st January 2023;
 - The total sanctioned posts for the commission are 124, but only 54 posts are filled and 70 are still vacant.
 - Group A posts in the NCST are filled by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and Groups B and C posts are the NCST's responsibility.
- The commission has sanctioned one Superintendent of Police, one Law Officer and one Accounts Officer (all Group A posts), but no appointments are made to the post since 2004, and also the recruitment rules for them have not been framed yet.
 - Several key positions like Research Officers, Investigators and Directors are vacant.
 - Many positions in the Commission Secretariat are also vacant.
- The vacancy affected the functioning and effectiveness of the Commission.
- In the Parliament, the Government responded by making a statement that “the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes are in the process of filling vacant positions on a priority basis.”

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Indian Constitution through the 89th Constitution Amendment Act, of 2003.
- By the 89th amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely;
 - The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).
 - The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST).
- The separate National Commission for STs came into existence in 2004.
 - It consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson and three other members.
 - They are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
 - Their conditions of service and tenure of office are also determined by the President
- The term of office of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and each member is 3 years from the date of assumption of charge. The Chairperson has been given the rank of Union Cabinet Minister, the Vice-Chairperson that of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

The functions of the Commission are

- To investigate and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the STs and to evaluate their work.
- To inquire into specific complaints concerning the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the STs.
- To participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the STs and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union or a state.
- To recommend measures that should be taken by the Union or a state for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the
- To discharge such other functions concerning the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the STs as the President may specify.
- The President specified that the Commission would also discharge the following other functions concerning the protection, welfare and development & advancement of the Scheduled Tribes, namely:-
 - Measures to be taken over conferring ownership rights in respect of minor forest produce to STs Living in forest areas.
 - Measures to be taken to safeguard the rights of the tribal communities over mineral resources, water resources etc., as per law.
 - Measures are to be taken for the development of tribals and to work for more viable livelihood strategies.
 - Measures to be taken to improve the efficacy of relief and rehabilitation measures for tribal groups displaced by development projects.

- Measures to be taken to prevent the alienation of tribal people from land and to effectively rehabilitate such people in whose case alienation has already taken place.
- Measures to be taken to elicit maximum cooperation and involvement of tribal communities for protecting forests and undertaking social afforestation.
- Measures to be taken to ensure full implementation of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.
- Measures to be taken to reduce and ultimately eliminate the practice of shifting cultivation by tribals that lead to their continuous disempowerment and degradation of land and the environment
- The Commission presents an annual report to the President. The President places all such reports before the Parliament, along with a memorandum explaining the action taken on the recommendations made by the Commission.
 - The memorandum should also contain the reasons for the non-acceptance of any of such recommendations.
 - The President also forwards any report of the Commission about a state government to the state governor.
 - The governor places it before the state legislature, along with a memorandum explaining the action taken on the recommendations of the Commission.
 - The memorandum should also contain the reasons for the non-acceptance of any of such recommendations.

Powers of the Commission

- The Commission is vested with the power to regulate its procedure.
- The Commission, while investigating any matter or inquiring into any complaint, has all the powers of a civil court trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters:
 - Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath.
 - Requiring the discovery and production of any document.
 - Receiving evidence on affidavits.
 - Requisitioning any public record from any court or office.
 - Issuing summons for the examination of witnesses and documents.
 - Any other matter which the President may determine.
- The Central government and the state governments are required to consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the STs.

Museum Grant Scheme (MGS)

- The Ministry of Culture provides financial assistance for the digitization of museum collections under the Digitization of Museum component of the Museum Grant Scheme (MGS).
- The Ministry of Culture operates a Museum Grant Scheme (MGS), one of the components of which is the digitization of museum collections. Under this component, financial assistance is provided to Central/State Governments, Societies, Autonomous bodies, local bodies, Public Sector Undertakings, Academic Institutions and Trusts registered under the Societies Registration Act, of 1860 for the digitization of museum collections.
- **Museum Grant Scheme was launched in 2013.** The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance to the State Governments, Autonomous bodies, Local Bodies, Societies and Trusts registered under the Societies Act for setting up new Museums as well as for the development of existing museums.
 - The scheme also aims to develop at least 1 Central / State Government Museum located in a State Capital each year.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Supreme Court

- The Supreme Court of India started a project to transcribe its proceedings live using Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- The Chief Justice of India said that the project to transcribe its proceedings lives using Artificial Intelligence (AI) helps judges and lawyers. It will also help students in law colleges. They can analyse how matters are argued.
- The court transcription uses the 'Teres' platform which is used generally for transcribing arbitration proceedings.
 - The platform is run by Nomology Technology Private Limited, a Bengaluru-based company.
 - The platform will clear up the errors in the voice which cause a little bit of a problem.

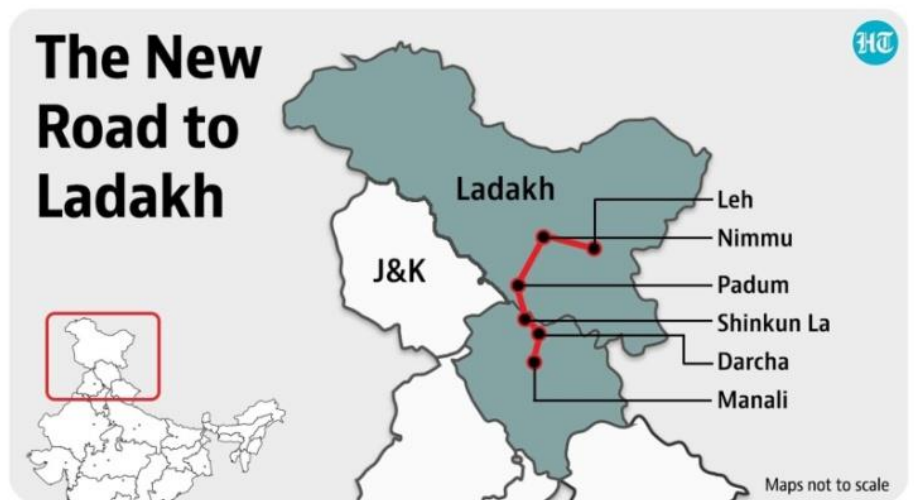
- The transcript will also be shared with lawyers who argued cases for verification and are likely to be uploaded on the SC website every evening.
- The transcribing is the second major decision towards making the court more transparent after the SC decided to live stream its proceedings before Constitution Benches.

Shinku La tunnel

- The Union Cabinet gave its nod for the construction of the 4.1-km Shinku La tunnel on the Nimu-Padam-Darcha road link to **provide all-weather connectivity to the border areas of Ladakh.**
- Shinku-La Tunnel, also known as Shinkula Tunnel or Shingo-La Tunnel, is a planned motorable tunnel linking Himachal Pradesh's Lahaul Valley and Ladakh's Zaskar Valley in Northern India.
- The Shinku La tunnel is a part of Project Yojak. This project is implemented by BRO. The main objective of the project is to make sure Manali – Leh route is accessible all through the year.
- The Ministry of Defence is creating Darcha-Shinkula-Padum-Nimu as an alternate road to connect Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh through the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- It'd be the third route connecting Ladakh to the main place, following the Manali-Sarchu-Leh and Srinagar-Kargil-Leh highways.
- After the Shinku-la tunnel is completed, the Darcha-Padum-Nimu or Manali-Padum-Nimu path would become an all-weather travel road which would be the safest and most efficient method of reaching Leh.
- Shinkula pass will be the only pass on this new road because the Atal Tunnel, Rohtang, has skirted the 13,050ft high Rohtang pass. The Darcha-Padum-Nimu route, unlike the Manali-Sarchu-Leh highway, has only one mountain pass – Shinkula pass.

22nd Law Commission

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the extension of the term of the 22nd Law Commission of India up to 31st August 2024.
- Before Independence: The first Law Commission was established during colonial rule in India by the East India Company under the Charter Act of 1833 and was presided by Lord Macaulay.
 - After that, three more commissions were established in pre-independent India.
- After Independence: The 1st Law Commission of independent India was established in 1955 for a three-year term.
 - In November 2022, Justice Rituraj Awasthi (Former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court) was appointed as the chairperson of the 22nd Law Commission.
- The Law Commission of India is a non-statutory body that is constituted by a notification of the Union Government, with definite terms of reference to carry out research in the field of law.
 - The Commission would have a tenure of 3 years from the date of publication of the Official Gazette.
- The commission's function is to research and advise the government on legal reform, and is composed of legal experts, and headed by a retired judge. The commission is established for a fixed tenure and works as an advisory body to the Union Ministry of Law and Justice.
- The Commission makes recommendations to the Government as per its terms of reference. Terms of reference for the 22nd Law Commission;
 - Identify laws which are no longer needed or relevant and can be immediately repealed.
 - Examine the existing laws in the light of Directive Principles of State Policy and suggest ways of improvement and reform.



- Suggest such legislation as might be necessary to implement the Directive Principles.
- Suggest some measures to attain the objectives set out in the Preamble of the Constitution.
- Revise the Central Acts of general importance to simplify them and remove anomalies, ambiguities and inequities.
- The recommendations of the commission are not binding on the government. They may be accepted or rejected.

National Science Day

- In India, **National Science Day (NSD) is celebrated on February 28 each year to honour the discovery of the 'Raman effect' by Indian physicist Sir C. V. Raman.**
- Sir C.V. Raman presented the 'Raman effect' on February 28, 1928, for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930.
- The theme of National Science Day 2023 is 'Global Science for Global Wellbeing'.
- In 1986, the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC) asked the Indian government to observe February 28 as National Science Day. Since then, National Science Day has been celebrated all over India in schools, colleges, universities, and other academic, scientific, technical, medical, and research institutions.

Aadi Mahotsav

- The Prime Minister (PM) of India inaugurated the Aadi Mahotsav tribal festival in New Delhi on the 16th of February.
- The Mahotsav will place a special emphasis on exhibiting Shree Anna grown by tribal people because 2023 is being observed as the International Year of Millets.
 - The United Nations announced 2023 as the International Year of Millets on India's insistence.
 - To boost the production of millets and increase their exports, GoI is launching several initiatives. One such is the tag name "Shree Anna". The Indian millets are to be sold under the brand name Shree Anna. To promote this, millets were showcased under the name of "Shree Anna" at the Aadi Mahotsav.
- Addressing the event, the PM said "Today, India goes to some of the world's biggest stages and presents the Adivasi culture as its own proudly – as a solution to global problems such as climate change and global warming. When people talk about sustainable development, we can proudly say that the world has a lot to learn from the Adivasis,"
- The Prime Minister also highlighted the important policies taken for the development of tribals.
 - More than 3,000 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras were set up.
 - 80 lakhs tribal Self Help groups created
 - Increase in the budget for tribal welfare.
 - Promoting Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs)
 - Increase in the number of forest products that the government was purchasing at the minimum support price.
 - Providing education to Adivasi children.
 - New Education Policy addressed the language barrier, which had been a problem for tribal children, allowing them to learn in their mother tongues.
 - Villages that used to be connected with separatism and extremism are now connected with 4G. The youth are now accessing the Internet and becoming part of the mainstream. This is the stream of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas which reaches every citizen of the country.
- The **Aadi Mahotsav 2023 highlighted and exhibited tribal artefacts, handicrafts, handlooms and other products** at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, New Delhi.
- The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED), an organisation of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, has been organising the 'Aadi Mahotsav' National Tribal Festival to provide direct market access to the tribal master craftsmen and women in large metros and state capitals.

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)

- In 1987, TRIFED was established under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984 by the Union Government.
- It was established as a National level Cooperative body, with the mandate of bringing about socio-economic development of tribals by institutionalizing the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them. TRIFED works as a market developer and service provider.
- Its objective is to ensure the socio-economic development of tribal people by marketing their products on which the lives of tribals depend heavily as they derive a major portion of their income.
- The approach involves capacity building of the tribal people through sensitization, formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and imparting training to them for undertaking a particular activity, exploring marketing possibilities in national as well as international markets, creating opportunities for marketing tribal products on a sustainable basis and creating a brand.
- To support tribal art and craft it organises the tribal art and craft exhibition called "Aadi Mahotsav"; where tribal craft products from all over the country are exhibited and bought by art lovers.
- The Aadi Mahotsav is TRIFED's flagship event. It features an exhibition-cum-sale of tribal handicrafts, handloom, paintings, jewellery, cane and bamboo, pottery, food, natural products, and tribal cuisine among other artefacts.

Nuclear Power Plant

- **North India's first nuclear power plant is coming up in Gorakhpur, Haryana**, about 150 km north of the national capital.
- The Gorakhpur Nuclear Power Plant or the Gorakhpur Haryana Anu Vidyut Pariyojana (GHAVP) is a proposed nuclear power plant to be built on a 560 hectares area west of Gorakhpur village of Fatehabad district of Haryana.
- Gorakhpur Haryana Anu Vidyut Pariyojana (GHAVP), will have two units of 700 MWe capacity each of pressurised heavy water reactor (PHWR) indigenous design.

First foreign university to establish a campus in India

- **The Deakin University of Australia will open its independent campus in Gujarat's GIFT City**, making it the first foreign institution to enter India.
 - In the QS World University Rankings, Deakin is ranked 266th and is one of the top 50 young universities in the world.
 - According to the Times Higher Education World Rankings, the university is ranked between 250 and 300.
- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 stated that "chosen universities, e.g., those from among the top 100 universities in the world will be permitted to operate in India."
- The Finance Minister had first stated in her Budget Speech in February 2022 that top international colleges and institutions will be permitted in GIFT City to offer courses in financial management, FinTech, science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
- In January 2023, the University Grants Commission (UGC) released draft guidelines for encouraging foreign universities and educational institutions to set up campuses in India.
 - The draft was open for public comments, and after getting and analyzing feedback from all stakeholders, the final guidelines were notified at the end of January 2023.

Key Points of the UGC guidelines

- A foreign university with a rank among the top 500 global rankings or a foreign educational institution of repute in the home country can apply to the UGC to set up a campus in India.
 - The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 also allowed top universities in the world to operate in India.
- A legislative framework promoting such entry will be put in place. They will have special power regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India.
- UGC will appoint a standing committee to decide on the application within 45 days after examining the institution's credibility, programmes offered, potential to strengthen educational opportunities in India, and proposed academic infrastructure.

- Within 45 days, the UGC may grant in-principle approval to the foreign institution to set up campuses in India within two years.
- The initial approval will be for 10 years, which can be extended.
- They can evolve their admission process and criteria to admit domestic and foreign students.
- They will have the autonomy to decide their fee structure and will face no caps that are imposed on Indian institutions. The only condition will be that the fee should be “reasonable and transparent”.
- They will have the autonomy to recruit faculty and staff from India and abroad.
- The courses to be offered cannot be online and open and in distance learning mode.
- The qualifications awarded to the students on the Indian campus should have equivalence with those awarded by the institutions in their country of origin.

▶ WHAT DRAFT REGULATIONS SAY

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ These varsities will have the freedom to decide on admission criteria and fee structure ■ The commission has advised keeping the fees “reasonable and transparent” ■ The foreign institution shall have the autonomy to recruit faculty/staff from India/abroad ■ The varsity to ensure that the foreign faculty stay at the campus for a reasonable period 	<h3 style="color: #0070C0;">WHAT IT ENVISAGES</h3> <p>The regulatory framework allowing the entry of higher-ranked foreign varsities will provide an international dimension to higher education, enable Indian students to obtain foreign qualifications at affordable cost, and make India an attractive global study destination</p>	<div style="background-color: #FFD700; border-radius: 50%; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> <h3 style="color: #0070C0;">WHO ARE ELIGIBLE</h3> <p>Two categories can apply. Universities that have secured a position within the top 500 of overall or subject-wise global ranking or a reputed institution in its home jurisdiction</p> </div>
<h3 style="color: #0070C0;">FUNDS AND FUNDING</h3>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of foreign currency accounts, mode of remittance, repatriation, and sale of proceeds shall be as per the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) ■ The operation of foreign HEIs shall not be contrary to the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency, or morality ■ An audit report shall be submitted annually to the commission certifying that the operations of the FHEIs in India are in compliance with the Act and related rules, the draft said 	

The new National Education Policy (NEP) has envisioned that top universities in the world will be facilitated to operate in India. For this, a legislative framework facilitating such entry will be put in place, and such universities will be given special dispensation regarding regulatory, governance, and content norms on par with other autonomous institutions of India

– M Jagadesh Kumar, UGC chairperson

Committee of Privileges

- The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has asked a parliamentary committee to investigate the allegations of privilege breach against 12 MPs for repeatedly entering the well of the House, shouting slogans and obstructing the house proceedings.
 - Some Members of the Rajya Sabha made complaints to the chairman that frequent disruptions by some members were a breach of their privilege.
 - A Member can't directly make complaints to Privilege Committee, therefore the matter came to the Chairman, who as per rule referred it to Privilege Committee to examine, investigate and report.
- **Article 105 and Article 194 of the Indian Constitution mentioned certain privileges for the Member of Parliament and State Assembly respectively** so that they can perform their duties without any obstruction.
- They are the special rights, immunities and exemptions enjoyed by the Members of Parliament/State Assembly, its committees and their members. These privileges do not extend to the president who is also an integral part of the Parliament.
- These privileges are necessary to secure their independence in working.
- Without these privileges;
 - The Houses cannot maintain their authority, dignity and honour.
 - The House cannot protect its members from any obstacle in the discharge of their parliamentary responsibilities.

- The Indian Constitution has also extended these privileges to the persons who are authorised to speak and take part in the Parliamentary procedures or any of its committees. These include the attorney general of India and Union ministers.
- These Privileges can be classified into two broad categories:
 - Collective Privileges - Those that are collectively enjoyed by the each House of Parliament.
 - Individual Privileges - Those that are individually enjoyed by the members.
- Each House of Parliament and its Committees collectively and members of each House individually enjoy certain rights, privileges and immunities without which they cannot perform their functions efficiently and effectively. The object of parliamentary privilege is to safeguard the freedom, authority and dignity of Parliament.
- The Committee consists of 15 members (10 members in the case of Rajya Sabha) nominated by the Speaker (Chairman in the case of Rajya Sabha).
 - In the Lok Sabha, the Speaker nominates the head of the committee of privileges.
 - In the Rajya Sabha, the deputy chairperson heads the committee of privileges.
- Its function is to examine every question involving a breach of privilege of the House or the members of any Committee. It determines concerning the facts and makes suitable recommendations in its report.

Clean Plant Centres

- With the demand for foreign planting materials of fruits like apple, avocado and blueberry rising over the years, the Centre plans to set up 10 'Clean Plant Centres', on the lines of those in developed countries such as the US, Netherlands and Israel.
- The aim is to boost the domestic production of the selected crops.
- The concept of Clean Plant Centres is unique in itself and does not exist in India.
- 10 centres will be established for fruit crops like apples, walnut, almond, grapes, mango, and pomegranate, among others, with an overall budget of Rs 2,200 crore in the next seven years till 2030. The centres will be fully funded by the Centre.
- It will be implemented in a PPP mode in partnership with research organizations, agriculture universities and private sector partners.
- The National Horticulture Board (NHB) will anchor the clean plant programme.

Air India Aircraft Deal

- Air India, now a Tata Sons-owned airline, announced having signed letters of intent with aerospace majors, Airbus and Boeing, to order a mix of new single-aisle and widebody aircraft.
- Tata Group-owned Air India (AI) placed two mega orders, adding up to a staggering 470 aircraft – for 250 planes with Europe's Airbus consortium, and 220 with Boeing Co. of the United States. This is the largest order placed by an airline in one go anywhere in the world.
- Air India's record deal for 470 planes from Airbus and Boeing has happened at a time when the carrier plans to become "a world-class proposition.
- These orders - beating the American Airlines' 460-plane deal in 2011 - would modernise Air India's fleet and help it to "dramatically" expand its network.
- The troubled national carrier was acquired by Tatas about two years ago. For years, Air India has been plagued by consumer grievances over ill-maintained cabins, dysfunctional entertainment systems and broken charging points.
- It has now retired most of its older aircraft and launched a five-year plan to modernise its ageing fleet. The first new plane will go into service at the end of this year.
- The sheer size of this new order indicates Air India's desire to reclaim its pole position in India's crowded aviation market and acquire a strategic edge to service the world.

WHICH PLANES, HOW MANY

Model	Order Size (nos)	Avg List Price (\$mn)	Total List Price (\$mn)
737 Max*	190	128.25	24,367.5
787-9	20	292.5	5,850
777-9	10	442.2	4,422
TOTAL (BOEING)*	220		34,639.5
A320neo	140	110.6	15,484
A321neo	70	129.5	9,065
A350-1000	34	366.5	12,461
A350-900	6	317.4	1,904.4
TOTAL (AIRBUS)**	250		38,914.4
GRAND TOTAL	470		\$73.55 billion**

*The list price for 737 MAX aircraft is based on average of list prices of two variants – MAX-8 and MAX-10 – that are part of the Air India order. The split between the two variants is not available.
** Computation based on list prices. Usually in large orders, significant discounts are offered by manufacturers.*



Pics: Airbus, Boeing

Indian Citizenship

- The Minister of state for external affairs has informed the Rajya Sabha **that more than 16.7 lakh Indians have renounced their citizenship since 2011, including 2,25,620 people last year (the highest during the period).**
 - The Ministry highlighted that the individuals renounced Indian citizenship due to personal reasons, which are unknown to the government.
- Citizenship status in India allows citizens of the Indian State to enjoy all civil and political rights.
- The Constitution of India allows for only single citizenship, that is, Indian citizenship. There is no provision for separate state citizenship.
 - The other federal states like USA and Switzerland adopted the system of double citizenship.
 - In the USA, each person is not only a citizen of the USA but also of the particular state to which he belongs.
- The system of single citizenship provided uniform rights (except in a few cases) for the people of India to promote the feeling of fraternity and unity among them and to build an integrated Indian nation.

Indian Constitution deals with citizenship from Articles 5 to 11 under Part II

- The original constitution only identifies the persons who became citizens of India at its commencement (i.e., on January 26, 1950).
 - It does not deal with the problem of acquisition or loss of citizenship after its commencement.
 - It empowers the Parliament to enact a law to provide for such matters and any other matter relating to citizenship.
 - Parliament has enacted the Citizenship Act (1955), which has been amended from time to time.
- According to the Constitution, the following four categories of persons became the citizens of India at its commencement i.e., on January 26, 1950.
 - Persons domiciled in India.
 - Persons migrated from Pakistan.
 - Persons migrated to Pakistan but later returned.
 - Persons of Indian origin residing outside India.
- The Citizenship Act (1955) provides for the acquisition and loss of citizenship after the commencement of the Constitution.

Acquisition of Citizenship

- The Citizenship Act of 1955 prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship, via, birth, descent, registration, naturalization and incorporation of territory.
- **By Birth** - A person born in India on or after January 26, 1950, but before July 1, 1987, is a citizen of India by birth irrespective of the nationality of his parents.
 - A person born in India on or after July 1, 1987, is considered a citizen of India only if either of his parents is a citizen of India at the time of his birth.
 - Further, those born in India on or after December 3, 2004, are considered citizens of India only if both of their parents are citizens of India.
 - The children of foreign diplomats posted in India and enemy aliens cannot acquire Indian citizenship by birth.
- **By Descent** - A person born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, is a citizen of India by descent, if his father was a citizen of India at the time of his birth.
 - A person born outside India on or after December 10, 1992, is considered a citizen of India if either of his parents is a citizen of India at the time of his birth.
 - December 3, 2004, onwards, a person born outside India shall not be a citizen of India by descent, unless his birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth.
- **By Registration** - Central Government may, on an application, register as a citizen of India any person if he belongs to any of the following categories, namely:-
 - A person of Indian origin who is ordinarily resident in India for seven years before making an application for registration.
 - A person who is married to a citizen of India and is ordinarily resident in India for seven years before making an application for registration.
 - Minor children of persons who are citizens of India.
- **By Naturalization** - Central Government may, on an application, grant a certificate of naturalization to any person if he possesses the required qualifications, including adequate knowledge of a language specified in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.
 - The government of India may waive all or any of the above conditions for naturalization in the case of a person who has rendered distinguished service to science, philosophy, art, literature, world peace or human progress.
- **By Incorporation of Territory** - If any foreign territory becomes a part of India, the Government of India specifies the persons who among the people of the territory shall be the citizens of India.
 - Such persons become citizens of India from the notified date.
 - For example, when Pondicherry became a part of India, the Government of India issued the Citizenship (Pondicherry) Order (1962), under the Citizenship Act (1955).
- Every Registered and naturalized citizen must take an oath of loyalty to the Constitution of India.

Loss of Citizenship

- The Citizenship Act (1955) prescribes three ways of losing citizenship whether acquired under the Act or before it under the Constitution, via, renunciation, termination and deprivation:
- **By Renunciation** - Any citizen of India of full age and capacity can make a declaration renouncing his Indian citizenship.
 - When a person renounces his Indian citizenship, every minor child of that person also loses Indian citizenship.
 - However, when such a child attains the age of eighteen, he may resume Indian citizenship.
- **By Termination** - When an Indian citizen voluntarily acquires citizenship of another country, his Indian citizenship automatically terminates.
 - This provision, however, does not apply during a war in which India is engaged.
- **By Deprivation** - It is a compulsory termination of Indian citizenship by the Central Government:
 - If the citizen has obtained citizenship by fraud.
 - The citizen has shown disloyalty to the Constitution of India.
 - The citizen has unlawfully traded or communicated with the enemy during a war.

- The citizen has, within five years after registration or naturalization, been imprisoned in any country for two years.
- The citizen has been ordinarily resident out of India for seven years continuously.

India's first national assessment regulator 'PARAKH'

- According to the CEO of Educational Testing Service (ETS), **India's first national assessment regulator 'PARAKH'** would bring about the much-needed uniformity in assessment across the nation.
- The Union government announced to release of a "benchmark framework" to evaluate students' performance at the secondary and higher secondary level. The main objective of the framework is to ensure "uniformity" across the state and central boards which presently follow different criteria for evaluation.
 - The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) discussed the "common assessment framework" with the representatives of state boards and State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs). They suggested setting up a new assessment regulator 'PARAKH'.

