

2022

FEBRUARY

EDITION



UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE



Download
Our App
Now!



Monthly Current Affairs Magazine – February 2022

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released the notification for Civil Services Examination 2022 (CSE 2022) on 2nd February 2022. According to the UPSC CSE Notification 2022, the online application link would be active from 2nd February 2022 to 22nd February 2022. The UPSC Prelims 2022 exam would be conducted on 5th June 2022, while UPSC Mains 2022 examination has been scheduled starting from 16th September 2022. For those, who are preparing for UPSC CSE 2022, needless to say, a thorough study, understanding, and revision of Current Affairs is a must!

To ease the preparation, we are providing monthly current affairs compilation for the aspirants. The magazine contains subject-wise distribution of comprehensive news articles, which have been derived from the sources like PIB, The Hindu, The Indian Express, etc.

A separate section – ‘The Editorials Corner’ has been added to discuss the important Editorial articles published in The Hindu and Indian Express Newspaper. We have also added MCQ Current Affairs questions with solutions. Aspirants should attempt these questions after reading the magazine, in order to evaluate their knowledge of Current Affairs.

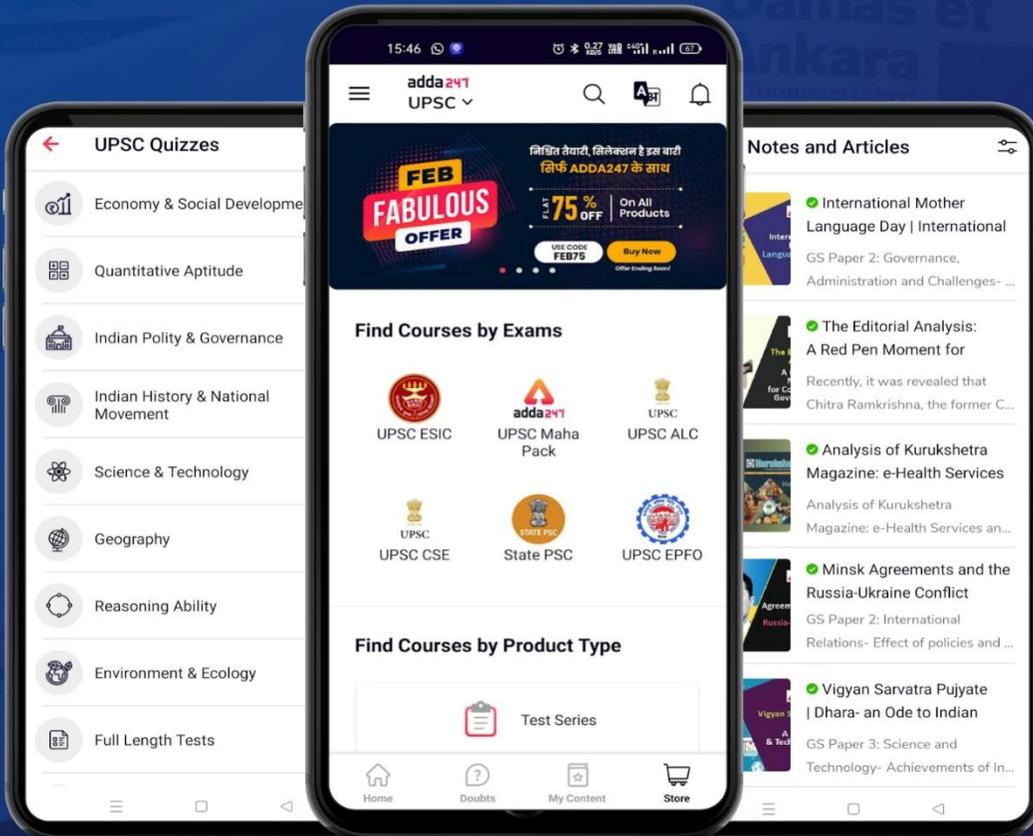
"Every day is a chance to begin again. Don't focus on the failures of yesterday, start today with positive thoughts and expectations."

– Catherine Pulsifer

Economy	34
• Code of Practices for Securing Consumer Internet of Things	34
• Digital Payment Index	35
• Domestic Systematically Important Insurers.....	35
• Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge	36
• India Israel FTA.....	37
• India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) Objectives, Features, and Performance of IPPB	37
• India to Become Asia’s Second Largest Economy by 2030	38
• India-UK Free Trade Agreement.....	39
• India’s Falling Jobless Rate and Risks to Employment- CMIE Findings.....	39
• MoSPI Releases First Advance Estimate for 2021-22	40
• National Conference on Agriculture for Summer Campaign 2021-22	41
• National Technical Textile Mission	41
• Offline Digital Payments: RBI Issues Guidelines.....	42
• Quarterly Employment Survey	43
• RBI Sets Up a Fintech Department	44
• Reciprocal Access Agreement	45
• Sub Mission on Agriculture Mechanization	45
• Surety Bonds: IRDAI Issues Guidelines	46
• Vision Document on Electronic Manufacturing	47
• WTO Says, China is a Developing Country.....	48
Social Issues	49
• Inequality Kills: A Report by Oxfam.....	49
• Nari Shakti Puraskar 2021	50
• North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP).....	50
• OBC Quota: SC upholds OBC quota in NEET	51
• World Employment and Social Outlook 2022.....	52
Environment & Biodiversity	53
• 19th Meeting of NTCA: 50 Cheetah to be introduced in next 5 years.....	53
• 2021-22 is Unusually Colder and Wetter Winter Year.....	53
• 4th Asia Ministerial Conference on Tiger Conservation	54
• Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav- Climate Change Awareness Campaign and National Photography Competition.....	54
• Government Planning to Blend Green Hydrogen with Natural Gas	55
• Increasing AMR in aquaculture	56
• Increasing Solar Waste in India.....	57

The Editorials Corner.....	84
• To the poll booth, with no donor knowledge	84
• Unlock India's food processing potential.....	84
• Inadequate Response.....	85
• A Stellar Fallacy.....	86
• Aiding in Governance.....	86
• Control Rather than Privacy	87
• Democratize and Empower City Governments	88
• Drop the IAS Cadre Rules Amendments.....	89
• Extending GST Compensation as a Reform Catalyst.....	90
• Extinguishing the Tobacco Industry's Main Narrative	91
• Friend in Need	92
• Limits of Power	93
• Just what the doctor ordered for the Livestock Farmer	94
• Preventing Genocide.....	94
• Reaping India's Demographic Dividend.....	95
• Space for Dreams.....	96
• The baton of forest restoration in the Net Zero Race.....	97
• The Chinese challenge uncovers India's fragilities	98
• The Crypto Assets Conundrum.....	98
• The Indo-Pacific Opportunity.....	99
• The sail that Indian diplomacy, statecraft need	100
• Wrong Route	101
• Setting sail for a powerful India-German partnership	102
Practice Questions	103

Prepare for
UPSC & STATE PSC EXAMS



UPSC Adda247 App Features

- Daily Top News & Headlines
- Daily Current Affairs Articles
- Daily Editorial Analysis
- General Studies Revision Notes
- Daily Current Affairs Quiz with Detailed Solutions
- Topic Wise GS & CSAT Quizzes
- Monthly Current Affairs Magazine
- Gist of Yojana, Kurukshetra & Down to Earth Magazines
- Analysis of Sansad TV Discussions
- All Content Available in Hindi Medium as well!



Download
Our App Now!



District Good Governance Index (DGGI) | J&K to have District-level Governance Index

Context

- Recently, Union government said that J&K will have **district level Governance Index**. With this, Jammu & Kashmir will soon become the first Union Territory in the country to have a district level **Good Governance Index**.
- District Good Governance Index (DGGI)** is modelled on the **Good Governance Index 2021** launched on 25 December 2021.

J & K District Good Governance Index (DGGI)

- About:** With 58 Indicators distributed in 10 sectors, District Good Governance Index (DGGI) of J&K is one of unique exercise in assessing the status of Governance in the Districts of J&K.
 - The framework of the proposed Index has been finalised with the technical support from the Centre for Good Governance (CGG) Hyderabad.
- Implementation:** Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) will carry out task of preparing J & K District Good Governance Index, in collaboration with the UT Government of J & K.
 - While there will be a comprehensive rank of Districts based on composite 10 Sectors, the DGGI will also offer a window on indicator-wise performance of the Districts.
- DGGI Framework for J & K:** DGGI has 58 Indicators drawn from different aspects of development and district administration distributed in all-encompassing 10 sectors such as-
 - Agriculture & allied sector,
 - Commerce & Industry,
 - Human Resource Development,
 - Public Health,
 - Public Infrastructure & Utilities,
 - Economic Governance,
 - Welfare & Development,
 - Public Safety & Judiciary and
 - Citizen Centric Governance.
- Significance:** DGGI will enable districts of J & K to rise to the level of some of the best administered districts of the country with time bound disposal of office files and other matters, increased transparency, increased accountability and increased citizen participation.
 - The next step would be to carry forward these Good Governance practices down to Tehsil and Block level.

District Good Governance Index (DGGI)- Key Points

- Background:** District Good Governance Index (DGGI) was announced at the Regional Conference organized by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) at Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.
- About:** District Good Governance Index for UP (first state) will be developed on the lines of the National Good Governance Index for improving the efficiency of Governance across Districts.
- Developing Authority:** District Good Governance Index will be developed by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) to collaborate with the Uttar Pradesh government.
- Significance:** Good Governance Index for the State can be replicated in other States to reach out to the last man in the last queue with all the benefits of the welfare schemes.

Draft National Air Sports Policy | NASP 2022

Context

- Recently, the Ministry of Civil Aviation released draft National Air Sports Policy (NASP) for public feedback. The draft policy is available on the website of the Civil Aviation Ministry.

National Air Sports Policy (NASP 2022)- Key Points

- About:** Draft National Air Sports Policy (NASP 2022) aims to promote the country's air sports sector, by way of making it safe, affordable, accessible, enjoyable and sustainable.
- Potential of Air Sports:** India has the potential to be among the leading nations in the world of air sports due to following-
 - India has a large geographical expanse, diverse topography and fair-weather conditions.
 - It has a large population, especially the youth.
 - It has a growing culture for adventure sports and aviation.
- Associated Benefits:** Other than the direct revenue from air sports activities, the multiplier benefits in terms of growth of travel, tourism, infrastructure and local employment, especially in hilly areas of the country, are several times greater.
 - Creation of air sports hubs across the country will also bring in air sports professionals and tourists from across the world.

Objective of rights and principles

These rights and principles should accompany people:

- affordable and high-speed digital connectivity everywhere and for everybody,
- well-equipped classrooms and digitally skilled teachers,
- seamless access to public services,
- a safe digital environment for children,
- obtaining easy-to-understand information on the environmental impact of our digital products,
- controlling how their personal data are used and with whom they are shared.

What are digital rights?

- Digital rights are those rights that allow people to access, use, create and publish digital media, as well as access and use computers, other electronic devices and communications networks.
- Digital rights are closely linked to freedom of expression and privacy.
- Digital rights are also called as an extension of human rights in a digital age.

Key digital rights

- Right to access and use computers and/or other electronic devices
- Right to access and use digital content
- Right to create and share digital media
- Right to privacy in digital communities
- Right to express your ideas and opinions freely
- Right to report anyone or anything that seems inappropriate

Key Digital Responsibilities

- Use appropriate language and behavior when interacting with others (i.e. no cyberbullying)
- Respect the opinions and ideas of others
- Obey all intellectual property laws
- Do not use or share others' work without permission
- Follow rules and/or codes of conduct for every Internet site
- Responsibility to report cyberbullying, threats, and inappropriate use of digital resources

Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) Quota: Committee Recommendations on Determining EWS

Context

- Recently, the Central Government has told the Supreme Court that it has decided to accept the recommendation of a three-member panel on Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) Quota.

EWS Quota Committee- Key Points

- **About:** The Centre had constituted the three-member committee in November last year according to an assurance given to the top court to revisit the criteria for determining EWS.
- **Members:** The committee had three members comprising-
 1. Ajay Bhushan Pandey, former finance secretary,
 2. VK Malhotra, member secretary, ICSSR, and
 3. Sanjeev Sanyal, Principal Economic Adviser to Centre,
- **Key Recommendation:** The three member Panel recommendations says that family income is a "feasible criterion" for defining EWS and in the current situation.

Key Recommendations of the Panel

- **Income Criteria:** EWS Quota Panel recommended to retain the current gross annual family income limit for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) of Rs 8 lakh or less. Panel said that-
 - Only those families whose annual income is up to Rs 8 lakh would be eligible to get the benefit of EWS reservation.
 - The current limit of annual family income of Rs 8 lakhs does not seem to be over-inclusive as the available data on actual outcomes does not indicate over inclusion.
- It should be noted that income includes salary and agriculture as well
 - Income criterion for EWS was "more stringent" than the one for the OBC creamy layer.
- **Agricultural Land:** The panel recommended that EWS, may exclude, irrespective of income, a person whose family has five acres of agricultural land and above.
- **Removal of residential Criteria:** The panel recommended that the residential asset criteria may altogether be removed for defining Economically Weaker Sections (EWS).

What is e-governance

- Electronic Governance or e-governance is the **use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for delivering government services** through integration of various systems between Government-to-Citizens (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), and Government-to-Government(G2G) services.

National Ayush Mission (NAM) | National Ayush Mission Scheme

Context

- Recently, the Cost effective Ayush services under the National Ayush Mission (NAM) have gotten major boost in the Union Budget 2022-23.
- The total allocation of budget to Ayush Ministry in last 7 years has increased over four times from 691 Cr to Rs 3050 Cr.

Union Budget 2022-23: Key provisions about National Ayush Mission scheme

- **Increase in Budget:** under **National Ayush Mission (NAM)**, Union budget 2022-23 has Increased Budget amount, up to Rs 800 Crore. The NAM had earlier received the budget of Rs 500 Cr.
- **Expected Benefits:** It will help Ayush Ministry in-
 - The upgradation of its hospitals and dispensaries,
 - Support cultivation of medicinal plants and
 - In many other areas including increase in export of value-added items of medicinal plants.

National Ayush Mission (NAM)- Key Points

- **About:** National AYUSH Mission (NAM) is a flagship scheme of Ministry of AYUSH, launched in 2014.
 - National AYUSH Mission is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Union Government.
- **Implementation:** National AYUSH Mission (NAM) launched during 12th Plan for implementing through States/UTs.
- **Mandate:** NAM aims to promote AYUSH medical systems through-
 - Cost effective AYUSH services,
 - Strengthening of educational systems,
 - Facilitate the enforcement of quality control of Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani & Homoeopathy (ASU &H) drugs and
 - Sustainable availability of ASU & H raw-materials.

Vision of the NAM Scheme

- **To provide cost effective and equitable AYUSH health care** throughout the country by improving access to the services.
- **To revitalize and strengthen the AYUSH systems** making them as prominent medical streams in addressing the health care of the society.
- **To establish a holistic wellness model** based on AYUSH principles and practices
- **To improve educational institutions** capable of imparting quality AYUSH education
- **To promote the adoption of Quality Control of ASU&H Drugs** and making available the sustained supply of AYUSH raw-materials.

Key Objectives

- **To provide cost effective AYUSH Services**, with a universal access through-
 - Upgrading AYUSH Hospitals and Dispensaries,
 - Co-location of AYUSH facilities at Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Community Health Centres (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs).
- **To establish a holistic wellness model** based on AYUSH principles and practices to-
 - Empower masses for 'self-care' to reduce the disease burden, out of pocket expenditure and
 - Provide informed choice to the needy public.
- **To strengthen institutional capacity** at the state level through upgrading AYUSH educational institutions, State Govt. ASU&H Pharmacies, Drug Testing Laboratories and ASU & H enforcement mechanism.



What is manual scavenging?

- Manual scavenging is the practice of **physically removing human excreta** by hand from sewers or septic tanks. This dehumanizing practice is mostly undertaken by members of the Dalit community, which is at the bottom of India's caste system.
- According to the 2013 Act, the definition of **manual scavengers was broadened** to include people employed to clean septic tanks, ditches or railway tracks.

National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) Scheme

Context

- Recently, Union Education Minister launched NEAT 3.0 (National Educational Alliance for Technology) and AICTE prescribed technical books in regional languages.

NEAT 3.0- Key Points

- **About:** NEAT 3.0 is a single platform to provide the best-developed ed-tech solutions and courses to students of the country.
- **Benefits:** Under NEAT 3.0 scheme, 12 Lakh NEAT ed-tech free course coupons worth Rs 253.72 crore were distributed to socially disadvantaged groups.

NEAT Scheme- Key Points

- **About:** National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT) is an initiative to provide the use of best-developed technological solutions in the education sector.
 - NEAT solutions use Artificial Intelligence for a personalized and customized learning experience for better learning outcomes and skill development in the niche areas.
- **Mandate:** NEAT Scheme aims to enhance the employability of the youth on a single platform for learners' convenience.
- **Implementing Agency:** All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), Ministry of Education is acting as the facilitator in the process of implementing NEAT scheme.
 - AICTE is entrusted for ensuring that the solutions are freely available to a large number of socially and economically backward students.
 - EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage the registration of learners through the NEAT portal.

- **Stakeholders:** NEAT aims to create a National Alliance with such technology developing EdTech Companies through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.
 - NEAT has 58 Education Technology Companies with 100 products that help to develop employable skills, capacity building, and bridge learning gaps.

NEAT Scheme- Key Significance

- **Bridging Digital-divide:** NEAT will be a game-changer in bridging the digital divide and fulfilling the knowledge-based requirement of the world.
 - NEAT will bridge digital divide, especially among the economically disadvantaged students and also in fulfilling the knowledge-based requirement of India and the world.
- **Promoting 21st Century employability:** NEAT to be integrated with skill India, to tap opportunities in emerging 21st century skills to boost employability and prepare our youth for the future.

National Water Development Agency (NWDA)

Context

- Recently, the Meeting of Governing Body of National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was held through video conferencing.

Key Points

- **About:** National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was set to carry out detailed studies, surveys and investigations in respect of Peninsular Component under National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Water Resources Development.
- **Establishment:** National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was set up as an autonomous society in 1982 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- **Parent Ministry:** The National Water Development Agency (NWDA) is a Registered Society under Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation (DoWR, RD&GR)], Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- **Governing Body:** National Water Development Agency has a governing body which meets regularly and discusses various issues on the Field.
 - Meeting of Governing Body of National Water Development Agency (NWDA) is chaired by Secretary, DoWR, RD&GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Key Functions

- National Water Development Agency (NWDA) aims to carry out detailed survey and investigations of possible reservoir sites and interconnecting links.
 - This is done to establish feasibility of the proposal of Peninsular Rivers Development and Himalayan Rivers Development Components forming part of the National Perspective for Water Resources Development and Central Water Commission.
- National Water Development Agency (NWDA) works towards carry out detailed studies about the quantum of water in various Peninsular River systems and Himalayan River systems.
 - Extra water can be transferred to other basins/States after meeting the reasonable needs of the basin/States in the foreseeable future.
- NWDA also carries out surveys & investigations work and prepare DPRs of river link proposals under the NPP for Water Resources Development.
- NWDA prepares Pre-Feasibility Reports (PFRs)/Feasibility Reports (FRs)/DPRs of the Intra-State links as may be proposed by the States.
- NWDA undertake/construct/repair/renovate/rehabilitate /implement the projects either of its own or through an appointed Agency/Organizations/PSU or Company and the projects.
- NWDA do all such other things the Society may consider necessary, incidental, supplementary or conducive to the attainment of above objectives.

National Youth Festival 2022- PM to Inaugurate 25th National Youth Festival

Context

- Prime Minister of India will inaugurate the 25th National Youth Festival on 12th January, 2022 in Puducherry, via video conferencing.
- The 25th National Youth Festival is going to be held in Puducherry from 12th to 16th January 2022.
- The **National Youth Festival 2022** is being organised as part of the Azadi ki Amrit Mahotsav, marking the 75th year of Independence.

National Youth Festival

- **Background:** National Youth Festival started in 1995 as a major activity under the programme held by National Integration Camp (NIC).

- **About: National Youth Festival** is an annual gathering of the Youth of India. The National Youth Festival is observed on the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda that is 12 January.
 - **National Youth Festival is organized as a part of National Youth Week celebrations.**
- **Key Objectives:** National Youth Festival is organised with the aim of propagating the concept of national integration, brotherhood, the spirit of communal harmony, courage and adventure amongst the youth.
 - National Youth Festival aims to shape the minds of India's youth and transform them into a united force for nation building.
 - National Youth Festival also aims to bring diverse cultures of India and integrate them into a united thread of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'.
- **Ministry: National Youth Festival** is organized by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, in association with one of the State Governments.
 - **National Youth Festival** is organised in a different state each year during National Youth Week.

National Youth Festival 2022- Key Points

- **About:** in view of the emerging Covid situation, 25th National Youth Festival has been scheduled to be held virtually from 12 - 13 January, 2022.
- **Participation:** The **National Youth Festival 2022** is likely to see participation of around 7000 youths in the age group of 18 to 22 from across the country.
 - The National Youth Festival 2022 will see youth representatives from every district in India
 - Around 500 youths from Puducherry will also take part in the National Youth Festival 2022 event.
- **National Youth Summit:** it will be organized on 13 January wherein there will be panel discussions on four identified themes. Key themes will be-
 - Environment, climate and SDG led growth;
 - Tech, entrepreneurship and innovation;
 - Indigeneous and ancient wisdom; and
 - National character, nation building and home grown.
- **Key Events:** During the event, the Prime Minister will unveil selected essays on "Mere Sapno ka Bharat" and "Unsung Heroes of Indian Freedom Movement".
 - These essays have been selected from submissions by over 1 lakh youth on the two themes.

NewsOnAir Radio Live-stream Global Rankings

Context

- Recently, NewsOnAir Radio live-stream global ranking was released. NewsOnAir Radio Live-stream Global Rankings ranks countries (except India) where All India Radio (AIR) live-streams on NewsOnAir app are most popular.
- NewsOnAir Radio Live-stream Global Rankings are based on data from December 1 – December 15, 2021.

Key Findings

- Fiji has toppled United States to take the first position in the NewsOnAir Radio Live-stream Global Rankings.
- United Kingdom and United Arab Emirates have slipped to 7th and 10th spot respectively.
- New Zealand, Japan, Ireland and Papua New Guinea have entered top 10, while Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Kuwait are no more in the top list.
- Among the top All India Radio streams globally (excluding India), AIR Punjabi, AIR Telugu, AIR Chennai Rainbow and Asmita Mumbai have made a comeback to top 10.
 - AIR Mangalore, AIR Raagam, World Service 1 and Vividh Bharati Delhi were displaced from the coveted top list (top 10).
- More than 240 Radio Services of All India Radio are live-streamed on NewsOnAir App, Prasar Bharati's official App.
 - These All India Radio Streams on NewsOnAir App have a large number of listeners not just in India, but globally, in more than 85 countries.
- **Measurement for listenership across age-groups:** NewsOnAir Radio live-stream global ranking measurement for listenership across age-groups reveals that more than one third of the global listeners (excluding India) are in the age group of 18 to 44.
 - This shows NewsOnAir App's huge popularity among the youth across the world.

One District One Product (ODOP) Scheme

Context

- Recently, Union Minister for Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) launched six, One District One Product (ODOP) brands under the PMFME Scheme.
 - PMFME Scheme

- MoFPI has signed an agreement with NAFED for developing 10 brands of selected One District One Products under the branding and marketing component of the PMFME scheme.
 - Out of these, six brands namely Amrit Phal, Cori Gold, Kashmiri Mantra, Madhu Mantra, Somdana, and Whole Wheat Cookies of Dilli Bakes were launched.

Key Points

- **Background:** One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is operationally merged with 'Districts as Export Hub' initiative.
- **About:** One District One Product (ODOP) is an initiative which is seen as a transformational step forward towards realizing the **the goal of AtmaNirbhar Bharat**.
- **Mandate:** One District One Product (ODOP) scheme aims to realize true potential of a district, fuel economic growth and generate employment and rural entrepreneurship.
- **Implementation:** ODOP initiative is being implemented by DGFT, Department of Commerce, with Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) as a major stakeholder.
 - The Department of Commerce through DGFT is engaging with State and Central government agencies to promote the initiative of One District One Product.
 - State Export Promotion Committee (SPEC) and District Export Promotion Committee (DEPC) have been constituted in states under ODOP initiative.
 - DEPC is constituted in all Districts of India, except districts of the state of West Bengal.
- **Marketing Avenues:** All the products under ODOP scheme will be available at NAFED Bazaars, E-commerce platforms, and prominent retail stores across India.

Key Objectives

- **Transforming Districts into Export Hubs:** One District One Product (ODOP) scheme aims to convert each District of the country into an Export Hub by-
 - Identifying products with export potential in the district,
 - Addressing bottlenecks for exporting these products,
 - Supporting local exporters/manufacturers to scale up manufacturing, and find potential buyers outside India.

- **Promoting Industry and Export:** One District One Product (ODOP) initiative aims to promote manufacturing & services industry in the District, along with promoting exports of identified products.
- **Generating Employment:** One of the key goals of One District One Product (ODOP) initiative is to generate employment for the local people in the District.

PMFME Scheme: Key Points

- **About:** Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme launched under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
- **Objective:** PMFME Scheme aims to-
 - Enhance the competitiveness of existing individual micro-enterprises in the unorganized segment of the food processing industry and Promote formalization of the sector and
 - Provide support to Farmer Producer Organizations, Self Help Groups, and Producers Cooperatives along their entire value chain.
- **Funding:** PMFME scheme is provided with an outlay of Rs. 10,000 crores for over a period of five years from 2020-21 to 2024-25.
- **Beneficiaries:** PMFME scheme envisions to directly assist the 2,00,000 micro food processing units for providing financial, technical, and business support for up-gradation of existing micro food processing enterprises.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2022

Context

- Prime Minister will interact with Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar (PMRBP) awardees on 24th January, 2022 via video conferencing.

Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

- **About:** Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is given as recognition to children residing in India, above the age of 5 years and not exceeding 18 years.
 - Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar Awards are conferred by Hon'ble President in a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhawan.
 - The Prime Minister also interacts with these awardees every year.
- **Associated Ministry:** Ministry of Women and Child Development is entrusted with the organizing the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar each year.

- **Nomination and Selection for the Award:** Any child with an exceptional achievement in the above fields, can apply for the award.
 - Also, any person who knows about a meritorious achievement by a child can recommend this child for the award.
 - A high-level committee selects the winners of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar after careful consideration of each application.
- **Award/Prize:** Under Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar, each awardee is given a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/- and a certificate.

Categorization of Award

The Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is given under two categories- **Bal Shakti Puraskar and Bal Kalyan Puraskar**. Below, these are discussed in detailed-

- **Bal Shakti Puraskar:** The National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement was instituted in 1996 to give recognition to children with exceptional abilities and outstanding achievements.
 - From the year 2018, the award has been renamed as the Bal Shakti Puraskar and achievements of children in the field of bravery are also acknowledged.
 - **Categories:** Bal Shakti Puraskar is given under in the following 6 fields-
 - Innovation,
 - Scholastic achievements,
 - Sports,
 - Arts & Culture,
 - Social Service and
 - Bravery



- **Bal Kalyan Puraskar:** National Child Welfare Awards were instituted in 1979 to give recognition to those who have made outstanding contributions in the fields of Child Development, Child Protection and Child Welfare.
 - **Significance:** It is important to recognize such individuals and institutions as they help complement the efforts of the Government.
 - From the year 2018, the award has been renamed as Bal Kalyan Puraskar.
 - **Categories:** Bal Kalyan Puraskar Award is given in two categories-
 - Individual and
 - Institution.

- **Content of the President's Address:** President's Address to Joint Sitting of Parliament essentially highlights the government's policy priorities and plans for the upcoming year.
 - The President's Address also provides a broad framework of the government's agenda and direction.

Can President refuse to address the Joint Sitting of the Parliament?

- **Constitutional Duty:** Delivering the address to the joint sitting of parliament is a constitutional duty of the president (Article 87). Hence, S/he can't refuse to perform the constitutional duty.
- However, President can deviate from the text of the speech prepared by the government in cases of disagreement with the content of the speech.
 - So far, there have been no instances of President doing so.

President Addresses Joint Sitting of Parliament- Parallels in Other Countries

- **United States of America (USA):** US Constitution provides that the President, "from time to time give to Congress information of the State of the Union and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient."
- **United Kingdom (UK):** In UK, it is called the Queen's Speech and is part of the ceremony to mark the formal start of the parliamentary year.

President Address | President Addresses Joint Sitting of Parliament

Context

- Recently, President Ram Nath Kovind addressed both Houses of Parliament. The President said that India's capability in fight against Covid-19 was evident in vaccination program.

Key Point

- **Background:** Originally, the Constitution required the President to address both Houses of Parliament at the commencement of "every session".
 - This was changed to present situation (first session of each year) by the first Constitutional Amendment Act.
- **Constitutional Provision:** Article 87 of the Constitution provides for the President address to both Houses of Parliament.
- **Occasions for President's Address:** Article 87 provides two instances when the President specially addresses both Houses of Parliament.
 - **After Each General Election:** The President of India addresses both the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha at the beginning of the first Session after each general election when the reconstituted lower house meets for the first time.
 - **At the Beginning of the First Session each year:** The President also addresses both the houses at beginning of the first session of each year.
- **Drafting of the President Addresses:** The Union Cabinet is responsible for drafting and providing a broader framework of the government's agenda and direction.

Registration of Political Parties: Eligibility Criteria for Registration of National and State Political Parties

Context

- The Election Commission has announced the General Elections for the Legislative Assemblies of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.
- In this context, due to covid led restrictions, there was dislocation and delay in moving applications for registration, which in turn led to delay in registration as a Political Party.

Registration of Political Parties

- **About:** Registration of Political Parties in India is entrusted to the Election commission of India with an aim to promote political democracy and freedom to form registered political parties in India.

Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme

Context

- Recently, the Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has approved the inclusion of Alpine Skiing athlete Md Arif Khan in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) Core group.
- He is included in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) until the Winter Olympics, scheduled this February in Beijing, China.

Key Points

- About:** Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme was formulated in July 2014 under overall ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).
- Parent Ministry:** Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme is being implemented under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), GOI.
- Key Objectives:** Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme aims to identify, groom and prepare potential medal prospects for Olympic and Paralympic Games.
 - Target Olympic Podium (TOP) scheme also aims to provide financial assistance and other help to athletes in their pursuit of medals in the Olympics and other international sporting events.
- Funding:** More than 50 % of total expenditure of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF) has been incurred on Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme.

Key Features

- High Priority Group:** Under Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme, this has been created to put focus on and incentivize those sports disciplines played in the Olympics in which-
 - India has won medals in the last conducted Asian Games as well as Commonwealth Games or
 - In which India has good chance of winning medals in Olympics.
- Sports Categories in High Priority Group:** Presently, nine sports disciplines have been categorised as 'High Priority'. They are-
 - Athletics,
 - Badminton
 - Hockey
 - Shooting
 - Tennis
 - Weightlifting
 - Wrestling,
 - Archery and
 - Boxing

- Benefits:** Under TOP Scheme, all requisite support is provided to probable athletes identified for the Tokyo-2021, Paris-2024 and Los Angeles-2028 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games.
 - Support includes foreign training, international competition, equipment and coaching camp besides monthly stipend of Rs.50,000/- for each athlete.

Mission Olympic Cell (MOC)

- Mission Olympic Cell (MOC):** It is body created to identify and support the athletes who are selected under the Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme.
- Parent Ministry:** Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) functions under overall supervision of the Sports Authority of India (SAI), Ministry of Sports Affairs.
- Key Functions: Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) under Target Olympic Podium (TOP) Scheme** is responsible for following activities-
 - Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) approves specialized training programs for selected athletes.
 - Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) is also responsible for recommending financial disbursements for the programs.
 - Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) is entrusted with establishing a reporting structure for the training programs of the athletes.
 - Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) is responsible for supporting, monitoring and reviewing the training programs of the athletes.
 - Feedback Mechanism:** Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) is entrusted with informing the athletes of their performance and requirements, among others.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day | Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

Context

- Recently, World observed the 3rd World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) Day on 30th January 2022.
- India also joined global movement to illuminate 100 landmarks across the globe to raise awareness on Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs).
 - India joined close to 40 other nations to illuminate the iconic New Delhi Railway Station in purple and orange hues.

World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day

- **About:** World Health Assembly declared 30th January as 'World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day' in 2021.
 - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) led the proposal to declare 30th January as the World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day in the 74th World Health Assembly.
 - The first World NTD Day was celebrated informally in 2020.
- **Objectives:** World NTD Day aims to mobilise political will and secure commitments to eliminate NTDs in support of the WHO's NTD Roadmap 2021-2030, including the elimination of at least 1 NTD from 100 countries by 2030.
 - World NTD Day serves as a catalyst to translate awareness into action, secure increased resources for neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).
 - World NTD Day crucially facilitate political leadership and ownership of NTD programs from affected countries.

- **Organization in India:** in India, National Centre for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC) is responsible for organizing and observing the World NTD Day.

Neglected Tropical Diseases- Key Points

- **About: Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs)** are widespread in the world's poorest regions, where water safety, sanitation and access to health care are substandard.
- **Transmission and Spread of the Disease:** NTDs affect over 1.7 billion people globally and are caused mostly by a variety of pathogens including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi, and toxins.
- **Reasons for Negligence:** Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) are "neglected" because they are almost absent from the global health agenda, enjoy little funding, and are associated with stigma and social exclusion.
 - They are diseases of neglected populations that perpetuate a cycle of poor educational outcomes and limited professional opportunities.

International Relations

Davos Summit 2022 | World Economic Forum's Davos Agenda 2022

Context

- Recently, Prime Minister of India delivered a special State of the World special address at the World Economic Forum (WEF)'s Davos Agenda 2022 through video conferencing.
- At Davos Summit, he zeroed on to the consumerist tendency of "use and dispose" and argued for changing this trend by launching a global peoples movement.
- **Davos Summit 2022-** Davos Summit 2022 is being held between 17-21 January 2022.
 - World Economic Forum (WEF) will host a series of virtual plenaries aligned with the Annual Meeting objective of orienting global leaders on the imperatives of the year ahead.

Davos Summit 2022- India's Stance at Davos Summit

- **Fighting Climate Change:** Indian Prime Minister suggested that 'Lifestyle for Environment' is useful for fighting climate challenges
 - In his Davos 2022 summit, India suggested the world to launch a peoples movement with "3 Ps" - **"Pro Planet People"**.
- **Countering Covid-19:** highlighted the role of India in countering the covid-19 pandemic, especially role played by Indian doctors and health professionals.
 - India is the third largest pharma producer in the world.
 - In COVID times, India following the vision of 'One Earth, One Health', is saving crores of lives by giving essential medicines and vaccines to many countries.
- **Pro- Business, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Friendly India:** PM said at Davos summit that the spirit of entrepreneurship is at a high among the youth of India.
 - India highlighted that more than 50 lakh software developers are working in the country and 10,000 startups have registered in the last six months.
 - The digital infrastructure that India developed and adopted in the last few years has turned out to be a major strength for India.

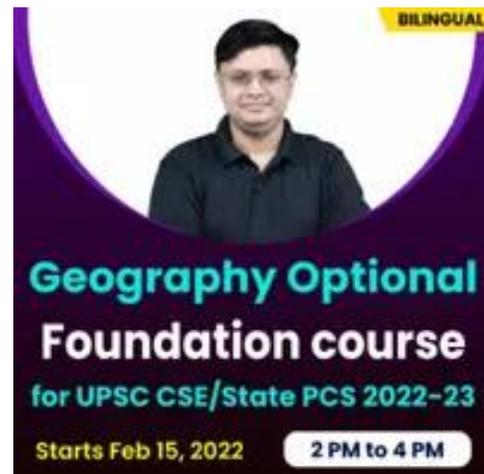
- **For example-** Arogya Setu app (used for the tracking of corona infection) and the Co-Win portal (used for vaccination are technological solutions).
- Deregulation of several sectors like drones, space, geospatial mapping.

Davos Summit 2022- Key Points

- **About:** Davos Summit is an annual dialogue organized by World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos (Switzerland).
- **Objectives:** Davos Agenda will mobilize heads of state and government, business leaders, international organizations and civil society to share their outlook, insights and plans relating to the most urgent global issues.
 - The Davos meeting will also provide a platform for connection, enabling the public to watch and interact, through livestreamed sessions, social media polling and virtual connections.

World Economic Forum (WEF)

- **About:** World Economic Forum (WEF) is an international non-governmental and lobbying organization.
 - Klaus Schwab is credited to have founded World Economic Forum (WEF) on 24, 1971.
 - It is recognized as the international institution for public-private cooperation by Swiss government.
- **WEF Headquarter:** World Economic Forum (WEF) is based in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **Funding:** World Economic Forum (WEF) is mostly funded by its 1,000 member companies.
- **Mandate:** WEF is committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.



Passport Ranking 2022 | Henley Passport Index 2022

Context

- Recently, the Henley Passport Index revealed the world's most travel-friendly passports for 2022.
- Japan and Singapore have again topped the list in the annual Henley Passport Index of 199 countries.

Henley Passport Index 2022- Key Points

- **Background:** Dr. Christian H. Kaelin (chairman of Henley & Partners) is originally credited with creating the Henley Passport Index (HPI) ranking.
- **About:** Henley Passport Index (HPI) is a global ranking of the countries around the world according to the travel freedom enjoyed by their ordinary passport holders.
 - Henley Passport Index ranks passports of countries according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.
 - Henley Passport Index was launched 2006. Henley Passport Index also includes 199 different passports.
- **Database used:** Henley Passport Index is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
 - IATA entrusted with maintaining the world's largest and most accurate database of travel information.
- **Preparation and Update:** Henley Passport Index includes 199 different passports for ranking and is updated in real time throughout the year as and when visa policy changes come into effect.

Global Ranking

- **Top Ranking:** Japan and Singapore have topped the list in the annual Henley & Partners' Henley Passport Index.
 - The passport holders of Japan and Singapore are able to travel visa-free to 192 destinations.
- **Other Top Performers:** South Korea is tied with Germany in second place (with a score of 190) and Finland, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain are on the third spot (with a score of 189).
 - Ireland and Portugal are in fifth place (with a score of 187).
- **Worst Performers:** Afghanistan (with a score of 26), Iraq (with a score of 28) and Syria (with a score of 29) were the top three worst performers in the Henley Passport Index 2022.

India's Performance

- **Improvement in Performance:** India now ranks at 83rd position in the Henley Passport Index 2022, climbing seven places from 90th rank last year.
 - In the Henley Passport Index 2022, India shares its position with Sao Tome and Principe in Central Africa, behind Rwanda and Uganda.
- **Significance:** 83rd position in the Henley Passport Index 2022 allows Indian Passport holders to access 60 countries without prior visa.
 - India has added 35 more destinations since 2006.
- **Prior Performance:** In 2020, India was ranked 84 in the Henley Passport Index while in 2016, India was ranked 85th along with Mali and Uzbekistan.

India and Turkmenistan Cooperation on Disaster Management

Context

- Recently, Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and Turkmenistan on Cooperation in the field of Disaster Management.
- The India and Turkmenistan MoU seeks to put in place a system, whereby both India and Turkmenistan will be benefited from the Disaster Management mechanisms of each other.

Cooperation Areas

- **Monitoring and forecasting** emergencies and assessment of their consequences;
- **Coordination:** Interaction, through Competent Authorities, between appropriate organizations involved in disaster management.
- **Joint planning, development and implementation** of research projects, exchange of scientific and technical publications and results of research works in the field of disaster management.
- **Exchange of information**, periodicals or any other publications, video and photo materials, as well as technologies, as mutually agreed within the scope of this MoU.
- **Organization of joint conferences**, seminars, workshops as well as exercises and trainings in the relevant fields.
- **Exchange of experts and experiences** in disaster management.
- **Training and capacity building** of first responders in search and rescue operations; exchange of trainees and experts to facilitate capacity building in the field of disaster management.

- **Rendering assistance**, as mutually agreed, for providing technical facilities and equipment, enhancing early warning systems and capacity building of the Parties in disaster management;
- **Providing assistance**, as mutually agreed, in emergency response.
- **Mutual assistance sharing of knowledge and expertise** for creation of disaster resilient infrastructure.
- **Rendering quality management systems**, as mutually agreed in accordance with the internationally recognized standards.
- **Any other activities** related to **disaster management**, which may be mutually agreed by the Competent Authorities of the Parties.

India-Central Asia Summit | First India-Central Asia Summit Held Virtually

Context

- Recently, first India-Central Asia Summit was hosted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- This first India-Central Asia coincided with the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries.
- A comprehensive Joint Declaration was adopted by the leaders that enumerates their common vision for an enduring and comprehensive India-Central Asia partnership.

Key Points

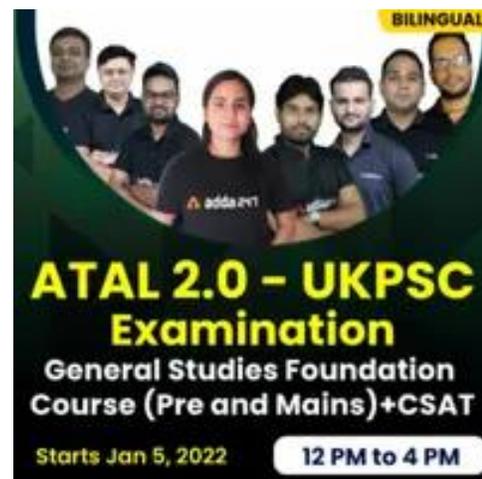
- **About:** India-Central Asia Summit was held virtually between India and Central Asian Countries.
- **Institutionalization of India-Central Asia Summit:** India and central Asian Countries agreed to institutionalize the Summit mechanism by deciding to hold India-Central Asia Summit every 2 years.
 - They also agreed on regular meetings of Foreign Ministers, Trade Ministers, Culture Ministers and Secretaries of the Security Council to prepare the groundwork for the Summit meetings.
- **India-Central Asia Secretariat:** At First India-Central Asia Virtual Summit, it was decided to set up an India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi to support the new India-Central Asia Summit mechanism.

- **Cooperation in Other Areas:** At first India-Central Asia Virtual Summit, the leaders discussed proposals to further cooperation in areas of trade and connectivity, development cooperation, defence and security and, on cultural and people to people contacts. These include-
 - Round-Table on Energy and Connectivity;
 - Joint Working Groups at senior official level on Afghanistan and use of Chabahar Port;
 - Showcasing of Buddhist exhibitions in Central Asian countries,
 - Commissioning of an India-Central Asia dictionary of common words,
 - Joint counter-terrorism exercises,
 - Visit of 100 members youth delegation annually from Central Asian countries to India and
 - Special courses for Central Asian diplomats.
- **Discussion on Afghanistan Situation:** The leaders reiterated their strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan with a truly representative and inclusive government.
 - Prime Minister conveyed India's continued commitment to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

India- Israel Relations | India-Israel Cooperation in Agriculture Sector

Context

- Recently, India-Israel agreed to further enhance cooperation in the agricultural sector.
- India has decided to convert 150 villages around the Centers of Excellence into Villages of Excellence with technical assistance from Israel.
 - Out of these 150 Villages of Excellence, 75 villages are being taken up in the first year to commemorate the 75th year of India's independence where India and Israel will work together.