About PARAKH

- As part of the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP)-2020, PARAKH has been established. The NEP-2020 suggested the establishment of a standard-setting body to provide guidance to school boards on new assessment practices and to encourage collaborations between them.
- It will function as a component of the NCERT. It will also be responsible for conducting recurring learning outcome assessments like the National Achievement Survey (NAS) and State Achievement Surveys.
- It will focus on three main assessment areas: extensive assessments, school-based assessments, and examination improvements.
- It will establish norms, standards and guidelines for assessment and evaluation for all recognized school boards in India. The benchmark assessment framework will end the stress on rote learning.
- The government is expecting that PARAKH will conduct the National Achievement Survey (NAS) in 2024.
- **Objectives of PARAKH**
 - Setting norms, criteria, and procedures for student assessment and evaluation for all recognized educational boards across India.
 - Promote and support school boards in changing their assessment practices to reflect 21st-century skill standards.
 - To bring uniformity across the state and central boards, which currently use different standards of evaluation and produce significant score differences.
 - It will act as a body that establishes standards for student evaluation and assessment throughout all school boards across India.
 - It will address differences in student test scores among boards.
 - It will perform National Achievement Surveys (NAS) on learning outcomes, evaluate all components of the planning and execution of the NAS activities, and highlight areas that require improvement.
 - It will manage India's participation in international tests like the PISA, or the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).
- PARAKH will develop and implement the standards for test design, administration, scoring, and reporting at all levels of academic study. It is a gradual turn towards a more scientific method of teaching. The recommended structure will assist in adapting the child's abilities, including phases of mental development and social and physical awareness.

Child Marriage

- Over 4000 men were arrested in Assam during a state-wide crackdown on child marriages. The arrested men were charged under the strict provisions of the POCSO Act and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.
- The Chief Minister of Assam recently said that the police will arrest people who participated in child marriage in the last 7 years.
- Men are arrested under which law?
 - Men who married girls below 14 years of age are booked under the Protection of Children From Sexual Offences (POSCO) Act.

- Men who married girls between 14 and 18 years are booked under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act.

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

- The POCSO Act was enacted in 2012. It criminalises sex between a minor and an adult.
- It is a gender-neutral act; it also recognizes that boys can also become victims of sexual violence as well.
- It defines a child as someone under the age of 18.
 - The law does not recognize a minor's consent as valid.
- It also specifically lays down stringent punishment for exposing children to or using them to create child sexual abuse material.
 - The Act penalizes storage of pornographic material for commercial purposes with a punishment of up to 3 years, a fine, or both.
- The law lays down the procedures for reporting sexual crimes against children.
- It places the burden of proof on the accused, following 'guilty until proven innocent' unlike the IPC.
- Sexual assault under POCSO is a non-bailable, cognizable offence. This means that the police can arrest without a warrant.
- Section 19 of the POCSO Act imposes a "mandatory reporting obligation" which requires every person who suspects or has knowledge of a sexual offence being committed against a child must report it to the police or the Special Juvenile Police Unit. Failure to do so will result in imprisonment, a fine, or both.
 - The mandatory reporting obligations also require doctors to report cases where minor girls seek medical services during pregnancies.

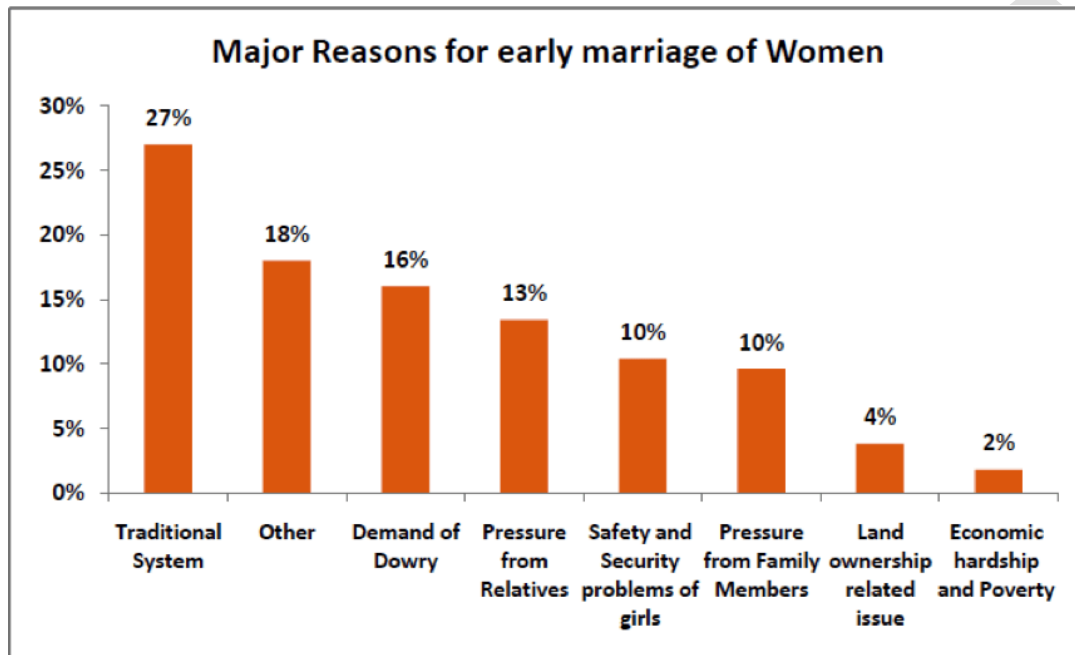
Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006:

- The act says that child marriages are illegal but not void. They are voidable only when the minor partner asks the court to declare the marriage void.
- The Act prescribes 18 years as the minimum marriageable age for women, while for men it is 21 years.
- The Act punishes child marriage with imprisonment which may extend to 2 years or with a fine which may extend to Rs 1 lakh or both.
- The punishment also extends to anyone who performs or conducts any child marriage.

Child Marriage in India

- As per Census 2011, over 12 million child marriages were reported in the country.
- Child Marriage is defined as a marriage of a girl or boy before the age of minimum legal age (18 years).
- According to the data released by National Family Health Survey-5
 - In India, 8 States have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average; West Bengal, Bihar and Tripura top the list with more than 40% of women aged 20-24 years married below 18.
 - States with a large population of tribal poor have a higher prevalence of child marriage. In Jharkhand, 32.2% of women in the age bracket 20-24 got married before 18 years.
 - Infant mortality stood at 37.9%
 - 8% of women in the 15-19 years age bracket are anaemic.
 - Assam has a high prevalence of child marriage (31.8% in 2019-20).
 - States with high literacy levels and better health and social indices have performed much better; In Kerala, women who got married before the age of 18 years stood at 6.3% in 2019-20.
- The reason behind Child Marriage
 - It is a widely practised social custom.
 - Poverty and Illiteracy of a Child's parents.
 - Social and Economic Condition of the family including the Cultural values of the family and the Surrounding Society.
 - Lack of awareness about the harmful effects of lack of Schooling.
 - Political Patronage: Due to Social acceptance politicians find it difficult to oppose the practice of child marriage as it may mean losing votes and Support.

- Child marriage is also widely reported to be used to traffic girls from poor and tribal families for either the Sex trade or as cheap labour. It is more prevalent in rural areas.
- Rates of Child marriage are highest in the Central and Western parts of India and lower in the eastern and southern parts of India.
- Result of Child Marriage;
 - It Restricts access to education and better opportunities in the future.
 - It limits the freedom of decision and promotes socio-economic and gender inequality.
 - It is associated with multiple health risks, limited Knowledge and access to, and use of, Contraception and reproductive health services and information.



Amrit Sarovars

- The Prime Minister of India stated that the Union Government has completed the construction of more than 30,000 Amrit Sarovars.
 - Under Mission Amrit Sarovar, the government announced a target **to build 50,000 Amrit Sarovars by 15th August 2023.**
- The Prime Minister launched a new Mission Amrit Sarovar on 24th April 2022.
- The objective of the mission is to conserve water for the future.
- The Mission is aimed at developing and rejuvenating 75 water bodies in each district of the country as a part of the celebration of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- This Mission has been launched with a whole Government Approach in which 6 Ministries/Department namely;
 - Dept of Rural Development.
 - Department of land resources.
 - Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
 - Department of Water Resources.
 - Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
 - Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate changes.
- The Mission works through the States and Districts, by refocusing on various schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi NREGS, 15th Finance Commission Grants, and PM Krishi Sichayi Yojana sub-schemes such as Watershed Development Component, Har Khet Ko Pani besides States' schemes.
- The Mission would encourage the mobilization of citizen and non-govt resources for supplementing these efforts.
- The Mission Amrit Sarovar is to be completed by 15th August 2023.
 - Around 50,000 such Amrit Sarovar may be constructed in the country.
- People's participation in the Mission is the focal point.

- Local freedom fighters, their family members, Martyr's family members, Padma Awardees and citizens of the local area wherein an Amrit Sarovar is to be constructed, will be engaged at all stages.

Expunged from the Parliament records

- Some Portions of the opposition leader's speech delivered in Lok Sabha have been expunged or removed from the Parliament records by the orders of the Speaker.
- The expunging of certain words, sentences, or portions of a speech from the Parliament records is a fairly routine exercise and is carried out under parliamentary rules.
 - The decision on which part of the speech or proceedings of the house is to be expunged lies with the Presiding Officer of the House.
- **The Indian Constitution under Article 105(2)** mentioned that "no Member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said...in Parliament or any committee thereof".
 - However, MPs don't enjoy the freedom to say whatever they want inside the parliament.
- The speeches of MPs are subject to the discipline of the Rules of Parliamentary proceedings, and the control of the proceedings by the lok sabha Speaker. These checks are necessary to ensure that MPs cannot use "defamatory or indecent or undignified or unparliamentary words" inside the House.
- Rule 380 ("Expunction") of the Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha says: "If the Speaker is of opinion that words have been used in the debate are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, the Speaker may order that such words be expunged from the proceedings of the House records."

Aero India 2023

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the 14th edition of Asia's largest aero show -- **Aero India 2023 - in Bengaluru, Karnataka** on February 13, 2023.
- Aero India is a biennial air show and aviation exhibition held in Bengaluru, India at the Yelahanka Air Force Station.
- It is organised by the Defence Exhibition Organisation, Ministry of Defence. Aero India is the largest air show in Asia.
- The Defence Ministry of India, Indian Air Force, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Department of Space, the Union Civil Aviation Ministry and other such organisations join hands to organise Aero India show making it the largest air show in Asia. The first edition of the air show was held in 1996.

Deputy Speaker

- The Supreme Court of India issued notices to the Union Government and five states Governments (Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand) over the failure to elect a Deputy Speaker.
- A Supreme Court Bench led by the Chief Justice of India sought responses from the Union and 5 state Governments on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) that claims that not electing a Deputy Speaker to the 17th (present) Lok Sabha, which was constituted on June 19, 2019, is "against the letter and spirit of the Constitution".
 - The deputy speaker post has been lying vacant in the 5 state Assemblies as well.

Indian Constitution about the Deputy Speaker

- **Article 93 of the Indian Constitution** says that "The House of the People shall, as soon as may be, choose two members...to be...Speaker and Deputy Speaker...and, so often as the office of Speaker or Deputy Speaker becomes vacant; the House shall choose another member..."
 - Article 178 of the Constitution contains the corresponding position for Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of a state.
- Constitutional experts highlighted that both Articles 93 and 178 use the word "shall", indicating that the election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker is mandatory under the Indian Constitution.
- Articles 93 and 178 of the constitution say "As soon as may be", but they do not lay down a specific time frame.
- In general, both Lok Sabha and the state Assemblies elect the Speaker during the first session of the new House.
 - The election of the Deputy Speaker usually takes place in the second session – and is generally not delayed.

- Rule 8 of The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha expresses the election of Deputy Speaker “shall be held on such date as the Speaker may fix”.
 - The Deputy Speaker is elected once a motion proposing his name is carried in the House.
 - Once elected, the Deputy Speaker usually continues in office for the entire duration of the House.
- Courts usually don’t intervene in the procedural conduct of the Parliament.
 - Article 122(1) of the Indian Constitution says: “The validity of any proceedings in Parliament shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure.”
- However, experts said that the courts do have jurisdiction to at least inquire into why there has been no election to the post of Deputy Speaker since the Constitution mentioned an election “as soon as may be”.

Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha

- Like the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker is also elected by the Lok Sabha itself from amongst its members.
- He is elected after the election of the Speaker has taken place. The date of election of the Deputy Speaker is fixed by the Speaker.
- Whenever the office of the Deputy Speaker falls vacant, the Lok Sabha elects another member to fill the vacancy.
- Like the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker remains in the office usually during the life of the Lok Sabha. However, he may vacate his office earlier in any of the following three cases:
 - If he ceases to be a member of the Lok Sabha.
 - If he resigns by writing to the Speaker.
 - If he is removed by a resolution passed by a majority of all the then members of the Lok Sabha.
 - Such a resolution can be moved only after giving 14 days’ advance notice.
- The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker, while assuming their offices, do not make and subscribe to any separate oath or affirmation.
- The Deputy Speaker performs the duties of the Speaker’s office when it is vacant. He also acts as the Speaker when the latter is absent from the sitting of the House.
 - In both cases, he assumes all the powers of the Speaker.
 - He also presides over the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament, in case the Speaker is absent from such a sitting.
- The Deputy Speaker is not subordinate to the Speaker. He is directly responsible to the House.
- Whenever a deputy speaker is appointed as a member of a parliamentary committee, he automatically becomes its chairman.
- Like the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, while presiding over the House, cannot vote in the first instance; he can only exercise a casting vote in the case of a tie.
 - When a resolution for the removal of the Deputy Speaker is under consideration by the House, he cannot preside at the sitting of the House, though he may be present.
- When the Speaker presides over the House, the Deputy Speaker is like any other ordinary member of the House.
 - He can speak in the House, participate in its proceedings and vote on any question before the House.
- The Deputy Speaker is entitled to a regular salary and allowance fixed by Parliament and charged to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Upto the 10th Lok Sabha, both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker were usually from the ruling party.
 - Since the 11th Lok Sabha, there has been a consensus that the Speaker comes from the ruling party (or ruling alliance) and the post of Deputy Speaker goes to the main opposition party.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in a recently released report raised serious concern over the “inhuman and deplorable” condition of all 46 government mental healthcare institutions across the country.
 - The report mentions that the government facilities are “illegally” keeping patients long after their recovery, in what is an “infringement of the human rights of mentally ill patients”.
 - NHRC reports were made after the study team visited all operational government facilities, to assess the implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017 (MHA).
- The National Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. It was amended in 2006.

- The commission works as the watchdog of human rights in the country.
- The commission is a multi-member body consisting of a chairman and four members.
- The chairman should be a retired chief justice of India, and members should be serving or retired judges of the Supreme Court, a serving or retired chief justice of a high court and two persons having knowledge or practical experience concerning human rights.
- In addition to these full-time members, the commission also has 4 ex-officio members;
 - The chairman of the National Commission for Minorities.
 - The National Commission for SCs.
 - The National Commission for STs.
 - The National Commission for Women.
- The chairman and members are appointed by the president on the recommendations of a 6-member committee consisting of;
 - The Prime Minister is the head.
 - The Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
 - The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
 - Leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament.
 - The Central home minister.
- The chairman and members hold office for a term of five years or until they attain the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.
- The salaries, allowances and other conditions of service of the chairman or a member are determined by the Central government. But, they cannot be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment. After the tenure, the chairman and members are not eligible for further employment under the Central or state government.
- The President can also remove the chairman or any member on the ground of proven misbehaviour or incapacity. However, in these cases, the president has to refer the matter to the Supreme Court for an inquiry. If the Supreme Court, after the inquiry, upholds the cause of removal and advises so, then the president can remove the chairman or a member.

Functions of the Commission

- Inquire into any violation of human rights or negligence in the prevention of such violation by a public servant, either *suo motu* or on a petition presented to it or on an order of a court.
- Intervene in any proceeding involving an allegation of violation of human rights pending before a court.
- Visit jails and detention places to study the living conditions of inmates and make recommendations.
- Review the constitutional and other legal safeguards for the protection of human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation.
- Review the factors including acts of terrorism that inhibit the enjoyment of human rights and recommend remedial measures.
- Study treaties and other international instruments on human rights and make recommendations for their effective implementation.
- Undertake and promote research in the field of human rights.
- Spread human rights literacy among the people and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights.
- Encourage the efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the field of human rights.
- Undertake such other functions as it may consider necessary for the promotion of human rights.
- The Central government should inform the Commission of the action taken on the recommendations within three months.
- The commission submits its annual or special reports to the Central government and the state government concerned.
- These reports are laid before the respective legislatures, along with a memorandum of action taken on the recommendations of the commission and the reasons for non-acceptance of any of such recommendations.

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)

- Cabinet Committee on Security approved the **induction of over 9,000 troops in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**.
- The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) Force was raised on 24 October 1962.
- At present, the ITBP guards 3,488 km long India-China borders ranging from the Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh. Apart from this, the Force also has important roles in many internal security duties and operations against Left Wing Extremism in the state of Chhattisgarh.
- Most of the ITBP's Border Out Posts (BOPs) are located at altitudes ranging from 9,000 ft to 18,800 ft where temperatures drop to minus 45 degrees Celsius in extreme winters.
- ITBP is a specialized Armed Police Force of the Nation which trains its personnel in various disciplines including mountaineering and skiing apart from intensive tactical training, thereby creating a distinctive image of the Force.
- ITBP also conducts relief and rescue operations as 'First Responders' for natural calamities in the Himalayan region.
- The Force has responded in hundreds of search, rescue & relief operations over the years to provide succour to thousands of citizens in distress due to various calamities.

e-Sanjeevani

- In his radio speech 'Mann Ki Baat', the Prime Minister claimed that the **eSanjeevani programme had ensured access to medical care for citizens residing in remote regions of the nation**.
 - Talking about the eSanjeevani app, Prime Minister stated that through this app, now, the number of teleconsultants through videoconferencing has crossed the figure of 10 crores.
- The e-Sanjeevani is a flagship telemedicine platform of the Government, developed by the Centre for Development of Advance Computing (C-DAC), Mohali under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It aims to provide healthcare services to patients in their homes. Safe & structured video-based clinical consultations between a doctor in a hospital and a patient in the confines of his home are being enabled.
- It is a step towards digital health equity to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC). It facilitates quick and easy access to doctors and medical specialists from smartphones.
- One can also access quality health services remotely via eSanjeevani by visiting the nearest Ayushman Bharat Health & Wellness Centre.
- It is being implemented under the Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre (AB-HWCs) programme.
 - Using the hub-and-spoke approach, it aims to link together all 1,50,000 HWCs. According to the model, a network will be created that consists of an anchor establishment, or hub, that provides a full range of services and will be complemented by secondary establishments, or spokes, that offer limited services and direct patients in need of more intensive services to the hub for treatment.

The advertisement features a central illustration of a male doctor in a white coat and yellow tie, sitting at a desk with a laptop. The laptop screen shows the doctor's face. To the right of the doctor is a pink first aid kit with a white cross. Above the doctor are logos for the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India, Digital India, and the National Health Authority. The text on the right reads: 'Free Online Tele-Consultation Service through eSanjeevani OPD Platform'. Below this, it lists services: 'Online OPD Consultation from Specialists & Doctors', 'General Medicine', 'Paediatrics', and 'Gynaecology & Obstetrics'. At the bottom, it says 'Download eSanjeevani application from Android Playstore or Apple App Store'.

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INTERNATIONAL

India, France, and UAE unveil cooperation plan

- A comprehensive plan for trilateral cooperation in the areas of technology, energy, and defence was announced by INDIA, France, and the UAE.
- The plan was finalised during a phone conversation between External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, and his France and UAE counterparts, Catherine Colonna and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, respectively.
- According to a joint declaration, the three nations recognise that defence is an area of close collaboration. As a result, efforts will be made to further improve compatibility, joint development, and co-production, while looking for ways to increase cooperation and training between the armed forces of the three nations.
- On September 19 of last year, outside of the UN General Assembly, the three foreign ministers got together for the first time in a trilateral arrangement (UNGA). They decided at the meeting to formalise a trilateral cooperation effort to increase cooperation in many areas of shared interest. To develop a plan for this initiative's implementation, a phone call between the three ministers was scheduled in this context.
- According to the statement that was made public, the three parties agreed that the trilateral initiative will act as a forum to promote the design and execution of cooperation projects in the fields of energy, with a focus on solar and nuclear energy, as well as in the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity, especially in the Indian Ocean region.
 - The three nations will investigate the potential for collaboration with the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to pursue real, doable projects on sustainable energy, the environment, and biodiversity.

- Several trilateral events will be held in support of the initiatives during the Indian G20 Presidency and the UAE's hosting of COP-28 in 2023, respectively.

World Economic Outlook (WEO) Report

- In its January update of the World Economic Outlook (WEO) Report, the IMF has marginally improved the forecast for global growth in 2023 – a relief, given the fears of a global recession in 2023.
- The **World Economic Outlook (WEO) is a comprehensive report published twice a year by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)**. The data is drawn from IMF representatives' consultations with member countries and is included in the WEO database.
- It includes the IMF's estimates and forecasts for global output growth and inflation.
 - It also includes estimates of real gross domestic product (GDP) growth, consumer prices, current account balances and unemployment in the fund's 190 member countries, grouped by region and development status.
- Compared with the October forecast, the estimate for 2022 and the forecast for 2023 are both higher by about 0.2 percentage points, reflecting positive surprises and greater-than-expected resilience in numerous economies.
- China, Russia, the US, Germany, and Italy are some of the key economies that have seen the most significant upward revisions in their 2023 GDP forecasts. The United Kingdom saw a substantial (almost 1 percentage point) downgrade in its 2023 GDP.
- Inflation-Disinflation: Inflation, which destabilised the global economy, is expected to have peaked in 2022 but the disinflation (the fall in inflation rate) will be slow and take all of 2023 and 2024.
- Headline Inflation: About 84% of countries are expected to have a lower headline (consumer price index) inflation in 2023 than in 2022.
- Global Inflation: Global inflation is set to fall from 8.8% in 2022 (annual average) to 6.6% in 2023 and 4.3% in 2024—above pre-pandemic (2017–19) levels of about 3.5%.
- Price Rise: Price rise is slowing for two main reasons:
 - Monetary tightening all across the world – higher interest rates drag down overall demand for goods and services and that, in turn, slows down inflation.
 - In the wake of faltering demand, prices of different commodities – both fuel and non-fuel – have come down from their recent highs. India will stay the world's fastest-growing major economy in 2023 and 2024
- There's been no change in India's growth outlook since October 2022.
 - **Growth in India is set to decline from 6.8% in 2022 to 6.1% in 2023** before picking up to 6.8 per cent in 2024, with resilient domestic demand despite external headwinds.
 - This means India will remain the world's fastest-growing major economy both in 2023 as well as 2024.

Haifa Port

- An Adani Group-led joint venture took over **Israel's Haifa Port**.
- Haifa Port is Located in northern Israel; Haifa is one of the biggest commercial ports that handle nearly half of Israel's container cargo and is also a principal port for passenger traffic and cruise ships.
- The Port of Haifa is the largest of Israel's three major international seaports, the others being the Port of Ashdod, and the Port of Eilat.
- It has a natural deep-water harbour, which operates all year long, and serves both passenger and merchant ships.

Israel:

- It is a country in Western Asia.
- Situated between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea, it is bordered by;
 - Lebanon in the North.
 - Syria in the Northeast.
 - Jordan in the East.
 - Egypt in the Southwest,
 - Palestinian territories – the West Bank along the east and the Gaza Strip along the southwest – with which it shares legal boundaries.

- Tel Aviv is the economic and technological centre of the country, while its seat of government is in its proclaimed capital of Jerusalem, although Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem is unrecognized internationally.



Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)

- India and the U.S. launched a programme to **enhance their strategic partnership with delegations led by National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and his American counterpart, Jake Sullivan**, meeting in Washington for the inaugural dialogue of the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET).
- The two sides announced a set of programmes whose aim is to increase the depth and scope of bilateral cooperation in cutting-edge technology, including in the defence sector.
- The iCET seeks to build supply chains which increase co-production and co-development between the countries and increase linkages between the countries' start-up ecosystems
- **Six areas of planned cooperation:**
 - strengthening innovation ecosystems,
 - defence innovation and technology cooperation,
 - resilient semiconductor supply chains,
 - space,
 - STEM talent and
 - Next-generation telecommunications.
- **The programmes include:**
 - a Research Agency Partnership between the U.S. National Science Foundation and Indian science agencies;
 - a mechanism to cooperate on quantum computing that will also involve academia and industry;
 - developing a new defence industrial cooperation roadmap; supporting the development of semiconductors in India, including by setting up a task force to identify opportunities; and
 - Increasing space cooperation, including human spaceflight.
- Also announced was a private-public dialogue to further 5G/6G cooperation and the adoption of Open RAN (technology to connect phones and the Internet) in India.
- The U.S. also committed to a speedy review of an application from General Electric to produce jet engines in India for India-manufactured Light Combat Aircraft.
- The initiative is a particularly significant milestone in the bilateral relationship, having been announced at the highest level – by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and U.S. President Joe Biden at the Quad summit in Tokyo in May 2022.
- Biden administration would work with the U.S. Congress to lower barriers to U.S. exports to India of High-Performance Computing and source code.

- The initiative comes at a time when the U.S. is seeking to out-compete China in critical technologies and tighten the screws on China’s semiconductor industry. Biden administration officials were quick to emphasise, however, that iCET is not just about China.

Spy Balloon

- The United States shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon that had floated over American airspace for several days, triggering the latest diplomatic crisis amid already worsening relations between the world’s two biggest powers.
- Beijing reacted angrily to the shooting down of what the U.S. called a “surveillance balloon” but Chinese authorities maintained that it was a civilian airship used for meteorological purposes that had drifted off course.

5th Regional Dialogue on Afghanistan

- India reiterated its call for an “inclusive and representative” government in Afghanistan, with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval declaring that the people of Afghanistan were among India’s “foremost priorities”. He was speaking at the ‘5th Regional Dialogue on Afghanistan’ being held in Moscow.
- Doval highlighted India’s “historical and special relationship” with Afghanistan and said that the “well-being and humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan” would “continue to guide” India’s policy towards Kabul.
 - He emphasised that Afghan territory should not be used for terrorism and that the natural resources of Afghanistan should be utilised “first for the welfare of Afghanistan”.
 - India has not recognised the Taliban administration in Kabul. However, a technical team stationed at the Indian embassy in the Afghan capital has been overseeing the humanitarian assistance that India has been providing over the past year.