Cooperation in Indo-Pacific Region

- Mauritius is strategically important with reference to India's policy towards the Indian Ocean/Indo-Pacific region.
- Two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one-third of its bulk cargo, and half of its container traffic", transit through the Indian Ocean.
- Mauritius-India cooperation will also make Indian Ocean safe, secure and free from any challenge.
- SAGAR (Security and Growth for All) was launched by India Prime Minister in Mauritius which called for deepening economic and security cooperation with India's maritime neighbours.

India-US Homeland Security Dialogue

Context

- Recently, the Senior Officers Meeting of the India-US Homeland Security Dialogue was held in virtual mode.
- **India-US Homeland Security** meeting was co-chaired by the Home Secretary (GoI), and Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy and Plans, Department of Homeland Security, (Govt of USA).
 - The meeting was also attended by other senior officials of both the countries.

Key Points

- **Mutual Cooperation:** At India-US Homeland Security Dialogue, both sides reviewed the ongoing cooperation and identified further steps in advancing cooperation in areas such as-
 - Counter-terrorism,
 - Cyber security,
 - Securing critical infrastructure and global supply chains,
 - Maritime security,
 - Aviation security,
 - Customs enforcement and trade security.
- **Creating Institutional Mechanism:** At India-US Homeland Security Dialogue, both sides agreed that the existing sub-groups under the Homeland Security Dialogue meet separately in the coming months.
 - The sub-groups would deliberate and explore how ongoing cooperation can be strengthened further. These sub-groups to be established on-
 - Law enforcement engagement,
 - Securing global supply chains,
 - Aviation security,
 - Investigative cooperation, and
 - Capacity building and training

- The India-US Homeland Security Dialogue meeting concluded with both sides expressing satisfaction with the ongoing partnership.
- **Cooperating in areas of mutual concern:** At India-US Homeland Security Dialogue, both US and India also agreed to deepen bilateral engagement and collaboration in all areas of mutual concern.
- **Upgrading to Ministerial level Dialogue:** At India-US Homeland Security Dialogue, the two sides are also expected to hold the Ministerial-level Homeland Security Dialogue later this year.

POWERGRID and Africa50: Pioneering Africa's first transmission PPP Project

Context

- Recently, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) has signed a Joint Development Agreement with Africa50, to develop the Kenya Transmission Project on a public-private partnership (PPP) basis.
 - It is first PPP mode transmission project in Kenya.
- The signing of this agreement underscores POWERGRID and Africa50's commitment to continue to dedicate resources to accelerate development activities on the project until financial close.

POWERGRID and Africa50

- **About:** The project entails the development, financing, construction, and operation of the 400kV Lessos- Loosuk and 220kV Kisumu- Musaga transmission lines under a PPP framework.
- **Role of POWERGRID:** It is one of the world's leading electric transmission utility companies. POWERGRID will provide technical and operational know-how to the project.
- **Role of Africa50:** It will bring its project development and finance expertise and will act as a bridge between the Kenyan government and private investors.

Significance

- Once completed, the project will be the first Independent Power Transmission (IPT) in Kenya.
- It will set a reference point in Africa as the first financing of transmission lines on a PPP basis.
- This Project will also improve both the supply and reliability of power transmission in Western Kenya.
- It will create a demonstration effect to help increase private sector investments into the expansion of Africa's power transmission networks- critical to bridging the continent's electricity access gap.

Africa50: Key Points

- **About:** Africa50 is an Investment Bank for Infrastructure in Africa that focuses on high-impact national and regional projects in the energy, transport, ICT and water sectors.
 - Africa50 was established by African governments and the African Development Bank.
- **Mandate:** Africa50 is an infrastructure investment platform that aims to help bridge Africa's infrastructure funding gap and contributes to Africa's economic growth by-
 - Developing and investing in bankable infrastructure projects,
 - Catalyzing public sector capital, and
 - Mobilizing private sector funding, with differentiated financial returns and impact.
- **Partners:** Africa50 currently has 31 shareholders, comprised of 28 African countries, the African Development Bank, the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), and Bank Al-Maghrib.

Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2022- Historical Background, Features and Significance

Context

- On the occasion of 2022 Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD), Union Minister of State for External Affairs will speak at a virtual youth Pravasi Bhartiya Divas conference on the "role of Indian diaspora" in innovation and new technology.
- The Prime Minister of India has greeted everyone, especially the Indian diaspora on the occasion Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) 2022.

Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2022

- **About:** Pravasi Bhartiya Divas is celebrated every year on 9th January every year. Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas also known as the Non-Resident Indian Day.
- **Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas 2022:** This year Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) is celebrated in virtual mode due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas- Key Points

- **Historical Background:** 9th January 1915 marks the day of return of Mahatma Gandhi to India from South Africa. After his return, freedom struggle movement in India truly became mass movement against British rule in India.
- **Origin:** Since 2003, Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) conventions are being held every year on 9th January to mark the contribution of the Overseas Indian community in the development of India.

- **PBD Conventions:** The format of has Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas been revised since 2015 to celebrate the PBD once every two years and to hold theme-based PBD Conferences.
 - Since 2015, govt. holds theme-based PBD Conferences during the intervening period with participation from overseas diaspora experts, policymakers, and stakeholders.
 - Last theme-based PBD Conferences was held in 2021. The theme of the 16th PBD Convention 2021 was "Contributing to Aatmanirbhar Bharat".
- **Objective:** Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) celebration aims to increase the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and also focus on reconnecting them with their roots.
- **Ministry:** Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) Convention is the flagship event of the Ministry of External Affairs.
 - Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) convention provides an important platform to engage and connect with overseas Indians.
- **Awards & Events:** At the Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) convention, awards such as '**Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award**' are given to the deserving ones for their meaningful contributions.
 - Events like 'Bharat ko Janiye Quiz' are organized to strengthen the engagement with young overseas Indians (18-35) and encourage them to know more about their country of origin.

Key Significance

- **Ensures Participation:** Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) convention provides an open platform for NRIs to express their feelings, outlooks and perceptions about India.
- **Connecting to Indian roots:** Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) convention create a network of NRIs in all the countries of the world and connect the younger generation with immigrants.
- **Promoting Development:** Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas provides an opportunity to NRIs to contribute to the developmental process by infusing their ideas and experiences on their motherland i.e. India.
 - Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas (PBD) event nudges NRIs to bring their knowledge and expertise to their motherland, and contribute to its growth.
- **Celebrating Achievements of NRIs:** PBD provides a platform to Indian Diaspora to commemorate the achievements of individuals of Indian origin in various fields across the World.

UNSC pledges to stop Nuclear Proliferation

Context

- Recently, UNSC permanent members (P5)—**China, France, Russia, the UK and the US** pledged to prevent the proliferation of nuclear arms.

Key points

- Five of the world's nuclear powers have also said that nuclear war is **not an option** to any of the present situation.
- The joint statement said that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.
- There was also affirmation that “nuclear weapons — for as long as they continue to exist — should serve **defensive purposes**, deter aggression, and prevent war.
- The joint pledge was issued ahead of the latest review of the **Treaty of the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)**, that was postponed to later this year.
- The joint agreement will help increase mutual trust and replace competition among major powers with coordination and cooperation.

Aims of P5

- The P5 members agreed to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to **cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date** and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

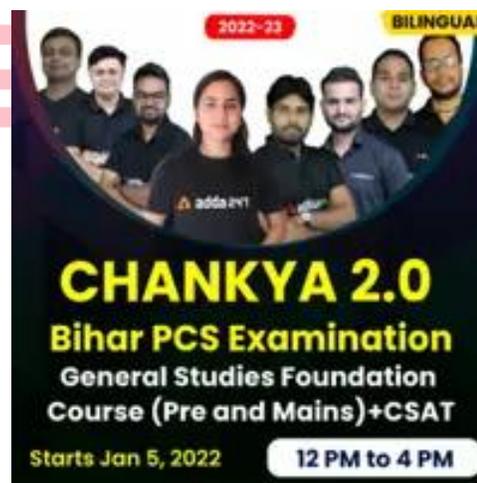
What is NPT?

- The NPT is a landmark international treaty whose objective is to **prevent the spread of nuclear weapons** and weapons technology, to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to further the goal of achieving nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament.

- The Treaty represents the **only binding commitment** in a multilateral treaty to the goal of disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States. Opened for signature in 1968, the Treaty entered into force in 1970.
- The Treaty is regarded as the **cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime** and an essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.
- It was designed to **prevent the spread of nuclear weapons**, to further the goals of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament, and to promote cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- South Africa remains the only country** known to have developed nuclear weapons and then to have dismantled its nuclear arsenal completely.
- North Korea is the only country** to withdraw from the treaty.

P5 nations: Geopolitical tensions

- The global powers have been dealing with a lot of **geopolitical tensions**.
- US has warned Russia** of sanctions if Russia further invade Ukraine.
- Relations between Beijing and Washington are also strained over the **status of Taiwan** and increased military activity in the Pacific.
- In December last year, both the **US and the EU accused Beijing** of undermining peace and security in the region.



- **Ensure that personal data is secure:** In case the device collects or transmits personal data, such data should be securely stored. Also, the confidentiality of personal data transiting between a device and a service, especially associated services, should be protected, with best practice cryptography.
- **Make it easy for users to delete user data:** Devices and services should have mechanisms such that personal data can easily be removed when there is a transfer of ownership, when the consumer wishes to delete it and/or when the consumer wishes to dispose of the device. Consumers should be given clear instructions on how to delete their personal data, including how to reset the device to “factory default” and delete data stored on the device and in associated services including backend/cloud accounts and mobile applications.

Digital Payment Index

Context

- Recently, RBI has released Digital Payment Index which shows that digital payments in India rose to 304.06 in September 2021 against 217.74 in the year-ago month.

Key points

- Digital payments have increased by around 40% which shows the deepening of payments through digital modes in our country.
- RBI said that the RBI-DPI index continues to demonstrate significant growth in adoption and deepening of digital payments across the country.
- The RBI said the index will be published on a semi-annual basis with a lag of four months.
- Base period of the RBI-DPI has been set as March 2018, which means DPI score for March 2018 is set at 100.

About the DPI index

- The DPI index comprises five broad parameters that enable us to know the penetration of digital payments in the country over different time periods.
- Parameters: payment enablers (with 25 per cent weight), payment infrastructure—demand-side factors (10 per cent), payment infrastructure—supply-side factors (15 per cent), payment performance (45 per cent) and consumer centricity (5 per cent).

Digital payments in India

- Experts have pointed out that Covid-19 pandemic has advanced digital payments adoption in the country by 5-10 years.
- Jeffries reported that India sees over \$2 trillion in digital payments on an annual basis on a combination of banking apps, cards, unified payments interface (UPI), mobile wallets and government-driven direct-benefit transfers.
- UPI payments have seen the highest increase, and constitute \$1 trillion of annualised payments (as of August 2021), followed by immediate payments services (IMPS).
- While mobile wallets are growing, their transaction market share is lower, while national electronic fund transfer (NEFT) still drives a dominating \$3.6 trillion in annualised payments.

Reasons for expansion of digital payments

- A combination of initiatives by the government and the regulator has led to rapid replacement of cash transactions in favour of digital.
- These include the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan Bank Accounts), Aadhaar-based identification and mobile penetration, launch of platforms like UPI, mobile banking and payment gateways, among others.

Domestic Systemically Important Insurers

Context

- IRDAI (Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India) has recently said that **LIC, GIC Re and New India** has been retained as Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs) for 2021-22.

What is D-SII?

- Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs) refer to insurers of such size, market importance and domestic and global inter connectedness whose distress or failure would cause a **significant dislocation** in the domestic financial system.
- Therefore, the continued functioning of D-SIIs is **critical for the uninterrupted availability** of insurance services to the national economy.

D-SIIs: Too Big to Fail

- D-SIIs are perceived as insurers that are ‘**too big or too important to fail**’ (TBTF).
- This perception and the perceived expectation of government support may amplify risk taking, reduce market discipline, create competitive distortions, and increase the possibility of distress in future.

- These considerations require that D-SIIs should be subjected to **additional regulatory measures** to deal with the systemic risks and moral hazard issues.
- D-SIIs will also be subjected to enhanced regulatory supervision.

D-SIIs responsibilities

- Given the nature of their operations and the systemic importance of the D-SIIs, these insurers have been asked to carry out the following:
 - Raise the level of **corporate governance**;
 - identify all relevant risk and promote a **sound risk management** culture.

D-SIIs parameters

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has developed a methodology for identification and supervision of D-SIIs. The parameters include:
 - the **size of operations** in terms of total revenue
 - global activities across **more than one jurisdiction**;
 - **lack of substitutability** of their products and/or operations; and
 - **interconnectedness** through counterparty exposure and macro-economic exposure.

About IRDAI

- Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), is a **statutory body** formed under an Act of Parliament, i.e., Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 (IRDAI Act 1999) for overall supervision and development of the Insurance sector in India.
- It has been set up under **Ministry of Finance**.

IRDAI composition

- The Authority is a ten-member team consisting of
 - a chairman;
 - five whole-time members;
 - four part-time members,
- Where **all the members are appointed** by the Government of India.

IRDAI missions

- To **protect the interest** of and secure fair treatment to policyholders;
- To **bring about speedy and orderly growth** of the Insurance industry, for the benefit of the common man, and to provide long term funds for accelerating growth of the economy;

- To set, promote, monitor and enforce **high standards** of integrity, financial soundness, fair dealing and competence of those it regulates;
- To ensure **speedy settlement** of genuine claims, to prevent Insurance frauds and other malpractices and put in place effective grievance redressal machinery;
- To promote fairness, transparency and **orderly conduct in financial markets** dealing with Insurance and build a reliable management information system to enforce high standards of financial soundness amongst market players;
- To **take action** where such standards are inadequate or ineffectively enforced;
- To **bring about optimum amount of self-regulation** in day-to-day working of the industry consistent with the requirements of prudential regulation.

Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge

Context

- The “Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge” was recently inaugurated by the Department of Fisheries, Government of India in association with Startup India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge

- **About:** Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge is launched by Department of Fisheries, Government of India in association with Startup India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Objective:** Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge has been launched with an objective to provide a platform to start-ups within the country to showcase their innovative solutions within the Fisheries and Aquaculture sector.
- **Application Process:** “Fisheries Startup Challenge” launched today by Department of Fisheries will be live for 45 days for submission of applications on the Start-up India portal- www.startupindia.gov.in.
- **Theme:** The following themes have been identified for submission of problem statements under the Fisheries Start-up Grand Challenge-
 - **Design and develop technology / solutions** for enhancing the productivity so that the fishers & fish farmers can achieve better price realization
 - **Develop infrastructure and post-harvest management solutions** that will enable fishers, fish farmers in creating value addition, value creation and value realization ensuring minimal wastage across the fisheries value chain

- **Develop business solutions** and outreach activities that will make fish and fish products easily accessible, acceptable and popular among the meat consuming population in the country.
- **Develop sustainable solutions** to reduce/stop soil erosion, siltation of the water bodies and develop eco-friendly solutions for costal fishers.
- **Expected outcome:** Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge is expected to foster start-up culture within the sector and to establish a strong foundation of the entrepreneurial model.
- **Funding:** Department of Fisheries has earmarked funds to the tune of Rs. 3.44 Crore for the Fisheries Startup Grand Challenge.
- **Award:** The selected 12 winners of the challenge will be awarded a cash grant of Rs 2.00 Lakh each to 10 shortlisted start-ups for translating their 'Idea to PoC'.
 - In the final round a grant up to INR 20.00 lakh (General category) and INR 30.00 Lakh (SC/ST/Women) will be provided to the winners for transforming their ideas into effective pilots.
 - These pilots would be further translated into commercialization.

Benefits of FTA

- **Tariff reduction** – One of the known benefits of FTA or PTA is reduced tariff for the offered product list for example in India-MERCOSUR PTA, MERCOSUR offered preferential tariff reduction ranging from 10% to 100% on 450 listed products. It allows exporters to access the market at lower tariff, and hence provides competitive final prices for the exporters of a partner country.
- **Access to new markets** – Trade with MERCOSUR saw a significant growth post the FTA. The FTAs give easier and competitive access to the exporters as well as importers in the partner countries. For example: copper wires import from Malaysia saw a sudden spike post the signing of India –ASEAN FTA in 2010.
- **Trade risk diversification** – Increasing the diversification in terms of product basket and diversification countries help in hedging the unfavourable consequences on global and national trade due to geopolitical turmoil. For example, oil crisis after Iran imbroglio, rift in GCC and incidental issues that are on rise in 21st century.
- **Innovation and competition** – Generally better market integration tend to enhance competition thereby pushing the industry towards innovation benefitting consumers in long run.
- **Technology transfer and increased integration** – Increased trade leads to better integration of market and also facilitate transfer of skills and technology.

India Israel FTA

Context

- Recently, the union minister of commerce and industry has said that India is in dialogue with Israel to conclude Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Key points

- The announcement coincides with **the 30th anniversary** of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.
- The minister also informed that bilateral free trade agreements are being negotiated with the **United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada**.
- He also informed that the agreement with the UAE was 'close to finalisation' while the FTA with Australia was at a 'very advanced stage'.
- The FTAs would cover a wide range of sectors such as **agricultural products and pharmaceuticals**.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) | Objectives, Features, and Performance of IPPB

Context

- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) announced that it has crossed the five-crore customer mark in 3 years of commencement of operations.
- With this, India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has become one of the fastest growing digital payments banks in the country.

Performance of IPPB

- **Digitization:** India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) opened up five crore accounts in digital and paperless mode.
- **Focus on Rural Areas:** These 5 crores accounts were opened through its 1.36 lakh Post Offices, out of which 1.20 lakh are in rural areas with the help of about 1.47 lakhs doorstep banking service providers.

- **Focus on Empowering Women:** Out of the total account holders, around 48% were women account holders while 52% were male that indicated the Bank's focus on bringing the women customers under the banking network.
 - About 98% of accounts of women were opened at the doorsteps and over 68% of women were availing DBT benefits.
- **Promoting Financial Literacy:** With this, IPPB has achieved the world's largest digital financial literacy program by building a financially aware and empowered customer-base.
- **Promote Grassroots Banking:** IPPB has taken the digital banking to the grassroots-levels through Interoperable Payments and Settlement Systems of NPCI, RBI and UIDAI offering services in over 13 languages.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)

- **About:** India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) has been established by the government to build the most accessible, affordable and trusted bank for the common man in India.
- **Parent Ministry:** India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) functions under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by Government of India.
 - However, IPPB will be governed by Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- **Mandate:** India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) is mandated to remove barriers for the unbanked and under-banked and reach the last mile leveraging the postal network.
- **Operating Model:** IPPB's reach and its operating model is built on the key pillars of India Stack - enabling Paperless, Cashless and Presence-less banking in a simple and secure manner at the customers' doorstep, through a CBS-integrated smartphone and biometric device.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)- Key Objectives

- IPPB enables Paperless, Cashless and Presence-less banking in a simple and secure manner at the customers' doorstep, through a CBS-integrated smartphone and biometric device.
- IPPB delivers simple and affordable banking solutions through intuitive interfaces available in 13 languages.
 - IPPB does this by leveraging frugal innovation and with a high focus on ease of banking for the masses.
- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) is aims to provide a fillip to a less cash economy and contribute to the vision of Digital India.

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB)- Key Functions

- **Account Types:** India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) opens 3 types of saving account-
 - Regular Account- **Safal**,
 - Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account (BSBDA)- **Sugam**
 - BSBDA Small- **Saral**
- IPPB also offers Forex services at lower charges.
- **Deposit Limit:** An IPPB current and savings account is allowed to have a maximum of Rs 1 lakh in its account. It offers a 4 per cent interest rate on savings account.
- **Key Services:** IPPB offers social security payments like MNREGA wages, direct benefit transfer and give access to third-party services like insurance and mutual funds.
- **Debit Card Services:** Indian Post Payments Bank offers a free debit card with an annual maintenance fee of Rs. 100/-.

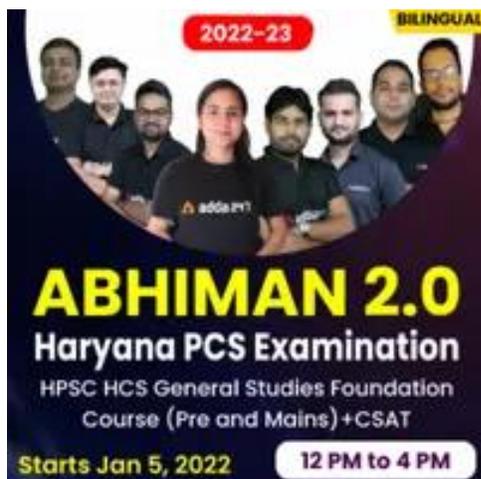
India to Become Asia's Second Largest Economy by 2030

Context

- According to the recently released report by IHS Markit, **India is likely to overtake Japan** as Asia's second-largest economy by 2030.

Key points

- At present, **India is the sixth-largest economy** in the world, behind the US, China, Japan, Germany and the United Kingdom.
- The report highlighted that India is projected to surpass that of Germany and the UK and Japan to rank as world's No.3 by 2030.
- The report said that India's nominal GDP measured in USD terms is forecast to rise from USD 2.7 trillion in 2021 to **USD 8.4 trillion by 2030**.



National Conference on Agriculture for Summer Campaign 2021-22

Context

- Recently, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has conducted the **4th National Conference on Agriculture for Summer Campaign 2021-22** where the agriculture minister has emphasised upon the production of zaid crops.