Earthquakes

- Turkey has been getting hammered by a series of powerful earthquakes.
- An earthquake is the shaking of the Earth when two blocks of the earth suddenly slip past one another. The surface where they slip is called the fault or fault plane. The location below the earth’s surface where the earthquake starts is called the hypocenter, and the location directly above it on the surface of the earth is called the epicentre.
- 'Operation Dost' was launched by India to help Turkey and Syria. It is a rescue operation initiated by the Government of India to aid Syria and Turkey after an earthquake hit both countries. Under the operation, India has deployed a field hospital, supplies, and rescue personnel to the earthquake-stricken countries of Turkey and Syria.

Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII)

- India’s National Accreditation System under the Quality Council of India (QCI) has been **ranked 5th in the world in the recent Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII) 2021**.
- The GQII program is an initiative of the independent consulting firms Mesopartner and Analyticar to research and disseminate data on Quality Infrastructure.
 - Here, Quality Infrastructure means the international system of metrology, standardization, accreditation and quality-related services (testing, calibration, inspection, verification, training and awareness building). All these create confidence in international trade and contribute to the protection of consumers and the environment.



- The GQII is a database and ranking that allows interested persons to compare the quality infrastructure of different countries worldwide.
- The GQII ranks the 184 economies in the world based on quality infrastructure (QI).
- The GQII rankings are published and presented post-facto for each year based on the data collected till the end of that year.
- India has been ranked fifth among 184 countries in terms of the quality of its accreditation system, according to the recently released Global Quality Infrastructure Index (GQII) 2021.
 - India's overall QI system ranking continues to be tenth.
 - The standardization system (under BIS) is ranked 9th and the metrology system (under NPL-CSIR) at the 21st position in the world.
- According to the index, India was ranked 21st in terms of metrology and ninth in standardization.

GQII 2021: Global Ranking and Subrankings by QI area (184 Economies)

Economy Name	Economy Code	GQII Rank	GQII Scores	Rank Metrology	Rank Standardization	Rank Accreditation
Germany	DEU	1	0,996	2	2	1
China	CHN	2	0,990	3	1	3
United States	USA	3	0,987	1	8	2
United Kingdom	GBR	4	0,982	4	4	6
Japan	JPN	5	0,976	5	3	12
France	FRA	6	0,973	7	6	11
Korea, Republic of	KOR	7	0,962	6	7	17
Italy	ITA	8	0,957	15	5	4
Spain	ESP	9	0,949	13	10	7
India	IND	10	0,932	21	9	5
Poland	POL	11	0,927	19	15	7
Switzerland	CHE	12	0,924	14	12	21
Brazil	BRA	13	0,924	11	20	18
Australia	AUS	14	0,923	9	18	22
Czech Republic	CZE	15	0,923	18	13	14
Turkey	TUR	16	0,921	16	25	10
Netherlands	NLD	17	0,914	20	11	15
Mexico	MEX	18	0,913	10	42	9
Canada	CAN	19	0,912	8	24	26
South Africa	ZAF	20	0,909	12	27	19

3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting

- The 3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers (ADGMIN) meeting with India was held on a virtual platform.
 - The **3rd ASEAN Digital Ministers Meeting (ADGMIN) was held in Boracay Island, Aklan, Philippines on 9-10 February 2023.**
- The **theme was “Synergy Towards a Sustainable Digital Future”**, the meeting had fruitful and productive discussions on strengthening India-ASEAN relations in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).
- The Ministers' meeting approved the India-ASEAN Digital Work Plan 2023. The work plan includes
 - Capacity building and knowledge sharing in emerging areas in the field of Information and Communication Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence in Cyber Security, Application of IoT & AI in Next Generation Smart City & Society 5.0, Sustainable Data and Transport Networks for Future: Standards and Applications, 5G technologies for IoT and future trends,
 - Role of ICT in implementation of Digital Health and Security protection and assessment for future network, etc. The ongoing and proposed projects in ICTs will strengthen collaboration between India and ASEAN by leveraging complementary strengths of each other.

About ASEAN:

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

- The motto of ASEAN is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.
- 8th August is observed as ASEAN Day. ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.
- Its objectives are to promote regional stability, economic growth, social progress, cultural development, active collaboration in greater utilisation of resources, and also promote Southeast Asian studies and cooperation in regional as well as international issues.



"Fab 4" or 'Chip 4'

- The U.S.-led "Fab 4" or 'Chip 4' semiconductor alliance of Taiwan, the United States, Japan and South Korea held its first video meeting of senior officials.
- The "Fab" in the name refers to a shorthand industry expression for the fabrication plants where chips, used in everything from fridges and smartphones to fighter jets, are made.
- The countries that are a member of this group in the Indo-Pacific region is home to some of the world's largest contract chip makers including.
- The United States September 2022 convened the first meeting of the working group, to discuss how to strengthen the [semiconductor supply chain](#), after a global chip crunch caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The semiconductor shortage, which forced some carmakers to halt production, thrust chip powerhouse Taiwan into the spotlight and has made supply chain management a bigger priority for governments around the world.

International Mother Language Day

- International Mother Language Day is **celebrated on 21st February 2023 with the theme “Multilingual education – a necessity to transform education”** to promote awareness about linguistic and cultural diversity and to promote multilingualism.
- 21st February was declared International Mother Language Day by UNESCO in 1999. It has been observed throughout the world since 21st February 2000.
 - The declaration came up in tribute to the Language Movement done by the Bangladeshis (then the East Pakistanis).
- It was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly with the adoption of UN resolution 56/262 in 2002.
- Mother Language Day is part of a wider initiative "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world".
- The idea to celebrate International Mother Language Day was the initiative of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, the 21st of February is the anniversary of the day when the people of Bangladesh (then East Bengal of Pakistan) fought for recognition of the Bengali language.

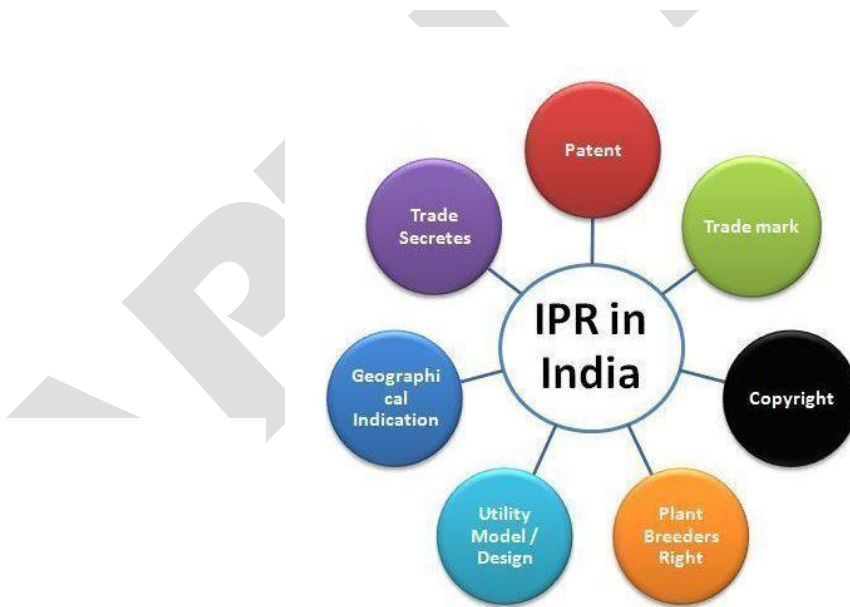
International IP Index

- The International IP Index is released by the US Chambers of Commerce. The Report covers everything from patent and copyright laws to the ability to monetize IP assets and the ratification of international agreements.
- **India ranks 42nd among 55 leading global economies on the International IP Index.**
- India has maintained continued strong efforts in copyright piracy through the issuing of “dynamic” injunction orders.
- As India's size and economic influence grow on the world stage, India is ripe to become a leader for emerging markets seeking to transform their economy through IP-driven innovation.
- India has taken steps to improve enforcement against copyright-infringing content and provides a best-in-class framework to promote better understanding and utilization of IP assets. However, addressing long-standing gaps in its IP framework will be critical to India's ability to create a new model for the region and India's continued economic growth.
- By analysing the IP landscape in global markets, the Index aims to help nations navigate toward a brighter economic future marked by greater innovation, creativity, and competitiveness.

About Intellectual Property Rights

- Intellectual property (IP) is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect.
- Intellectual property rights include patents, copyright, industrial design rights, trademarks, plant variety rights, trade dress, and geographical indications.
- The main purpose of intellectual property law is to encourage the creation of a wide variety of intellectual goods, to achieve this, the law gives people and businesses property rights to the information and intellectual goods they create, usually for a limited period.
 - This gives economic incentive for their creation because it allows people to benefit from the information and intellectual goods they create and allows them to protect their ideas and prevent copying.
 - These economic incentives are expected to promote innovation and contribute to the technological progress of countries.

I



Rice Bran

- China has started promoting Rice bran as the staple food amid the ongoing food shortage in the country.
- Rice bran is the brown outer layer of the rice kernel, mainly composed of the pericarp, aleuron, seed coat, and germ.
- It contains 50% carbohydrate (mainly starch), 20% fat, 15% protein, and 15% dietary fibre (DF), mainly insoluble fibre.
- Rice bran is a rich source of protein, fat, dietary fibres, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals (mainly oryzanols and tocopherols), and is currently mostly used as animal feed.

- Rice bran is used for oil extraction and many by-products are produced during the processing of rice bran oil, viz., wax sludge, gum sludge, soap stock sludge, fatty acid distillate and deodorizer distillate.

PISA Test Agreement

- The state government of Gujarat has signed an agreement with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to perform the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test for students of State government schools.
 - The agreement was signed between Ratnakanwar Gadhvicharan (Samagra Shiksha project director) and Kevin O'Brien from the OECD.
 - It was signed in the presence of the Chief Minister of Gujarat (Bhupendra Patel) and OECD's Paris director (Andreas Schleicher) for Education and Skills.
 - On this occasion, the OECD's Paris director praised the Gujarat government's Gyanshakti residential school project expressing that it had the potential for replication internationally.
- Gujarat became the first Indian state to sign such an agreement. It will improve the reading, mathematics and science knowledge of the students. It will improve the critical thinking, problem-solving and effective communication skills of the students. It will help in achieving the aim of ensuring quality learning outcomes in government schools.

About PISA

- The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations.
 - In 2000, the PISA exercise was first performed and then it is conducted every three years.
 - Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, PISA 2021 was postponed to 2022.
- PISA is a global exercise where students from different countries are put under a two-hour test to measure their skills and knowledge; mainly in science, reading, and mathematics.
 - PISA test questions don't measure the memorization of facts.
 - The test demand that students draw on real-world problem-solving skills and knowledge.
- The main objective of the exercise is to evaluate educational systems around the world by measuring 15-year-old school students' performance in mathematics, science, and reading.
- It aims to provide comparable data to facilitate countries to improve their education policies and outcomes.
- Significance
 - It provides assessments of educational attainment that are useful in the process of designing education policymaking at both national and international levels.
 - It provides regular assessments within a common, internationally agreed framework; by evaluating students learning that can help in understanding the root of variation in performances within and between countries.
- PISA 2022
 - 85 countries participated in PISA 2022 in September 2022.
 - Around 6,300 students aged between 15-years-3-months and 16 years-2-months at the time of assessment participate in the PISA 2022.
 - Three key learning subject areas are tested: reading literacy, mathematics, and science
 - The Main Survey result is yet to be released.
- The latest PISA results information is PISA 2018 results;
 - China topped the list with a mean score of 1,736.
 - Singapore at the second spot and Estonia at the third spot.
- India last participated in PISA 2009, and it ranked poorly at 73rd among 74 countries, above only Kyrgyzstan.
- In 2019, the then-human resource development ministry (Presently Education Ministry) had taken the decision to participate in PISA 2021 (Postponed to 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic). It was decided that students from Chandigarh and a few adjoining areas would have represented India.
- In July 2022, the Minister of state for education updated the Lok Sabha that the government had decided not to participate in PISA 2022 due to the impact of pandemic-induced school closure on learning levels.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

- In 1948, the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was established to help administer the Marshall Plan; the program for the reconstruction of Europe after World War II.
 - In 1961, the OEEC was reformed into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the membership was extended to non-European states; the USA and Canada.
- It was founded to facilitate economic progress and world trade.
- Currently, OCDE is an intergovernmental organisation with 38 member countries.
 - India is not a member of the OECD.
- The member countries describe themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, and coordinate the domestic and international policies of its members.
- The majorities of OECD members are high-income economies with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries.
 - As of 2017, the OECD member countries collectively comprised 62.2% of Global nominal GDP and 42.8% of global GDP at purchasing power parity.
 - The OECD is an official United Nations observer.
- The OECD is funded by contributions from member countries.
- The OECD's headquarters are in Paris, France.

What Is the OECD?
(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

- It is an association of 38 nations in Europe, the Americas, and the Pacific
- It helps member countries formulate economic and social policies
- Members and key partners represent 80% of world trade

It aids developing countries outside membership and promotes reform

Northern Ireland Protocol

- The United Kingdom Supreme Court on 8th February ruled that the Northern Ireland Protocol, which is a post-Brexit agreement that created a trade border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, is lawful.
- The Northern Ireland Protocol is a trading arrangement, negotiated during Brexit talks. It allows goods to be transported across the Irish land border without the need for checks.
- Before Brexit, it was easy to transport goods across this border because both sides followed the same EU rules. After the UK left, special trading arrangements were needed because Northern Ireland has a land border with the Republic of Ireland, which is part of the EU.
- The EU has strict food rules and requires border checks when certain goods - such as milk and eggs - arrive from non-EU countries.
- The land border is a sensitive issue because of Northern Ireland's troubled political history. It was feared that cameras or border posts - as part of these checks - could lead to instability.

- The UK and the EU agreed that protecting the Northern Ireland peace deal - the Good Friday Agreement- was an absolute priority.
- So, both sides signed the Northern Ireland Protocol as part of the Brexit withdrawal agreement. It is now part of international law.

How does the protocol work?

- Instead of checking goods at the Irish border, the protocol agreed that any inspections and document checks would be conducted between Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland.
- These take place at Northern Ireland's ports.
- It was also agreed that Northern Ireland would keep following EU rules on product standards.

Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI)

- **India's rank in Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) improved a notch to 47 from 48 among 50 countries surveyed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as the sanctions-hit Russia slipped below India.**
- It was launched in 2014 and updated annually, the OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI) is a unique, evidence-based tool that provides information on regulations affecting trade in services in 22 sectors across all OECD member countries and Brazil, the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, and Vietnam. These countries and sectors represent over 80% of global trade in services.
- The STRI toolkit can support policymakers to
 - Scope out reform options,
 - Benchmark them relative to global best practices, and assess their likely effects;
 - For trade negotiators to clarify restrictions that most impede trade, and for businesses to shed light on the requirements that traders must comply with when entering foreign markets.
- The 2022 STRI of India is above the OECD average and high compared to all countries in the STRI sample. Market access to certain key services sectors remains prohibited for foreigners or is subjected to stringent conditions.
 - Recent reforms include the privatisation of Air India in January 2022 and the elimination of pricing guidelines for transfers of shares between residents and non-residents.
- The report said India had been progressively introducing reforms over the past years, contributing to a slight liberalisation of services trade in some sectors, most notably between 2018 and 2021.
 - Engineering services, computer services, road freight transport and sound recording are the sectors with the lowest score (least restricted) relative to the average STRI across all countries.
 - Accounting services, legal services, architecture services and rail freight transport are the sectors with the highest score (most-restrictive) relative to the average STRI across all countries.
- India applies labour market tests for natural persons seeking to provide services in the country temporarily as intra-corporate transferees, contractual services suppliers or independent services suppliers. At least one of the board members and the manager in corporations must be residents of India. Finally, there are preferences for local suppliers in public procurement.

What does the UK want to change?

Under the Brexit deal, certain goods have to be checked when they enter Northern Ireland from Great Britain

The current process

- The goods are checked at ports in Northern Ireland on arrival
- They can then be moved into the Republic of Ireland once checked



The UK's new plan

- The goods are split into two different lanes
- Goods destined only for Northern Ireland go into the **Green Lane** and are not checked
- Goods destined for Ireland and the EU go into the **Red Lane** and checks are carried out



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New START Treaty

- Russian President Vladimir Putin announced in an address to his nation that **Russia is suspending its participation in the New START, the last remaining major military agreement with the United States.**
 - Putin said the fact that the US wants to inspect Russia’s military facilities – a requirement under the treaty – while at the same time saying openly that its goal is Russia’s strategic defeat, was the “theatre of the absurd”.
- The name START comes from the original “Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty”, known as START-I, which was signed between the US and the erstwhile USSR in 1991, and came into force in 1994.
 - START-I, which capped the number of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that each side could deploy at 6,000 and 1,600 respectively, lapsed in 2009 and was replaced first by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT, also known as the Treaty of Moscow), and then by the New START treaty.
- The **New START, officially, the “Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms”,** entered into force on February 5, 2011, and placed new verifiable limits on intercontinental-range nuclear weapons.
- 700 deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), deployed submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and deployed heavy bombers equipped with nuclear armaments.
- 1,550 nuclear warheads on deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments (each such heavy bomber is counted as one warhead toward this limit).
- 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers equipped with nuclear armaments.
-

Windsor Framework

- **Britain and the European Union have reached an agreement on new trade rules in Northern Ireland** in an attempt to resolve a thorny issue that has fueled post-Brexit tensions in Europe and on the island of Ireland.
 - The deal could potentially resolve the issue of imports and border checks in Northern Ireland, one of the most challenging and controversial aspects of the United Kingdom’s split from the EU.
 - Northern Ireland is part of the UK but shares a land border with the Republic of Ireland, an EU member state.
- The new deal called the “Windsor Framework,” will deliver “smooth flowing trade” within the UK, “protects Northern Ireland’s place” in the UK and “safeguard” the sovereignty of Northern Ireland.
- The purpose of the deal is to fix the issues created by the Northern Ireland Protocol, an addendum to the Brexit deal agreed upon by Boris Johnson and the EU in 2019.
- The protocol was created to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland by keeping Northern Ireland aligned with the EU, meaning goods don’t need to be checked between the Republic and the province. The Windsor Framework will replace the Northern Ireland Protocol.

Admissions open for
WBCS
[Gr. A & Gr. B]
2023-24

ABHIK PATLA
RANK 46

MRINMOY MAJI
RANK 45

ARGHYA BHATTACHARYA
RANK 54

BANANI MAJUMDER
RANK 83

CHANDAN SAHA
RANK 101

DEBNATH MAHATA
RANK 111

AMIT TAMANG
RANK 115

JAGANNATH BHOWMICK
RANK 161

SUBRATA DAS
RANK 166

MONOJIT CHOWDHURY
RANK 2

Our Top successful candidates in WBCS 2020

ECONOMICS

PAN is to be used as a common identifier for digital systems.

- Permanent Account Numbers (PANs) would be used as a **common identity for all digital systems** of the recognized government institutions, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The action would aid in further enhancing the ease of doing business in the country.
- **PAN is a 10-digit alphanumeric identification number** that the Income Tax department issues to an individual, business, or other entity.
- Ms Sitharaman stated that as part of the "Vivad Se Vishwas" programme, small businesses would receive 95% of the performance security if MSMEs (micro, small, and medium enterprises) failed to carry out the contract.
- The Vivad Se Vishwas plan allows for the settlement of disputed taxes, penalties, interest, or other fees in connection with an assessment or reassessment order upon payment of 100% of the disputed tax and 25% of the disputed penalty, interest, or other fees.

National Digital Library

- To promote a "culture of reading" and make up for pandemic-era learning loss, **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has proposed a national digital library for children and adolescents along with strengthening the National Book Trust.**
- According to the Minister, the States would be encouraged to establish physical libraries at the panchayat and ward levels and to provide the necessary infrastructure for users to access the National Digital Library's resources.
- According to the most recent Annual State of Education, Report 2022 produced by the NGO Pratham, children's basic literacy had significantly suffered as a result of the closure of schools during COVID-19, with their reading ability deteriorating and falling to pre2012 levels.
- Education funding is increasing the entire budgetary allotment for the Ministry of Education increased by 8.2% from 1,04,277 crore to 1,12,898 crore, with school education seeing an increase of 8.4% and higher education seeing a growth of 7.9%.
- Another major increase in spending on education was for the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, where the budget increased by 9%, from 7,650 to 8,363 crores.
- The funding for the PM POSHAN plan (midday meal programme) increased from 10,233 to 11,600 crores, a 13.35% increase.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Plan (MGNREGS) was only given Rs 60,000 crores in the Government Budget for 2023–2024. That is 33% lower than Rs 89,000 crores estimates for the scheme for the current year.

More about MGNREGA

- The MGNREGA is Indian labour law and social security programme that aims to **guarantee the 'right to work'**.
- It provides a **legal right for 100 days of employment in every financial year to at least one member of every rural household** whose adult members agree to do **unskilled manual work**.
- **The Ministry of Rural Development is monitoring** the implementation of this scheme.
- **Women were guaranteed one-third of the jobs** made available under the MGNREGA.
- The MGNREGA programme also helps in **creating durable assets** (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells).
- **Work is to be provided within 5 km of workers' residence** and minimum wages are to be paid.
- **Right to get unemployment allowance** in case employment is not provided within 15 days of applying.

- MGNREGA is implemented mainly by gram panchayats. Adult members of rural households submit their details to the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Panchayat registers households after enquiring and issues a job card. The job card contains the details of the adult member enrolled and his /her photo
- **The involvement of contractors is banned.**
- **The Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory**, which ensures accountability and transparency.
- MGNREGA provides a 'right to work' following Article 41 which directs the State to secure for all citizens the right to work.
- The programme is providing **economic security and creates rural assets.**

Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY)

- The **provision for the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) was boosted by 66% in the Union Budget 2023-24**, significantly boosting the availability of affordable housing.
 - Compared to the 48,000 crores allocated last year, PMAY received around 79,000 crores this fiscal.
- The announcement of the Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF), which will be utilised to build urban infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, was made by the minister of finance, Nirmala Sitharaman.
- The programme was introduced in 2015 to give all citizens a chance at affordable housing. The programme was developed to help the middle-income population, economically disadvantaged groups, and low-income groups.
- The aim of this Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) is to offer its beneficiaries an interest subsidy to take out loans to buy or construct a home.
- **States and localities will be urged to implement urban planning changes and other measures to make their cities "sustainable cities of tomorrow,"** the minister stated in her budget speech. This involves the effective use of land resources, sufficient funding for urban infrastructure, transit-oriented development, increased accessibility to and affordability of urban land, and equal opportunity for all, she explained.
- According to Ms Sitharaman, the shortfall in loans to the prioritised sectors will be used to fund the creation of the UIDF. Government agencies will use this to build urban infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. It will be administered by the National Housing Bank. Each year, the Center will give the fund a budget of 10,000 crores.

More about Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation launched Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana in 2015.**
- The Programme was initiated with the **objective of 'Housing for All by 2022'.**
- Providing housing Facilities to rural poor and urban poor including slum dwellers
- **Financial assistance is provided** to eligible beneficiaries for the construction of pucca houses.
- The **Centre and States share the Cost** of the houses made under the scheme.
- The mission has **2 Components:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Gramin (PMAY-G)** was formerly called the Indira Awas Yojana and was renamed in March 2016.
 - It is targeted at promoting accessibility and affordability of housing for all of rural India with the exceptions of Delhi and Chandigarh.
 - Under the PMAY-G, financial assistance of Rs 1.20 lakh in plain areas and Rs 1.30 lakh in hilly states is provided to a beneficiary.
 - The cost is shared by the Centre and state in a ratio of 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for hilly states (special category states which include 8 North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and J&K).
 - In the UTs, including Ladakh, the Centre bears 100% of the expenditure on the implementation of the rural housing scheme.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme**
 - **In Situ Slum Redevelopment:** A slum rehabilitation grant of Rs. 1 lakh per house, on average, would be admissible for all houses built for eligible slum dwellers in all such projects. Slums so redeveloped should compulsorily be denotified.
 - **Affordable Housing through Credit Linked Subsidy:** Under Credit Linked Subsidy, beneficiaries of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) and Low Income Group (LIG) can seek housing loans from Banks,

Housing Finance Companies and other such institutions for new construction and enhancement of existing dwellings as incremental housing.

- **Affordable Rental Housing Complexes:** It will be a mix of single/double bedroom Dwelling Units and a Dormitory of 4/6 beds including all common facilities which will be exclusively used for rental housing for a minimum period of 25 years.
- **Aadhar Card is mandatory** to take benefit of the scheme.
- Economically weaker sections and Middle-Income Groups are also eligible for financial assistance under the Missions.
- **Priority is given to SCs, STs, OBSs, differently-abled persons, senior citizens, minorities, single women, transgender and other Socio-economic weaker sections of society.**
- Identifying beneficiaries eligible for assistance and their prioritisation to be done using information from the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) ensures total transparency and objectivity.
- The ownership of houses is provided in the name of female members or joint names.
- **Houses made under the scheme would ensure basic facilities** like salutation, tap water connection, etc.
- Under the scheme, the Government promoted Training to Rural Masons under Rural Mason Training (RMT) programme to make a pool of trained rural masons available for faster construction of quality houses.

Government's new policy of UPI for NRIs

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) paved the way for international (phone) numbers to be able to transact using UPI.
 - **Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is an instant real-time payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India.** The interface facilitates inter-bank peer-to-peer and person-to-merchant transactions. It is used on mobile devices to instantly transfer funds between two bank accounts.
- The Union Cabinet also approved an incentive scheme with an outlay of ₹2,600 crores for the promotion of RuPay debit Cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions (person-to-merchant) in FY 2022-23.
- International numbers;
 - Non-resident accounts such as non-resident external accounts (NRE) and non-resident ordinary accounts (NRO), having international numbers, will now be allowed into the UPI payment system.
 - NRE accounts are those used by non-residents to transfer earnings from foreign countries to India while NRO accounts are used to manage income earned in India by non-residents. These incomes could be rent, interest, and pension, among other things.
- At present, users from 10 countries will be able to avail of the facility; Singapore, Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the U.K.
 - It will allow NRIs to use the payment method for making utility bill payments for their families (or themselves) in India, make purchases from e-commerce or online platforms and make payments to physical merchants who accept UPI QR-based payments when they travel to India.
- Presently, there is no MDR charge levied for RuPay-based debit card and UPI transactions.
 - The merchant discount rate is the rate charged to a merchant for payment processing services on debit and credit card transactions.
 - It is collected by the acquirer to compensate the varied service providers and intermediaries in the payment system.
- As per the DigiDhan dashboard maintained by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, BHIM-UPI accounted for 52% of all digital payments in FY 2021-22.
 - At present, it stands at 59.74%.