Key points

- Summer crops, or the zaid crops, not only provide extra income but also create employment opportunities in between Rabi and Kharif for the farmers thereby increasing crop intensity.
- Though more than half of cultivated area in summer season is under **pulses, oilseeds and nutri-cereals**, the farmers with irrigation source are growing rice and vegetables during the summer season.
- Area under cultivation of zaid crops including rice has increased progressively 2.7 times from 29.71 lakh hectares in 2017-18 to **80.46 lakh hectares in 2020-21**.

Suggestion to states

- States should use **new varieties of seeds** for better production of summer crops.
- States has been asked to **plan in advance for their fertilizers** needs and provide estimates to the center so that fertilizer department can provide sufficient fertilizers timely.
- States should also **increase the use of NPK** and liquid urea and reduce the dependence on DAP fertilizers.
- Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)** and **Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA)** should jointly conduct the essential training for the small and marginal farmers so that new technology and knowledge reach the grassroots level.

Crop classification

Based on the seasons, the crops have been categorised into:

- Kharif crops
- Rabi crops
- Zaid/summer crops

About Zaid crops

- Zaid or summer crops are grown in the short season **between Kharif and Rabi crops**, between March and July.
- These crops are mostly **grown on irrigated lands** and therefore, the farmers do not wait for the monsoon.

Summer crops in India

- Zaid crops require **warm soil and high temperatures** (cooling at night) to grow.
- As they are grown in summer season, they require warm **dry weather and longer day length** for flowering and fruiting.
- Most of the **vegetables and hybrid cereals** are grown in zaid season.
- Zaid season crops:** Paddy, corn; pumpkin, cucumber, tomato; almonds, peanuts, cashews; Gram, lentil, etc

Benefits of summer crops

- Income and employment:** Summer crops not only provide extra income but also create employment opportunities in between Rabi and Kharif for the farmers thereby increasing crop intensity.
- Improves soil health:** Cultivating summer crops improves soil health, and also mechanized sowing has helped summer crops to grow better.
- Insurance against bad weather:** Summer crops help in reducing losses due to heavy rain in rabi season.

National Technical Textile Mission

Context

- Recently, Ministry of Textiles has cleared **20 strategic projects** in the areas of specialty fibres and geotextiles under the flagship programme **National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM)**.

Key points

- The 20 strategic projects worth Rs. 30 crores. Previously, 11 research projects worth Rs. 78. crores were cleared by the Ministry of Textiles in March 2021.
- Amongst the 20 Research projects, 16 projects of Specialty fibres were cleared including 5 projects in healthcare, 4 projects in Industrial and Protective, 3 projects in Energy Storage, 3 projects in Textile waste recycling, & 1 in Agriculture and 4 projects in Geotextiles (Infrastructure) were cleared.
- It will be a **step in the direction of Atmanirbhar Bharat**, especially in the Healthcare, Industrial and Protective, Energy Storage, Textile Waste Recycling, Agriculture and Infrastructure.

About National Technical Textile Mission (NTTM)

- National Technical Textiles Mission is a flagship scheme of **Ministry of Textiles** to position the country as a **global leader in technical textiles**.
- The scheme has been approved for creation at a **total outlay of Rs.1480 Crore**; with a four-year implementation period **from FY 2020-21 to 2023-24**.
- **Six courses** on for skill development in Technical Textiles sector have been on-boarded on National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) for providing training in the sector.

National Technical Textile Mission: 4 components

- For **Research Innovation & Development** – Rs. 1000 crores
 - A sub-component of the research will focus on development of bio degradable technical textiles materials, particularly for agro-textiles, geo-textiles and medical textiles.
- For **Promotion and Market Development**- Rs.50 crore,
- For **Education, Training and Skilling**- Rs. 400 crore, and
- For **Export Promotion** – Rs.10 crores and balance Rs.20 crores for administrative expenses.

Focus of the mission

- The focus of the Mission is for developing on usage of technical textiles in various flagship missions, programmes of the country including strategic sectors.

Technical textiles meaning

- Technical textiles are textiles materials and products manufactured **primarily for technical performance** and functional properties rather than aesthetic characteristics.
- Technical Textiles products are divided into **12 broad categories** (Agrotech, Buildtech, Clothtech, Geotech, Hometech, Indutech, Mobiltech, Meditech, Protech, Sportstech, Oekotech, Packtech) depending upon their application areas.

Technical textiles in India

- India shares **nearly 6% of world market** size of 250 Billion USD.
- However, the annual **average growth of the segment is 12%**, as compared to 4% world average growth.
- Penetration level of technical textiles is low in India at **5-10%, against 30-70%** in advanced countries

Technical textiles applications

- Technical Textiles are futuristic segment of textiles, which are used for various applications ranging from
 - agriculture,
 - roads,
 - railway tracks,
 - sportswear,
 - health
 - bullet proof jacket,
 - fire proof jackets,
 - high altitude combat gear and
 - space applications

Technical textiles benefits

- It will help in the **promotion of manufacturing** and exports activities in India.
- The use of technical textiles in agriculture, aquaculture, dairy, poultry, etc. will bring an overall improvement in cost economy, water and soil conservation, better agricultural productivity and **higher income to farmers** per acre of land holding.
- The use of geo-textiles in highways, railways and ports will result in **robust infrastructure**, reduced maintenance cost and higher life cycle of the infrastructure assets.

Offline Digital Payments: RBI Issues Guidelines

Context

- Recently, RBI has released a framework for small-value offline transactions in the digital mode to increase digital transactions in rural and semi-urban areas.

What is offline payment?

- An offline payment means a transaction which **does not require internet** or telecom connectivity to take effect.
- The guidelines are directed to push digital transactions in **rural and semi-urban areas**.
- Authorised payment system operators (PSOs) and payment system participants (PSPs) —banks as well as non-banks —which wish to offer payments in the offline mode will have to comply with the requirements under the framework.

Guidelines

- Offline payments may be made **using any channel** or instrument like cards, wallets, mobile devices, etc.
- Offline payments shall be made in proximity (**face to face**) mode only.

- Offline payment transactions may be offered **without Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA)**.
- Payment instruments shall be enabled for offline transactions based on explicit consent of the customer. Such transactions using cards shall be allowed without a requirement to switch on the contactless transaction channel.
- The upper limit of an offline payment transaction shall be **₹200**. The total limit for offline transactions on a payment instrument shall be **₹2,000** at any point in time. Replenishment of used limit shall be allowed only in online mode with AFA.
- The issuer shall send transaction alerts to users as soon as transaction details are received. There is **no compulsion to send alert** for each transaction; however, details of each transaction shall be adequately conveyed.
- The acquirer shall incur all liabilities arising out of technical or transaction security issues at merchant's end.
- Offline payments shall be covered under the provisions of RBI's **limited customer liability** circulars (as amended from time to time)
- The customers shall have recourse to the Reserve Bank - **Integrated Ombudsman Scheme**, as applicable, for grievance redressal.
- Reserve Bank retains the **right to stop or modify the operations** of any such payment solution that enables small value digital payments in offline mode.

Quarterly Employment Survey

Context

- Recently, Ministry of Labour & Employment has released the report of first quarter of Quarterly Employment Survey (QES) as part of the **All-India Quarterly Establishment-based Employment Survey (AQEES)** prepared by the Labour Bureau.

About AQEES report

- The objective of AQEES is to provide quarterly updates about the employment and related variables of establishments, in **both organised and unorganised** segments of nine selected sectors.
- These sectors altogether account for a majority of the total employment in the **non-farm establishments**.
- **Nine sectors:** Manufacturing, Construction, Trade, Transport, Education, Health, Accommodation and Restaurant, IT/ BPO and Financial Services.

Key highlights

- **Sector-wise employment:**

Sector	Employment
Manufacturing	41%
Education	22%
Health	8%
Trade	7%
IT/BPO	7%

- **Impact of COVID:** The impact was evident in 27 percent of the establishment; however, the silver lining was that 81 percent of the workers received full wages during the lock-down period.

- **Sector-wise growth in employment:**

Sector	Growth in employment
IT/BPO sector	152%
Health	77%
Transport	68%
Financial services	48%
Construction	42%
Education	39%
Manufacturing	22%
Trade	(-)25%
Accommodation & Restaurant	(-)13%

- Nearly **90 percent of the establishments** have been estimated to work with less than 100 workers.
- Nearly **35 percent of the IT/ BPO** establishments worked with at least 100 workers, including about 13.8 percent engaging 500 workers or more.
- In the **Health sector**, 18 percent of the establishments had 100 or more workers.
- **Women participation:** The over-all participation of female workers stood at 29 percent.
- **Regular and casual workers:** Regular workers constitute 88 percent of the estimated workforce in the nine selected sectors, with only 2 percent being casual workers. However, 18 percent of workers in the Construction sector are contractual employees and 13 percent are casual workers.

- **Registered establishments:** Only 9 percent of the establishments (with at least 10 workers) were not registered with any authority or under any act. While 26 percent of all the establishments were registered under the Companies Act with 71 percent registration in IT/ BPO, 58 percent registration in Construction, 46 percent in Manufacturing, 42 percent in Transport, 35 percent in Trade and 28 percent in Financial Services.
- **On0-job skill training:** Around 18 percent of the establishments have provision of on-job skill training programmes.

RBI Sets Up a Fintech Department

Context

- Recently, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a **fintech department** to focus on the "dynamically" growing financial sector.

Key points

- RBI said that the decision to set up a fintech department in the Bank was taken to focus on the area and **facilitate innovation** in fintech sector in keeping pace with the dynamically changing financial landscape.
- The new department has been **created by subsuming** the FinTech Division of Department of Payment and Settlement Systems, Central Office (DPSS, CO).
- The department will be headed by **Ajay Kumar Choudhary**, executive director of the RBI.
- The fintech department will report to its central administrative division.

Fintech Department benefits

- The department will **promote innovation** in the fintech sector.
- It will also **identify the challenges and opportunities** associated with it and address them in a timely manner.
- It will also **provide a framework** for further research on the subject that can aid policy interventions by the Bank.

Fintech department responsibilities

- All matters related to the facilitation of **constructive innovations and incubations** in the fintech sector, which may have wider implications for the financial sector and falling under the purview of the Bank, will be dealt with by the fintech department.

- All matters related to **inter-regulatory coordination** and international coordination on fintech shall also be dealt with by the department.
- The department will work towards establishing a **transparent regulatory environment**, which in turn will seek to help innovation in the sector.

What is fintech?

- FinTech is generally described as an **industry that uses technology** to make financial systems and the delivery of financial services more efficient.
- FinTech is broadly used to describe **emerging technological innovations** in the financial services sector, with ever increasing reliance on information technology.

Fintech in India

- In India, FinTechs and digital players could function as the **fourth segment** of the Indian financial system, alongside large banks, mid-sized banks including niche banks, small finance banks, regional rural banks and cooperative banks.
- It has the potential to fundamentally **transform the financial landscape** where consumers will be able to choose from broader set of alternatives at competitive prices, and financial institutions could improve efficiency through lower costs.
- India has emerged as the **fastest growing FinTech market** and the third largest FinTech ecosystem in the world.
- The rapid and transformational changes in financial services brought on by FinTechs need to be continuously **monitored and evaluated**.
- Regulators need to be **creative, nimble and tech savvy** with their approach.



Reciprocal Access Agreement

Context

- Recently, Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) was signed between **Australia and Japan** to bolster security ties against the backdrop of rising Chinese military and economic might.

Key points

- The Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), **Japan's first with any country**, will allow the Australian and Japanese militaries to work seamlessly with each other on defence and humanitarian operations.
- Japan is **Australia's closest partner** in Asia as demonstrated by the special strategic partnership, Australia's only such partnership.
- The agreement comes in response to **tension over Chinese-claim over Taiwan**, which has been rising as President Xi Jinping seeks to assert China's sovereignty claims over the democratically ruled island.
- With its entry into force, the Japan-Australia RAA will facilitate implementation of **cooperative activities** between the defence forces of the two countries and further promote bilateral security and defence cooperation.
- The agreement will also pave the way for an enhanced contribution by Japan and Australia to the peace and stability of the **Indo-Pacific region**.

Why significant?

- Apart from being of strategic significance for Asia and the Indo-Pacific, the agreement fortifies trends that are part of the **changing security architecture** in the region.
- It marks the move **away from a US-centric polices** towards a greater focus on bilateral ties and regional groupings.
 - After the Second World War, the security order in Asia and the Indo-Pacific was marked by the US's bilateral ties with various players, which was in contrast to American strategy in Europe, where NATO played a key role.
- The **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** (or the Quad), with India, Japan, Australia and the US, the **AUKUS**, and now the RAA between Japan and Australia all point towards a more empowered and committed regional strategic network.
- Both Australia and Japan are continuously **standing up to China** on the question of a free and open Indo-Pacific and rules-based global order
- It is also a sign that Japan is willing to play a **more proactive role** in the region.

India's engagements

- India has also focussed upon **expanding bilateral, trilateral and regional cooperation** in the security domain.
- India has "2+2" ministerial dialogues with both Tokyo and Canberra.
- Nevertheless, it must step up this engagement, as well as reach out to other players in the region.

Sub Mission on Agriculture Mechanization

Context

- Recently, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has decided to extend financial support to promote drone use in agriculture under Sub-Mission on Agriculture Mechanization (SMAM).

Key points

- The guidelines of "Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization" (SMAM) have been amended which envisages granting upto 100% of the cost of agriculture drone or Rs. 10 lakhs, whichever is less.
- The Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) would be eligible to receive grant up to 75% of the cost of agriculture drone for its demonstrations on the farmers' fields.
- A contingency expenditure of Rs.6000 per hectare would be provided to implementing agencies that do not want to purchase drones but will hire drones for demonstrations from Custom Hiring Centres, Hi-tech Hubs, Drone Manufacturers and Start-Ups.
- The contingent expenditure to implementing agencies that purchase drones for drone demonstrations would be limited to Rs.3000 per hectare.
- In order to provide agricultural services through drone application, 40% of the basic cost of drone and its attachments or Rs.4 lakhs, whichever less would be available as financial assistance for drone purchase by existing Custom Hiring Centers.
- Agriculture graduates establishing Custom Hiring Centers would be eligible to receive 50% of the basic cost of drone and its attachments or up to Rs.5 lakhs in grant support for drone purchases.

About SMAM

- Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) is a submission launched under Krishonnati Yojana in 2014-15.
- The objectives of the scheme is to increase the reach of farm mechanization to small and marginal farmers and to the regions & difficult area where farm power availability is low.

- The report seeks a competitive tariff structure on electronic components and removal of all regulatory uncertainty to put India on the path to US\$300 billion electronics manufacturing.
- The report recommends a “winner takes all” strategy backed by economies of scale and global competitiveness, new and revised incentive schemes for some sectors, and the need to address issues of sustainability and ease of doing business.

WTO Says, China is a Developing Country

Context

- Recently, World Trade Organization (WTO) has tagged China with a ‘developing country’ status, which has become an **issue of contention** for various countries.

Issue of contention

- Countries are arguing that China, being **upper-middle income nation** is deriving benefits reserved for developing countries under WTO norms.
- Also, countries have also **raised objection with the ‘least developing country’** (LDC) status to Bangladesh, which has surpassed India in terms of per capita GDP.

Benefits to the ‘developing country’

- **Special and Differential Treatments:** WTO grants developing countries longer timeframe to abide by the WTO agreements and even commitments to raise trading opportunities for such countries.
- **Lenient targets:** WTO aims to reduce government subsidies to certain industries to ensure free and fair trade. Developing countries, however, are given lenient targets and they are granted more time to achieve such targets.
- **Preferential treatment:** Differential classification also allows other countries to

How is ‘developing country’ tag decided?

- **WTO has not defined** ‘developed’ or ‘developing’ country, so a country is free to recognise themselves whether they are ‘developed’ or developing’.

WTO Says, China is a Developing Country: Why some countries are raising objections?

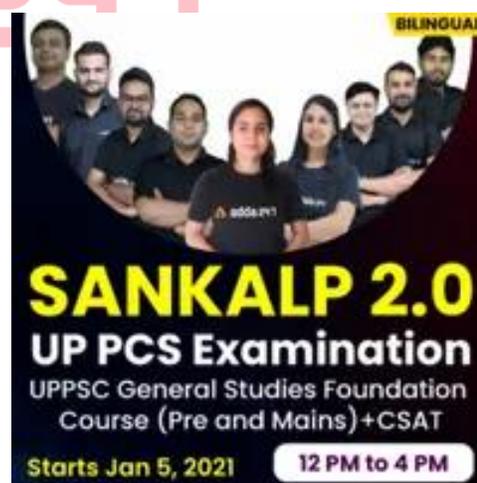
- **Per capita income:** According to the World Bank, China’s per capita income was \$10,435 in 2020, much above than India whose per capita income stands at \$1,928. Various countries have argued that China has become an upper-middle income country and it must relinquish its developing country status.
- **Unfair trade practices:** China is often accused of unfair trade practices like preferential treatment for state enterprises, dumping in other countries, data restrictions and inadequate enforcements of intellectual property rights.
- **Demand of countries:** Owing to these regions, countries have called that either China refrain from doing such unethical practices or forego its ‘developing country’ tag.

How has China responded?

- China has always maintained that it is the **‘world’s largest developing economy’**.
- It has recently indicated that it is **ready to forego all the benefits** and exemptions that are available to a developing country.

LDC classification

- WTO recognises LDCs on the **basis of a UN classification**, which is reviewed every three years.
- **LDC benefits:** Zero duty, zero quota access for almost all exports to European Union (EU). LDC countries also enjoys exemption from certain provision of WTO agreements.
- Bangladesh is **set to promote from the LDC status in 2026**, owing to its GDP performance.



Social Issues

Inequality Kills: A Report by Oxfam

Context

- Oxfam international has released a new report called '**Inequality kills**' where it has stated that 160 million people were rendered poor during the pandemic, while the **ten richest people doubled their assets** since the start of the pandemic.

Key points

- The report identifies "**vaccine apartheid**" (unequal access to vaccines between countries) and the lack of universal vaccination programs as a cause of the emergence of multiple new strains of the coronavirus that has led to the continuation of the pandemic.
- **Economic violence**: Extreme inequality is a form of 'economic violence'—where structural and systemic policy and political choices that are skewed in favor of the richest and most powerful people result in direct harm to the vast majority of ordinary people worldwide.
- **Billionaire variant**: Billionaires' collective wealth has increased by \$5 trillion during the pandemic and this vertical aggregation of global wealth into the hands of a few is "profoundly dangerous for our world".

Why the report says that inequality kills?

- The report identifies higher inequality with more crime and violence and less social trust.
- The **brunt of inequality and the violence** is borne by the vulnerable section of society like by women, Dalits in India, Black, Native American and Latinx persons in the United States and indigenous groups in many countries.
- **Inequality induced climate crisis**: Wealthiest 1% of humanity are responsible for twice as many emissions as the poorest 50%. Extreme neoliberal models of economic growth have led to a skewed system of carbon-intensive production, that favours richer countries while shifting the risk onto poorer countries.

Inequality Kills: India

- The report underlines that the pandemic has **set gender parity back from 99 years to now 135 years**.
- The stark wealth inequality in India is a result of an **economic system rigged in favour of the super-rich** over the poor and marginalised. For example, decreasing corporate taxes and increasing indirect taxes (through GST).

- **Underfunding for public services**: Sectors like health, education and social security schemes for workers are witnessing decrease in investment by the government.
- **Privatisation is detrimental**: The report further says that privatisation of basic services like health and education are detrimental to equality.

Recommendations

- **Redistribute India's wealth from the super-rich to generate resources for the majority**: It is time for India to reintroduce a wealth tax (discontinued in 2016) to generate much-needed resources to fund the recovery from the pandemic.
- **Generate revenue to invest in the education and health of future generations**: A temporary ONE percent surcharge on the richest 10 percent population could help raise an additional INR 8.7 lakh crore, which could be utilised to increase the education and health budget.
- **Enact and Enforce Statutory Social Security Provisions for Informal Sector Workers**: While the government is recognising gig economy workers, it also needs to focus on laying the legal groundwork of basic social sector protections for 93 percent of India's workforce.
- **Change the rules and shift the power in the economy and society**: It is time to reverse privatisation and commercialisation of public services, address jobless growth and bring back stronger social protection measures for India's informal sector workers.

How wealth tax would impact the development schemes in India

- **Four percent of wealth tax** on the 98 billionaires can take care of **Mid-Day- Meal** programme of the country for 17 years or **Samagra Sikshya Abhiyan** for 6 years.
- **One percent wealth tax** on 98 richest billionaire families would finance **Ayushman Bharat for more than seven years**.
- **One percent of wealth tax** of the 98 billionaires in India can take care of the total expenditure for the **school education and literacy**.
- **Four percent wealth tax** on the 98 billionaires would be enough to fund the **Mission POSHAN 2.0** (includes Anganwadi Services, POSHAN Abhiyan, Scheme for Adolescent Girls, and National Creche Scheme) for 10 years

Nari Shakti Puraskar 2021

Context

- Ministry of Women and Child Development informed that the nominations for the Nari Shakti Puraskar, 2021 is open.
 - Applications/nominations may be made on the online Portal www.awards.gov.in.
 - The last date for nomination is 31st January, 2022

Nari Shakti Puraskar

- Background:** Nari Shakti Puraskar was initiated by Ministry of Women and Child Development in 1999.
- About:** Nari Shakti Puraskar is awarded on the International Women's Day each year on 8th March by the President of India.
- Ministry:** Ministry of Women and Child Development is responsible for complete process related to the Nari Shakti Puraskar.
- Significance:** Nari Shakti Puraskar is the highest Civilian Honour for Women in India.
- Award:** The Nari Shakti Puraskar carries a cash award of Rs.2 Lakh and a certificate for individuals and institutions.
- Eligibility:** Ministry of Women and Child Development provides following eligibility criteria for selecting Nari Shakti Puraskar-
 - Awardee:** Nari Shakti Puraskar open to individuals, groups and institutions for outstanding work towards empowerment of women.
 - Age criteria:** Individual applicant must be at least 25 years of age.
 - Experience:** Institutions must have at least 5 years of relevant experience.

Institutional Categories

Nari Shakti Puraskar is provided under six institutional categories, each of them is named after eminent woman in Indian history.

- Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Award:** It is given to the best Private Sector organization/ Public sector undertaking in promoting the well-being and welfare of women.
 - Ahilyabai Holkar was a 18th-century ruler of the Malwa kingdom.
- Kannagi Devi Award:** It is given to best State which has appreciably improved Child Sex Ratio (CSR).
 - Kannagi was the central character of the Tamil epic Silapathikaram.

- Mata Jijabai Award for Best Urban Local body** for providing services and facilities to women,
 - Mata Jijabai (mother of Shivaji) founded the Maratha Empire in the 17th century.
- Rani Gaidinliu Zeliang Award** for Best Civil Society organization (CSO) doing outstanding work for the welfare and well-being of women.
 - Rani Gaidinliu was a 20th-century Naga spiritual and political leader
- Rani Lakshmi Bai Award** for Best Institution for Research & Development in the field of women empowerment.
 - Lakshmbai was one of the leading figures of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and erstwhile queen of Jhansi.
- Rani Rudramma Devi Awards** for two District Panchayats and two Gram Panchayats.
 - Rudrama Devi was a 13th-century ruler of Deccan Plateau.

North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP)

Context

- North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) Intervention paved the way for women empowerment by providing them with opportunity for sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Key Points

- About:** North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) is a joint development initiative of the North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of DoNER, Govt. of India and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- Mandate:** NERCORMP is a livelihood and rural development project, aimed to transform the lives of the poor and marginalized tribal families in North East (NE) India.
- Parent Ministry:** North Eastern Region Community Resource Management Project (NERCORMP) functions under the North Eastern Council (NEC), Ministry of DoNER.
- Focus Areas:** NERCORMP adopts a holistic approach of development with two broad focus areas-
 - Social mobilization, organization and capacity building to tap and realize the great latent potential of the communities by employing time tested their traditional value systems and culture
 - Intervene with the economic and social activities and infrastructure with predominant thrust on income generating activities to achieve economic transformation

Environment & Biodiversity

19th Meeting of NTCA: 50 Cheetah to be introduced in next 5 years

Context

- Recently, the 19th meeting of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was held under the aegis of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Key points

- The meeting has stressed upon protection and conservation of 7 major big cats including Cheetah numbering **50 over a period of 5 years** will be introduced in various parks.
- CA|TS:** 14 Tiger Reserves have been accredited under CA|TS and NTCA is working on getting other Tiger Reserves evaluated for CA|TS accreditation.
- Water atlas:** A Water Atlas was also launched that maps all the water bodies in the tiger bearing areas of India.
 - Landscape wise information have been outlined in this water atlas which include, the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic plain landscape, Central Indian Landscape and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats landscape, North Eastern Hills and Brahmaputra flood plains and Sundarbans.
- 'India for Tigers: A Rally on Wheels'**, was also organized under the aegis of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was a mega success.
- The 5th cycle of All India Tiger Estimation which is currently underway will help in taking correct policy decision.

Way forward

- North-eastern states:** Air gun problem in north eastern states is an issue that states & UT have been advise by the ministry for organising awareness program so that people can surrender their airguns.
- Core area:** As part of effective regulation of tourism activity in the Tiger Reserves, there should be one core area which should be sacrosanct and vehicular movement in the reserve should be restricted to one way.
- Tiger conservation efforts** in the Indian context have the community at its centre, hence continuous efforts are being made for involvement of local communities in protection and Eco-tourism activities.

- There is need for vision plan to put Tigers on assured path of recovery and conservation and suggested that six committees be formed so that they can visit 2 Tiger Reserves and study various aspects and problems to help in formulating better policy.

2021-22 is Unusually Colder and Wetter Winter Year

Context

- The year 2021-22 is appearing to be unusually cold and long for many in North India. The days, in particular, has been colder and chiller than previous year.

Colder weather

- Since December 2021, maximum temperatures in the North India, North west India and the Central India has been below the average normal temperature, thus leading to "cold day" conditions.
 - The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) defines a day as cold day when the maximum temperature falls below 16-degree Celsius.
- This January, number of cold days witnessed in Delhi was 9. Previously, 2013 was the coldest January, when the region witnessed a total of 19 cold days. Besides, 2015 witnessed 11 cold days, while 2010, 2013 and 2004, all have witnessed 9 cold days.
- This year, the cold days was felt not only in Delhi, but also in regions like Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Konkan.

Reasons

- Western Disturbances:** Until 26th January, seven western disturbances has passed over India. This has caused hailstorms in northern Maharashtra, and rainfall in Tamil Nadu.
- La Nina:** Frequent and higher numbers of western disturbances are associated with La Niña. At present, moderate intensity La Niña conditions are prevailing.
- Cold winds from far north:** After a western disturbance passes over India, cold winds from the far north penetrate to lower latitudes, and can reach up to even Telangana and Maharashtra, leading to colder weather, and sometimes to cold wave conditions.
- Moisture:** The presence of low-lying clouds and the availability of moisture along the Indo-Gangetic plains also made it favourable for cold day conditions in the region.

- **Key Events:** Cities will be organizing one or more of the following activities in their cities leading up to the event-
 - Climate Change Awareness Campaign
 - Social Media Campaign on Climate Change
 - Promote Photography Competition

Climate Change Awareness Campaign

- **About:** Climate Change Awareness Campaign will include participation of Municipal Commissioners and key heads of urban local bodies and Smart City CEOs.
- **Key Mandate:** Climate Change Awareness Campaign aims at creating awareness across educational institutions including schools and colleges within their cities.
 - Climate Change Awareness Campaign aims to align young minds to the challenges and solutions associated with Urban Climate Change and Sustainability.

National Photography Competition

- **About:** National Photography Competition is a city level Photography competition that will be organized based on the theme of climate change.
- **Process:** The participants are invited to submit photographs which are either focusing on the impacts of climate change on Indian cities and actions taken by individuals, communities or city authorities to adapt/ mitigate climate change.
 - The selection of photographs will focus on content, composition and technique.
- **Participation:** To participate in the competition, photographs should be submitted in two categories:
 - Climate Impacts in Cities
 - Climate Actions in Cities

Social Media Campaign on Climate Change

- The city officials will carry out a social media awareness campaign where City leaders like Mayors/Municipal Commissioners/Smart City CEOs will be talking about climate actions, that can be implemented within their city.
- They will take up activities like plantation drive, cleaning of water bodies, recycling of e-waste, promoting the adoption of solar energy within residential and commercial buildings, or any other initiative which promotes climate adaptation or mitigation actions.

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav

- **About:** Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is an initiative to celebrate and commemorate 75 years of progressive India and the glorious history of its people, culture and achievements.
 - Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is an embodiment of all that is progressive about India's socio-cultural, political, and economic identity.
- **Celebrating People of India:** Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is dedicated to the people of India who have been instrumental in bringing India thus far in its evolutionary journey.
 - People of India also hold within them the power and potential to enable Prime Minister's vision of activating India 2.0, fuelled by the spirit of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- **Beginning of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav:** The official journey of "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" commenced on 12th March 2021 which starts a 75-week countdown to our 75th anniversary of Independence.

Government Planning to Blend Green Hydrogen with Natural Gas

Context

- Recently, the Government has said that it is planning to **blend 15% green hydrogen with piped natural gas** for domestic, commercial and industrial consumption.

About the initiative

- The initiative will be in line with India's ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and becoming **carbon neutral by 2070**.
- It will be a part of the government's **National Hydrogen Energy Mission**, which is aimed at generating hydrogen from green power sources.
- Government is planning to float bids for manufacturing green hydrogen, which will be supplied to fertiliser units and petroleum refineries.
- Similarly, the plan is also to **supply green hydrogen for PNG**. The government will offer free transmission (of power) for this like in the case of RE.
- The objective is to blend 15 per cent green hydrogen with PNG, as it is **technically viable**.

What is Anti-Microbial Resistance?

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is the ability of microorganisms to persist or grow in the presence of drugs designed to inhibit or kill them.
- These drugs, called antimicrobials, are used to treat infectious diseases caused by microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi, viruses and protozoan parasites.
- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a major global threat of increasing concern to human and animal health. It also has implications for food safety, food security and the economic wellbeing of millions of farming households.

Implication of AMR

- When microorganisms become resistant to antimicrobials, standard treatments are often ineffective, and in some cases, no drugs provide effective therapy. Consequently, treatments fail.
- This increases illness and mortality in humans, animals and plants.
- For agriculture, this causes production losses, damages livelihoods and jeopardizes food security.
- Moreover, AMR can spread among different hosts and the environment, and antimicrobial resistant microorganisms can contaminate the food chain.

Factors leading to increased use of antimicrobials in animal and plant production:

- Burden of diseases that are otherwise preventable through modification of environmental hygiene, nutrition, husbandry and other management practices;
- Limited access to animal and plant health experts, as well as limitations in training and support for these experts;
- The use of antimicrobials as growth and production promoters in animals;
- Lack of regulation and oversight of the use of antimicrobial drugs;
- Over the counter or internet sales that make antimicrobial drugs readily available;
- Availability and use of substandard and falsified antimicrobials;
- Lack of awareness regarding good practices, leading to excessive or inappropriate use;
- Anthropological, sociocultural, political and economic factors that pose barriers good practices.

Antibiotics in aquaculture

- Emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in cultured fishes is one of the major challenges faced in aquaculture.
- The high prevalence of bacterial infections in fishes leads to frequent use of antibiotics by the fish-farmers and this leads to their persistence in the aquatic environment. This in turn results in the increase in the antibiotic resistant bacteria.
- Most of the cultured fishes, including ornamental fishes, possess diverse pathogens that exhibit multiple antibiotic resistance.
- Suggested measures: Continuous monitoring programmes, timely detections of the resistant bacteria and implementation of proper regulations are necessary to curb the dissemination of antimicrobial resistance in aquaculture.

Increasing Solar Waste in India

Context

- According to a report prepared by the National Solar Energy Federation of India, India could generate over **34,600 tonnes of cumulative solar waste by 2030.**

Solar waste in India

- Solar waste is the electronic waste generated by **discarded solar panels.**
- Solar waste is generally sold as **scrap in our country.**
- It is envisaged that solar waste can increase by at least **four-five-fold by the next decade.**
- The value of recoverable materials might surpass \$15 billion by 2050, which would be enough to power 630 GW with two billion solar panels.
- Globally, it is expected that end-of-life (EoL) of solar panels will **drive the solar panel recycling business** in the next 10-20 years.



- **Significance:**
 - ISFR is widely used for formulating policies planning and management of forests as well as investments affecting country's forestry sector.
 - ISFR also acts as an important reference document for students and researchers in the field of natural resource management.
 - ISFR provides a significant amount of data which meets India's reporting requirements to International Organizations and various conventions and commitments such as-
 - Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
 - UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
 - Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- **India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021- Major Findings**
 - **Increase in total Forest and Tree Cover:** As compared to the assessment of 2019 (ISFR-2019), there is an increase of 2,261 sq km in the total forest and tree cover of the country.
 - Out of this, the increase in the forest cover has been observed as 1,540 sq km and that in tree cover is 721 sq km.
 - **The total forest and tree cover** of the country is 80.9 million hectare which is 24.62 percent of the geographical area of the country.
 - **Increase in forest cover (Top States): Increase in forest cover** has been observed in open forest followed by very dense forest.
 - **As per** ISFR-2021, top three states showing increase in forest cover are-
 - Andhra Pradesh (647 sq km)
 - Telangana (632 sq km) and
 - Odisha (537 sq km).
 - **Area-wise Forest Cover:** ISFR 2021 reports that area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra.
 - **Percentage-wise Forest Cover:** In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are-
 - Mizoram (84.53%),
 - Arunachal Pradesh (79.33%),
 - Meghalaya (76.00%),
 - Manipur (74.34%) and
 - Nagaland (73.90%).
- **States/UTs with More than one third area under forest cover:** ISFR 2021 findings show that 17 states/UT's have above 33 percent of the geographical area under forest cover.
 - **More than 75%:** Five states/UTs namely Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have more than 75 percent forest cover.
 - **Between 33%- 75%:** 12 states/UTs namely Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura, Goa, Kerala, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Assam, Odisha, have forest cover between 33% to 75%.
- **Increase in Mangrove cover:** As per India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021, an increase of 17 sq Km in mangrove cover has been observed as compared to the previous assessment of 2019.
 - Total mangrove cover in the country is 4,992 sq km.
 - **Top three states** showing mangrove cover increase are-
 - Odisha (8 sq km)
 - Maharashtra (4 sq km) and
 - Karnataka (3 sq km).
- **Total Carbon Stock:** India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 shows an increase of 79.4 million tonnes in the carbon stock of country as compared to the last assessment of 2019.
 - The annual increase in the carbon stock is 39.7 million tonnes.
 - Total Carbon Stock in country's forest is estimated to be 7,204 million tonnes.
- **Bamboo Forests:** As per ISFR 2021, Bamboo forests have grown from 13,882 million culms (stems) in 2019 to 53,336 million culms in 2021.
- **Status of Forest Fires:** India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2021 findings show that 35.46% of the forest cover is prone to forest fires.
 - Out of this, 2.81% is extremely prone, 7.85% is very highly prone and 11.51% is highly prone.
- **Climate change hotspots in Indian forests:** As per ISFR 2021, around 45-64% of Indian Forests will experience the negative impact of climate change and rising temperatures by 2030.
 - Forests in all Indian states (except Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Nagaland) will be highly vulnerable climate hot spots.
 - UT of Ladakh (forest cover 0.1-0.2%) is likely to be the most affected due to climate change and rising temperature.

- **Using biotechnology:** The use of biotechnology and breeding will be important in developing eco-friendly, disease-resistant, climate-resilient, more nutritious and diversified crop varieties
- **Digital technology and extension services:** Wider use of digital technology and extension services will be helpful in information sharing and generating awareness among the farmers.
- **Managing post-harvest loss and formation of FPO:** The article also highlighted that better post-harvest loss-management and a revamp of co-operative movement through the formation of farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) can arrest the volatility in food prices and farmers' income and help harness the true potential of Indian agriculture.

Basic tenets of Green Revolution 2.0

- The Second Green Revolution (SGR) or Green Revolution 2.0 has to be **distinctly different from the first Green Revolution.**
 - **Basic ingredients of the first green revolution were:** HYV seeds with superior genetics; use of chemicals - pesticides and fertilizers; and multiple cropping system supported by the use of modern farm machinery and proper irrigation system.
- The emphasis should be on **small and marginal farmers.**
- Attempt should be made not only to increase the production but also to **sustain the productivity** within the limits of natural resources.
- SGR should envisage **integrated programmes** taking care of all aspects of agriculture from soil characteristics, matching seeds, grains, conversion to food and its marketing after value addition.

Record Ocean warming in 2021

Context

- According to the recently published analysis in the Advances in Atmospheric Sciences journal, **world's oceans underwent record warming in 2021.**

Key points

- The report has stated that, the upper 2,000 metres of the ocean absorbed **235 zettajoules (ZJ)** of heat in 2021 relative to the 1981-2010 average.
- The sum of the **energy used by humans** across the world in a single year **is about half a ZJ** (one ZJ is equal to 10^{21} joules).
- The warming rates in 1986-2021 represents a **maximum eight-fold increase** compared to 1958-85.

How oceans heat up?

- **Oceans stabilise Earth's climate** by absorbing large amounts of heat from sunlight, water vapour and other greenhouse gases.
- The heat absorbed by the oceans find its way back into the atmosphere through melting ice shelves, evaporating water or directly reheating the atmosphere.
- If the ocean absorbs more heat than it releases, its heat content rises.
- Oceans are **absorbing most of the heating from human carbon emissions** like carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, due to which there is an **energy imbalance.**
- The experts have stated that the heating of ocean will continue until we reach **net-zero carbon emissions.**

Impact of El Niño and La Niña

- **During El Niño**, the oceans release some amount of heat, contributing to a mini global warming. So, the warmest years in terms of surface temperature are El Niño years.
- **During La Niña**, oceans take up heat and bury it at depths away from the surface.
- Expert is of the opinion that this amount of energy is huge for the atmosphere, but the cumulative effect on ocean warming is much less.

Effect on coastal communities

- **Melting ice accelerates sea-level rise.** Also, as oceans heat up, water expands (thermal expansion of water). This leads to an increase in the volume of water.
- **Warmer oceans also supercharge weather systems**, creating more powerful storms and hurricanes, as well as increasing precipitation and flood risk.
- The experts recommended that the **coastal communities need to modify engineering designs**, building codes and coastal development plans to tackle increased sea-level rise, as they are the **first to bear the brunt** of sea-level change.

Effect on marine life

- Warming oceans could result in **increased ocean stratification** or separation, causing less mixing of the ocean layers.
- It means that heat, **oxygen and carbon dioxide are not transported** from the surface to the oceanic depths. It **affects the marine life** in the aphotic zones and the benthic zone.

Eruption equivalent to hundreds of Hiroshimas

- According to the NASA Earth Observatory, the eruption emitted **between 5 and 30 megatons** (5 million to 30 million tonnes) of TNT equivalent.
- In comparison, the US atomic bomb unleashed on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945 was estimated to have been around 15 kilotons (15,000 tonnes) of TNT.
 - **TNT equivalent** is a convention for expressing energy, typically used to describe the energy released in an explosion.

What the scientists have said?

- NASA scientists said that the eruption of a submarine volcano in Tonga is helping them to understand how features formed on the **surfaces of Mars and Venus**.
- It is offering researchers a rare chance to study **how water and lava interact**.
- Studying the Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai volcano and its evolution in recent weeks is **important for planetary science** as the knowledge might help to reveal results of water–lava interactions on the red planet and elsewhere across the Solar System.
- The volcanic island, which began to form from ash and lava expelled from an undersea volcano in early 2015, attracted the researchers due to its **similarity to structures** on Mars and possibly also Venus.

About Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai

- Hunga Tonga–Hunga Ha’apai is a volcanic island that was **built by undersea eruptions**.
- **Two pre-existing islands** (Hunga Ha’apai and Hunga Tonga) were joined by the 2015 eruption into a single landmass.
- Ever since new land rose above the water surface in 2015 and joined two existing islands, the **landmass was monitored** by the researchers around the world.
- A team of researchers used a **combination of satellite observations** and surface-based geophysical surveys to track the evolution of the rapidly changing piece of Earth.

Sixth mass extinction: What we know so far

Context

- According to the latest study, **Earth is headed towards sixth mass extinction**, which might wipe all life on the planet.

Key points

- Scientists believed that Earth has entered its sixth mass extinction, which can cause disruption and could eventually lead to **end of entire life it possesses**.

- **Reasons:** Due to rising climate change activities and irreversible damage to the environment caused by humans, many experts have been speculating for years that natural disasters are headed to Earth in this decade, ranging from volcanoes to tsunamis.
- The scientists have believed that the **sixth mass extinction will be human-caused**.
- While many scientists have referred to the IUCN Red List and **denied this claim**, the scientists of this study have reasons to believe that Earth is on the cusp of a major biodiversity crisis, which can have a massive impact on humans.
- The scientists of this study claims that the **Red List is heavily biased:** almost all birds and mammals but only a minute fraction of invertebrates have been evaluated against conservation criteria.
- The scientists also claimed that incorporating estimates of the true number of invertebrate extinctions leads to the conclusion that the rate **vastly exceeds the background rate** and that we may indeed be witnessing the start of the 6th mass extinction.

Extinctions so far

- Till date, there have been a **total of five mass extinction** events on the Earth, including asteroid impact and volcanic eruptions, but no humans were involved.
- Last mass extinction took place **65 million years ago**, which marked the **end of dinosaurs in the planet**.
- Sixth mass extinction, the scientists believed will be caused by the **interplay of humans**, and climate change, habitat destruction, pollution and industrial agriculture.

What would happen in this mass extinction?

- **Loss of food security:** About one-third of the world's food supply relies on pollinators such as bees, and, if they die out, agricultural yields could drastically reduce.
- **Soil fertility:** Dieing of critical microorganisms would reduce the fertility of the soil. Their disappearance could lead to worsening erosion, which in turn results in more floods, as well as poorer fertility, which again impacts crop growth.

- The word '**budget**' refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase '**Zero Budget**' means without using any credit, and without spending any money on purchased inputs.
- '**Natural farming**' means farming with Nature and without chemicals.

Expert committee on ZBNF

- The committee stated that there would be tremendous yield loss if ZBNF is adopted on a large scale which may **compromise India's food security**.
- The committee has stressed on:
 - Conducting long term field trials.
 - Carrying out future research on ZBNF only in rainfed regions instead of irrigated zones which produce the biggest chunk of agricultural crops production in the country.

Impact of green revolution

- **Positive impact:** Introduction of high yielding seeds, application of chemical fertiliser and assured irrigation, India has emerged as one of the biggest producers of several agricultural crops such as rice, wheat, pulses and oilseeds.
- **Negative impact:** Though the yield has increased, there has been gradual degradation of soil health because of excessive use of chemical fertiliser and pesticides in the last four decades.

Recommendation of committee

- In place of ZBNF, the expert committee has recommended adoption of an integrated production system through usage of farm practices such as **conservation agriculture** through usage of farmyard manure, inter-cropping, crop diversification and integrated nutrient management for improving soil health.