Unity Mall

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced in the Budget that states would be encouraged to set up a **"Unity Mall" in their capitals, their most prominent tourism centres, or their financial capitals.**
- The Minister did not specify what the "unity mall" would be, its physical or non-physical structure, or how it would work. However, she said that the **unity malls would focus on the promotion and sale of the state's own "ODOPs (one district, one product), GI products and other handicraft products,** and for providing space for such products of all other States".

- One District, One Product is an initiative by the government which aims to make regional products more accessible while providing capital to those who produce them. Under the scheme, the State identifies the chief product for a district and then offers support for its processing, storage and marketing.
 - These products can be perishable agri produce, cereal-based products or food products like mango, potato, meat and fisheries. The scheme also supports traditional and innovative products including waste-to-wealth products, such as honey and herbal edible products.
- A Geographical Indication (GI) tag is given to agricultural, natural or manufactured products that originate from a specific geographical area due to which they possess unique characteristics and qualities, according to the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Angel Tax

- As per a motion made in the Finance Bill, 2023, Indian start-ups that offer their shares to foreign investors, may have to pay 'angel tax'. Earlier, it was only supposed to be paid for investments raised by resident Indian investors.
- An angel investor is an individual who provides capital for a start-up, in exchange for convertible debt or ownership equity.
 - Angel Investors are Wealthy Individuals or High Net worth Individuals having huge wealth. These investors generally provide seeding capital or initial capital to a start-up entity to earn healthy profit or capital appreciation of investment once start-ups come into operations and exist from the start-ups.
- Angel tax is levied on start-ups when they receive investments over their 'fair market value'. The perceived profit is considered as income from other sources – it's taxed at 30% and termed as angel tax.
- An angel investor is an **individual who provides capital for a start-up**, in exchange for convertible debt or ownership equity.
- Angel Investors are **Wealthy Individuals or High Net worth Individuals** having huge wealth. These investors generally provide seeding capital or initial capital to a start-up entity to **earn healthy profit or capital appreciation of investment once start-ups come into operations and exist from the start-ups**.

PM-KUSUM Scheme

- The deadline for PM-KUSUM Scheme to install 30,000 MW solar power capacity in rural India by 2022, has now been pushed to March 2026- said the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.
- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM) Yojana is a scheme to subsidize farmers to install solar irrigation pumps for cultivation. It was launched by the Government of India in 2019.
- Each farmer will receive a 60% subsidy to set up tube wells and pump sets. They will also get 30% of the total cost as a loan from the Government.
- The primary objective of the PM KUSUM Scheme is to make cutting-edge technology available to our farmers and provide sources for de-dieselised irrigation to the agricultural sector. It aims to increase the income of farmers.

Andhra Pradesh's new Pension Scheme

- The Union Government is set to discuss a new pension model, which has been proposed by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in the state.
- Andhra Pradesh Pension scheme is a unique pension model that combines the elements of both the Old Pension Scheme (defined benefit) and the New Pension Scheme (defined contribution).
 - The scheme is also known as the 'Guaranteed Pension Scheme' (GPS).
- **Andhra Pradesh's new Pension Scheme** 'defined contribution' from employees every month and offers two options of 'defined benefit';
 - Option 1: Employees can get a guaranteed pension of 33% of their last drawn salary if they contribute 10% of their basic salary every month which is matched by a 10 % contribution by the state government.
 - Option 2: Employees can get a guaranteed pension of 40% of their last drawn salary if they contribute 14% of their salary every month, which will be matched by a 14% government contribution.

Old Pension Scheme (OPS)

- Earlier the Pension of the Centre and states government employees was fixed at 50% of the last drawn basic pay. For example: If a government employee's basic monthly salary at the time of retirement was Rs 20,000, he/she would be assured of a pension of Rs 10,000.
- The monthly payouts of pensioners also increased with hikes in dearness allowance (DA) announced by the government for serving employees.
 - DA is calculated as a percentage of the basic salary, it is a kind of adjustment the government provides to its employees and pensioners to make up for the steady increase in the cost of living.
 - DA hikes are announced twice a year, generally in January and July.
- Currently, the minimum pension paid by the government is Rs 9,000 a month, and the maximum is Rs 62,500 (50% of the highest pay in the Central government, which is Rs 1, 25,000 a month).
- The Old Pension System was replaced by a New Payment System (NPS), which came into effect for employees joining government service from 1st January 2004,
 - The New Pension System promises an assured or 'defined' benefit to the retiree. It is therefore described as a 'Defined Benefit Scheme'.

New Pension Scheme (NPS):

- NPS for Central government employees was notified on December 22, 2003, and it was made mandatory for all recruits joining government service from January 1, 2004.
- The defined contribution comprised 10% of the basic salary and dearness allowance by the employee and a matching contribution by the government, In January 2019, the government increased its contribution to 14% of the basic salary and dearness allowance.
- NPS offers a range of investment options and choices of Pension Funds (PFs) for planning the growth of the investments reasonably and monitoring the growth of the pension corpus. Subscribers can switch over from one investment option to another or from one fund manager to another.

India Energy Week (IEW) 2023

- The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the **India Energy Week (IEW) 2023 in Bengaluru**.
- It was held **under the patronage of the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**, Government of India, India Energy Week is the only all-encompassing international energy event supported at the highest level of the Indian government, with participation from all the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), and officially supported by the Federation of Indian Petroleum Industry (FIPI).
- Thus, India Energy Week is the leading global platform for innovation, ideas and investment to accelerate the world's energy transition securely and sustainably.
- Over 1,000 exhibitors from over 50 countries are coming together in Bengaluru at a pivotal time for the energy industry, to forge new partnerships, build relationships and do business.
- The exhibition will embody India's energy ambitions, providing a platform for key energy companies from across the energy value chain to showcase the latest products, services, and initiatives.
- India Energy Week is exhibiting companies including energy producers, integrated energy companies, service providers, EPC contractors, technology companies, financial organizations, and utility and power generation companies from across the oil, gas, alternative and renewable value chain.

Highlights of 2023 Energy Week

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged global investors to explore investment opportunities in the country's energy sector, saying India is the most opportune place at present.
- The Prime Minister launched the uniforms under the 'Unbottled' initiative of Indian Oil.
- To phase out single-use plastic, IndianOil has adopted uniforms for retail customer attendants and LPG delivery personnel made from recycled polyester (rPET) & cotton.
- Each set of uniforms of IndianOil's customer attendant shall support the recycling of around 28 used PET bottles.
- IndianOil is taking this initiative further through 'Unbottled' - a brand for sustainable garments launched for merchandise made from recycled polyester. Under this brand, IndianOil targets to meet the requirement of

uniforms for the customer attendants of other Oil Marketing Companies, non-combat uniforms for the Army, uniforms/ dresses for Institutions & sales to retail customers.

- He also dedicated the twin-cooktop model of the IndianOil's Indoor Solar Cooking System and flagged off its commercial roll-out.
- The Budget (for 2023-34) has provided Rs 10 lakh crore for capital expenditure, which will give a boost to green hydrogen, solar power, and road sectors.
- Several initiatives are being taken by the government to promote green energy and make India net zero by 2070. The budget 2023-24 has provided Rs 35,000 crore to the petroleum and natural gas ministry for achieving the net-zero target.

Disinvestment

- In the Union Budget for 2023-24, the government has set a disinvestment target of ₹51,000 crores, down nearly 21% from the budget estimate for the current year and just ₹1,000 crores more than the revised estimate.
 - It is also the lowest target in seven years. Moreover, the Centre has not met the disinvestment target for 2022-23 so far, having realised ₹31,106 crores to date, of which, ₹20,516 crores or close to a third of the budgeted estimate came.
- Disinvestment means the sale or liquidation of assets by the government, usually Central and state public sector enterprises, projects, or other fixed assets. Disinvesting is an exit strategy that means taking out an existing investment. Disinvestment policies are commonly followed by governments to allocate resources more efficiently.
- For example, The Government of India will sell 30.48% of its stake in the IDBI bank, and the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) shall sell 30.24%, aggregating to 60.72% of IDBI Bank's share capital, along with the transfer of management control in the lender.
- In a nutshell, Disinvestment by the government means the market activity through which the Government conducts the sale or liquidation of Government-owned assets. Such assets usually refer to the Government's ownership stake in Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) and state public sector enterprises (SPSEs), but are not limited to that. Government assets also include project undertakings and other fixed assets.

Repo Rate

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the **Reserve Bank of India hiked the Key Policy Rate-the Repo rate or the rate at which the RBI lends funds to banks, by 25 basis points to 6.50 per cent in a bid to rein in retail inflation.**
- With the raising of the key benchmark interest rate by 25 basis points to 6.5%, there will be a direct impact on both bank depositors and new loan borrowers.
- Since the Repo rate is hiked the banks will now have to pay a higher amount of interest to the RBI which in turn shall be collected from the retail/ corporate borrowers of the banks. This would result in higher interest outflow on loans taken from the banks. Thus, the loans in general will become costlier by 1-2%.
- As the repo rate rises, banks increase the interest rate on their consumer loans.
- The repo rate is the rate at which banks borrow from RBI on a short-term basis against a repurchase agreement. Under this policy, banks are required to provide government securities as collateral and later buy them back after a pre-defined time.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- MPC is a government-constituted body of the RBI, which is responsible for framing the monetary policy of the country, using the tools like repo rate, reverse repo rate, bank rates etc.
- Urjit Patel Committee was the first committee that proposed the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). The first meeting of MPC was conducted in October 2016 in Mumbai.
- The prime objective of RBI MPC is to determine the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target. RBI Act, of 1934 empowers the RBI to take Monetary Policy Decisions.
- The meetings of the Monetary Policy Committee are held at least 4 times a year (specifically, at least once BIMONTHLY) and it publishes its decisions after each such meeting.

- The committee comprises six members - three officials of the Reserve Bank of India and three external members nominated by the Government of India. The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India is the chairperson ex officio of the committee.
 - Each member has a tenure of four years. They need to observe a "silent period" seven days before and after the rate decision for "utmost confidentiality".
 - Decisions are taken by the majority with the Governor having the casting vote in case of a tie. MPC decisions are taken by voting, where a simple majority (4 out of 6) is necessary for a decision to be passed.
- **Inflation targets:**
 - Targeted consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate is = 4%
 - Upper tolerance limit of inflation is = Target inflation rate + 2% = (4% + 2%) = 6%
 - Lower tolerance limit of inflation is = Target inflation rate - 2% = (4% - 2%) = 2%
 - Targeted consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate period from = April 1, 2021
 - Targeted consumer price index (CPI) inflation rate period up to = March 31, 2026

Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030

- Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 estimates investments of Rs. 1, 00,000-1, 25,000 crores for capacity augmentation and development of world-class infrastructure at Indian Ports.
- At present, **India is not having landside mega-port and terminal infrastructure to deal with Ultra-large container ships.** Ports need a higher draft, several large cranes, better yard management capability, increased automation, larger storage facilities, more inland connectivity, and enhanced labour productivity. Ultra-large container ships seek speedy unloading of the large volumes they carry.
- To develop global standard ports in India, Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 has estimated investments to the tune of INR 1,00,000-1,25,000 crore for capacity augmentation and development of world-class infrastructure at Indian Ports.

Suposhit Maa Abhiyan

- The Prime Minister of India has praised the Lok Sabha speaker to promote mother and child health under the 'Suposhit Maa' initiative.
- In March 2020, the Lok Sabha Speaker launched the 'Suposhit Maa Abhiyan' intending to create a malnutrition-free India in Kota, Rajasthan.
 - The Union Women and Child Development Minister presided over the event.
- The Lok Sabha Speaker informed that under this Abhiyan, 1,000 women would be given food items for one month. At the same time, the health of the child, including medical examination, blood tests, medicines, and delivery, would be covered.
 - 1,000 kits of a 17 kg balanced diet were provided to 1,000 pregnant women in the first phase of the campaign.
- Under the programme, the identified women would be required to register on a website for adoption. Only one pregnant woman would be adopted from a family.
- In May 2022, the Lok Sabha Speaker launched the 2nd phase of "Suposhit Maa Abhiyan" in Kota, Rajasthan. Under the 2nd Phase, 3000 women were given nutrition kits for 9 months.

Payment Aggregator

- The payments arm of big technology companies Amazon and Google are among 32 firms that have been given in-principle approval by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as online payment aggregators.
- A payment aggregator (also known as a merchant aggregator) is a third-party service provider that allows merchants to accept payment from customers by integrating it into their websites or apps.
- In other terms, a payment aggregator (PA) bridges the gap between merchants and acquirers.
- Under the payment aggregator model, merchants can process transactions through the aggregator's Merchant Identification Number (MID). This means, your business doesn't require a separate merchant account as the payment aggregator takes care of everything while levying a moderate fee. Thus, the PA receives payments from

customers on the behalf of merchants. Finally, it transfers the payments to the merchant in batches after some time. This step is known as the settlement. The settlement may be standard i.e. it requires T+ 2 to 4 days. On the other hand, the settlement can be instant which can be as fast as 15 minutes.

- **Laws and regulations about Payment Aggregators**

- Payment aggregators in India are incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 / 2013. Now, it can be a bank or a non-bank entity.
- Since a PA handles funds, it requires a license from the Reserve Bank of India.
- However, only non-bank payment aggregators require unique authorization from RBI. This is because 'handling funds' is considered a part of the normal banking relationships for bank PAs.

- **Eligibility**

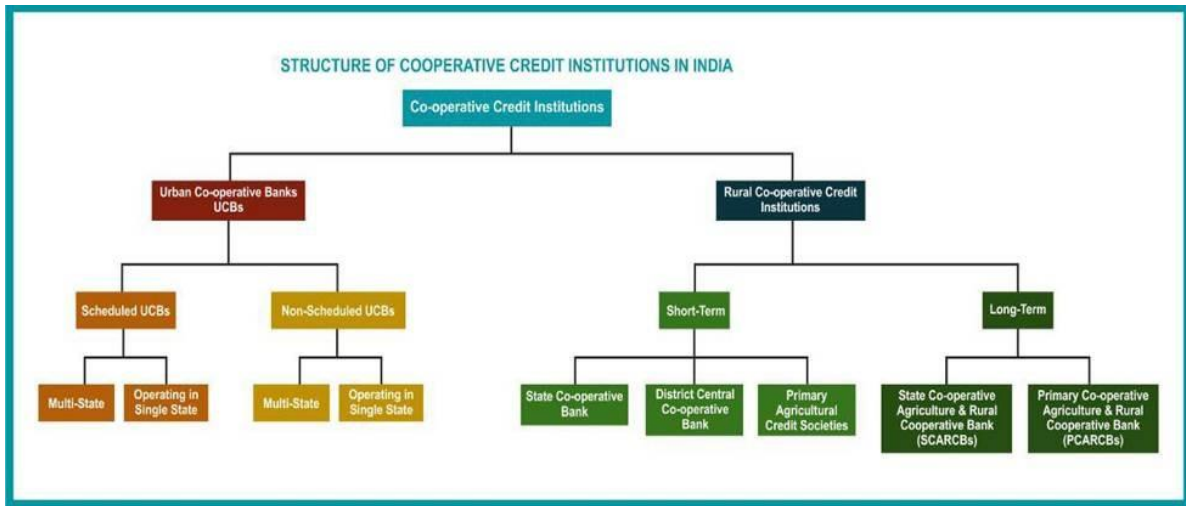
- According to RBI rules, a company applying for aggregator authorization must have
- A minimum net worth of Rs 15 crore in the first year of application, and
- At least Rs 25 crore by the second year.
- It also must fulfil the "fit and proper" criteria, and be compliant with global payment security standards.

Payment Gateway vs Payment Aggregator

- A payment gateway is a Payment Processing Software. Payment Gateways only deal with online transactions and are equipped with restricted payment options. Examples of payment gateways include Axis bank, HDFC, Union Bank of India, etc., as in India, most banks act as payment gateways.
- The key difference between a Payment Gateway & Aggregator is that while a Payment Gateway only provides the technology, a Payment Aggregator would also receive payments from consumers on the business/merchant's behalf and then settles the same in their account.

Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)

- The Union Budget has announced Rs 2,516 crore for the computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) over the next five years. To bring greater transparency and accountability in their operations and enable them to diversify their business and undertake more activities.
- PACS are ground-level cooperative credit institutions that provide short-term and medium-term agricultural loans to farmers for various agricultural and farming activities. It works at the grassroots gram Panchayat and village level.
- The first Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS) was formed in the year 1904. Since then, these societies have been playing a significant role in providing short-term and medium-term credit to farmers. Till the early seventies, this was the only institutional credit agency available to people in rural areas. The PACS functioning at the base of the cooperative banking system constitutes the major retail outlets of short-term and medium-term credit to the rural sector.
- PACS are village-level cooperative credit societies that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the State Cooperative Banks (SCB) at the state level.
- Credit from the SCBs is transferred to the district central cooperative banks, or DCCBs, that operate at the district level. The DCCBs work with PACS, which deals directly with farmers.
- Since these are cooperative bodies, individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them. A village can have multiple PACS
- PACS are involved in short-term lending — or what is known as crop loans. At the start of the cropping cycle, farmers avail credit to finance their requirement of seeds, fertilizers, etc.
- Banks extend this credit at 7% interest, of which 3% is subsidized by the Centre, and 2% by the state government. Effectively, farmers avail the crop loans at 2% interest only.



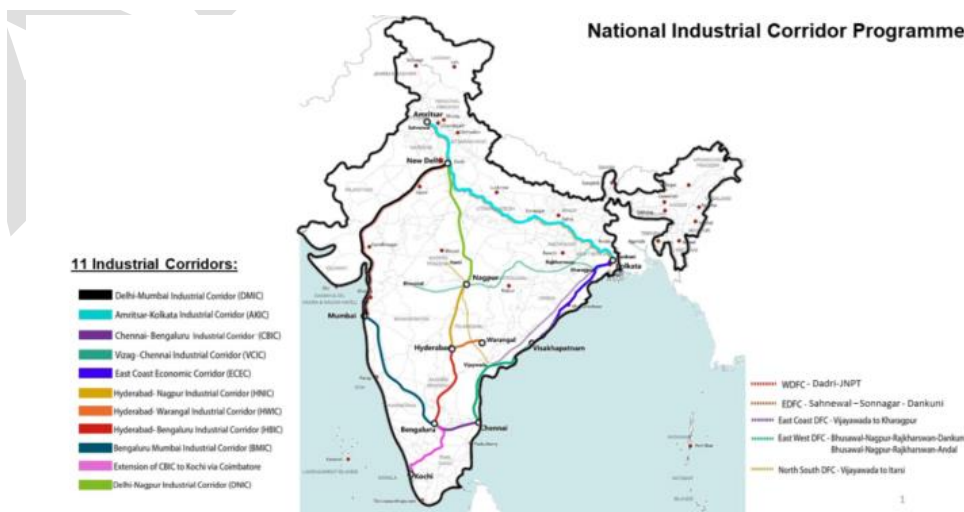
National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)

- Eight Projects under National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT) have been sanctioned and approved by Government.
- National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (NICDC) is a Special Purpose Vehicle that envisages establishing, promoting and facilitating the development of the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme.
- The current equity shareholders in NICDC include the Government of India (49%), represented through the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) (26%) and financial institutions such as Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) (19.9%), India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited (IIFCL) (4.1%) & Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) (1.0%).

National Industrial Corridor Development Programme:

- National Industrial Corridor Development Programme is India's most ambitious infrastructure programme aiming to develop new industrial cities as "Smart Cities" and converge next-generation technologies across infrastructure sectors.
- The government of India is developing various industrial corridor projects as part of the National Industrial Corridor Programme which is aimed at the development of futuristic industrial cities in India which can compete with the best manufacturing and investment destinations in the world.
- The same will create employment opportunities and economic growth leading to overall socio-economic development.

The programme is aimed at providing impetus to planned urbanization in India with manufacturing as the key driver.



Udyam Portal


- Retail and wholesale traders reinstated under the MSME category by the Government in July 2021 are topping the table of the top 10 segments or sub-sectors in the MSME sector based on the number of registrations on the Udyam portal.
- Udyamregistration.gov.in is the only Government Portal for the registration of MSME (Udyam).
 - It was launched by the Union MSME Ministry on July 1, 2020.
 - It is an official portal to register a new MSME or to re-register already registered EM-II (Entrepreneurs Memorandum, Part-II) or UAM (Udyog Aadhaar Memorandum).
- The Ministry of Micro, Small Medium Enterprises maintains this portal. It gives the details and steps relating to registration and makes the registration process easy for any person. It provides free-of-cost and paperless registration.
- Udyam registration is a prerequisite for availing the benefits of schemes or programs of the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises such as the Credit Guarantee Scheme, public procurement policy, additional edge in Government Tenders and protection against delayed payments etc.
- Aadhaar, PAN and GST numbers are required for registration.
- The Udyam portal is seamlessly integrated with Income Tax and GST Identification systems along with the government e-marketplace.
- The details on investment and turnover are taken automatically from government databases.

Action Plan for Champion Sectors in Services

- Centre has formulated an 'Action Plan for Champion Sectors in Services' to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors.
- 5000 Crores have been earmarked to support sectoral initiatives of the Nodal Ministries/Departments identified for these sectors, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry.
- The government of India follows a multipronged strategy to promote trade in services comprising the following:
 - Negotiating meaningful market access through multilateral, regional and bilateral trade agreements.
 - Trade promotion through participation in and organization of international fairs/exhibitions like the Global Exhibition on Services, Higher Education Summit etc. Focused strategies are undertaken for specific markets and sectors.
 - Addressing domestic sectoral challenges and difficulties which are identified through periodic consultations with the stakeholders. Moreover, efforts are made to engage with the concerned Ministries/Departments to pursue a domestic reform agenda to make the services sector competitive globally.
 - The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has set up a dedicated Services Sector Division Council (SSDC) to formulate Indian Standards in various Services Sectors, especially Champion Services Sectors. Wherever possible, the Indian Standards are harmonized with international standards for ensuring that the quality of services matches global expectations. BIS has already published 143 standards on services till January 2023.
 - Districts as Export Hubs Initiative highlights the need to channel the potential and diverse identity in each District of the country to make them export hubs. Under this initiative, the Department of Commerce through the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) works with the States/UTs and the districts directly to create institutional mechanisms to facilitate exports of identified products/services from the districts. Products and services with export potential have been identified in all districts of the country in consultation with all the stakeholders including the States/UTs.

Cabinet Decision
February 28, 2018

Action Plan for 12 Champion Sectors in Services



- Cabinet approves the proposal of the Department of Commerce to give focused attention to 12 identified Champion Services Sectors for promoting their development, and realizing their potential
- **12 Sectors-** Information Technology & Information Technology enabled Services (IT & ITeS), Tourism and Hospitality Services, Medical Value Travel, Transport and Logistics Services, Accounting and Finance Services, Audio Visual Services, Legal Services, Communication Services, Construction and Related Engineering Services, Environmental Services, Financial Services and Education Services
- Dedicated fund of Rs. 5000 crores has been proposed to be established to support initiatives for sectoral Action Plans of the Champion Sectors
- **Impact-**
 - Enhance the competitiveness of India's service sectors
 - Create more jobs in India, contributing to a higher GDP
 - Boost exports of various services from India to global markets
 - Embedded services are substantial part of 'Goods' as well; competitive services sector will add to the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector as well

Millet International Initiative for Research and Awareness (MIIRA)

- India is holding the Presidency of the G20. During India's time as G20 president, the country is committed to maintaining its focus on food security. Towards this goal, India plans to propose the launch of a global initiative to encourage millets consumption and production known as-- Millet International Initiative for Research and Awareness also known as MIIRA.
- **MIIRA aims to coordinate millet research programs worldwide.**
- The UN's declaration as the International Year of Millet 2023 has been instrumental for India to be at the forefront in celebrating the millet year. MIIRA is in line with this declaration. The MIIRA secretariat will be in Delhi.
- Besides setting up a web platform to connect researchers and holding international research conferences, the plan is also to promote millet consumption by raising awareness.
- Promoting millets not only raises awareness of these wonder crops but also of women farmers and their farming knowledge. Raising awareness among farmers and the general public about the numerous benefits of millet can help to revitalise millets production and consumption in India.
- The vision is to make Millets a "people's movement" alongside positioning India as the "Global hub of millets".

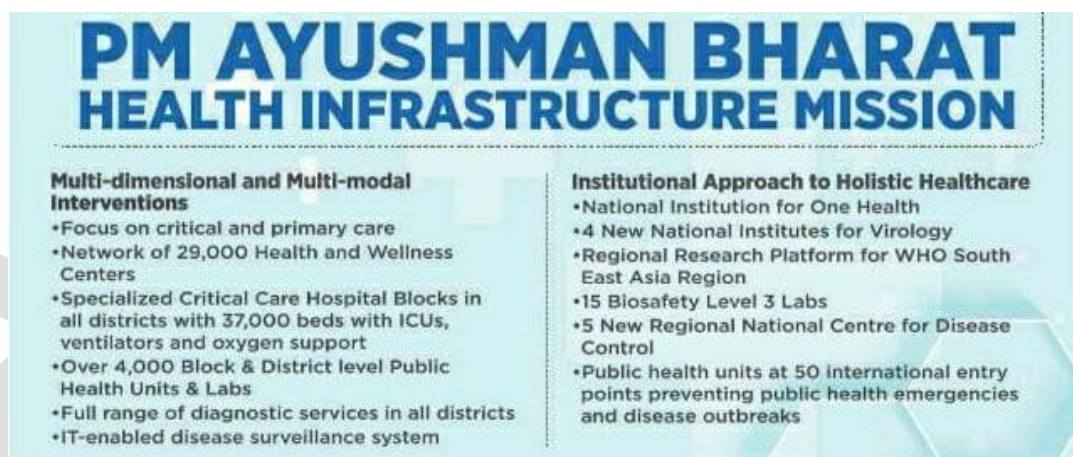
Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Infrastructure Mission (PMABHIM)

- The Union government has signed loan agreements with international agencies to borrow Rs 13,879 crore to strengthen health infrastructure in India.
- The Ministry of State for Health stated that loan agreements had been signed with;
 - Asian Development Bank (ADB) (\$300 million or Rs 2,474 crore).
 - Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) (50 billion Japanese Yen or Rs 3,162 crore)
 - World Bank (\$1 billion or Rs 8,243 crores)
- The loans have been taken to strengthen the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM).
 - The PMABHIM was launched to fill gaps in health infrastructure, especially in critical and primary care facilities.

PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission:

- It is **one of the largest health schemes for strengthening healthcare infrastructure** across India. In the Budget 2021-22, the PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission has been announced with an outlay of Rs 64,180 crore.
- It was launched in October 2021 to achieve the vision of providing comprehensive healthcare services across the country.

- To fill the essential gaps in the public healthcare infrastructure, especially in critical care facilities and primary care in both urban and rural areas.
- To strengthen Public health institutions at the grassroots level to deliver universal comprehensive primary health care and critical care services for diagnostics and treatment.
- To expand and build an IT-enabled disease surveillance system for effectively detecting, investigating, preventing and combating Public Health Emergencies and Disease Outbreaks by developing a network of surveillance laboratories at block, district, regional and national levels, Points of Entry in Metropolitan areas.
- To expand research on infectious diseases (including COVID-19) and to deliver the One Health Approach to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease outbreaks in animals and humans.
- The PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission consists of Centrally Sponsored Scheme Components and some Central Sector Components.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) Components of the Mission for 5 years (2021-22 to 2025-26);**
 - Ayushman Bharat - Health & Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) in rural areas to support infrastructure development for nearly 18,000 Sub-Health Centres in 7 High Focus States (Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) and 3 North Eastern States (Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya).
 - Ayushman Bharat - Health & Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) in Urban areas to support infrastructure development for nearly 11,000 Urban Health & Wellness Centres across the country.
 - Block Public Health Units to Support infrastructure development for nearly 3500 blocks in 11 High Focus States/ UTs (Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand).
 - Integrated District Public Health Laboratories in all districts.
 - Critical Care Hospital Blocks in all districts with a population of more than 5 lakhs.
- **Central Sector (CS) Components:**
 - Critical Care Hospital Blocks in 12 Central Institutions.
 - Strengthening Surveillance of Infectious Diseases and Outbreak Response in all states.
 - Strengthening Surveillance Capacities at Points of Entry.
 - Strengthening Disaster and Epidemic Preparedness.
 - Bio-security Preparedness and Strengthening Pandemic Research, National Institutions and Platforms for One Health.



Windfall Profit Tax

- The Finance Ministry has lowered the Windfall Profit Tax levied on domestically-produced crude oil as well as on the export of diesel and ATF, in line with softening international oil prices.
- The government levies a windfall tax on business entities due to abnormal gains from financial windfalls. The main objective of such a tax is reallocating abnormal profits favourably in one sector for social causes. Taxes on winnings from game shows and horse racing lottery tax, gambling or betting are examples of the same.
- A **windfall tax refers to the tax levied against certain industries by the government when economic conditions permit those industries to experience significantly above-average profits.** Such economic conditions come from a sudden windfall gain to a certain business or industry, typically as a result of a geopolitical disruption, natural

disaster, or war that causes unusual spikes in demand or supply interruptions. A good example is a confrontation between Russia and Ukraine.

- A tax imposed on such an unexpected rise in profits is called a windfall tax. They are usually imposed when there is a sudden increase in profits in a particular sector. They are also imposed if there is an acute need for a temporary spurt in public spending at the same time.
- In July 2022, the government of India enacted windfall taxes amid domestic crude producers making exceptional gains due to the global impact of the Russia-Ukraine war. Domestic players gained tremendous profit by selling crude to refiners at internationally bench-marked pricing.

Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS) 2022-23

- The Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj inaugurated the Mission Antyodaya Survey (MAS) 2022-23, and also launched its portal and mobile application during an event organised in New Delhi.
- The village-wise survey involving Community Resource Persons (CRPs) is expected to be conducted over one month.
- The survey will collect village-level data on 183 indicators under 216 data points of 21 sectors.
- **The survey questions have been categorized into 5 categories;**
 - Panchayat Infrastructure
 - Panchayat Services
 - Village Infrastructure
 - Village Services
 - Village Practices
- A total of 26 Central Government Ministries/Departments have been consulted for the finalization of the questionnaire.
 - The questionnaire has been translated into 13 regional languages.
- The Ministry in consultation with the National Informatics Centre (NIC), has developed an android mobile application with a geo-tag feature for 36 assets in villages.
- The Ministry has also set up an in-house HelpDesk for the resolution of queries related to the questionnaire and mobile application.

About Mission Antyodaya:

- Mission Antyodaya was adopted in the Union Budget 2017-18.
- It is a convergence and accountability framework initiative aiming to bring optimum use and management of resources of the Union Government under various programmes for the development of rural areas with Gram Panchayats as focal points of convergence efforts.
- It is a State-led initiative for rural transformation to make difference based on measurable outcomes in 50,000-gram Panchayats.
- Significance:
 - It provided a strong infrastructural base for the selected Gram Panchayats through the prioritised implementation of schemes.
 - It is an effective social capital promoting participatory planning.
 - The implementation of the schemes involves various stakeholders at the Gram panchayat level.
 - It diversified economic opportunities in the non-farm sector, skilling rural youth and women, developing value chains and promoting enterprises.
 - It strengthened democratic processes through capacity building at the Gram Panchayat level.

GST Appellate Tribunal

- The GST Council in its 49th meeting accepted the Group of Ministers (GoM) recommendations on the long pending constitution of the GST Appellate Tribunal in the country with some modifications.
- The Appellate Tribunal under GST is a quasi-judicial body that has been established to provide a platform for the resolution of disputes that arise between businesses, individuals, and the government regarding the implementation and interpretation of the GST laws.

- The Tribunal operates as an appellate authority that hears appeals against the decisions and orders of the lower authorities. Under GST, if a person is not satisfied with the decision passed by any lower court, an appeal can be raised to a higher court, the hierarchy for the same is as follows (from low to high):
 - Adjudicating Authority
 - Appellate Authority
 - Appellate Tribunal
 - High Court
 - Supreme Court.
- The GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) or simply the Appellate Tribunal is the second appeal forum under GST. For any dissatisfactory order passed by the First Appellate Authorities, an application for revision of the same can be raised to the National Appellate Tribunal.
- The National Appellate Tribunal is also the first common forum to resolve disputes between the centre and the states.
- Being a common forum, it is the duty of the GST Appellate Tribunal to ensure uniformity in the redressal of disputes arising under GST.
- As per the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the GST Appellate Tribunal holds the same powers as the court and is deemed Civil Court for trying a case.
- The Appellate Tribunal has been granted the powers to hear appeals and to pass orders and directions, including those for the recovery of amounts due, for the enforcement of its orders, and for the rectification of mistakes.
- The Tribunal also has the power to impose penalties, revoke or cancel registrations, and take such other measures as may be necessary to ensure compliance with the GST laws.
- The jurisdiction of the Appellate Tribunal extends to all cases where an appeal has been filed against an order, decision, or direction of a lower authority under the GST laws.
- The Tribunal has the power to hear and resolve disputes related to the assessment of taxes, determination of liability, imposition of penalties, and other matters related to the implementation and interpretation of the GST laws.

Social Stock Exchange (SSE)

- The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has received final approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India, to set up a Social Stock Exchange (SSE) as a separate segment of the NSE.
- **An SSE allows the listing of non-profit or Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) on stock exchanges, providing them with an alternative fund-raising structure.** It may be listed on BSE or NSE. The idea of SSE was first floated by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her 2019-20 Budget speech. Countries like the UK, Canada and Brazil have SSEs.
- The fund-raising is proposed through several instruments such as zero-coupon-zero-principal bonds, social venture funds and mutual funds.
- A Social Stock Exchange may help rebuild the livelihoods of people as the investments will have a social impact.
- The SSEs will aim at unlocking large pools of social capital, and encourage blended finance structures so that conventional capital can partner with social capital to address urgent social issues.
- Example: The Cancer Fund by HDFC Mutual Fund is one example. It operates as a standard mutual fund, with the exception that the returns generated are channelled towards the financing of Non-Profit Organizations. Its investors get their money back from HDFC MF, but any interest or gains that are made are donated to the NPO.

High Networth Individuals (HNIs)

- According to the Union Ministry of External Affairs, more than 2.25 lakh Indians renounced their citizenship in 2022, the number is the highest since 2011.
 - Recently, the Minister of state for external affairs informed the Lok Sabha that more than 16 lakh Indians have renounced their citizenship since 2011.
- The data suggest Indians, especially high net worth individuals (HNIs), are moving to western countries in search of better opportunities, healthcare, quality of life, and education, among other factors.
- HNIs are those who have wealth of over \$1 million or ₹ 8.2 crore.

- According to the Henley Global Citizens Report, there were around 3.47 lakh HNIs in India in December 2021.
 - Of these, 1.49 lakh HNIs were found in just 9 cities: Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, Gurugram, and Ahmedabad.
- According to the report, India ranked 4th in the world in terms of privately held wealth, after the U.S., China, and Japan.

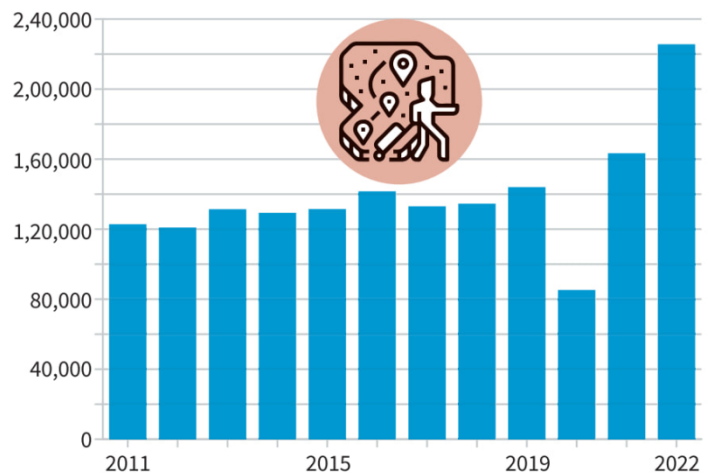
Possible factors behind the trend

- Indian Industry representatives highlighted that several western countries have initiated “residence through - investment” programmes to attract investment in their nation.
 - The U.S. EB5 visa, Portugal Golden Visa, Australian Global Talent Independent Visa, Malta Permanent Residency Programme, and Greece Residence by Investment Programme.
- The “Residence through investment” scheme benefits individuals and families, providing them with the right to live, work, study, or retire in western countries.
- A few years after the investment, the individual will be eligible for a passport from these countries, making them eligible to visit over 150 countries without a visa.
 - The majority of Western Countries ranked high in the Henley Passport Index which ranks the strongest and weakest passports globally.
 - Indian passport holders can access just 59 destinations worldwide.
- HNIs invest to give their children a better future in foreign countries.
- HNIs like business owners, entrepreneurs, and professionals such as doctors and engineers are also searching for better business opportunities outside India.
- Wealthy families aspire for better healthcare, open and flexible business environments, and access to better academic and professional opportunities.
 - The “residence through investment” programmes in several developed nations provide them with these options.

UPI-PAYNOW Linkage

- India’s Unified Payments Interface – better known as **UPI** – and Singapore’s PayNow **have been officially integrated.**
- The project to link both the fast payment systems was initiated in September 2021 to facilitate faster, more efficient and transparent cross-border transactions relating to trade, travel and remittances between the two countries.
- They allow for a “real-time payment linkage”.
- This will enable faster remittances between the two countries at a competitive rate.
- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is India’s mobile-based fast payment system, which facilitates customers to make round-the-clock payments instantly, using a Virtual Payment Address (VPA) created by the customer.
 - It eliminates the risk of sharing bank account details by the remitter.
 - UPI supports both Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) payments and it also enables a user to send or receive money.
- PayNow is a fast payment system in Singapore.
 - It enables peer-to-peer funds transfer service, available to retail customers through participating banks and Non-Bank Financial Institutions (NFIs) in Singapore.
 - It allows users to send and receive instant funds from one bank or e-wallet account to another in Singapore by using just their mobile number, Singapore National Registration Identity Card (NRIC)/Foreign Identification Number (FIN), or VPA.

As many as 2.25 lakh Indians renounced Indian citizenship in 2022, the highest in the past decade



WEST BENGAL BUDGET 2023-2024

- Cross-border retail payments are generally less transparent and more expensive than domestic transactions.
- The UPI-PayNow linkage is a significant milestone in the development of infrastructure for cross-border payments between India and Singapore and closely aligns with the G20's financial inclusion priorities of driving faster, cheaper and more transparent cross-border payments.
- On 15th February 2023, West Bengal's Finance Minister Chandrima Bhattacharya presented the state's budget for the upcoming fiscal year 2023-24.

West Bengal's Economy

- **GSDP:** West Bengal's GSDP (at constant prices) is projected to rise by 8.4% in 2022-2023 compared to the previous year. In comparison, it is projected that in 2022-2023, the country's GDP will grow by 7%.
- **Sectors:** According to estimates, agriculture, manufacturing, and services will make up 19.4%, 24%, and 56.5% of the GDP in 2022-2023 (at current prices).
- **Employment:** According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, West Bengal's unemployment rate for 2020-21 was 6.8%, which was lower than the 7.5% figure for the entire country.

Table 1: West Bengal's GSDP Growth

Year	GSDP Growth	
	Current Price	Constant Price
2020-21	7.7%	1.1%
2021-22	18.0%	10.7%
2022-23	14.0%	8.4%

Sources: Medium Term Fiscal Policy Statement and Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement (various years), West Bengal Budget Documents; PRS.

Budget Estimates for 2023-24

- **Expenditure:** Total expenditure (excluding debt repayment) in 2023-24 is targeted at Rs 2,78,622 crore. This is an increase of 8.6% over the revised estimate of 2022-23.
- **Revenue:** The expenditure is proposed to be met through receipts (excluding borrowings) of Rs 2,12,783 crore and net borrowings of Rs 59,499 crore. The remaining amount will be funded through the public account and contingency fund.
 - Total receipts for 2023-24 (other than borrowings) are expected to register an increase of 9.3% over the revised estimate of 2022-23.
- **Revenue Deficit:** The revenue deficit in 2023-24 is estimated to be 1.8% of GSDP (Rs 30,924 crore), lower than the revised estimates for 2022-23 (2.6% of GSDP).
- **Fiscal deficit:** Fiscal deficit for 2023-24 is targeted at 3.8% of GSDP (Rs 65,839 crore), as compared to the revised estimates for 2022-23 (4.0% of GSDP).
 - For 2023-24, the central government has allowed states a fiscal deficit of 3.5% of GSDP (including 0.5% for undertaking power sector reforms).
- In 2022-23, both expenditure (without debt repayment) and receipts (without borrowing) is estimated to be lower by 1.6% and 1.8% of GSDP respectively over budget estimates.

Table 2: Budget 2023-24 - Key figures (in Rs crore)

Items	2021-22 Actuals	2022-23 Budgeted	2022-23 Revised	% change from BE 2022-23 to RE 2022-23	2023-24 Budgeted	% change from RE 2022-23 to BE 2023-24
Total Expenditure	2,60,286	3,21,030	3,16,321	-1.5%	3,39,162	7.2%
(-) Repayment of debt	31,540	60,401	59,858	-0.9%	60,541	1.1%
Net Expenditure (E)	2,28,746	2,60,629	2,56,463	-1.6%	2,78,622	8.6%
Total Receipts	2,55,798	3,13,191	3,09,170	-1.3%	3,32,823	7.7%
(-) Borrowings	77,581	1,14,959	1,14,429	-0.5%	1,20,040	4.9%
Net Receipts (R)	1,78,217	1,98,232	1,94,742	-1.8%	2,12,783	9.3%
Fiscal Deficit (E-R)	50,528	62,397	61,721	-1.1%	65,839	6.7%
as % of GSDP	3.7%	3.6%	4.0%		3.8%	
Revenue Deficit	32,000	28,280	39,663	40.3%	30,924	-22.0%
as % of GSDP	2.3%	1.7%	2.6%		1.8%	
Primary Deficit	13,856	23,286	21,887	-6.0%	23,076	5.4%
as % of GSDP	1.0%	1.4%	1.4%		1.3%	

Note: BE is Budget Estimates; RE is Revised Estimates. Expenditure for 2022-23 RE does not include transfer of Rs 180 crore to contingency fund.

Sources: West Bengal Budget Documents 2023-24; PRS.

Expenditure in 2023-24

- Revenue expenditure for 2023-24 is proposed to be Rs 2,43,561 crore, an increase of 4% over the revised estimate of 2022-23. This includes expenditure on salaries, pensions, interest, grants, and subsidies.
- Capital outlay for 2023-24 is proposed to be Rs 34,026 crore, an increase of 58% over the revised estimate for 2022-23. Capital outlay is the expenditure towards the creation of assets.
- Committed expenditure of a state typically includes expenditure on payment of salaries, pension, and interest. A larger proportion of the budget allocated for committed expenditure items limits the state's flexibility to decide on other expenditure priorities such as capital outlay.
 - In 2023-24, West Bengal is estimated to spend Rs 1,31,192 crore on committed expenditure, which is 61.7% of its estimated revenue receipts. This comprises spending on salaries (30% of revenue receipts), interest payments (20%), and pension (11%). In addition, a debt of Rs 60,541 crore will be repaid by the state.
 - In 2023-24, committed expenditure is expected to increase by 3% over the revised estimate of 2022-23.
- The sectors listed below account for 64% of the total expenditure on sectors by the state in 2023-24.

Sector-wise expenditure under West Bengal Budget 2023-24 (in Rs crore)

Sector	2021-22 Actuals	2022-23 Budgeted	2022-23 Revised	2023-24 Budgeted	% change from RE 2022-23 to BE 2023-24	Budget Provisions (2023-24)
Education, Sports, Arts, and Culture	37,682	43,466	41,490	45,812	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 17,522 crore has been allocated for assistance to non-government secondary schools. Rs 1,765 crore has been allocated to Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan.
Social Welfare and Nutrition	34,873	36,448	43,164	36,844	-15%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 9,639 crore has been allocated for women's welfare. Child welfare has been allocated Rs 2,504 crore.
Health and Family Welfare	16,768	17,786	17,586	18,490	5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban health services- allopathy has been allocated Rs 6,766 crore. Rural health services- allopathy has been allocated Rs 2,093 crore.
Agriculture and Allied Activities	8,553	12,709	10,172	17,767	75%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 2,684 crore has been allocated for food grain crops. Crop insurance has been allocated Rs 1,125 crore.
Rural Development	14,963	22,236	16,196	15,979	-1%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 5,067 crore has been allocated for rural employment guarantee schemes.
Urban Development	9,983	11,606	15,076	11,526	-24%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 2,379 crore has been allocated for assistance to local bodies, urban development authorities, and town improvement boards.
Police	9,541	10,410	11,744	10,595	-10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Police has been allocated Rs 6,933 crore.
Welfare of SC, ST, OBC, and Minorities	4,351	6,581	4,729	7,229	53%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JAIBANGLA has been allocated Rs 1,623 crore.
Transport	5,823	6,843	6,507	7,089	9%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 4,928 crore has been allocated for capital expenditure on roads and bridges.
Housing	236	505	447	7,074	1484%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rs 6,574 has been allocated for rural housing.
% of total expenditure on all sectors	63%	65%	65%	64%		

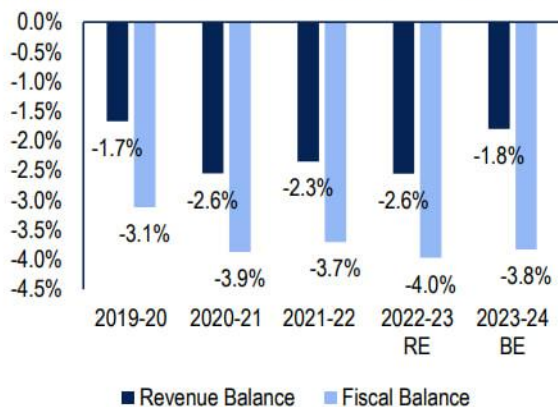
Receipts in 2023-24

- **Total revenue receipts for 2023-24** are estimated to be Rs 2,12,637 crore, an increase of 9% over the revised estimate of 2022-23. Of this, Rs 94,972 crore (45%) will be raised by the state through its resources, and Rs 1,17,665 crore (55%) will come from the centre.
 - Resources from the centre will be in the form of the state’s share in central taxes (36% of revenue receipts) and grants (19% of revenue receipts).
- **Devolution:** In 2023-24, the state’s share in central taxes is estimated at Rs 76,844 crore, an increase of 8% over the revised estimate for 2022-23.
 - Grants from the centre in 2023-24 are estimated at Rs 40,821 crore, a decrease of 2% over the revised estimates for 2022-23.
- **State’s revenue:** West Bengal’s total own tax revenue is estimated to be Rs 88,596 crore in 2023-24, an increase of 11% over the revised estimate of 2022-23. Own tax revenue as a percentage of GSDP is estimated at 5.2% in 2023-24.
- In 2023-24, State GST is estimated to be the largest source of own tax revenue (43% share). State GST revenue is estimated to increase by 9% over the revised estimates for 2022-23.
- In 2023-24, revenue from state excise is estimated to increase 19% over the revised estimates of 2022- 23

West Bengal Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2010 provides annual targets to progressively reduce the outstanding liabilities, revenue deficit and fiscal deficit of the state government.

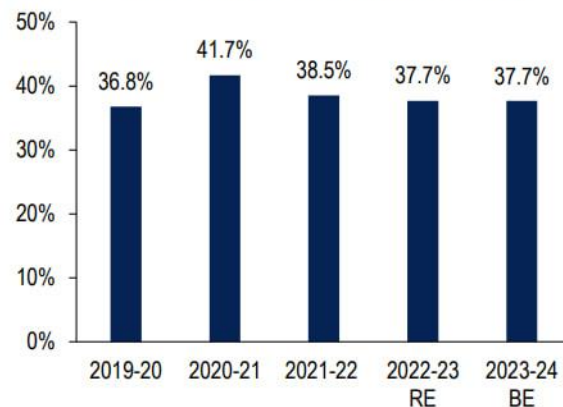
- **Revenue deficit:** It is the difference between revenue expenditure and revenue receipts. A revenue deficit implies that the government needs to borrow to finance those expenses which do not increase its assets or reduces its liabilities.
 - The budget estimates a revenue deficit of Rs 30,924 crore (1.8% of the GSDP) in 2023-24.
 - In 2022-23, the revenue deficit is estimated to be Rs 39,663 crore (2.6% of the GSDP), which is higher than the budget estimate (1.7% of the GSDP).
- **Fiscal deficit:** It is the excess of total expenditure over total receipts. This gap is filled by borrowings by the government and leads to an increase in total liabilities. West Bengal’s fiscal deficit is estimated to be 3.8% of GSDP in 2023-24.
- **Outstanding liabilities:** Outstanding liabilities is the accumulation of total borrowings at the end of a financial year, it also includes any liabilities on the public account.
 - At the end of 2023-24, the outstanding liabilities are estimated to be 37.7% of GSDP. The outstanding liabilities have risen as compared to the 2019-20 level of 36.8% of GSDP

Figure 1: Revenue and Fiscal Deficit (% of GSDP)



Note: RE is Revised Estimates; BE is Budget Estimates.
Sources: Medium Term Fiscal Policy, West Bengal Budget 2023-24; PRS.

Figure 2: Outstanding Liabilities (% of GSDP)



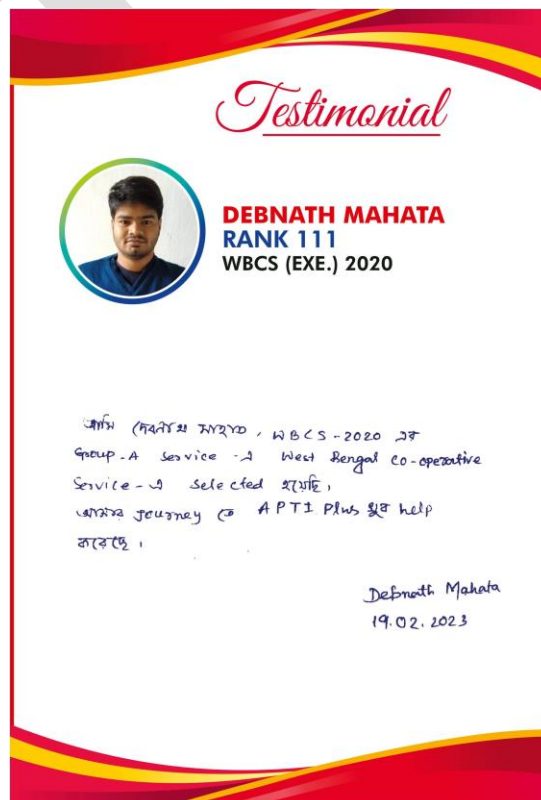
Note: RE: Revised Estimates; BE: Budget Estimates.
Sources: Medium Term Fiscal Policy, West Bengal Budget 2023-24; PRS.

Expenditure on key sectors

- **Health:** West Bengal has allocated 6.7% of its expenditure on health in 2023-24. This is higher than the average allocation for education by states in 2022-23 (6.3%).
- **Education:** West Bengal has allocated 16.5% of its total expenditure towards education, which is higher than the average allocation for education by states (14.8%).
- **Urban Development:** West Bengal has allocated 4.2% of its expenditure towards urban development. This is higher than the average allocation towards urban development by states (3.5%).
- **Roads and bridges:** West Bengal has allocated 2.0% of its total expenditure towards roads and bridges, which is lower than the average allocation by states (4.5%).
- **Police:** West Bengal has allocated 3.8% of its expenditure towards police. This is lower than the average allocation towards police by states (4.3%).
- **Agriculture:** West Bengal has allocated 6.4% of its expenditure towards agriculture, which is higher than the average allocation towards agriculture by states (5.8%).

Overview of the Policy

- **Tax proposals:** Home buyers will be eligible for rebates of 2% on stamp duty and 10% on the circle rate of land/property through September 30, 2023. For 2023–2024 and 2024–2025, tea gardens won't pay any agricultural income tax.
- **Settlement of tax issues:** Under the programme for settlement of tax disputes, if an application is made by May 31, 2023, any disputed tax, including arrear tax, interest, penalty, or late fee pending before any authority as of February 10, 2023, will be settled.
- **Funding for local area development:** As part of the Bidhayak Elaka Unnayan Prakash, each MLA will receive an increase in their annual allotment from Rs 60 lakh to Rs 70 lakh for projects related to the local area development.
- **Lakshmir Bhandar:** Recipients of Lakshmir Bhandar will start receiving an old age pension of Rs 1,000 per month once they are 60 years old.
- **Matsyajeebi Bandhu Scheme:** Dependent family members would receive a one-time payout of Rs 2 lakh upon the death of a registered fisherman in the age range of 18 to 60.
- **Youth credit:** The Bhavishyat Credit Card Program will be introduced; About 2 lakh people between the ages of 18 and 45 would be eligible for loans up to 5 lakh rupees under the programme to start micro-enterprises. 350 crore rupees have been allotted for the programme.



DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Defence Budget

- The Union Budget allocated **₹5.94 lakh crore for Defence**, a 13% increase from last year's Budget Estimates.
- In the budget estimates for 2023–2024, the non-salary revenue expenditure increased by 44% to 90,000 crores. Since the 2020 standoff with China, there has been a large increase in operational commitments, major force accretion and maintenance along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and storage of spare parts and ammunition.
- According to the Defence Ministry, this increased budget will support the maintenance of weapon systems and platforms, including ships and aircraft, and their logistics; improve fleet serviceability; purchase emergency supplies of ammunition and spare parts; hire specialised personnel to fill in capability gaps wherever they may be necessary; advance the stocking of military reserves; and strengthen forward defences, among other things.

Prime Minister inaugurated Helicopter Factory at Tumakuru in Karnataka

- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi dedicated to the nation Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) Helicopter Factory at Tumakuru in Karnataka.
- The factory is India's largest helicopter manufacturing facility and will initially produce Light Combat Helicopters (LCHs).
- The LUH is an indigenously designed and developed three-ton class, single-engine multipurpose utility helicopter with unique features of high manoeuvrability.
- Initially, this factory will produce around 30 helicopters per year which can be enhanced to 60 and then 90 per year in a phased manner.
- The Greenfield Helicopter Factory, spread across 615 acres of land, is planned with a vision to become a one-stop solution for all helicopter requirements of the country.
- After initially producing LUHs, the factory will be augmented to produce other helicopters such as Light Combat Helicopters (LCHs) and Indian Multirole Helicopters (IMRHs).
- It will also be used for Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul of LCH, LUH, Civil Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) and IMRH in the future. Potential exports of civil LUH will also be catered to from this factory.
- The HAL plans to produce more than 1,000 helicopters in the range of 3-15 tonnes, with a total business of over Rs four lakh crores over 20 years.

Malabar Multilateral Naval Exercise

- Australia will host the Malabar multilateral naval exercise, consisting of India, Australia, Japan and the U.S., for the first time this year.
- The Quad Foreign Ministers are scheduled to hold a meeting a day after the G-20 meeting. Australia is scheduled to host the Quad summit later this year.
- Malabar, which began as a bilateral exercise, is now one of the cornerstones of military interoperability of the Quad forces.
 - It is a multilateral war-gaming naval exercise that was started in 1992.
 - It began as a bilateral exercise between the navies of India and the United States.
- Navies of the four member nations of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or the Quad – India, the United States, Japan, and Australia – are participating in the 25th edition of the Malabar Exercise
- From 2002 onward, the exercise has been conducted every year.
- Japan and Australia first participated in 2007, and since 2014, India, the US and Japan have participated in the exercise every year.
- Japan joined the naval exercise in 2015 as a permanent member, and Malabar became a trilateral exercise.
- Last year, for the first time in over a decade, the exercise saw the participation of all four Quad members. It was the second time that Australia participated in the Malabar series of Naval exercises.

Indian Coast Guard (ICG)

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is celebrating its 47th Raising Day on **1st February 2023**.
- **It was formally established on 1 February 1977 by the Coast Guard Act, 1978 of the Parliament of India. It operates under the Ministry of Defence.**
- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is an Armed Force of the Union of India for ensuring the security of the maritime zones of India with a view to the protection of maritime and other national interests in such zones and for matters connected therewith.
- It operates under the Ministry of Defence.
- Headquarters in Kochi, Kerala
- The Indian Coast Guard's motto is "वयम रक्षामः" (Vayam Rakshamah), which translates from Sanskrit as "We Protect".

Agniveers

- A recently published advertisement by the Indian Army announced a change in the recruitment process for Agniveers.
- Earlier candidates had to go through a 3 steps process to join the army as soldiers;
 - Step 1: Candidates to undergo the Physical fitness test.
 - Step 2: After clearing Step 1, candidates undergo medical tests.
 - Step 3: After clearing Step 2, candidates need to qualify common entrance examination (CEE) as the last step.
 - Candidates after clearing all 3 steps were eligible to join the Indian army as soldiers.
- In the newly published recruitment process, candidates will need to clear a 3 steps process much like the earlier recruitment process, but the order of the steps changed;
 - Step 1: Candidates will need to undergo an online common entrance examination (CEE).
 - Step 2: After clearing Step 1 (online examination), candidates undergo physical fitness tests during recruitment rallies.
 - Step 3: After clearing Step 2, candidates need to clear the medical test as the last step.
 - Candidates after clearing all 3 steps will be eligible to join the Indian army as soldiers.
- In the earlier recruitment process, nearly everyone between 17½ - 21 years of age group was eligible to attend the recruitment rallies, and as the result, a large number of candidates varied from 5,000 in smaller towns to 1.5 lakhs in bigger cities were joining the recruitment rallies, this stressed administrative resources.
 - Under the earlier recruitment process, massive administrative costs and logistical arrangements were required to manage the thousands of candidates during recruitment rallies.
- The earlier process needed to screen a large number of candidates, which stressed administrative resources.
 - A large number of security personnel were deployed to manage the law and order situations.
 - A large number of medical staff had to be present for the requirement rallies.

About AGNIVEER:

- In June 2022, the Indian government announced the Agnipath scheme for the armed forces intending to transform the process of recruitment of soldiers, sailors and airmen into the Defence Services.
 - The soldiers to be recruited under the scheme will be called "Agniveer".
 - The new system is only for personnel below officer ranks.
- Under the scheme, Agniveers will be recruited for 4 years, after which about 25% of Agniveers will be selected for permanent service in the Armed Forces.
 - Soldiers selected for permanent service (after 4 years) would be required to serve for a minimum of 15 years more.
 - In the long term, the army will adopt a policy of a 50:50 mix of Agniveers and regular soldiers.
- The objective of the AGNIPATH Scheme is to encourage youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a limited period (4 years), including a training period of 6 months.
- They will get an attractive monthly package with Risk and Hardship allowances.
- They will be paid a one-time Seva Nidhi package after the engagement of four years.

- It will be exempt from Income Tax.
- They will start with a monthly salary of Rs 30,000, which will go up to Rs 40,000 in the fourth year.
 - One-third of the salary will go into the Agniveer Corpus Fund, with an equal contribution will be made by the government.
 - At the end of four years, an accumulated amount of Rs 11.71 lakh would be paid to each Agniveer.
 - There shall be no entitlement to gratuity and pensionary benefits.
- They will get a non-contributory Life Insurance Cover of Rs 48 lakh during their service in the Indian Armed Forces.

Eligibility
Age limit for applicants from 17½ to 21 years

Recruitment
Candidates will be enrolled under the respective Service Act for a service duration of four years including training period
Recruitment as per terms and conditions

Training
Imparted rigorous military training in existing training centres

Service
Opportunity to serve the nation in varied terrain from mountains to deserts, on Land, Sea or Air

FINANCIAL PACKAGE

Composite Annual Package
1st year package - approx. ₹ 4.76 Lacs
Upgradation upto approx. ₹ 6.92 Lacs in 4th year

Allowances
Risk & Hardship, Ration, Dress, Travel allowances as applicable

Seva Nidhi
30% of monthly emoluments to be contributed by individuals
Equal amount matched & contributed by the Government
Corpus of approx. ₹ 11.71 Lacs after four years, exempted from Income Tax

Death Compensation
Non-contributory life insurance cover of ₹ 48 Lakhs
Additional Ex Gratia of ₹ 44 Lakhs for death attributable to service
Pay for unserved portion upto four years including 'Seva Nidhi' component

Disability Compensation
Compensation based on % disability laid down by medical authorities
One time ex-gratia of ₹ 44/ 25/ 15 Lacs for 100%/ 75%/ 50% disability, respectively

On Completion
All candidates entitled 'Seva Nidhi' on completion of four years
Skill Gained Certificate

Screening Assessment
Centralised transparent screening, based on merit and demonstrated performance during Service
Agniveers can apply on volunteer basis to enrol in the regular cadre

Selection
Selection through a centralized, transparent and rigorous system
On enrolment in regular cadre, pay fixed as regular soldier. Pension as per extant regulations

Ex TARKASH

- The indo-US joint exercise, named TARKASH, has for the first time included the “Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terror response” in its drill.
- The 6th edition of the joint exercise Tarkash was recently concluded in Chennai by the National Security Guard (NSG) and the US Special Operations Force (SOF). This is the sixth edition of the exercise which began on 16 January and ended on 14 February.
- The drill for CBRN terror response “involved small team insertion by IAF helicopters to the target area, successful intervention in a large auditorium, rescue of hostages and neutralisation of the chemical agent weapon.”
- The exercise also included a drill for tackling chemical and biological attacks by terrorists. The mock validation exercise involved a terrorist organisation armed with chemical agents threatening to attack a convention hall during an international summit.
- CBRN weapons have the capability of creating mass casualties as well as mass disruption and therefore, are classified as weapons of mass destruction.
- Chemical weapons include mustard gas (which damages the respiratory tract, skin, and eyes) and nerve agents (victims rapidly become unconscious, have breathing difficulties, and may die).
- Biological agents like anthrax (causes fever, malaise, cough, and shock. Death can be within 36 hours), botulinum toxin (leads to paralysis of respiratory muscles) and plague are some examples of biochemical weapons.
- Radiological weapons include weaponised radioactive waste and dirty bombs as well as nuclear weapons.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)

- As India looks to purchase armed Predator Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) from the U.S., Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) and General Atomics announced at Aero India that the turbo-propeller engines that

power the MQ-9B Guardian High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) RPAS will be supported by the HAL engine division for the Indian market.

- High-altitude long-endurance (HALE) unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) generally refers to UAVs flying at an altitude of 15–20 km with a low speed. In other words, it needs to realize long-distance flight in an environment with thin air and low temperature.
- There are many ways to achieve long endurance, such as using sustainable energy sources (e.g., solar energy), increasing the energy density of energy storage (e.g., solid hydrogen), and improving power conversion efficiency.

EX DHARMA GUARDIAN

- The 4th edition of a joint military exercise, “EX DHARMA GUARDIAN”, between India and Japan began at Camp Imazu in the Shiga province of Japan.
- The annual training event with Japan is crucial and significant in terms of security challenges faced by both nations in the backdrop of the current global situation.
- The scope of this exercise covers platoon-level joint training on operations in jungle and semi-urban or urban terrain.
- This joint exercise will enable the two armies to share best practices in tactics, techniques and procedures for conducting tactical operations under a UN Mandate
- It will also help develop inter-operability, bonhomie, camaraderie and friendship between the two armies.
- The training will focus primarily on a high degree of physical fitness and sharing of drills at the tactical level.

NAVDEX 23 and IDEX 23

- Indian Naval Ship Sumedha participated in NAVDEX 23 (Naval Defence Exhibition) and IDEX 23 (International Defence Exhibition) in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 20 to 24 February 2023.
- INS Sumedha is the third ship of the indigenously built Saryu class Naval Offshore Patrol Vessels (NOPV) and was commissioned into the Indian Navy in March 2014.
- Built indigenously at Goa Shipyard Limited, she is fitted with an impressive array of weapons and sensors, can carry an integral helicopter and boasts of long endurance.
- A highly potent platform that can be deployed for a variety of operational missions, she bears testimony to the capabilities of the Indian ship building industry.

Ex DUSTLIK

- As part of a military-to-military exchange program between the Indian Army and the Uzbekistan Army, the fourth edition of the biennial training Exercise DUSTLIK (2023) was conducted in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.
- The Indian contingent was represented by the 14th Battalion, The GARHWAL RIFLES, part of Western Command in this bilateral exercise. The Uzbekistan Army was represented by troops of the North Western Military District of Uzbekistan Army.
- This joint exercise is aimed at enhancing military capability to undertake multi-domain operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under United Nations Mandate.

Exercise Desert Flag VIII

- An Indian Air Force contingent comprising 110 Air Warriors reached the Al Dahfra airbase of the United Arab Emirates for participating in Exercise Desert Flag VIII.
 - This is the first occasion when the LCA Tejas will participate in an international flying exercise outside India.
- Exercise Desert Flag is a multilateral air exercise in which Air Forces from UAE, France, Kuwait, Australia, the UK, Bahrain, Morocco, Spain, the Republic of Korea and the USA would also be participating.
- The exercise aims to participate in diverse fighter engagements and learn from the best practices of various Air Forces.

Exercise Topchi

- The School of Artillery in Devlali Field Firing Ranges in Nashik, Maharashtra, held "Exercise Topchi," an annual firepower display and training exercise of the Regiment of Artillery of the Indian Army.
- To show off how to deploy drones, weapons, rocket launchers, mortars, and other surveillance and weaponry equipment in concert.
- The emphasis of the exercise was on weaponry produced domestically.

SCIENCE

Sickle Cell Anemia

- Union budget of FY 2023-24, announced to launch of a mission to **eliminate sickle cell anaemia by 2047**.
- **A sickle cell disease is a group of disorders that affects haemoglobin**, the molecule in red blood cells that delivers oxygen to cells throughout the body.
- Signs and symptoms of sickle cell disease usually begin in early childhood. Characteristic features of this disorder include a low number of red blood cells (anaemia), repeated infections, and periodic episodes of pain.
- The signs and symptoms of sickle cell disease are caused by the sickling of red blood cells. When red blood cells sickle, they break down prematurely, which can lead to anaemia.
- Anaemia can cause shortness of breath, fatigue, and delayed growth and development in children. The rapid breakdown of red blood cells may also cause yellowing of the eyes and skin, which are signs of jaundice.
- Painful episodes occur when sickled red blood cells, which are stiff and inflexible, get stuck in small blood vessels. These episodes deprive tissues and organs, such as the lungs, kidneys, spleen, and brain, of oxygen-rich blood and can lead to organ damage.
- Sickle cell disease is a lifelong illness. A blood and bone marrow transplant is currently the only cure for sickle cell disease, but there are effective treatments that can reduce symptoms and prolong life.

Vaccine-derived Polio

- World Health Organisation (WHO) has released an advisory to curb the global spread of vaccine-derived polio.
- Vaccine-derived poliovirus is a well-documented type of poliovirus that has mutated from the strain originally contained in the oral polio vaccine (OPV). The OPV contains a live, weakened form of poliovirus.
- On rare occasions, when replicating in the gastrointestinal tract, OPV strains genetically change and may spread in communities that are not fully vaccinated against polio, especially in areas where there is poor hygiene, poor sanitation, or overcrowding.
- Further changes occur as these viruses spread from person to person. The lower the population immunity, the longer this virus survives and the more genetic changes it undergoes. In very rare instances, the vaccine-derived virus can genetically change into a form that can paralyze – this is what is known as a vaccine-derived poliovirus (VDPV).
- The WHO panel reviewed the data on wild poliovirus (WPV1) and circulating vaccine-derived polioviruses (cVDPV) for the global target of WPV eradication and cessation of cVDPV2 outbreaks by the end of 2023.
- Several countries reported climate-related disasters, including both flooding and drought, that were causing greater vulnerability to several disease outbreaks, including polio. The ongoing conflict in several polio-affected countries also continued to pose significant challenges to the programmes.
- An increase in wild poliovirus cases in 2022 shows the fragility of the fight against the highly infectious viral disease.

Amorphous Ice

- Scientists have created a new type of ice called Amorphous Ice that matches the density and structure of water.
- Amorphous ice (non-crystalline or "vitreous" ice) is an amorphous solid form of water.
- Normally, when water freezes, it crystallizes and its molecules are arranged into the familiar hexagonal, solid structure that we call ice. Amorphous ice lacks long-range order in its molecular arrangement.

- Amorphous ice is produced either by the rapid cooling of liquid water (so the molecules do not have enough time to form a crystal lattice) or by compressing ordinary ice at low temperatures.
- Although almost all water ice on Earth is the familiar crystalline ice Ih, amorphous ice dominates in the depths of the interstellar medium, making this likely the most common structure for H₂O in the universe at large.
- Just as there are many different crystalline forms of ice (currently more than seventeen are known), there are also different forms of amorphous ice, distinguished principally by their densities.
- Amorphous ice may be formed when liquid water is cooled to its glass transition temperature (about 136 K or -137 °C) in milliseconds to prevent the spontaneous nucleation of crystals.
- Pressure is another important factor in the formation of amorphous ice, and changes in pressure may cause one form to convert into another.
- Cryoprotectants can be added to water to lower its freezing point (like antifreeze) and increase viscosity, which inhibits the formation of crystals.

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D2)

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully instituted the second edition of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV-D2) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- A launch vehicle or carrier rocket is a rocket-propelled vehicle used to carry a payload from Earth's surface to space, usually to Earth's orbit or beyond.
- The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is a small-lift launch vehicle developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The SSLV was developed to launch small satellites commercially at a drastically reduced price and higher launch rate as compared to Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).
- It has a payload capacity to deliver 600 kg. SSLV is a three-stage, all-solid launch vehicle that can carry a payload weighing 500 kilograms to the polar orbit, 500 kilometres above Earth's surface and a 300-kilogram payload into Sun Synchronous Polar Orbit. It can support multiple orbital drop-offs. The SSLV is the smallest vehicle at 110-ton mass at ISRO. It can carry satellites weighing up to 500 kg to a low earth orbit while the tried and tested PSLV can launch satellites weighing in the range of 1000 kg.

SSLV D-2
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

India launched the second edition of the SSLV-D2 from the first launch pad of Satish Dhawan space centre at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.

MISSION
Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is capable of launching mini, micro or nano satellites (10 to 500 kg mass) in to 500 km planar orbit.

Parameter	Specifications
Altitude (km)	450
Inclination (°)	37.2
Launch Pad	First launch pad
Launch Azimuth (°)	135

Vehicle Configuration
SS1+SS2+SS3+VTM

Core Base Shroud + Fins-Aluminium

Height: 34 metres

Diameter: 2 metres

Labels: Payload Fairing CFRP, Velocity Trimming Module + Payload Adapter, Third Stage Solid Motor (SS3) Composite case, Metallic Honeycomb Inter-stage, Second Stage Solid Motor (SS2) Composite, Vented Inter-stage Aluminium, First Stage Solid Motor (SS1) 15CDV6

EOS-07 Mission Objectives
Design and develop payload instruments compatible with micro satellite bus and new technologies that are required for future operational satellites.
Lift-off mass 153.6 kg
Mission life: 1 year
Power: Li-ion 27.2 Ah capacity battery

Janus-1
Satellite mass: 10.2 kg
JANUS-1 is a technology demonstrator, smart satellite mission, based on Antaris software platform.

AzaadiSAT-2
8U NanoSat Weighing about 8.8 kg
AzaadiSAT-2 mission aims to demonstrate LoRa and Amateur Radio communication capabilities, measure radiation levels in space.

Source: ISRO

Vikas Engine

- The Indian Space Research Organisation has successfully tested the throttling of Vikas, its workhorse launch-vehicle engine.
- The Vikas is a family of liquid fuelled rocket engine conceptualized and designed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre in the 1970s.
- The early production of Vikas engines used some imported French components which were later replaced by domestically produced equivalents.

- The Vikas engine powers the second stages of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), the liquid strap-ons of GSLV and the core liquid stage of LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark III) for space launch use.
- Vikas engine is used to power the second stage of PSLV, boosters and second stage of GSLV Mark I and II and also the core stage of GSLV Mark III. The propellant loading for Vikas engine in PSLV, GSLV Mark I and II is 40 tons, while in GSLV Mark III is 55 tons.

Bard

- Google has made a decisive move in the generative artificial intelligence (AI) race, announcing that it is working on a competitor to ChatGPT called 'Bard'.
 - A chatbot is a rules-based computer program, which simulates human interaction with end-users via a chat interface. In other words, a chatbot can have a conversation with you just like a real person, ask questions and answer queries based on pre-defined rules and logic.
 - Machine Learning Algorithms power the conversation between a human being and a chatbot.
- The service will use artificial intelligence to generate answers in a text when people type in queries, similar to what ChatGPT does.
- Bard can help people perform tasks like planning a baby shower, comparing two Oscar-nominated movies, or explaining discoveries by NASA to a 9-year-old child.
- Bard is based on Google's AI model called LaMDA, which the company introduced in 2021 as its generative language model for dialogue applications which can ensure that the Google Assistant would be able to converse on any topic.

INDIAai Initiative

- India is making an aggressive play in artificial intelligence (AI) with twin objectives of "making AI in India and making AI work for India". In this direction and against the backdrop of the revolutionary transition in AI brought in by ChatGPT, the government is expanding the INDIAai initiative in partnership with Indian tech companies, start-ups, and academic institutions.
- INDIAai is the National AI Portal of India - a central hub for everything AI in India and beyond.
- The website aims to be the trusted content powerhouse in the backdrop of India's journey to global prominence in Artificial Intelligence.
- INDIAai (The National AI Portal of India), a joint venture by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the National e-Governance Division (NeGD) and the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), has been set up to prepare the nation for an AI future.
- It is the single central knowledge hub on artificial intelligence and allied fields for aspiring entrepreneurs, students, professionals, academics, and everyone else.
- The portal focuses on creating and nurturing a unified AI ecosystem for driving excellence and leadership in India's AI journey, to foster economic growth and improve lives through it.

Lithium

- Lithium reserves have been found for the **first time in the country in Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The 5.9-million-ton reserve of lithium, found in Jammu and Kashmir, is of the best quality.
- Lithium is referred to as "white gold" – Lithium metal is soft, white, and lustrous – and several of its alloys and compounds are produced on an industrial scale. Lithium is a non-ferrous metal and is one of the key components in EV batteries.
- Australia, Chile, China and Argentina are the world's top four lithium-producing countries.

Uses

- Electronics: The most important use of lithium is in rechargeable batteries for mobile phones, laptops, digital cameras and electric vehicles.
- Glass and Grease: Lithium-ion batteries are also used in ceramics and glass, lubricating greases, polymer production, and air treatment.

- Medical: Lithium is also used in some non-rechargeable batteries for things like heart pacemakers, toys and clocks. It is also used in psychiatric medications and dental imprints. Lithium carbonate is used in drugs to treat manic depression.
- Nuclear Weapons: The lighter of the two lithium isotopes are used in the production of Tritium, a key component of nuclear weapons.
- Infrastructure: Lithium metal is made into alloys with aluminium and magnesium, improving their strength and making them lighter. Aluminium-lithium alloys are used in aircraft, bicycle frames and high-speed trains.
- Fuel: Lithium hydride is used as a means of storing hydrogen for use as a fuel.
- Other: A magnesium-lithium alloy is used for armour plating. Lithium chloride is one of the most hygroscopic materials known and is used in air conditioning and industrial drying systems (as is lithium bromide). Lithium stearate is used as an all-purpose and high-temperature lubricant.

Cadaver Organ Transplants

- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced that the earlier provision under the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) guidelines that people beyond 65 years of age could not receive cadaver organ transplants had been removed.
 - **The cadaveric donation comprises organ donation – that is, taking organs (heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas) from brain-dead people,** as well as tissue donation, meaning taking tissues (skin, corneas, tendons, bone) from brain-dead as well as heart dead people.
- The Minister stated that the government has decided to do away with the maximum age ceiling.
 - Now, people beyond 65 years in need of an organ donation will also be eligible to get one.
 - From now an individual of any age can register for an organ transplant
- The Minister mentioned that the age limit provided under the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO) guidelines violates the Right to Life.
- Earlier an organ recipient could register for a prospective transplant in the domicile State.
 - States like Gujarat had made it mandatory for registered patients to furnish a domicile certificate to be eligible for a transplant.
 - In November 2022, the Gujarat High Court quashed the discriminatory policy of the State government.
- In line with the High Court judgment, the Indian government has decided to do away with the domicile policy and all States have agreed on this decision.
 - Now a patient irrespective of domicile State can register in any other State for a transplant.
 - The patient will be allotted a unique ID by NOTTO on registering which will get carried forward even if the patient changes multiple hospitals in different States.
- At present, many States like Kerala and Maharashtra have been charging fees ranging from ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 for registering organ transplant patients.
 - The Health Ministry has asked the States to stop charging registration fees to patients.
- These steps have been taken under the Union Health Ministry's vision of a 'One Nation One Policy,' for organ donation and transplantation.

Marburg Virus Disease

- **Guinea has confirmed its first-ever outbreak of Marburg virus disease.**
- Marburg virus disease is a highly virulent disease that causes haemorrhagic fever, with a fatality ratio of up to 88%. It is in the same family as the virus that causes Ebola virus disease i.e family Filoviridae.
- The virus was initially detected in 1967 after simultaneous outbreaks in Marburg and Frankfurt in Germany; and in Belgrade, Serbia.
- There is a severe illness in humans and non-human primates caused by either of the two Marburg viruses: Marburg virus (MARV) and Ravn virus (RAVV). MVD is a viral hemorrhagic fever (VHF), and the clinical symptoms are indistinguishable from Ebola virus disease (EVD).
- Marburgvirions contain non-infectious, linear nonsegmented, single-stranded RNA genomes.
- Marburg Viruses are endemic in arid woodlands of equatorial Africa.
- The common symptoms of a virus are fever, headache, fatigue, abdominal pain and gingival haemorrhage.

- Transmission
 - Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae Family are the key carriers of the disease. It typically infects humans following prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by Roussettus bat colonies.
 - Human-to-human transmission takes place through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people. Surfaces and materials contaminated with these fluids are other vital sources. Its incubation period ranges from two days to three weeks.
- There are no approved vaccines or antiviral treatments for the virus yet.
- Early supportive care with rehydration and symptomatic treatment improves survival rates.

Equatorial Guinea

- Equatorial Guinea is on the west coast of Central Africa.
- The country consists of a mainland territory, Río Muni, which is bordered by Cameroon to the north and Gabon to the east and south, and five small islands, Bioko, Corisco, Annobón, Elobey Chico (Small Elobey), and Elobey Grande (Great Elobey).
- The capital is Malabo.
- Equatorial Guinea lies between latitudes 4°N and 2°S, and longitudes 5° and 12°E. Despite its name, no part of the country's territory lies on the equator—it is in the northern hemisphere, except for the insular Annobón Province, which is about 155 km south of the equator.
- Equatorial Guinea has a tropical climate with distinct wet and dry seasons.