ZBNF in India: Present status

- Many of the elements of ZBNF such as name of **Beejamrit** (seed-microbial coating), **Jeewamrit** (soil-microbial enhancer), **Waaphasa** (soil-aeration), and **Acchadana** (Mulching), etc, are currently practised under the conservation agriculture.
- Also, **Bhartiya Prakritik Krishi Padhati** (BPKP), a sub scheme of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), is being implemented since 2020-21, which focuses on promoting traditional indigenous practices including ZBNF.



OmiSure | Test Kit for Detecting the Omicron Variant of SARS-CoV-2

Context

- Recently, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved a testing kit for detecting the Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

Key Points

- About:** OmiSure is a RT-PCR kit that will be used to confirm the Omicron variant of Covid virus in patients with its S-Gene Target Failure (SGTF) strategy.
- Development of OmiSure kit:** the kit is manufactured by Tata Medical and Diagnostics and is named OmiSure.
 - The kit currently in use to detect Omicron in India has been developed by the U.S.-based scientific instrumentation company Thermo Fisher.
 - It, too, uses the SGTF strategy to detect the variant.

Associated Significance

- Critical for Public Health:** Diagnostic services like OmiSure test kit are critical for public health.
 - During an outbreak, timely information is needed to guide and tailor public health response to stop/ curtail disease spread.
- Reducing Inaccessibility:** Development of OmiSure will help in addressing inequalities in access to COVID-19 diagnostics tools in India and globally.

Additional Information: SARS-CoV-2 genomics consortium in Southeast Asia

- About:** In the context of rising omicron cases, the WHO is proposing to set up a SARS-CoV-2 genomics consortium in Southeast Asia this year.
- Key Mandates:**
 - The SARS-CoV-2 genomics consortium will help enhance genomic sequencing and surveillance.
 - The SARS-CoV-2 consortium will develop a robust regional system for detecting and monitoring the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 viral threats for epidemics and pandemics.
- Significance:**
 - The SARS-CoV-2 genomics consortium will help improve the timely use of genomic data for public health decision-making.
 - The SARS-CoV-2 genomics consortium also aims to strengthen preparedness and response to future outbreaks/ pandemics, added a release issued by the group.

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle: ISRO's Indigenous Launcher

Context

- Recently, ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) has indicated that ISRO's indigenous new launch rockets, called the **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle** (SSLV), will make its maiden development flight in **April 2022**.

Key points

- The SSLV is intended to cater to a market for the **launch of small satellites** into low earth orbits.
- Low earth orbit has emerged in recent years on account of the need for developing countries, private corporations, and universities for small satellites.
- Till now, the launch of small satellites has been dependent on **'piggy-back' rides** with big satellite launches on ISRO's work-horse – the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle** (PSLV).
- The launch of the maiden flight of the SSLV was scheduled for July 2019 but has been delayed due to **setbacks from the Covid 19** crisis and other issues.

About SSLV

- Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is a **3 stage Launch Vehicle** configured with three solid propulsion stages and liquid propulsion-based **Velocity Trimming Module** (VTM) as a terminal stage.
- SSLV is **2m in diameter and 34m in length** with lift off weight of ~120 tonnes.
- The SSLV can carry satellites weighing up to **500 kg to a low earth orbit** while PSLV can launch satellites weighing in the range of 1000 kg.

SSLV payload capability

- Single/Multi Satellites - **Nano, Micro and Mini satellites**
- Single Satellite up to 500kg in 500km planar orbit
- Multiple satellites ranging from 10kg to 300kg into 500km Planar Orbit.

SSLV advantages

- Low weight:** The SSLV is the smallest vehicle at 110-ton mass at ISRO.
- Less time:** It will take only 72 hours to integrate, unlike the 70 days taken now for a launch vehicle.
- Less manpower:** Only six people will be required to do the job, instead of 60 people.
- Low cost:** The entire job will be done in a very short time and the cost will be only around Rs 30 crore.

- **Build synergy:** The development and manufacture of the SSLV are expected to create greater synergy between the space sector and private Indian industries

What is a launch vehicle?

- Launchers or Launch Vehicles are used to **carry spacecraft to space**. India has **two operational launchers**: Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV).
- **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre**, located in Thiruvananthapuram, is responsible for the design and development of launch vehicles.
- **Satish Dhawan Space Centre**, SHAR, is the space port of India and is responsible for integration of launchers. It houses two operational launch pads from where all GSLV and PSLV flights take place.

Solid State Lithium Metal Battery

Context

- Recently, Shareholders of California-based QuantumScape Corp, a battery startup backed by Volkswagen AG, have approved a multibillion-dollar pay package. It has triggered comparisons with the package that Tesla awarded Elon Musk in 2018.

Key points

- Quantum Scape’s solid-state battery is seen as an exceptionally bright prospect in an increasingly crowded space.
- Solid-state batteries or SSBs are the lithium-ion batteries made with solid electrolytes.
- Solid-state batteries are an emerging option for next-generation traction batteries promising low cost, high performance and high safety

Benefit of SSBs

- The nascent technology has the potential to trump the current incumbent—lithium-ion batteries made with liquid electrolytes—by being stable at high temperatures, which enables safer operation and better performance.
- SSBs promised that electric vehicles and mobile phones will no longer be at risk from batteries that catch fire.
- The solid electrolyte perse doesn’t improve performance, but its stability and barrier properties allow the safe use of energy-dense anode materials such as lithium metal and silicon that help the SSBs outperform the lithium-ion batteries that are in use today.

- A solid-state battery has higher energy density than a Li-ion battery that uses liquid electrolyte solution. It doesn’t have a risk of explosion or fire, so there is no need to have components for safety, thus saving more space.
- A solid-state battery can increase energy density per unit area since only a small number of batteries are needed. For that reason, a solid-state battery is perfect to make an EV battery system of module and pack, which needs high capacity.

How solid-state lithium battery is different from liquid lithium battery?

- A traditional lithium-ion battery has an anode, a separator immersed in a liquid electrolyte, and a cathode. During discharge, lithium ions flow from the anode to the cathode through the electrolyte and across the separator.
- SSB, on the other hand, do not need a separator, since the solid electrolyte acts as a physical barrier between the anode and cathode.

Challenges

- There are various scientific challenges associated with using solid electrolytes.
- Its developers are yet to prove that they can make SSBs at commercial scale.

Startup India Innovation Week | National Start-up Day to be Celebrated Each Year

Context

- Recently, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is organizing the first-ever Startup India Innovation Week from 10th -16th of January 2022.
- Interestingly, in the start-up world, 2021 has been recognised as the 'year of unicorns,' with 40+ unicorns added in the year.
- It was also decided that 16 January will be celebrated as the National Start-up Day each year to promote start-up ecosystem in the far-flung regions of the country.

Key Points

- **About:** Startup India Innovation Week is being celebrated to commemorate the 75th year of India’s independence ‘Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav’. It is being celebrated in virtual mode.
- **Key Objective:** Startup India Innovation Week is designed to showcase the spread and depth of entrepreneurship across India.

Security

Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

Context

- Union Home Minister is expected to seal the final agreement to end the dispute in six areas of the Assam-Meghalaya boundary ahead of Meghalaya's 50th Statehood Day celebration on January 21.

About Assam Meghalaya dispute

- Meghalaya was carved out of Assam under the **Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971**.
- The Act was **not accepted unanimously** and people challenged its provision, thus leading to conflict.
- Since the early 1970s, both states have made contesting claims on the actual demarcation of the village.
- Assam and Meghalaya share an 885-km-long border. As of now, there are **12 points of dispute** along their borders.
- The Assam-Meghalaya **border dispute are the areas** of Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.
- A **major point of contention** between Assam and Meghalaya is the district of Langpih in West Garo Hills that borders the Kamrup district of Assam.
- Langpih was part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period, but post-Independence, it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya.
- Assam considers it to be part of the Mikir Hills in Assam. Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills -now Karbi Anglong region - being part of Assam.
- According to Meghalaya, these were parts of erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.

Assam Meghalaya Border: Ending the dispute

- Among the 12 dispute points, **six had been selected for resolution** in the first phase.
- The six areas include: Tarabari, Gijang, Hahim, Baklapara, Khanapara-Pilangkata and Ratacherra.
- Assam and Meghalaya had formed three regional committees each to inspect the disputed areas and record the views of the local residents.

Assam and Border Issues

- The states in the North-eastern region of India were **largely carved out of Assam**, which has border disputes with several states.
- Assam's border disputes with Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland are already pending in the Supreme Court.
- Assam's border disputes with Meghalaya and Mizoram are currently in the phase of resolution through negotiations.

BrahMos Missile- Extended Range BrahMos Flight-Tested

Context

- Recently, the Supersonic cruise missile BrahMos with increased indigenous content and improved performance was successfully flight-tested from the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur off the coast of Odisha.
- Earlier this month, an extended range sea-to-sea variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was test fired from stealth guided missile destroyer INS Visakhapatnam.

Extended Range BrahMos Flight-Tested

- **Advance Technology:** BrahMos missile was equipped with the advanced indigenous technologies and followed a modified optimal trajectory for enhanced efficiency and improved performance.
 - The Brahmos missile with the modified control system has been fine tuned to achieve an enhanced capability.
- **Launching Agency:** Extended Range BrahMos Flight launch was conducted by Brahmos Aerospace in close coordination with DRDO teams.

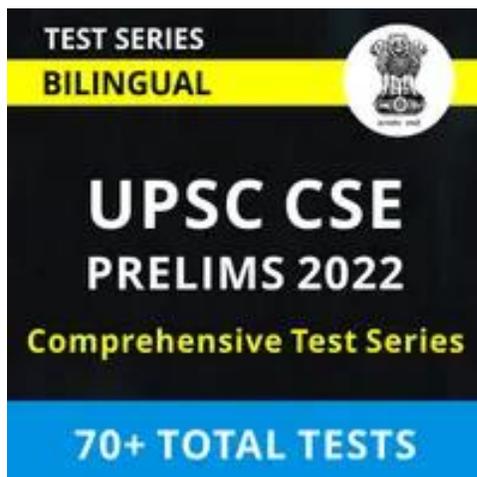
BrahMos Missile

- **About:** BrahMos is a two-stage air to surface supersonic cruise missile, jointly developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation of India (DRDO) and the NPOM of Russia.
- **Brahmos Name:** BrahMos derives its name from two rivers- the rivers Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia).

- **Stages in Brahmos Missile:** Two stages of the Brahmos missile include-
 - **First Stage:** A Solid Propellant Engine. It is separated after BrahMos missile reaches MACH-1 or Supersonic speed.
 - **Second Stage:** Liquid Ramjet. This stage takes the BrahMos missile close to MACH 3 in cruise phase.
- **Warhead Carrying Capacity:** BrahMos missile has a carrying capacity of 250-300 kgs. BrahMos missile is capable of carrying a regular warhead as well as a nuclear warhead.

BrahMos Missile- Key Features

- **Multiplatform Missile:** BrahMos Missile is a multi-platform missile that can be launched from ships, land, submarines and aircraft platforms.
- **All Weather Multi-Capability Missile:** BrahMos Missile is multi capability missile with pinpoint accuracy. BrahMos Missile works in both day and night irrespective of the weather conditions.
- **Fire and Forgets" Principle:** BrahMos Missile once launched, does not require further guidance because it works on the Fire and Forgets" Principle.
- **Speed:** BrahMos Missile can attain a speed of Mach 2.8, which is 3 times more than the speed of sound. This makes BrahMos one of the fastest operationally deployed missile in the world.
- **Range:** Flight range of the BrahMos Missile is about 300 Km.
 - India became a member of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016.
 - With this, the range of BrahMos Missile is planned to be extended to 450 km and to 600km at a later stage.



Global Risks Report 2022

Context

- Recently, World Economic Forum has released the 17th edition of the Global Risks Report 2022 where the report has discussed the top five risks facing India.

Key points

- The report tracks global risks perceptions among experts and world leaders in business, government and civil society.
- The study examines risks across **five categories**—economic, environmental, geopolitical, societal, and technological.
- **Extreme weather was considered the world's biggest risk** in the short term and a failure of climate action in the medium and long term—two to 10 years.
- **Top global risks:** Climate crisis, growing social divides, heightened cyber risks and uneven global recovery, as the coronavirus pandemic lingers on, are the top global risks over the next 10 years.
- The report also said that **diverging economic recoveries** and the fallout of the pandemic threaten global cooperation on other challenges at a time when climate risks loom large.
- **Digitalisation:** The increasing reliance on digital systems, which has only grown in the past two years, has made digital or cybersecurity threats more potent.

Global Risks Report 2022: India

- **Top 5 risks:** disillusionment among youth, digital inequality, fracture of interstate relations, debt crises and failure of technology governance are the top 5 risks mentioned by the report.
- The report summarises **youth disillusionment as a societal problem**, which includes youth disengagement, lack of confidence or trust of existing economic, political and social structures at a global scale.
- The report was of the view that the **disillusionment is negatively impacting social stability**, individual well-being and economic productivity.

Global Risks Report 2022 suggestion

- **Global leaders must come together** and adopt a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to tackle unrelenting global challenges and build resilience ahead of the next crisis.

History, Art & Culture

Ganga Sagar Mela

Context

- Recently, the West Bengal Chief Minister said that her government cannot stop or impose restrictions on the Ganga Sagar Mela.
- Lakhs of pilgrims assemble on the Sagar Island in the South 24 Parganas district on the occasion of Makar Sankranti to take a dip where river Ganga meets the sea.

Ganga Sagar Mela

- **About:** The Ganga Sagar Mela is a religious festival celebrated on Sagardwip (Sagar Island) in West Bengal state of India.
 - The Ganga Sagar Mela is the second biggest fair in India after Kumbha Mela of India.
- **Time of festival:** The Ganga Sagar Mela is a six-day fair held in the month of January and on the day of Makar Sankranti.
- **Ganga Sagar Mela Ritual:** It is a ritual of pilgrims taking bath in holy water and visiting nearby famous Kapil Muni Temple is performed.

Ganga Sagar: Key Points

- **About:** Ganga Sagar is the largest village of Sagar Island of the South 24 Parganas district. Ganga Sagar Village is under the administration of Sunderbans, West Bengal.
- **Location:** Ganga Sagar is situated just off the Bengal coast on the point where the River Ganga meets the Bay of Bengal.
- **Significance:** Ganga Sagar Mela is held in the Ganga Sagar in the month of January, every year on the Occasion of Makar Sankranti.
 - Every year, Ganga Sagar islands sees gathering of lakhs of devotees from all parts of the country who come to take a dip in the holy waters where Ganga meets the sea.

Jallikattu- T.N. govt. allows Jallikattu

Context

- Despite the surge in COVID-19 cases, the Tamil Nadu government recently allowed the conduct of Jallikattu, Manjuvirattu and Vadamadu.
- Only 50% of the seating capacity can be filled, and the number of spectators at Jallikattu event will be capped at 150 to ensure adherence to physical distancing norms.

Key Points

- **About:** Jallikattu is a competitive sport in Tamil Nadu to honour bull owners who rear them for mating.
 - Jallikattu is a violent sport in which contestants try to tame a bull for a prize; if they fail, the bull owner wins the prize
 - Jallikattu is also referred by other names such as Yeruthazhuvuthal, Madu Pidithal, and Pollerudhu Pidithal.
- **Jallikattu Belt:** Jallikattu is mostly popular in Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Theni, Pudukkottai and Dindigul districts of Tamil Nadu. This region is also known as the Jallikattu belt.
- **Timing:** Jallikattu is celebrated during the Tamil harvest festival, Pongal (typical in the second week of January).

Importance in Tamil Culture

- **Preserving Native Bulls:** Jallikattu is considered a traditional way for the peasant community to preserve their pure-breed native bulls.
 - At a time when cattle breeding is often an artificial process, conservationists and peasants argue that Jallikattu is a way to protect these male animals which are otherwise used only for meat if not for ploughing.
- **Respect among Natives:** The owners of premium Jallikattu breed bulls command respect locally.
 - Kangayam, Pulikulam, Umbalachery, Barugur and Malai Maadu are among the popular native cattle breeds used for Jallikattu.

Evolution of the Legal Battle

- **2007:** Animal Welfare Board of India and the animal rights group PETA moved petitions in the Supreme Court against Jallikattu as well as bullock cart races.
- **2009:** The Tamil Nadu government, however, worked its way out of the ban by passing a law in 2009, which was signed by the Governor.
- **2011:** Centre added bulls to the list of animals whose training and exhibition is prohibited.
- **2014:** the Supreme Court banned the bull-taming sport, ruling on a petition that cited the 2011 notification.
- **2017:** To nullify 2014 order of SC, the Tamil Nadu government released an ordinance amending the central Act and allowing Jallikattu in the state.
 - This was later ratified by the President.
- **2018 (Present Situation):** the Supreme Court referred the Jallikattu case to a Constitution Bench, where it is pending now.

Kathak Dance | Indian Classical Dances

Context

- The Prime Minister expressed deep grief over the passing away of legendary Kathak dancer Pandit Birju Maharaj. He also said that his passing is an irreparable loss to the entire art world.

Kathak Dance

- Kathak Dance is one of the important classical dances of India. Kathak dance is said to have started by Kathakars.
- Kathakars or story-tellers, are people who narrate stories largely based on episodes from the epics, myths and legends.
- Lady Leela Sokhey (Menaka) revived the classical style. Some prominent dancers include Birju Maharaj, Sitara Devi.

Background

- Kathak Dance probably started as an oral tradition. Mime and gestures were perhaps added later on to make the recitation more effective.
- Thus evolved a simple form of expressional dance, providing the origins of what later developed into Kathak as we see it today.

Evolution of Kathak

- Bhakti Movement:** The Vaishnavite cult which swept North India in the 15th century and the resultant bhakti movement contributed to a whole new range of lyrics and musical forms, promoting Kathak.
 - The Radha-Krishna theme proved immensely popular along with the works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas and Krishnadas.
- Mughal Influence:** With the coming of the Mughals, this dance form received a new impetus.
 - A transition from the temple courtyard to the palace durbar took place which necessitated changes in presentation.
 - In both Hindu and Muslim courts, Kathak became highly stylized and came to be regarded as a sophisticated form of entertainment.
- Emergence of Raslila:** It was mainly developed in the Braj region (Mathura in Western U.P.). It combined in itself music, dance and the narrative.
- Patronage of Wajid Ali Shah:** The nineteenth century saw the golden age of Kathak under the patronage of Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Oudh.
 - He established the Lucknow gharana of Kathak Dance with its strong accent on bhava, the expression of moods and emotions.
 - The Jaipur gharana known for its layakari or rhythmic virtuosity and the Benaras gharana are other prominent schools of Kathak dance.

Dance Movements

- The weight of the body is equally distributed along the horizontal and vertical axis.
- The full foot contact is of prime importance where only the toe or the ball of the foot are used, their function is limited.
- There are no deflections and no use of sharp bends or curves of the upper or lower part of the body.
- Torso movements emerge from the change of the shoulder line rather than through the manipulations of the backbone or upper chest and lower waist muscles.
- In the basic stance, the dancer stands straight, holds one hand at a level higher than the head and the other is extended out on the level of the shoulder.
- The technique is built by the use of an intricate system of foot-work.
- Pure dance (nritya) is all important where complex rhythmic patterns are created through the use of the flat feet and the control of sound of the ankle bells worn by the dancer

Key Features

- As in Bharatnatyam, Odissi and Manipuri, Kathak also builds its pure dance sequences by combining units of movement.
- The cadences are called differently by the names tukra, tora, and parana, all indicative of the nature of rhythmic patterns used and the percussion instrument accompanying the dance.
- The dancer commences with a sequence called That where soft gliding movements of the neck, eyebrows and the wrists, are introduced.
- This is followed by a conventional formal entry known as the Amad (entry) and the Salami (salutation).



Makar Sankranti, Lohri, and Pongal 2022: Date, History, and Significance

Context

- Recently, the President of India greeted citizens on the eve of Lohri (which falls on 13th January, 2022), Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Bhogali Bihu, Uttarayan and Paush Parva (which fall on 14th January, 2022).

Key Points

- About:** Makar Sankranti is a Hindu festival, dedicated to express gratitude to the Sun God and nature for their abundant resources and good produce during the winter harvest festival.
 - Harvest Festival:** Makar Sankranti or Uttarayan is also the harvest festival and is celebrated in North India, especially in Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh.
- Astrological Aspect:** Makar Sankranti marks the entry of the sun into the zodiac sign of Makara (Capricorn) as it travels on its celestial path.
- Other names:** Makar Sankranti is also referred to as Maghi, Poush Sankranti, or simply Sankranti in different parts of the country.
- Rituals Performed:** On the festival of **Makar Sankranti**, people take a holy dip in the rivers, offer prayer to Sun God as a part of Makar Sankranti Puja, and also donate grains, sweets, and til to the needy.
 - It is believed that donation brings happiness and prosperity.

Lohri

- About:** Lohri is the harvest festival of Punjab and is widely celebrated in Northern India. Lohri is primarily celebrated by Sikhs and Hindus.
- Tradition:** On this day, people offer prayer to God of Fire (Agni) and pray for prosperity and happiness.
- Harvest Festival:** The festival marks the end of the sowing season of winter crops and welcomes the harvest season and farmers pray for promising harvesting in the season.

Pongal

- About:** Pongal is a four-day festival of the Tamil community, dedicated to Sun God.
 - The Pongal festivities include Thai Pongal, Mattu Pongal and Kaanum Pongal.
 - People celebrate Bhogi Pongal, a day prior to Thai Pongal.
- Harvest Festival:** Pongal is celebrated for four days to thank Lord Sun for a good harvest season.
- Pongal Celebration:** People decorate the house with mango and banana leaves, worship cows like God, paint horns with flowers and garlands, and also cook a plethora of delicacies.

Makar Sankranti, Lohri, and Pongal- Significance

- Celebrates Harvest:** The festivals of Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Bhogali Bihu, Uttarayan and Paush Parva, mark the harvesting season of crops as the winter season ends and ushers in the spring.
- Preserving Environment:** People enjoy the fruits of good harvest and celebrate these festivals which also underline the need to preserve our environment.
- Celebrating Unity in Diversity:** It is not only an example of Indian diversity but also that of unity in diversity of our country.

Rani Velu Nachiyar- Jhansi Rani of Tamil Nadu

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister has paid tributes to Rani Velu Nachiyar on her birth anniversary.
- He said that her indomitable courage shall keep motivating the coming generations. Her strong commitment to fight colonialism was remarkable. She personifies the spirit of our Nari Shakti.

Rani Velu Nachiyar

- About:** Rani Velu Nachiyar was the first queen of Tamil origin to fight against the British in India. Rani Velu Nachiyar was an inspiring-women in the south.
 - Velu Nachiyar is still held in high regard in Tamil Nadu with the moniker 'Veeramangai' or brave woman bestowed upon her by the people.
- Rebellion against British Rule:** Rani Velu Nachiyar formed an army and fought and won against the British in 1780, with military assistance of Hyder Ali.
 - Rani Velu Nachiyar was drawn into battle after her husband was killed by the British.
- Protection of Hyder Ali:** Rani Velu Nachiyar lived under the protection of Hyder Ali of Mysore near Dindigul.
- Idea of Human Bomb:** Rani Velu Nachiyar was said to have come up with the idea of a human bomb.
- Her Rule:** Rani Velu Nachiyar also formed a women's army and was one of the few rulers who regained her kingdom and ruled for 10 more years.
 - She ruled the kingdom for over a decade before bequeathing the royal commitments to the Maruthu brothers at her death in 1796.

Additional Information- Kuyili

- **About:** Kuyili had risen up to the ranks of commander-in-chief in queen Velu Nachiyar's military entourage.
- **Fight against Britishers:** Kuyili devised a strategy that would involve women infiltrating through the watchdog eyes of the British and enter the Sivaganga fort.
 - Upon her command, Kuyili's companions poured ghee and oil that were meant for lighting the lamps, upon her.
 - Following which, a valiant Kuyili walked into the armoury chambers with her head held high and set herself on fire.
 - Kuyili sacrificed her life for the motherland that would go on to help Velu defeat the troops and reclaim her fort and sovereignty.
- **Recognition:** Kuyili's name has somehow faded away from the public memory, except for a memorial in the Sivaganga district by the state government that was erected only recently.

Sri Ramanujacharya | Statue of Equality to be Unveiled by the Prime Minister

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will unveil a 216-foot statue of Ramanujacharya. The Statue of Sri Ramanujacharya described as the 'Statue of Equality' in Hyderabad on February 5.

Statue of Equality

- **About:** The Statue of Equality is 216-feet statue of the 11th-century saint and social reformer **Sri Ramanujacharya**.
- **Location:** Statue of Equality is located in a 45-acre complex at Shamshabad on the outskirts of the city of Hyderabad, Telangana
- **Funding:** Statue of Equality is a 1000 crores project funded entirely by donations from devotees globally.
- **Key Features:**
 - The inner sanctorum deity of Ramanujacharya is made of 120 kg of gold to commemorate the 120 years the saint walked this earth.
 - The outdoor 216-foot statue would be one of the tallest statues in a sitting posture.
 - The Statue of Equality is made of 'panchaloha', a mix of five metals - gold, silver, copper, brass, and zinc.
 - The Statue of Equality complex has identical recreations of 108 Divya Desams, the 108 ornately carved Vishnu temples mentioned in the works of the Alwars, mystic Tamil saints.

Sri Ramanujacharya

- **Birth:** Sri Ramanujacharya, also referred to as **Ilaya Perumal** was born in 1017 CE at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu.
 - **The term 'Ilaya Perumal'** means the radiant one.
- **About:** Sri Ramanujacharya was a social reformer who worked to end the social, cultural, gender, educational, and economic discrimination from the society.
- **Belief:** Sri Ramanujacharya liberated millions with the foundational conviction that every human is equal regardless of nationality, gender, race, caste, or creed.
- **Vishishtadvaita:** Sri Ramanujacharya was a famous proponent of Vishishtadvaita, a sub-school of Vedānta.
- **Bhakti Movement:** Bhakti movement was greatly influenced by Sri Ramanujacharya's philosophical teachings of devotionalism.
- **Temple Entry:** Sri Ramanujacharya opened the doors of temples to all people, including those subjected to extreme discrimination.
- **Literary Contributions:** Sri Ramanujacharya's literary contributions includes bhāṣya on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.

Subhas Chandra Bose- Statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to be installed at India Gate

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister announced that a statue of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose will be installed at India Gate to honour his contribution to the independence movement.
- Until the installation of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's statue is completed, a hologram of Netaji will be projected at the site of the statue.

Subhas Chandra Bose

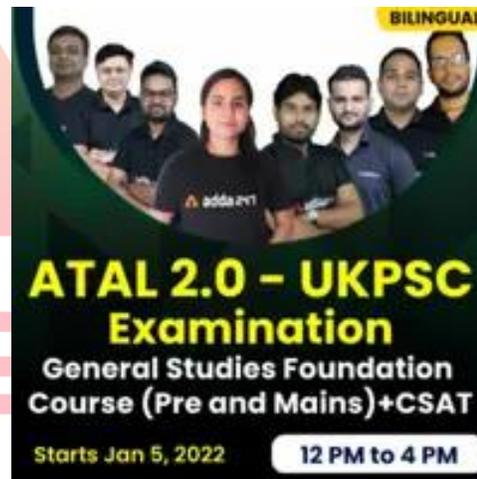
- **About:** Subhas Chandra Bose, affectionately called as Netaji, was one of the most prominent leaders of Indian freedom struggle.
- **Birth:** Subhas Chandra Bose was born on January 23, 1897 in Cuttack, Orissa.
 - His father Janaki Nath Bose was a famous lawyer and his mother Prabhavati Devi was a pious and religious lady.

- **Education:** Subhas Chandra Bose was a brilliant student right from the childhood.
 - **School:** Subhas Chandra Bose topped the matriculation examination of Calcutta province.
 - **Collage:** Subhas Chandra Bose graduated with a First Class in Philosophy from the Scottish Churches College in Calcutta.
 - **Swami Vivekanand's influence:** Subhas Chandra Bose was strongly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's teachings and was known for his patriotic zeal as a student.
 - **Indian Civil Services (ICS):** To fulfill his parents' wishes, Subhas Chandra Bose went to England in 1919 to compete for Indian Civil Services.
 - In England he appeared for the Indian Civil Service competitive examination in 1920, and came out fourth in order of merit.
 - **Resignation From ICS:** Subhas Chandra Bose was deeply disturbed by the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, and left ICS midway to return to India in 1921.
 - **Literary work:** Subhas Chandra Bose wrote the **Indian Struggle**- covered the country's independence movement in the years 1920-1934.
 - **Death and Controversy:** It is believed that Subhas Chandra Bose died in a plane crash in Taiwan on 18 August 1945.
 - However, many in India refused to believe that Subhas Chandra Bose had died in the plane crash.
 - Many enquiry committees such as the **Figgess Report (1946)**, the **Shah Nawaz Committee (1956)** and the **Khosla Commission (1970)** were established on the matter.
 - These committees concluded that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose died in the plane crash in Taiwan.
 - Unlike above, **Mukherjee Commission (2005)** said that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's death in the plane crash could not be proved.
 - This report was rejected by the government.
- Contribution in Freedom Struggle Movement**
- **Association with Congress:**
 - After returning to India Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and joined the Indian National Congress in 1921.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose became the President of the All-India Youth Congress in 1923.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose was elected as the President of Indian National Congress in 1938 (Haripur) and was again re-elected in 1939 (Tripuri).
 - During his presidency, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose talked of planning in concrete terms, and set up a National planning Committee in October 1938.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the presidency due to internal difference with Gandhi ji and formed the All India Forward Bloc, a faction within the Congress.
 - Forward Bloc aimed at consolidating the political left.
 - **Association with C.R Das:** On Gandhiji's instructions, Subhas Chandra Bose started working under Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das (C.R Das).
 - Subhas Chandra Bose later acknowledged CR Das his political guru.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose took over the editorship of the newspaper 'Forward' in 1921, founded by Chittaranjan Das's Swaraj Party.
 - CR Das after winning the Mayorship of Calcutta Cooperation, appointed Subhas Chandra Bose as the CEO of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose was arrested and sent to jail in Mandalay in 1925 for his political activities.
 - **Promotion of Labour Movement:** Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose was associated with trade union movements and was elected the President of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC).
 - **Opposition to Nehru Report 1928:** In 1928 the Motilal Nehru Committee appointed by the Congress declared in favour of Domination Status.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose along with Jawaharlal Nehru opposed it, and both asserted that they would be satisfied with nothing short of complete independence for India.
 - **Participation in Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM):** Subhas Chandra Bose was jailed during Civil Disobedience movement in 1930.
 - Subhas Chandra Bose was released in 1931 after Gandhi-Irwin pact was signed.
 - He protested against the Gandhi-Irwin pact and opposed the suspension of Civil Disobedience movement specially when Bhagat Singh and his associates were hanged.

Key Contributions

- **Philosophy of Yoga and Vedanta:** Swami Vivekananda is credited with introducing Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world.
 - **Swami Vivekananda** represented India in the first Parliament of Religion held in Chicago (U.S.) in 1893.
- **Preached Philosophy of 'Neo-Vedanta':** Swami Vivekananda preached 'neo-Vedanta', which is an interpretation of Hinduism through a Western lens and believed in combining spirituality with material progress.
 - Philosophy of Neo-Vedanta is a modern interpretation of Vedanta, with a liberal attitude toward the Vedas.
 - Philosophy of Neo-Vedanta reconciles dualism and non-dualism and rejects the "universal illusionism" of Shankaracharya.
- **Literary Works:** Swami Vivekananda gave four pathways of attaining moksha from the worldly pleasure and attachment through his books -
 - Raja Yoga
 - Jnana Yoga
 - Karma Yoga
 - Bhakti Yoga
- **Associated Organizations:**
 - **Ramakrishna Mission:** Swami Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897.
 - Through Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Vivekanand aimed to bring noblest ideas to the doorstep of even the poorest and the meanest.

- Ramakrishna Mission works in the area of value-based education, culture, health, women's empowerment, youth and tribal welfare and relief and rehabilitation.
- **Belure Math:** It was established by Swami Vivekanand in West Bengal in 1899 which became his permanent abode. He died here in 1902.
- **Focus on Education:** Swami Vivekananda emphasized on educating the young of India for the regeneration of our motherland.
 - Swami Vivekananda believed in imparting man-making character-building education.
 - Swami Vivekanand toured across India with an aim to educating the masses about ways to improve their economic condition along with imparting spiritual knowledge.
 - Swami Vivekananda believed that a nation is advanced in proportion as education is spread among the masses.
 - He also zealously worked for educating the women and the lower castes people.



The Editorials Corner

To the poll booth, with no donor knowledge

Context

- In late 2021, Union government authorised State Bank of India to issue and encash a new tranche of electoral bonds, 19th since its launch in 2018.

Criticisms of electoral bond

- Not transparent: Electoral bond scheme has undermined the democratic process, by denying citizens the right of access to information, especially material on political funding. Supreme Court also has allowed the scheme to continue and has denied an interim stay on its operation.
- No obligation on parties: Political parties have no obligation to provide details to the public on each donation received by them through electoral bonds. Besides, companies are also under no obligation to disclose the name of the party to whom they made the donation.
- Undemocratic amendments: Amendments have been made removing a previous prohibition that disallowed a company from donating anything more than 7.5% of its net profits over the course of the preceding three years.
 - Similarly, a mandate that a company had to have been in existence for at least three years before it could make was also lifted.

Arguments of government

- Government of India (GoI) said that voters have no fundamental right to know how political parties are funded.
- GoI also claimed that the scheme helps eliminate the role of black money in funding elections.

Issues with government arguments

- Supreme Court has consistently held that voters have a right to freely express themselves during an election. Also, voters are entitled to all pieces of information that give purpose and vigour to this right. Surely, to participate in the electoral process in a meaningful manner, a citizen must know the identity of those backing the candidates.
- Affidavits filed by the Election Commission of India in the Supreme Court have demonstrated that the scheme augments the potential role of black money in elections.

Role of Judiciary

- Reserve Bank of India reportedly had advised the Government against the scheme's introduction.
- Judges in 1957 warned of the threats posed by limitless corporate funding of elections.
- Chief Justice M.C. Chagla of the Bombay High Court predicted that any decision to allow companies to fund political parties might "ultimately overwhelm and even throttle democracy in this country".
- Justice P.B. Mukharji of the Calcutta High Court was of the view that the individual citizens, although in name equal, will be gravely handicapped in their voice because the length of their contribution cannot ever hope to equal the length of the contribution of the big companies
- So, it is high time that the apex court decide upon the usefulness of the electoral bond scheme in a democratic country like India.

Unlock India's food processing potential

Context

- India's food chain system should be both economically viable and ecologically sustainable. Fortunately, technologies are emerging that revamp the traditional approach of farm to fork and with a lower environmental footprint.
- Production-Linked Incentive Scheme (PLIS) is expected to incentivise the incremental sales in food processing sector.

PLIS progress

- **Investment:** A sum of ₹10,900 crore has been earmarked for PLIS and to date, 60 applicants have already been selected under Category 1, which incentivises firms for incremental sales and branding/marketing initiatives.
 - Assuming the committed investment as a fixed ratio of their sales and undertaking execution of at least 75% of the projects, the sector is likely to witness at least ₹6,500 crore worth of investment over the next two years.
- **Public infrastructure:** A study in the United States concluded that a 1% increase in public infrastructure increased the food manufacturing output by 0.06% in the longer run. This correlation holds good for India too as a higher investment is being concentrated in States such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.

A Stellar Fallacy

Context

- Recently, the Union Environment Ministry is decided to implement a 'star-rating system'. This has sparked controversy after one of its official communiqués became public.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- About:** The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is one of the cornerstones of ensuring that the ecological costs of infrastructure development are minimal.
- Mechanism for Approval:**
 - Prospective projects above a certain size and with a potential to significantly alter the natural environment must be first approved by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA).
 - State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) comprised of State officers and independent experts.
 - SEIAA projects make up the bulk of projects for approval including building and construction, small mining, small industry projects, and are considered 'less polluting'.
 - Projects that are even bigger or involve forest land- category A- must be cleared by an expert committee formed by the Centre.

Star-rating system

- About:** Under **Star-rating system**, State-level environment committees that appraise industrial projects on their potential environmental risk would be incentivized with points for "transparency, efficiency and accountability".
- Aims.** Star-rating system mechanism aims to facilitate the Government's broader commitment to 'Ease of Doing Business'.
- Criteria for Rating SEIAA:** The proposed Star-rating system highlights seven criteria to rate SEIAAs on "transparency, efficiency and accountability".
 - On a scale of 7, an SEIAA, for instance, gets more points for granting a clearance in less than 80 days than for within 105 days and no marks for more.
 - A score of seven or more would be rated 'five star'.

- Controversy:** the star rating system proposed is to "rank" and "incentivise" States on how quickly and "efficiently" they can accord environmental clearances.
 - Many Environment Conservationists believe that States, in the quest for more stars, would logically vie for speedily clearing projects rather than ensure a thorough appraisal.
- Environment Ministry's Response:** The Environment Ministry said that the intention is not to hasten clearances but accelerate the pace of decision making.
 - Rather than files being sent back for every query, all objections must be compiled and addressed at one go.

Way Forward

- The Government must take steps to increase trust in the system and ensure that all States have competent experts who can conduct appraisals without fear or favour.

Aiding in Governance

Key points

- A collaborative effort among government, market and non-state informal institutions leads to development of a country.
- CSR: Companies Act mandates corporates who are beyond a certain level of profits and turnover to pay at least 2% of their net profits before tax to the development space. It necessitates the private sector to collaborate with non-state actors like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to undertake developmental efforts.

Benefits of NGOs

- Non-state actors like NGOs strengthens the citizenry-private partnerships.
- Non-state actors, because of their depth of engagement with communities, bring patient capital to corporate board rooms and help the state, too, by engaging in welfare activities.
- NGOs and voluntary groups/organisations have played a significant role in building capacities of citizens to hold governments accountable.
- They become the vehicle to carry the demands of people to formal institutions. For example, RTI Act was enacted due to the efforts of NGOs.

- NGOs acts as a bridge between people and firms/state. They help in executing various flagship projects and hence bring development to the local level.
- NGOs and CSOs sometimes do the heavy lift and ensure that schemes reach the last person even in the face of disaster. When non-state actors take a large load off the state's shoulder, the state can focus more on governance.
- Research shows that the synergy of NGOs, Government and corporates is the holy grail of development.

Control Rather than Privacy

Context

- Recently released, the Joint Parliamentary Committee report on the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 has failed to provide a robust draft legislation ensuring the privacy of citizens.

Right to Privacy

- **Background:** Puttaswamy judgment and the Justice B.N. Srikrishna committee report led to the Personal Data Protection Bill of 2019 which was later sent to the Joint Parliamentary Committee.
 - These developments came in the backdrop of unavailability of any individual privacy law in the country.
- **Constitutional Provision:** In Puttaswamy judgment, Supreme Court declared Right to Privacy as the Fundamental Right under Article 21 of the part-III of the constitution

Control Rather than Privacy- Issues with Personal Data Protection Bill

- **Wrong Presumption:** The report is based on the presumption that the question of right to privacy emerges only where operations and activities of private entities are concerned.
 - However, Under the Constitution, fundamental rights are generally enforced against the state and its instrumentalities and not against private bodies.
- **Exemption to Government:** Clause 12 of the Bill provides exemptions for the government and government agencies and Clause 35 exempts government agencies from the entire Act itself.

- **Clause 12:** says personal data can be processed without consent for the performance of any function of the state.
- Clause 12 is an umbrella clause that does not specify which ministries or departments will be covered.
- The government can use these provisions as a means of control and surveillance.
- **Issue with data protection authority (DPA):** The Bill elaborates on the functions and duties of the DPA.
 - **Functional Overload:** It is doubtful whether a single authority will be able to discharge so many functions in an efficient manner.
 - **Issue with Appointment:** Unlike the Justice Srikrishna committee report provided for a judicial overlook in the appointments of the DPA, the Bill entrusts the executive with the appointments.
 - Although the report expanded the committee, the power to appoint the panelists vests with the Central government.
 - **Government Control:** Clause 86 says, "Authority should be bound by the directions of the Central Government under all cases and not just on questions of policy".
- **Representation of States:** the appointment of the **data protection authority (DPA)** violates the principle of federalism.
 - The proposed central authority issues directions to allow processing of data on the grounds of 'public order', 'public order' is an entry in the State List.
- **Inclusion of Non-personal data:** The Joint Parliamentary Committee has included non-personal data within the ambit of the Bill, putting a huge compliance burden on the economy.
 - This will hit the MSME sector and small businesses harder as technical processes involving data-sharing are very expensive.
 - The government-constituted panel headed by S. Gopalkrishnan also opposed the idea of including non-personal data in the Bill.
- **Issue with Mandatory data localization:** it is estimated to squeeze the economy by 0.7-1.7%. This may also invite similar measures by other sovereign countries which will hamper smooth cross-border flow of data.

Way Forward

- **Ensure Independence of Data Protection Authority (DPA):** While ensuring the protection of citizens' fundamental right, it is necessary that the DPA is entrusted with the responsibility should work independently.
- **Reducing Government control on Data Protection Authority (DPA):** Excessive control (Clause 86) makes the DPA duty-bound to follow the orders of the government. This weakens its independence and gives the government excessive control.
- **Ensuring Federalism through Participation of States:** If the pith and substance of the legislation are related to the State, then it has to be monitored by the State Data Protection Authority.

Conclusion

- In its present avatar, the Bill is more about surveillance and control than privacy. At the time of passage of the Bill, loopholes must be plugged so that India can have a robust data protection law.

Democratize and Empower City Governments

Context

- RBI has released State Finances, Study of Budgets of 2021-22 report in November last year, where it discussed about the financial unviability of local self-governments in the pandemic.

Key points

- Similar to the recommendations of the 15th Finance Commission, the report commented that there should be increase in functional autonomy of civic bodies their governance structure should be strengthened.
- An RBI survey of 221 municipal corporations (2020-21) revealed that more than 70% municipal corporations saw a decline in revenues while their expenditure rose by almost 71.2%.
- It means that not only the city governments were facing challenges in earning revenues, but **expenditure also increased significantly**.
- The RBI report also highlights the **limited coverage of property tax** and its failure in shoring up municipal corporation revenues.
 - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) data show that India has the lowest property tax collection rate in the world — i.e., property tax to GDP ratio.

Issues

- **No place for elected representatives:** Under the disaster management plan of action, cities are at the forefront to fight the pandemic; however, the elected leadership finds no place in them. Cities are continuously being seen as the adjuncts of State governments.
- **No place for financial empowerment:** Urban development is a state subject, which is more linked to political and democratic movements in states. While constitutional status to local self-government provided the much-needed legitimacy to grassroots democracy, the financial empowerment did not get the required focus.
- **Incomplete 12th schedule:** Schedule 12 talks about empowering urban local bodies to perform 18 functions. These functions however, find no mention of financial empowerment.
- **No investments:** The idea of “competitive cities” where the plan was to attract investments in the urban centres by making their structures and land laws flexible could not succeed as not much investment has happened in cities.
- **Snatching away the cities of power to collect taxes:** Before Value Addition Tax (VAT) came into picture, octroi tax was one of the most sought for tax for the cities.
 - For example: Pimpri-Chinchwad and Pune were two of the very high revenue-earning municipalities that depended on octroi, as both cities have strong bases of industrial production. However, arrival of VAT took away this source of revenue from them.
 - Previously, while almost 55% of the total revenue expenditure of urban centres was met by octroi (e.g., Shimla), now, the grant—as suggested by the finance commission on the basis of demographic profile—covers only 15% of expenditure.
 - Similarly, the arrival of GST has further eroded the financial autonomy of urban governments.