ULTRASAT

- NASA to launch Israel's first space telescope mission, the Ultraviolet Transient Astronomy Satellite (ULTRASAT).
- ULTRASAT (Ultraviolet Transient Astronomy Satellite) is a space telescope in a smallsat format with a large field of view, 210 square degrees.
- It will detect and monitor transient astronomical events in the near-ultraviolet (220–280 nm) spectral region.
- ULTRASAT will observe a large patch of sky, alternating every six months between the southern and northern hemispheres.
- The satellite will be launched into geosynchronous orbit in early 2026.
- All ULTRASAT data will be transmitted to the ground in real time.
- Upon detection of a transient event, ULTRASAT will provide alerts within 20 minutes to other ground-based and space telescopes to be directed to the source for further observation of the event in other wavelength bands.
- ULTRASAT will study the hot transient universe. The extra-Galactic volume accessible to ULTRASAT for the discovery of transient sources will be 300 times larger than that of the most sensitive UV satellite to date, GALEX.



i-ATS (Indigenous-Automatic Train Supervision) system

- India achieved another milestone by launching the first ever indigenously developed Train Control and Supervision System.

- The i-ATS (Indigenous-Automatic Train Supervision) system has been launched by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) on its first corridor i.e. Red line (from Rithala to Shaheed Sthal).
- The system called i-ATS (Indigenous-Automatic Train Supervision) system has been jointly developed by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) under the Government of India's 'Aatma Nirbhar Bharat' initiative for the Metro Rail Transit System.
- With the launch of i-ATS, India becomes the sixth country that has its own ATS products after France, Germany, Japan, Canada, and China.
- The ATS, which stands for "Automatic Train Supervision," is a computer system that keeps track of how railroads work.
- The Automatic Train Supervision system controls the speed so that the least amount of energy is used for a given trip time. In addition, the system makes smooth speed changes. Thus, this makes passengers' journeys considerably better.
- The job of the driver is flexible so that he or she helps passengers if a need arises. Trains with ATS no longer need to be staffed all the time, which can lower costs for staff.

Jupiter becomes a planet with most moons

- A natural satellite is any celestial body in space that orbits around a larger body.
- In 2019, Saturn has overtaken Jupiter as the planet with the most moons, a team discovered 20 new moons orbiting Saturn, bringing its total to 82.
- Recently in February 2023, Astronomers discovered 12 new moons of Jupiter, taking the total number to 92.

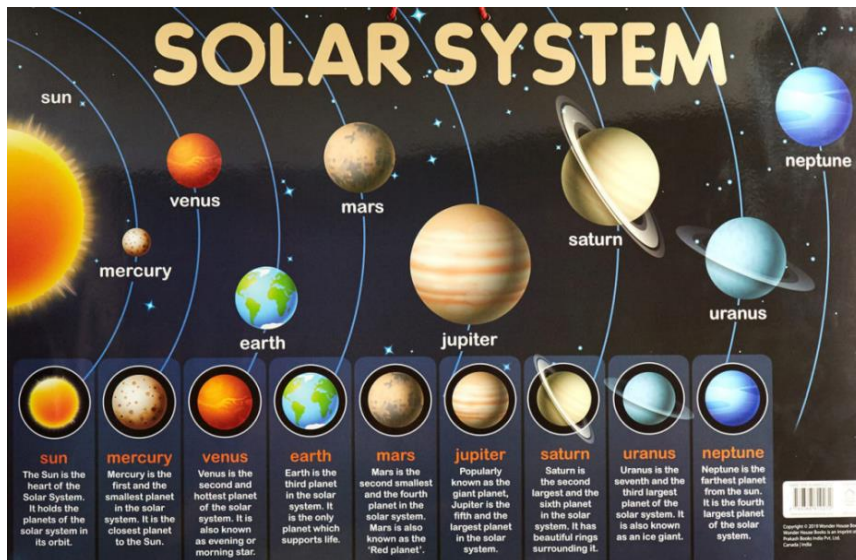
Jupiter

- Jupiter has enough room to fit almost 1,300 Earth.
- In Jupiter, a day lasts roughly 10 hours (the time it takes for Jupiter to rotate or spin once).
- **Jupiter lacks a solid surface since it is a gas-giant planet.**
- The inner core of Jupiter may be a solid mass the size of the Earth.
- **Helium (He) and hydrogen (H₂) make up the majority** of Jupiter's atmosphere.
- Jupiter has a minor ring system, which was found by the Voyager-1 mission in 1979. All four giant planets in our solar system have ring systems.
- Jupiter cannot support life as we know it. However, **some of Jupiter's moons have oceans underneath their crusts that might support life.**

Saturn

- Saturn lacks a solid surface since it is a gas-giant planet.
- Helium (He) and hydrogen (H₂) make up the majority of the atmosphere of Saturn (He).
- Saturn has the most spectacular ring system, which consists of seven rings with various gaps and divisions between them.
- The missions Pioneer 11, Voyager 1 and 2, and Cassini-Huygens are the only ones to have visited Saturn. **Cassini has been studying Saturn, its moons, and rings since 2004.**





Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- According to the World Health Organisation, 'Autism spectrum disorder' (ASD) affects one in 100 children
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.
- The autism spectrum often referred to as just autism, autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or sometimes autism spectrum condition (ASC), is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and the presence of repetitive behaviour and restricted interests.
- Other common signs include unusual responses to sensory stimuli and an insistence on sameness or strict adherence to routine.
- Signs of autism usually appear by age 2 or 3. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier, and often, they can be diagnosed as early as 18 months.
- Research shows that early intervention leads to positive outcomes later in life for people with autism.
- There is no cure for autism. There are many forms of therapy, such as speech and occupational therapy that may help autistic people.

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Academy for Civil Services Pvt. Ltd.

DEBNATH MAHATA
RANK 111 (Gr. A)
WBCS 2020

“I am thankful to APTI PLUS for their guidance and support.”

“I am very grateful and supporting”
Debnath Mahata

IASOYAN
Academy for Civil Services Pvt. Ltd.

SPORTS

Volleyball World Championship

- India will host the men's Club World Championship for the next two years, according to Volleyball World and the International Volleyball Federation (FIVB).
- The Club World Championship is scheduled to take place from December 6 to 10 this year, and the host city will be revealed later in the season.

FIFA Club World Cup

- Real Madrid won the Club World Cup by defeating Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal by 5-3 in the final in Rabat, Morocco.
- Madrid last won the club world cup in 2018 while it won the Club World Cup also in 2014, 2016 and 2017.
- Madrid also won three Intercontinental Cups in 1960, 1998 and 2002.
- The 2023 FIFA Club World Cup has been hosted by Morocco.

Deepti Sharma

- Deepti Sharma has become the first Indian bowler to complete 100 wickets in T20Is.
- The 25-year-old reached the landmark in the ICC Women's T20 World Cup match against West Indies.
- Anisa Mohammad of West Indies is at the top of the bowling charts with 125 dismissals in 117 games



Indonesia Masters Titles

- Jonatan Christie claimed his first title in 10 months at the 2023 Indonesia Masters
- He defeated Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo for his maiden BWF Badminton Tour title.

Aaron Finch

- Australian cricketer Aaron Finch has announced his retirement from international T20Is. Earlier, he had announced retirement from the 50-over format in September last year.
- He said that it's important for the new captain and opener to give sufficient time for the 2024 T20 World Cup.
- He made his international cricket debut in a T20I against England in 2011.
- He played 103 T20 matches for Australia and scored 3120 runs.
- He led Australia in 76 men's T20Is, as well as in 55 ODIs.


Ranji Trophy

- Saurashtra beat Bengal by 9 wickets to bag the second title by defeating Bengal by nine wickets in the final at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.
- Saurashtra fast bowler Jaydev Unadkat was declared player of the match.
- Saurashtra has won the Ranji Trophy title for the second time.

Smriti Mandhana

- India's star opener Smriti Mandhana has become the costliest player in the ongoing player auction for the Women's Premier League (WPL).
- Mandhana joined Royal Challengers Bangalore for Rs 3.4 crore after winning the highest bid in the ongoing Women's Premier League 2023 auction in Mumbai.
- Australia's Ashley Gardner was number two on the list of expensive players. He was bought by Gujarat Giants for Rs 3.20 crore.

Testimonial



CHANDAN SAHA
RANK 101
WBCS (EXE.) 2020

My self Chandan Saha, I have been selected in WBCS (EXE.) through WBCS (Executive) e.e. examination, 2020. During my preparation I enrolled myself to APTI PLUS Academy for my preparation.

From here I gained lots of experience & knowledge. (So Thank You, team APTI PLUS for proper guidance during my preparation, that's help me a lot).

Chandan Saha
WBCS (Executive)
Rank- 101
19.02.2023.

ENVIRONMENT

Ecological Conservation

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's budget speech introduced schemes and policies aimed at ecological conservation.
- **MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes)**
 - MISHTI is a new programme that will facilitate mangrove plantations along India's coastline and on saltpan lands.
 - The programme will operate through "convergence between MGNREGS, Campa Fund and other sources".
 - This new programme will aim at the intensive afforestation of coastal mangrove forests.
 - India has such forests on both its Eastern and Western coasts with the Sundarbans in Bengal being one of the largest mangrove forests on the planet.
- **PM PRANAM (Prime Minister Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth):**
 - This programme will seek to incentivise states and union territories to promote alternative fertilisers and the balanced use of chemical fertilisers.
 - The programme aims to ultimately bring down the government's subsidy burden, which is estimated to reach Rs 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23: 39 per cent higher than last year's figure of Rs 1.62 lakh crore.
- **Bhartiya Prakritik Kheti Bio-Input Resource Centres**
 - To further facilitate the adoption of "natural farming," 10,000 Bio-Input Resource Centres will be set up, creating a national-level distributed micro-fertiliser and pesticide manufacturing network.
 - This will impact over 1 crore farmers over the next three years, the finance minister said in her speech.
- **Amrit Dharohar**
 - This is a scheme that will be implemented over the next three years to encourage the optimal use of wetlands and enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
 - Amrit Dharohar will emphasise the importance of wetlands and their preservation, with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

World Wetlands Day

- World Wetlands Day is observed on the 2nd of February every year all over the world to commemorate the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 1971.
 - The 2023 theme for World Wetlands Day is 'Wetland Restoration' which highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland restoration.
- India is a party to the Convention since 1982 and has so far declared 75 wetlands as Ramsar sites covering 23 states and Union Territories.
- Wetlands, according to the Environment Ministry, are an "area of marsh, fen, peatland or water; whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres, but does not include river channels, paddy fields, human-made water bodies/ tanks specifically constructed for drinking water purposes and structures specifically constructed for aquaculture, salt production, recreation and irrigation purposes."
- Wetlands are extremely productive ecosystems that account for about two-thirds of the world's fish catch.
- Wetlands play a crucial part in the watershed's ecosystem. The combination of shallow water and high nutrient levels is perfect for the growth of creatures that serve as the foundation of the food web, feeding a variety of fish, amphibians, shellfish, and insects. Wetlands are extremely productive ecosystems that account for about two-thirds of the world's fish catch.
- Microbes, plants, and wildlife in wetlands play a role in world water, nitrogen, and sulphur cycles. Instead of releasing carbon dioxide into the sky, wetlands retain it in their plant communities and soil.

- Wetlands serve as natural barriers that capture and release surface water, rain, snowmelt, groundwater, and flood waters throughout time. Wetland vegetation also lowers soil erosion and slows the pace of flood flows, decreasing flood heights.
- Wetlands are essential for human and environmental survival. More than one billion people rely on them for a living, and wetlands are home to 40% of the world's biodiversity.
- Food, raw materials, genetic resources for pharmaceuticals, and electricity are all dependent on wetlands.
- They are vital in transportation, tourism, and people's cultural and spiritual well-being.
- They offer habitats for animals and plants, and many of them sustain a diverse range of life, including species and animals found nowhere else.
- Many wetlands are natural wonders that attract tourists, and many are significant to Aboriginal people.
- Wetlands also have a lot of advantages for industry. They are important to the commercial and recreational fishing sectors because they serve as nurseries for fish and other freshwater and marine species.

Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary

- The Rajasthan state Forest Department has proposed to construct a zoo inside Keoladeo National Park, a World Heritage Site popularly known as Bharatpur bird sanctuary, to display a range of wetland species, including rhinos, water buffaloes, crocs, dolphins and exotic species.
- The purpose of this zoo, called Wetland ex-situ Conservation Establishment (WESCE), says the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Development Project (RFBDP), is "to rejuvenate the biodiversity of Keoladeo National Park, thereby boosting its outstanding universal values."
- The Rs 15-crore WESCE plan for Bharatpur is part of the ambitious RFBDP for which Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the overseas development arm of the French government, has agreed to fund up to Rs 1,200 crore over eight years.

Bharatpur Sanctuary

- Formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, the Keoladeo National Park is recognised as one of the world's most important bird breeding and feeding grounds.
- It originated as a royal hunting reserve during the 1850s and was a game reserve for Maharajas and the British.
- Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India from 1936 to 1943, shot over thousands of ducks with his hunting party in a single day!
- In 1982, Keoladeo was declared a national park and then later listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985.
- The park is home to over 370 species of birds and animals such as the basking python, painted storks, deer, nilgai and more.
- Noted Indian ornithologist and naturalist Salim Ali used his influence to garner government support to create Keoladeo National Park.
- It was also known as the breeding ground for the rare and elusive to spot Siberian crane

World Pangolin Day

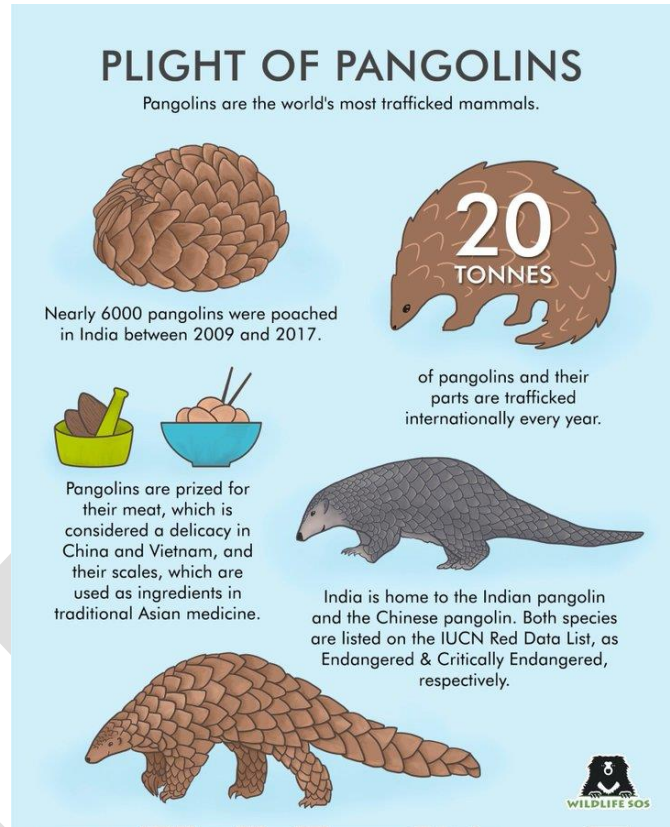
- On the eve of World Pangolin Day observed on February 18, a not-for-profit organisation working on the international trade of animals and plants, has brought out a fact sheet reporting that 1,203 pangolins have been found in illegal wildlife trade in India from 2018 to 2022.
- India reports a significant number of pangolin trafficking incidents reflected by seizures across the country
- They are poached mainly for international markets in China and Southeast Asia for their scales, which are used as an ingredient in traditional medicines.
- India is home to two species: the Indian Pangolin found across the subcontinent, and the Chinese Pangolin found across a larger area in south Asia. Bihar, West Bengal, and Assam see the presence of both.
- Both species are included under India's Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act which could result in a jail term for those hunting animals listed here.
- An analysis of the illegal pangolin trade in India by TRAFFIC in 2018 reported the poaching of 6,000 pangolins between 2009 and 2017.

About Pangolins

- Pangolins, despite being listed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 continue to be the world's most trafficked mammal.
- The Indian pangolin is the largest among eight pangolin species.
- The nocturnal animal lives in burrows and feeds on ants and termites.
- It practices Volvation, a defensive behaviour in certain animals, in which the animal rolls its own body into a ball, presenting only the hardest parts of its integument, or its spines to predators.

Debrigarh Tiger Reserve

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority of the Central Government has approved the Odisha Government's proposal to declare Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary in Sambalpur district a tiger reserve.
 - After Simlipal and Satkosia, Debrigarh will be the third tiger reserve of Odisha.
- The Debrigarh wildlife sanctuary is located in the Sambalpur district in the Indian state of Odisha, covering a total area of 346.91 km².
- It is situated near the city of Sambalpur's Hirakud Dam.
- The Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary is an important location for the conservation of various local wildlife and their habitat.
- It is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna. Over 40 species of mammals, 200 species of birds, 40 species of reptiles, 12 species of amphibians, 42 species of fishes, 39 species of odonates, 85 species of butterflies and 38 species of spiders have been found living in the sanctuary
- The sanctuary is bound to the east and north by the huge Hirakud reservoir.
- Debrigarh Wildlife Sanctuary is an Eco-sensitive Zone from both an ecological and environmental point of view and prohibits industries or classes of industries and their operations and processes in the said Eco-sensitive zone.



Tiger Reserves in India

- The Supreme Court on Wednesday banned all construction activities in the core areas of tiger reserves, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries after it was brought to its notice by a court-appointed panel that illegal constructions for the establishment of a tiger safari was being done within the buffer area of the Corbett Tiger Reserve in Uttarakhand.
- As of 2019, India's Tiger population stands at a total of 2967 which is 70% of the global tiger population.
 - India successfully fulfilled its target of doubling tiger numbers, made at St. Petersburg in 2010, much before the target year of 2022.
- The Indian states with the Tiger population:
 - Madhya Pradesh - 526
 - Karnataka - 524
 - Uttarakhand - 442
 - Maharashtra - 312

OBITUARIES

Vani Jairam Passes away

- Vani was found dead in her home at the age of 78 years. Vani lived alone after the death of her husband Jairam in 2018.
- In addition to "Bole re papihara," Vani's debut song in the Hindi cinema industry, the songs – "Humko man ki shakti dena," which became a national morning prayer, and "Hari bin kaise jiyoon," gained the recognition she deserved.
- Vani lived in Chennai. She received professional training in Carnatic music and performed in concerts, but she became obsessed with film songs that she first heard on Radio Ceylon and then Vividh Bharati. Vani's marriage brought her to Mumbai and introduced her to many well-known violinists who play Hindustani classical music.
- She studied Hindustani classical music in Bombay under the guidance of Ustad Abdul Rehman Khan of the Patiala Gharana. She sang in 18 other languages, among them Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu, Bengali, and Odiya.
- She received a Padma Bhushan award last month.

Shanti Bhushan Passed away

- Shanti Bhushan, a former Union Law Minister and experienced lawyer who was a vocal opponent of corruption and a supporter of civil freedoms passed dead at the age of 97.
- From 1977 to 1979, during the Morarji Desai Administration, he held the position of India's Law Minister while working at the Ministry of Law and Justice.
- During his tenure as Law Minister, he introduced the 44th Constitution Amendment, which was a political pledge to "return the Constitution to the condition it was in before the Emergency".

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CHANDAN SAHA
RANK 101 (Gr. A)
WBCS 2020

“

Finally I am thankful to APTI Plus for giving me such opportunity. APTI Plus Academy is providing a very good facility for preparing civil service. Here I am participated for WBCS mock interview. All the faculty members are very cordial and supportive. They also provide a very good study material for WBCS interview purpose. Over all I am happy & satisfied for their per behaviour. Thank you again for their efforts.”

Chandan Saha

”

TESTIMONIAL

 **IASOBYAN**
BRIDGE THE DIFFERENCE

APPOINTMENTS

Ruchira Kamboj

- Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj accepted the chairpersonship at the UN Headquarters in New York.
- This is the first time since 1975 that India has become Chair of the Commission for Social Development
- The Commission for Social Development is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council.
- The Commission serves as the primary inter-governmental body to deliberate upon and strengthen international cooperation on social development issues, according to the official release.
- The Commission for Social Development's main responsibility is to review, periodically, issues related to the follow-up and implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.



BVR Subrahmanyam

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister has approved the appointment of former IAS officer BVR Subrahmanyam as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NITI Aayog.
 - He will replace Parameswaran Iyer, who has been selected as the Executive Director of the World Bank.
- Subrahmanyam belongs to Andhra Pradesh, between 2004 and 2008, he worked as the private secretary to then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.
 - In 2018, he was appointed as the Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir and during his tenure, the state's special status was scrapped and it was divided into two union territories.
 - He later became the Commerce Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

NITI Aayog

- Planning Commission Inspired by the USSR/Soviet Model, Prime Minister established a Planning Commission in 1950 to design the five-year Plans for India.
 - In 2015, it was replaced by a new organisation named National Institution for Transforming India (NITI)
- Promote Cooperative Federalism
 - Governing Council of NITI Aayog has Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories and State Chief Ministers.
 - NITI Aayog Constituted a Committee of State Chief Ministers to examine important issues.
- Promote Competitive Federalism: NITI Aayog has Prepared online dashboards to rank the States on various indicators of development Such as;
 - Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index.
 - Health Index.
 - School Education Quality Index.
 - Digital Transformation Index.
 - Launched Aspirational District Programs for monitoring the progress of backward districts.
- NITI Aayog has not been given the mandate or Powers to impose Policies on States.

- NITI Aayog is a think tank or an advisory body.
- The Powers for the allocation of funds have not been given to the NITI Aayog. The Powers are with the Finance Ministry.
- As a 'think-tank', Niti Aayog has helped the government In framing various Policies on;
 - Clean energy
 - Methanol based economy
 - Infrastructure, human development etc.
 - The model acts on agricultural land leasing, livestock Selling etc.
- NITI Aayog regularly organizes Seminars, Workshops, and Conferences.
- NITI initiated Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) to help Startups. NITI is developing the National Program on Artificial Intelligence.
- NITI's approach is modernised, forward-looking, and less bureaucratic; NITI Aayog is playing an important role as a think tank for Economic growth, Human development and Good governance in India.



Ajay Banga

- US President Joe Biden is nominating former Mastercard CEO, India-born Ajay Banga, to be head of the World Bank.
- The World Bank is an international organization dedicated to providing financing, advice, and research to developing nations to aid their economic advancement. It is headquartered in Washington, D.C. The bank predominantly acts as an organization that attempts to fight poverty by offering developmental assistance to middle- and low-income countries.
- The World Bank was established in July 1944 at the Breton Woods Conference which was pursuing three goals:
 - facilitate reconstruction, which led to the creation of the IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development).
 - ensure financial and monetary stability, which led to the creation of the IMF.
 - restore and expand trade, an objective which has been more difficult to achieve. It started with the GATT and it is only in 1995 that the WTO was created.
- Thus, the World Bank was established in 1944 to help rebuild Europe and Japan after World War II. Its official name was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). When it first began operations in 1946, it had 38 members. Today, most of the countries in the world are members.
- The World Bank has two stated goals that it aims to achieve by 2030.
 - To end extreme poverty by decreasing the number of people living on less than \$1.90 a day to below 3% of the world population.
 - To increase overall prosperity by increasing income growth in the bottom 40% of every country in the world.



Shamika Ravi

- Shamika Ravi, a professor of economics and researcher, has been named to the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (EAC-PM).
- Shamika Ravi is a senior non-resident fellow in the Brookings Institution's Washington, D.C., programme for governance studies.
- EAC-PM currently has one full-time member and six part-time members and is chaired by economist Bibek Debroy.



A P Singh

- The Indian Air Force has named Air Marshal A P Singh as its new vice chief. He took the place of Air Marshal Sandeep Singh.
- In December 1984, Air Marshal A P Singh was commissioned into the Indian Air Force's fighter stream.
- Air Marshal A P Singh graduated from the National Defense College, the Defense Services Staff College, and the National Defense Academy.
- He has more than 4,900 hours of experience flying on a variety of fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft and is a qualified flying instructor and experimental test pilot.
- He served as a MiG 27 squadron's flight commander, commanding officer, and air officer commanding during his operational tenures.
- In Moscow, Russia, he supervised the MiG 29 Upgrade Project Management Team. He was the Air Defense Commander at the South Western Air Command as well as the Project Director (Flight Test) at the National Flight Test Centre, where he oversaw the flight testing of the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas.
- He served as Senior Air Staff Officer in the Eastern Air Command before taking over as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Central Air Command.



Manuela Roka Botey as Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea

- Equatorial Guinea has appointed Manuela Roka Botey as prime minister.
- She became the first woman in the country to hold the position.
- Ms Rotey was previously the education minister and joined the government in 2020.
- She replaced former premier Francisco Pascual Obama Asue, who has been in the position since 2016.



Nikos Christodoulides elected as President of Cyprus

- In Cyprus' presidential election, Nikos Christodoulides won.
- According to official figures, Andreas Mavroyiannis received 48.1% of the vote, while Christodoulides received 51.9%.
- With the support of right-centre and centrist parties, Christodoulides ran as an independent.
- Christodoulides has regularly been in the news over the past ten years, either in his capacity as the government's spokesperson or as the country's foreign minister till early 2022. He has the persona of a young, dynamic politician with new ideas.



Mohd Shahabuddin Choppu to become President of Bangladesh

- Mohammad Shahabuddin Choppu is set to become the next President of Bangladesh after the ruling Awami League, which holds an absolute majority in Parliament, nominated him for the top post.
- He will replace President Mohammad Abdul Hamid, whose tenure ends in April. According to the Constitution, he cannot hold a third term. Therefore, Mohammad Shahabuddin Choppu will be elected unopposed as Bangladesh's President.
- Mohammad Shahabuddin Choppu is a lawyer by profession and a member of the advisory council of the Bangladesh Awami League.



AWARDS

Sansad Ratna Awards 2023

- 13 Members of Parliament (MP) have been nominated for the Sansad Ratna Awards 2023.
- The Sansad Ratna Awards were instituted in 2010 at the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to honour top-performing Parliamentarians.
 - He also launched the first edition of the Award function in 2010 in Chennai.
 - Till now, 90 top-performing Parliamentarians have been honoured with the award.
- The 13th Edition of the award function will be held on 25th March 2023 in New Delhi.
- This year, the Jury Committee has chosen 13 MPs and 2 parliamentary committees for the award.
 - A lifetime award is to be presented for the first time this year.
- How the winner's name was finalized;
 - The jury committee comprises “eminent Parliamentarians and members of civil society”. The committee was chaired by Arjun Ram Meghwal (MoS, Parliamentary Affairs) and co-chaired by T S Krishnamurthy (Former Chief Election Commissioner of India).
 - Nominations were based on an MP’s cumulative performance in Parliament, from the beginning of the 17th Lok Sabha until the end of Winter Session 2022. Factors that the decision is based on include questions asked, private members’ Bills introduced, debates initiated, attendance, funds utilised, etc.
- The Sansad Ratna Awards are not given by the Government of India, the awards were started with support from IIT Madras.
- 2023 awardees list;
 - From the Lok Sabha: Bidyut Baran Mahato (Jharkhand), Sukanta Majumdar (West Bengal), Kuldeep Rai Sharma (Andaman Nicobar Islands), Heena Vijayakumar Gavit (Maharashtra), Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (West Bengal), Gopal Chinayya Shetty (Maharashtra), Sudhir Gupta (Madhya Pradesh), and Amol Ramsing Kolhe (Maharashtra).
 - From the Rajya Sabha; John Brittas (Kerala), Manoj Kumar Jha (Bihar), Fauzia Tahseen Ahmed Khan (Maharashtra), Vishambhar Prasad Nishad (UP) and Chhaya Verma (Chhattisgarh).
 - The Finance Committee (Lok Sabha) and Transport, Tourism and Culture Committee (Rajya Sabha) have been nominated for Awards.
 - T K Rangarajan (former Rajya Sabha MP) will be honoured with the “Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Lifetime Achievement Award”.

Golden Book Awards 2023

- Rakhi Kapoor has won the award for her book “Now You Breathe - Overcoming Toxic Relationships and Abuse” in the category Powerful Relationship Guide.
- The Golden Book Awards is one of Asia's prestigious award programs that celebrates the best works of literature.
- The winners are selected based on factors such as originality, creativity, and impact on the literary world. The winners of Golden Book Awards 2023 are-
 - J.K. Rowling - Fantastic Beasts: The Secrets of Dumbledore, Gaur Gopal Das - Energize Your Mind: A Monk's Guide To Mindful Living
 - Ruskin Bond - How To Live Your Life
 - Namita Thapar - The Dolphin And The Shark: Stories On Entrepreneurship.

BOOKS & AUTHOR

Novel "Victory City"

- Author Salman Rushdie has launched his new novel called "Victory City".
- Rushdie's novel "Victory City" is published by Penguin Random House and takes the form of a translation of a mythical epic originally written in Sanskrit about the Vijayanagara Empire that ruled over much of southern India in the 14th century.





ABHIK PATLA
RANK 46 (Gr. A)
WBCS 2020

“ I am very much satisfied with the experience I had during my mock interview. The administration is quite competent and very helpful throughout the whole process. There was not any moment of uncomfart or problem throughout. I am very happy to be a part of it. ”

Abhik Patla



BOOSTER DONE

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Government of India and the Government of the Republic of South Africa for cooperation in the Disability Sector.
- India's Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenues grew 12.7% in January 2023 to hit almost ₹1.59 lakh crore, the second highest monthly collections on record, as per revised figures from the Finance Ministry.
- Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush attended the colourful *Siang Unying Festival* - which is an important festival of the Adi community at Boleng, Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Seattle City Council recently becomes the first American city to prohibit caste-based discrimination. The City Council amended the City Municipal Code to ban caste-based discrimination, alongside race, gender, and religion.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) stumbled upon a 1,300-year-old stupa right in the middle of a mining site in Odisha's Jajpur district from where Khondalite stones were supplied for the beautification project around the 12th century Shree Jagannath Temple in Puri.
- The outlay for PM Awas Yojana is being enhanced by 66% to over Rs. 79,000 crore
- The Indian economy has increased in size from being 10th to 5th largest in the world in the past nine years.
- Former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh was recently conferred a Lifetime Achievement Honour by the India-UK Achievers Honours in London for his contribution to economic and political life.
- Former Union Commerce Secretary and retired bureaucrat Mr BVR Subrahmanyam has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of NITI Aayog for 2 years.
- The budget's "Saptarishi" prioritises seven areas: inclusive development, closing the opportunity gap, infrastructure and investment, releasing potential, green growth, young power, and the financial sector.
- The Atmanirbhar Clean Plant Program, with a budget of 2200 crore, would be introduced to increase the supply of high-quality, disease-free planting material for valuable horticulture crops.
- Urban Infrastructure Development Fund (UIDF) will be established through the use of priority Sector Lending shortfall, which will be managed by the National Housing Bank, and will be used by public agencies to create urban infrastructure in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.
- Rayyana Barnawi will be the first woman astronaut from Saudi Arabia to Visit International Space Station (ISS).
- Angela Merkel has been awarded the Felix Houphouet-Boigny UNESCO Peace Prize in Yamoussoukro, the capital of the Ivory Coast.
- A National Digital Library for Children and Adolescents to be set up for facilitating the availability of quality books across geographies, languages, genres and levels, and device-agnostic accessibility.
- Entity DigiLocker is to be set up for use by MSMEs, large businesses and charitable trusts to store and share documents online securely.
- iGOT Karmayogi, an integrated online training platform, was launched to provide continuous learning opportunities for lakhs of government employees to upgrade their skills and facilitate a people-centric approach.
- Pakistan's former President Pervez Musharraf passed away.
- 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under the GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) scheme to be established for promoting a circular economy at a total investment of Rs 10,000 crore. 5 per cent compressed biogas mandate to be introduced for all organizations marketing natural and biogas.
- Union Home Minister Amit Shah to present President's Colour Award to Haryana Police.
- Aspirational Blocks Programme covering 500 blocks launched for saturation of essential government services across multiple domains such as health, nutrition, education, agriculture, water resources, financial inclusion, skill development, and basic infrastructure.
- Rs. 15,000 crores for implementation of the Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission over the next three years under the Development Action Plan for the Scheduled Tribes.
- 'Bharat Shared Repository of Inscriptions' is to be set up in a digital epigraphy museum, with the digitization of one lakh ancient inscriptions in the first stage.

- A new sub-scheme of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana with a targeted investment of ₹6,000 crore is to be launched to further enable activities of fishermen, fish vendors, and micro & small enterprises, improve value chain efficiencies and expand the market.
- Centre to facilitate one crore farmers to adopt natural farming over the next three years. For this, 10,000 BioInput Resource Centres are to be set up, creating a national-level distributed micro-fertilizer and pesticide manufacturing network.
- Computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) with an investment of ₹2,516 crore initiated.
- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0, to be launched to skill lakhs of youth within the next three years covering new age courses for Industry 4.0 like coding, AI, robotics, mechatronics, IOT, 3D printing, drones, and soft skills.
- Sickle Cell Anaemia elimination mission to be launched.
- Indian Coast Guard celebrated its 45th Raising Day on 1st February 2023.
- 30 Skill India International Centres to be set up across different States to skill the youth for international opportunities.
- Jan Vishwas Bill to amend 42 Central Acts has been introduced to further trust-based governance.
- Three centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence are to be set up in top educational institutions to realise the vision of "Make AI in India and Make AI work for India".
- Annual production of 5 MMT under the Green Hydrogen Mission is to be targeted by 2030 to facilitate the transition of the economy to low carbon intensity and to reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports.
- National Data Governance Policy to be brought out to unleash innovation and research by start-ups and academia.
- India, Brazil and the US will work together to establish a global biofuel alliance along with other interested countries. The aim is to facilitate cooperation and intensify the use of sustainable biofuels.
- "PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment and Amelioration of Mother Earth" (PM-PRANAM) to be launched to incentivize States and Union Territories to promote alternative fertilizers and balanced use of chemical fertilizers.
- Tourism infrastructure and amenities are to be facilitated in border villages through the Vibrant Villages Programme.
- India ranks 42nd among 55 leading global economies on the recently released International IP Index. It is released annually by the US Chamber of Commerce.
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) India named Hindi film star Ayushmann Khurrana as a National Ambassador.
- World Wetlands Day is celebrated on 2nd February every year. The World Wetlands Day 2023 theme is "It's Time for Wetlands Restoration," which highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland Restoration.
- Under the second phase of the Faster Adoption and Manufacture of Electric Vehicles (FAME) scheme, Maharashtra has so far recorded the highest number of electric vehicle (EV) sales in the nation. The next five states were Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, in that order.
- States are to be encouraged to set up a Unity Mall for the promotion and sale of their own and also all other states' ODOPs (One District, One Product), GI products and handicrafts.
- 'Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes', MISHTI, to be taken up for mangrove plantation along the coastline and on salt pan lands, through convergence between MGNREGS, CAMPA Fund and other sources.

India's leading fintech company, MobiKwik, has become the first fintech app to support RuPay Credit Cards on Unified Payment Interface (UPI).

- Green Credit Programme to be notified under the Environment (Protection) Act to incentivize and mobilize additional resources for environmentally sustainable and responsive actions.
- Amrit Dharohar scheme to be implemented over the next three years to encourage optimal use of wetlands, enhance bio-diversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities.
- Author Dr Peggy Mohan has bagged the 'Mathrubhumi Book of The Year' award at the fourth edition of the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters.

- A unified Skill India Digital platform to be launched for enabling demand-based formal skilling, linking with employers including MSMEs, and facilitating access to entrepreneurship schemes.
- World Cancer Day is an international day marked on 4 February to raise awareness of cancer and to encourage its prevention, detection, and treatment. The theme for World Cancer Day 2022-2024 is 'Close the Care Gap'.
- The government has revised the definition of broadband connectivity; a higher minimum download speed of 2 Mbps (megabits per second).
- India's homegrown Paytm Payments Bank Limited (PPBL), has partnered with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to enable users to link RuPay credit cards with Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
- International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation 2023 is observed on the 6th of February 2023.
- The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) data for 2020-21, which was made public by the Union Ministry of Education, revealed a 7.5% rise in student enrollment nationwide from 2019-20 to 2020-21, with a total of 4.13 crore students enrolled nationwide.
- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) hiked the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) to 6.5% for FY 2022-23, and 5.3% for the next fiscal.
- The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate was adjusted to 6.25% from 6%, and the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate to 6.75%.
- International Development Week is celebrated on the 6th - 12th of February every year.
- The inaugural meeting of the G20 Education Working Group was held in Chennai on February 1 and 2, and the IIT Madras Research Park hosted a lecture on the "Role of Digital Technology in Education".
- World Pulses Day is celebrated on February 10 every year and recognized Pulses as a global food.
- National Productivity Day 2023 is observed on the 12th of February 2023. The theme set for this year is "A chance to set goals".
- In a meeting with Prime Minister (PM) Shri Narendra Modi, Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa announced ADB's commitment to invest USD 20-25 billion in resources over five years to assist India's aspirations for quick, inclusive, and environmentally friendly growth.
- World Radio Day is celebrated on 13 February a date proclaimed by UNESCO to celebrate radio broadcasts, improve international cooperation among radio broadcasters, and encourage decision-makers to create and provide access to information through radio, including community radios. This year's theme is "Yes to Radio, Yes to trust".
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to extend the UPI facility to inbound travellers (those who come to visit the country for travelling purposes) for merchant payments; initially to travellers from G20 countries.
- Airtel Payments Bank has launched - BizKhata, a current account with unlimited transactions and instant activation for small merchants and business partners across India.
- The United Nations (UN) World Day of Social Justice is annually observed on February 20 to encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication.
- The government's funding for the FAME (faster adoption and manufacturing of electric cars) scheme to subsidise the purchase of electric vehicles has increased, strengthening its push towards green mobility. In contrast to the revised projection of Rs 2,897 crore for the current fiscal year, the budget paper projects the subsidy under the FAME scheme for fiscal 2024 at Rs 5,172 crore.
- World Scout Day is celebrated every 22nd February.
- India's first frozen lake marathon was held on February 20, with the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) tasked with executing a "proper action plan" for the event in Ladakh's Pangong Tso.
- Under Project Cheetah, a total of 12 African cheetahs including seven males and five females will reach Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- Qualcomm launched the world's first satellite-based two-way messaging solution - Snapdragon Satellite.
- Green growth was designated as one of the government's seven top priorities by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who also authorised an allocation of 35,000 crores for achieving net zero and energy transition goals.
- World Thinking Day 2023 is observed on the 22nd of February 2023. The Theme is "Our World, Our Thriving Future: The environment and global poverty".

- Certain important export-boosting programmes have seen increased funding in the Union Budget 2023–24. Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme funding has increased by 10%, from Rs 13,699 crore in 2022–23 to Rs 15,069 crore in the next fiscal year.
- World NGO Day is observed every year on February 27.
- The country's first solid waste-to-hydrogen plant will be set up in Pune at a cost of over Rs 430 crore.
- Global anti-money laundering watchdog the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has suspended Russia's membership for its "illegal, unprovoked and unjustified" full-scale military invasion of Ukraine.
- The 'Lifestyle for Environment' or LiFE initiative of India for the adoption of energy-efficient behaviour can save the world \$440 billion in 2030, according to a report by International Energy Agency (IEA).
- India's Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and his Spanish counterpart Mr Pedro Sanchez agreed to collaborate on issues such as digital infrastructure, climate action, clean energy and sustainable development.
- A record budgetary boost of more than Rs 2.4 lakh crore has been given to the railways to speed up initiatives like the introduction of hydrogen-powered waggons and trains, the laying of additional tracks, the electrification of the network, and the renovation of stations to include better amenities for passengers.
- Every year, national science is celebrated on February 28 all over India. It is celebrated every year to mark the discovery of the "Raman effect". The 2023 Theme is "Global Science for Global Wellbeing".
- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed a fine of ₹2,232 crore on the Delhi government for damage caused to the environment due to improper solid and liquid waste management.
- Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will launch 'Digital Payments Utsav' in New Delhi. The main aim is to promote Digital Payments across the country. It has been planned with a focus on G-20 Digital Economy Working Group event cities.
- Google stated that Bard, a new AI chatbot built on the company's Language Model for Dialogue Application, will shortly begin public testing (LaMDA).
- India and Spain agreed to collaborate on digital infrastructure, climate action, and sustainable development.
- Tech Mahindra has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT), Saudi Arabia to establish a Data & Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Cloud Center of Excellence (CoE) in Riyadh.
- The National Philatelic Exhibition – AMRITPEX 2023 was inaugurated by Union Minister of Communications Ashwini Vaishnav at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi.
- The Rajasthan state Forest Department has recently proposed to construct a zoo inside Keoladeo National Park. The Keoladeo National Park formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary hosts thousands of birds, especially during the winter season.
- India's first mission to study the sun Aditya-L1 is to be launched by June-July 2023.
- All market intermediaries and businesses are required by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)-notified regulations to make regulatory payments to SEBI via direct credit into the bank account via digital payment systems.
- The road transport ministry has requested that states grant the required tax incentives and register automobiles owned by people with disabilities under the "Divyangjan" ownership category. It is not permissible to deny vehicle registration under the "Divyangjan" category to disabled people who possess a car and hire a driver.
- February 28 is marked as Rare Disease day 2023. This year's theme is "Share Your Colors."
- At the India Energy Week on February 6 in Bengaluru, Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled two inventions: a solar cooking system and clothing made from recycled plastic bottles.
- Union Cabinet has approved the signing of an MoU between India and South Africa for cooperation in the disability sector.
- Shinku La Tunnel construction was approved by Union Cabinet to provide all-weather connectivity in Ladakh.
- India's first green energy-based solar panel factory will be built by Delhi-based Luminous Power Technologies in Uttarakhand.
- Food delivery major Zomato has launched The Shelter Project, under which the company has started building public infrastructure (called Rest Points) to support the entire gig economy and delivery partners of various companies.
- According to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) report, titled "Global Sea-Level Rise and Implications", Between 2013 and 2022, the global mean sea level rose by 4.5 millimetres (mm).

- To promote India's cyber-readiness, KAVACH-2023 has been inaugurated in New Delhi. A national hackathon is being held to find creative concepts and cutting-edge technology answers to the 21st century's problems with cybercrime and security.
- Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shri Bhupender Yadav launched the Save Wetlands Campaign in Goa.
- Governor of Odisha Shri Ganeshi Lal launched India's first artificial intelligence (AI) driven ChatBot for agriculture named Ama KrushAI in Bhubaneswar at the annual Krushi Odisha event 2023.
- India and the United States (US) have moved ahead to jointly develop air-launched unmanned aerial vehicles (ALUAV) that will be used for surveillance missions, in a massive boost to Indo-US defence ties.
- India and Fiji have signed MoU on visa exemption for holders of diplomatic and official passports.
- The Ministry of Culture organised the First G20 Culture Group (CWG) meeting in Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh (MP) from 22nd to 25th February 2023. The theme of the Khajuraho meet is "Protection and Restitution of Cultural Property".
- The 15th BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) conference is scheduled to take place in South Africa's Durban in late August of 2023.
- Himachal Pradesh (HP) has become the first state in India to start the organised commercial cultivation of Licorice (Mulethi).
- Mr David Malpass would step down from the post of World Bank (WB) President by the end of June 2023, before his five-year term expires. His five-year term was due to end in April 2024.

India, France and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) unveiled an ambitious roadmap for cooperation in a wide range of areas including defence, energy and technology under a trilateral framework.

- The Textile Ministry hosted 'Technotex 2023' in Mumbai to boost manufacturing and research in the technical textiles sector.
- Haryana Police received Prestigious President's Colour Award.
- Ravichandran Ashwin has become the fastest Indian bowler and second overall to reach the mark of 450 Test wickets.
- The Prime Minister (PM) of India Shri Narendra Modi and his Singapore counterpart Lee Hsien Loong launched cross-border connectivity between the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India and PayNow of Singapore through video conferencing.
- Joginder Sharma announced his retirement from all forms of cricket.
- The world's first international summit on the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the military (REAIM) in 2023 commenced in The Netherlands.
- Australia announced the removal of the British monarchy from its banknotes.
- Murali Vijay announced his retirement from all forms of international cricket.
- NITI Aayog recently launched a report titled "Transforming Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)".
- The Government of India is to set up the first waste-to-hydrogen plant for Rs 430 crores in Pune.
- The first glass igloo restaurant in India is located in Gulmarg. The Kolahoi Green Heights hotel in Gulmarg, located in the Baramulla area of northern Kashmir, recently constructed this glass-walled restaurant in the middle of the snow.
- The government has launched a mobile app namely 'Khanan Prahari' and a web app Coal Mine Surveillance and Management System (CMSMS) for reporting unauthorized coal mining activities.
- The Union Cabinet has approved a Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Vibrant Villages Programme with a financial allocation of 4,800 crore rupees for the fiscal years 2022-23 to 2025-26.
- North India's first nuclear power plant will come up in Haryana in the village of Gorakhpur in Fatehabad district, 150 km north of the national capital.
- The Indore Municipal Corporation's Green Bonds have been listed on National Stock Exchange (NSE), marking the first-ever green bond issue by a municipal corporation in India.
- The European Investment Bank (EIB), the bank of the European Union, formally agreed to join the India Hydrogen Alliance (IH2A) and expand support for large-scale green hydrogen hubs and projects across India with indicative funding of €1 billion.
- According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Indian economy is expected to grow by 6.1% in 2023 and 6.8% in 2024.

- The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has recommended Dr Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi as the new Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).
- Financial Literacy Week (FLW) is being organised by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) from February 13 to February 17, 2023. The theme selected for the current year Financial Literacy Week (FLW) is "Good Financial Behaviour - Your Saviour".
- India and the European Union (EU) announced the formation of 3 working groups under the 'Trade and Technology Council' (TTC) with a focus on trade, investment & value chains, digital economy and clean technology.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) organised its 2nd global hackathon - "HARBINGER 2023 - Innovation for Transformation" with the theme 'Inclusive Digital Services'.
- Geological Survey of India (GSI) announced that "for the first time" it has established Lithium inferred resources of 5.9 million tonnes in the Reasi District of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).
- Asia's second and country's first cable suspension bridge "Bajrang Setu" is being constructed at Rishikesh, Uttarakhand.
- West Bengal (WB) Finance Minister (FM) Chandrima Bhattacharya presented a Rs 3.39-lakh crore budget for the Financial Year (FY) 2023-24.
- Reliance Retail has become the first Indian retailer to introduce Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), also known as the digital rupee (e₹-R) at its stores.
- Indian-American Ms Shasti Conrad became the 1st South Asian to be elected for the post of Washington State Democratic Party chair.
- Andhra Pradesh CM inaugurated tourist police stations at 20 centres.
- India ranks first in milk production in the world contributing 24% of global milk production.

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ARGHYA BHATTACHARYA
RANK 54 (Gr. A)
WBCS 2020

“The organization was very good, very comfortable atmosphere, the guidance and study material was very helpful.”

AB

IASOBYAN
PREDICT THE UNPREDICTABLE

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q1. Which of the following city will be made the new capital of Andhra Pradesh?

- (a) Visakhapatnam
- (b) Ananthapuram
- (c) Vijayawada
- (d) Nellore

Q2. Murali Vijay has announced his retirement recently. He was related to which of the following sport?

- (a) Hockey
- (b) Tennis
- (c) Football
- (d) Cricket

Q3. The Indian Coast Guard Day is celebrated every year on?

- (a) February 1
- (b) February 3
- (c) February 5
- (d) February 7

Q4. Padma Bhushan awardee Vani Jairam passed away recently. She was a;

- (a) Writer
- (b) Politician
- (c) Singer
- (d) Historian

Q5. Which ministry has inaugurated the G20 Cyber Security Exercise and Drill for more than 400 domestic and international participants under India's G20 presidency?

- (a) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- (b) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- (c) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (d) Ministry of External Affairs

Q6. Manuela Roka Botey has been elected as the first female PM of which country?

- (a) Cuba
- (b) Ghana
- (c) Sudan
- (d) Equatorial Guinea

Q7. World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on which day?

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

Q8. Shanti Bhushan passed away recently at the age of 97 years. He was related to which fields?

- (a) Writer
- (b) Politician
- (c) Actor
- (d) Lawyer

Q9. The union government has extended Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PMKUSUM) scheme till March 2026. PM-KUSUM scheme had launched in which year?

- (a) 2017
- (b) 2018
- (c) 2019
- (d) 2020

Q10. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated a helicopter manufacturing plant of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in which state?

- (a) Uttar Pradesh
- (b) West Bengal
- (c) Assam
- (d) Karnataka

Q11. Who has been appointed as a member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM)?

- (a) Ashima Goyal
- (b) Raghuram Rajan
- (c) Shamika Ravi
- (d) Anshika Singh

Q12. Which planet beats Saturn to become the planet with the most moons?

- (a) Jupiter
- (b) Uranus
- (c) Saturn
- (d) Neptune

Q13. Who won the 65th Grammy Award for Best Immersive Audio Album for the album Divine Tides?

- (a) Ricky Kej
- (b) Michael Buble
- (c) Samara Joy
- (d) Brandi Carlile

Q14. Aaron Finch has announced his retirement from international cricket. He is from which country?

- (a) England
- (b) New Zealand
- (c) Australia
- (d) South Africa

Q15. Visva-Bharati University is set to become the world's first "Living Heritage University". It was founded in which year?

- (a) 1911
- (b) 1921
- (c) 1931
- (d) 1941

Q16. Who has been awarded the Golden Book Awards 2023 for the book 'Now You Breathe'?

- (a) Amartya Sen
- (b) Rakhi Kapoor
- (c) Shashi Tharoor
- (d) Pulapre Balakrishnan

Q17. Which company has launched an Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered chatbot named "Bard" to compete with ChatGPT?

- (a) Microsoft
- (b) Apple
- (c) Adobe
- (d) Google

Q18. Which of the following fintech app has become the first fintech app to support RuPay Credit Cards on UPI?

- (a) Paytm
- (b) Razorpay
- (c) Freecharge
- (d) MobiKwik

Q19. Name of the rescue operation initiated by the Government of India to aid Syria and Turkey, after an earthquake hit both countries.

- (a) Operation Dost
- (b) Operation Rahat
- (c) Operation Maitri
- (d) Operation Madad

Q20. Who among the following is the author of the new novel "Victory City"?

- (a) Amartya Sen
- (b) Dr Ashwin Fernandes
- (c) Shashi Tharoor
- (d) Salman Rushdie

Q21. Nikos Christodoulides has been elected as the President of which country recently?

- (a) Cyprus
- (b) Bangladesh
- (c) Oman
- (d) Singapore

Q22. Mohammad Shahabuddin has been elected as the president of which country?

- (a) Iran
- (b) Nepal
- (c) Pakistan
- (d) Bangladesh

Q23. Which team has won the FIFA Club World Cup 2022 title?

- (a) Real Madrid
- (b) FC Barcelona
- (c) Liverpool
- (d) Al Hilal

Q24. India's first "Frozen-Lake Marathon" at a height of 13,862 feet will be held in which state/UTs?

- (a) Tripura
- (b) Jammu and Kashmir
- (c) Ladakh
- (d) Arunachal Pradesh

Q25. Who has become the costliest player in the ongoing player auction for the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2023?

- (a) Deepti Sharma
- (b) Harmanpreet Kaur
- (c) Renuka Singh
- (d) Smriti Mandhana

Q26. The Government of India will set up the first waste-to-hydrogen plant for Rs 430 crores in which city?

- (a) Bengaluru
- (b) New Delhi
- (c) Chennai
- (d) Pune

Q27. Which of the following team has won the Ranji Trophy 2022-23 title by defeating Bengal?

- (a) Saurashtra
- (b) Madhya Pradesh
- (c) Baroda
- (d) Bengal

Q28. North India's first nuclear power plant would be set up in which state?

- (a) Uttar Pradesh
- (b) Gujarat
- (c) Rajasthan
- (d) Haryana

Q29. Who has been appointed as the new CEO of NITI Aayog?

- (a) Abhishek Singhvi
- (b) Aryama Sundaram
- (c) Kishor Kumar Basa
- (d) BVR Subrahmanyam

Q30. International Mother Language Day is celebrated every year on which day?

- (a) 21 February
- (b) 22 February
- (c) 23 February
- (d) 24 February

ANSWER KEY

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1. | A | 16. | B |
| 2. | D | 17. | D |
| 3. | A | 18. | D |
| 4. | C | 19. | D |
| 5. | B | 20. | D |
| 6. | D | 21. | A |
| 7. | B | 22. | D |
| 8. | D | 23. | A |
| 9. | C | 24. | C |
| 10. | D | 25. | D |
| 11. | C | 26. | D |
| 12. | C | 27. | A |
| 13. | A | 28. | D |
| 14. | C | 29. | D |
| 15. | B | 30. | A |



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