Suggested measures

- As highlighted by the RBI report, **functional autonomy of city governments** must be allowed.
- This functional autonomy should happen with **three F's**: the transfer of ‘functions, finances and functionaries’ to city governments.
- A committee to review the 74th constitutional amendment suggested that **10% of income-tax collected** from the cities was to be given back to them as a direct revenue grant from the central government.

- Cities must be treated as **important centres of governance**, where there should be transparency and adequate participation of the people.
- Cities should **not be considered as entrepreneurship spaces** where the sole driving force is to make them competitive to attract investments.
- The resources required for quantitative and qualitative data must be immediately provided to the cities to ensure a **disaster risk reduction plan** keeping vulnerable communities in mind.
- A piecemeal approach such as the concept of **'smart cities' must be shunned altogether**. This approach further **widens the gap** between different sets of people.
 - Rather, the grants from the Centre must be enhanced and cities should be asked to **draw up their plans themselves** based on priority seeking from city residents.
- Leadership in the cities must be elected for a **term of five years**.
 - In some cities, the term of the mayor is for a year!
- Likewise, the third F, i.e., **functionaries**, must be **transferred to the cities** with a permanent cadre.

Drop the IAS Cadre Rules Amendments

Context

- Recently, the Central Government has proposed four amendments to Rule 6(1) of the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954 dealing with deputation, and has sought the views of State governments.
- "All India Services" (AIS) members are recruited and appointed by the Centre and allotted to various States, and who could serve both under the State and the Centre.

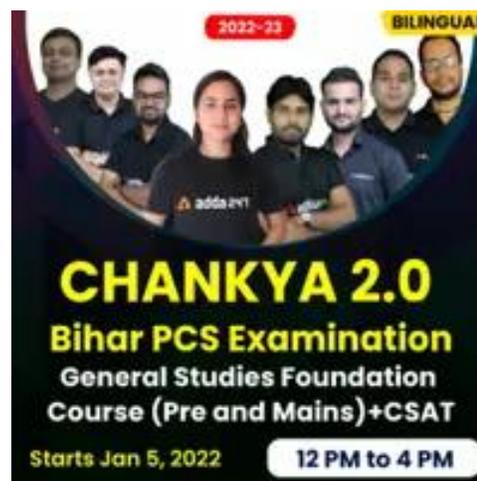
Background

- Sardar Patel had championed the creation of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) as "All India Services" (AIS).
- **He considered the AIS essential-**
 - To knit the administrative framework of a vast and diverse country into an integrated whole and
 - To provide a connecting link between implementation at the field level and policymaking at the top.

- **Healthy Convention for Deputation:** Few of the healthy conventions that were followed in the deputation process-
 - No officer was sent on central deputation against his/her own will.
 - Every year, the States would prepare an "offer list" of officers who had opted for central deputation without arbitrarily withholding any names.
 - The Centre would choose officers only from among those "on offer" from the States.
 - The States would relieve the officers picked up by the Centre at the earliest.

IAS Cadre Rules on Deputation

- **Present Mechanism:** The existing Rule 6(1) states that a cadre officer may be deputed to the Central Government (or to another State or a PSU) only with the concurrence of the State Government concerned.
 - However, it has a proviso which states that in case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the Central Government.
- **Amendments to IAS Cadre Rules:** Two contentious amendments are listed below-
 - It makes it mandatory for the State government to provide a certain fixed number of IAS officers for central deputation every year.
 - **Issue:** It compels a state government to offer IAS officers for central deputation even when these officers themselves may not wish to go on central deputation.
 - It requires the State government to release such officers whose services may be sought by the Central Government in specific situations.
 - **Issue:** States fear that this proviso may be misused for political considerations.



Debunking Tobacco Industry's Claims

- **Low Illicit cigarette trade:**
 - A 2018 survey of empty cigarette packs collected from retail outlets across different cities in India estimated that illicit cigarettes constitute 2.7% of the market.
 - A 2020 survey that used tax-gap analysis to estimate that the percentage of illicit cigarettes was 5.1% in 2009-10 and 6.6% in 2016-17.
- Both these studies used transparent and replicable methods and their estimates of the illicit market were nowhere near the 25% figure that the tobacco industry in India has been using to influence the public discourse on tobacco taxation.
- **Growth in Illicit Trade is Unrelated to tax increases:** There is sufficient evidence that shows tax increases only have a minimal impact, if at all, on illicit trade.
 - There are several countries where tobacco taxes are quite high and yet have low levels of illicit trade.
 - There are also countries with high levels of illicit trade despite having relatively low tax rates.

Way Forward

- **Cost and Economic Measure:** A large body of literature shows price and tax measures to be one of the most cost-effective measures to reduce demand for tobacco products.
 - When tobacco products become more expensive, people either quit using them or use them less, and it incentivizes many to not initiate the habit.
- **Implementing WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control:** India has already ratified the WHO's Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.
 - WHO's protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products aims at eliminating all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products through a package of measures.
 - The Protocol provides the tools and the measures to eliminate or minimise illicit trade which includes-
 - Strong governance,
 - Establishing an international track and trace system, and
 - Securing supply chains.
 - India should now show leadership in implementing these measures to effectively address even the relatively lower levels of illicit trade.

- **Increasing tax on Tobacco Products:** India had no significant tax increases on any of the tobacco products for the past four years since the introduction of GST in 2017.
 - Due to above, tobacco products have become more affordable as shown in recent studies.
 - The present situation demands raising tax on tobacco products by the government. This could reduce tobacco use among the Indian youth.

Friend in Need

Context

- Recently in the context of ongoing economic and health concerns, External Affairs Minister of India held a virtual meeting with Sri Lanka's Finance Minister.
- He assured that India will support Sri Lanka "in all possible ways for overcoming the economic and other challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic".

India-Sri Lanka Relations- Economic Challenges faced by Sri Lanka

- **Debt Servicing Issue:** Sri Lanka is facing issue of servicing debts to bonds with an instalment of \$500 million due on January 18.
 - Given the island's precarious finances, Sri Lankan government has to take a decision whether to service this or default for the first time ever.
- **Other Issues:** Sri Lanka is facing many issues like credit crunch, a slump in GDP spurred by COVID-19 losses to tourism, exports and remittances, foreign reserves.
 - Foreign Reserves dwindled from \$7.5 bn in 2019 to \$1.6 bn in November 2021, and pending debt repayments of more than \$7 bn expected in 2022.
- **Unrest in the country:** The most immediate problems to the Sri Lankan government come from rising unrest in the country due to the present economic crisis.

Support from China

- China and Sri Lanka discussed a full debt restructure of Sri Lankan borrowings.
- Beijing has also extended a currency swap arrangement of \$1.5 billion to Sri Lanka.

Support from India

Indian Foreign and Finance minister in coordination with Sri Lankan Finance Minister decided on a four-pronged initiative to thwart present Sri Lankan Economic Crisis. These are-

- **Lines of Credit (LoC):** the \$1.5 bn LoC for essential imports is reportedly under way.
 - This facility is to be utilized towards the import of fuel, food and medicines from India.
- **Currency Swap Arrangement:** India has extended \$400 million under the “SAARC currency swap” arrangement.
- **Debt deferrals:** India has also agreed to a partial deferral of a \$500 million settlement from Sri Lanka by two months.
- **Conclusion of the Trinco-oil farms project:** Trincomalee project MoU was signed earlier this month after decades of delays.

Conclusion

- In times of peril, New Delhi and Colombo have established a robust channel of communication and demonstrated an ability to act on promises quickly, proving that adage about friends in need.

Limits of Power

Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that the one-year suspension imposed last year by the Maharashtra Assembly on 12 BJP legislators was illegal and irrational.
- With this judgement, the Supreme Court has set the limits of the legislature’s power to deal with disorderly conduct in the House.

Supreme Court’s Decision

- **Illegal decision:** SC has laid down a significant principle that the effect of disciplinary action cannot traverse beyond the session in which the cause arose.
 - Therefore, the suspension beyond the duration of the session was illegal.
- **Suspension is a self-protective tool rather than a punitive measure:** Citing past precedents, the SC said that the power of the House to suspend a member is essentially defensive or ‘self-protective’ and it should not assume a punitive character.

- **Rationale behind suspension power:** The need to exercise the suspensive power was limited to restoring order in the House.
- Logically, it was not needed beyond the day, or in case of repeated disorderly conduct, to the session so that scheduled business could be completed.
- **Unrepresented Constituencies:** the year-long suspension will mean that the constituency remains unrepresented, while there would be no vacancy to be filled through a by-election.
 - Generally, if a member is expelled by a resolution of the House, the Election Commission is bound to hold a by-election within six months and the member could seek re-election.
 - This reasoning also makes the House’s decision to suspend 12 MLAs for a year, illegal.

State Government’s Rationale

- The State government argued that there was no limit to the action that the House could take for maintaining order and the Court could not examine the proportionality of the action.
 - Rule 53 of the Assembly allowed the Speaker to adopt a graded approach to disorderly conduct;
 - Naming members after which they should withdraw from the House for the day, and, in the case of the conduct being repeated, for the rest of the session.
- The Government insisted that the suspension was imposed under the inherent power of the Assembly to ensure orderly functioning.
- State government said that Article 212 of the Constitution bars the judiciary from examining the regularity of the procedure adopted by the House.
 - SC ruled that the present action was illegal and irrational, and not a mere irregularity of procedure.

Way forward

- In an era when the government side accuses the Opposition of being obstructionist, and the Opposition alleges that it is being silenced, it is gratifying that the higher judiciary grapples with questions related to the limits of the power exercised by the majority in the legislature.

Just what the doctor ordered for the Livestock Farmer

Context

- According to the 20th Livestock census, India has a total livestock population of approximately 537 million. Out of the total population, around 96% is concentrated in rural areas.

Issue of veterinary services

- The M.K. Jain Committee Report has highlighted that livestock farmers face greater challenges in comparison to traditional agricultural farmers especially while accessing credit and livestock insurance.
- Access to veterinary services is a major challenge in rural and remote areas of our country.
- Livestock farmers are often compelled to travel far from their villages whenever their animals need treatment.
 - It adversely impacts the longevity and the productivity of their livestock.

Focus of the Government

- Government has revised the provisions of Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH&DC) programme where the focus has been on 'Establishment and Strengthening of Veterinary Services – Mobile Veterinary Units (MVUs)'.
- Earlier, the Government was providing doorstep services related to artificial insemination and vaccination for livestock.
- The MVUs will build on the doorstep delivery model, as stationary hospitals cannot be easily accessed by most livestock farmers.

Benefits of – Mobile Veterinary Units (MVUs)

Address the issue of testing facility

- A Parliamentary Standing Committee has observed that inadequate testing and treatment facilities for veterinary diseases pose a major challenge, especially now where there is a drastic rise in cases of zoonotic diseases.
- Most villages in the country lack testing facilities, and even when samples are collected, they need to be sent to blocks/districts nearby for test results.
- So, MVUs can play a major role in plugging the gap in this regard.

Reduce antibiotic resistance

- Problems pertaining to antimicrobial resistance occur when the animal no longer responds to a drug to which it was originally responsive.
- The MVU model will mitigate the issue of antimicrobial resistance and is in alignment with the 'One Health vision' laid down by the Global Action Plan of WHO.

Avoid milk losses

- 70% of India's milk supply is sourced from farmers who own less than five animals, and losses due to mastitis alone amount to a milk loss of approximately 10 litres per day per farm.
 - Bovine mastitis is a condition typified by the persistent and inflammatory reaction of the udder tissue due to either physical trauma or infections caused by microorganisms.
- The loss roughly translates into ₹300-₹350 per day.
- So, for most farmers, death of or disease in livestock could mean the difference between sustenance and starvation.
- MVUs have been successfully in several states with positive results and increased outreach, especially in geographically difficult terrains.

Provide employment

- The increasing adoption of MVUs across the country will lead to a surge in employment opportunities for veterinarians and assistants.

Preventing Genocide

Context

- In the last few weeks, incendiary speeches by Yati Narsingh anand at a religious assembly have reignited discussion regarding hate speech, and the limits of the law.
 - The speeches made include calls for the genocide of Muslims in India.
- India has signed and ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948, putting international legal obligations on it to act against genocide.

Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948

- **Background:** Raphael Lemkin is credited with the use of the term 'genocide' and campaigned relentlessly for it to become an international treaty.
 - In 1946, Cuba, India and Panama co-sponsored General Assembly Resolution 96(I), which affirmed genocide as a 'crime under international law'.

- **About:** A Draft convention on the prohibition of genocide was passed by the General Assembly in 1948 and came into effect in 1951.
- **Members:** Presently, more than 150 states are party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948.
- **Mandate:** Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 1948 work towards prevention of genocide as well as the punishment of the crime.
- **Legal Obligation on the Parties:** Legal obligations on states that are party to the convention include the obligation-
 - Not to commit genocide, to prevent genocide, and to punish genocide (Article I),
 - To enact legislation to give effect to the provisions of the convention (Article V);
 - To provide for effective penalties for those found guilty of criminal conduct (Article V); and
 - To try those charged with genocide in a competent tribunal (Article VI)

Issues with Indian Legal System

- **Lack of adequate legislation:** there are no comparable provisions for the prosecution of any mass crimes, least of all genocide.
- Indian Penal Code provisions relating to rioting, unlawful assembly and 'promoting enmity between different groups' do not embody the basic elements of the crime of genocide.
 - Crime of Genocide is committed against a collectivity or a group, with the specific intent to cause its destruction.
- **Lack of legal provisions** preventing genocide and creating the conditions in which hate speech and other associated acts are not allowed to flourish.
 - These hate speeches may facilitate the commission of genocide.

Recent International Legal Development

- **Myanmar Genocide:** The Gambia has initiated proceedings before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar on the basis of the Genocide Convention.
- **Key Observations:** Genocide Convention embodies can be invoked by a state that may not be specially affected (on the basis of being part of the community of states).
 - The ICJ is relying on a previous case of Belgium v. Senegal for accepting the Gambia case against Myanmar.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro case 2007:** ICJ addressed the question of violation of the Genocide Convention in the Case Concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
 - In its final judgment in 2007 the ICJ found a failure to prevent genocide by Serbia.
 - The breaches of the Genocide Convention related to the obligations to prevent and the lack of cooperation, but not for the commission of genocide.

Conclusion

- It is more imperative than ever that international legal protections against genocide are incorporated in domestic legislations of its Parties including India.

Reaping India's Demographic Dividend

Demography in India

- India is in the **middle of demographic transition** due the factors like
 - falling fertility (currently 2.0),
 - rising median age (from 24 years in 2011, 29 years now and expected to be 36 years by 2036),
 - a falling dependency ratio (expected to decrease from 65% to 54% in the coming decade taking 15-59 years as the working age population).
- India has **already started reaping the benefits** of this demographic dividend. The benefits, however, are lower than the peers in Asia.
- Countries like Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea have already demonstrated how demographic dividend can be reaped to achieve incredible economic growth.
- Similar to these countries, **India needs to adopt forward-looking policies** and programmes to empower the youth in terms of their education, skills and health choices.

Measures to reap the benefits of demographic dividend

- **Undertake an updated National Transfer Accounts (NTA) assessment:**
 - Using NTA methodologies by Lee and Chen (2011-12) and M.R. Narayana (2021), we find that India's per capita consumption pattern is way lower than that of other Asian countries.
 - A child in India consumes around 60% of the consumption by an adult aged between 20 and 64, while a child in China consumes about 85% of a prime-age adult's consumption.

- Second, India must **enhance cooperation with key Southeast Asian partners** —Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines and Thailand — while humouring ASEAN as a grouping.
- Third, the **eastern and southern planks of Africa and the Indian Ocean** island states need continued high policy attention and financial resources.
 - A clear economic and trade agenda, involving and incentivising corporate India to follow the flag in this vital region, is certain to yield long-term dividends.

The sail that Indian diplomacy, statecraft need

Context

- India has decided to host the five Central Asia leaders at the Republic Day Parade this year. While the invitation is significant symbolically, a lot of hard work needs to be done to materialise the India-Central Asia relations.

India's attempt to build relation with Central Asia

- In 2015, a year after getting elected, our prime minister visited all the five Central Asian states.
- India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also hosted their Central Asian counterparts in Delhi.
- India's continental strategy: promoting connectivity, incipient defence and security cooperation, enhancing India's soft power and boosting trade and investment.
- Though noble, the above strategies seem to be insufficient to address the broader geopolitical challenges engulfing the region.

Focus of Indian diplomacy: Broad contours

Focussing on Eurasia

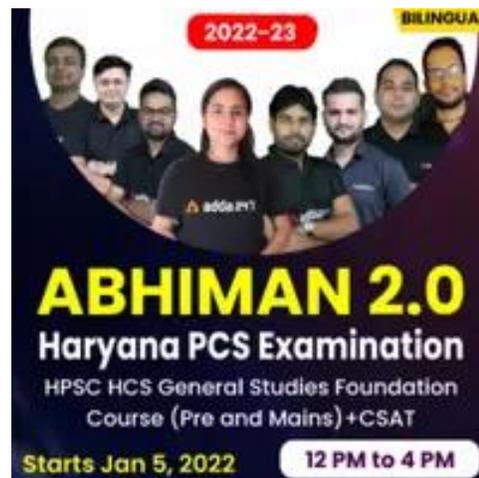
- Eurasia is the largest continental area on Earth, comprising all of Europe and Asia.
- Eurasia has become a geo-politically active region due to reasons like
 - withdrawal of forces of the United States/North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from Afghanistan,
 - the rise of Islamic fundamentalist forces,
 - the changing dynamics of the historic stabilising role of Russia (most recently in Kazakhstan)
 - Related multilateral mechanisms — the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, and the Eurasian Economic Union.
- To be an active member of this region, India needs to undertake a complex and long-term exercise.

Re-aligning maritime security

- At present, India's maritime security is majorly guided by National Maritime Strategy, the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative for the Indian Ocean Region and major initiatives relating to the Indo-Pacific and the Quad.
- China's aggression can be seen in the following cases: Belt and Road Initiative, undercutting traditional Russian influence, gaining access to energy and other natural resources, and dependency-creating investments, cyber and digital penetration and expanding influence among political and economic elites across the continent.
- Indian strategies need to be better aligned to counter the Chinese attempt to establish its hegemony in the region. Indian maritime strategies should focus on:
 - keeping sea lanes open for trade, commerce and freedom of navigation,
 - resisting Chinese territorial aggrandisement in the South China Sea and elsewhere, and
 - helping littoral states resist Chinese bullying tactics in interstate relations.
- Like Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality is key to the Indo-Pacific, centrality of the Central Asian states should be key for Eurasia.

Resolving connectivity issues

- The border areas of our country are witnessing increased militarisation from both sides—Pakistan in the east and China on the west.
- Alternative routes like the International North-South Transport Corridor, which is suffering from US hostilities due to Iran, need to be made operational by proper diplomatic steps.
- About INSTC: The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.



Setting sail for a powerful India-German partnership

Context

- Recently, a German Navy frigate called Bayern, landed in India. It marks a significant achievement in the history of India-Germany relations.

Key points

- Indo-pacific region has become a hotbed for the various countries, recent times.
- Germany too wants to play an active role in the region when it unveiled Indo-Pacific Policy Guidelines, and it visualises India as a key player, strategic partner and long-standing democratic friend at the hub.
- Other than Germany's own Indo-pacific policy, European Union too has its Indo-Pacific Strategy that was published last year.
- Converging point: Both India and Germany are of the view that trade routes stay open, freedom of navigation is upheld and that disputes are resolved peacefully on the basis of international law.
- India is a maritime powerhouse and a strong advocate for free and inclusive trade — and, therefore, a primary partner on that mission.

About Indo-pacific region

- The Indo-Pacific region is home to around 65% of the global population and 20 of the world's 33 megacities.
- The region accounts for 62% of global GDP and 46% of the world's merchandise trade.
- However, the region is also the source of more than half of all global carbon emissions.
 - This makes the region's countries key partners in tackling global challenges such as climate change and sustainable energy production and consumption.

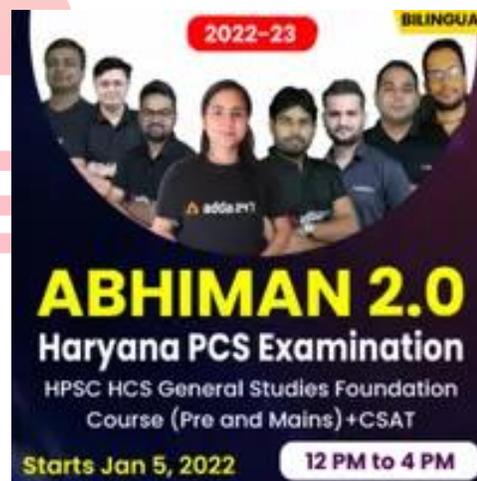
- More than 20% of German trade is conducted in the Indo-Pacific neighbourhood, and it is why Germany and India need to have a common vision to maintain and support stability, prosperity and freedom in this part of the world.

German projects in India

- Germany invests around €1.3 billion a year in development projects, 90% of which serves the purpose of fighting climate change, saving natural resources as well as promoting clean and green energy.
- Germany have been supporting the construction of a huge solar plant in Maharashtra's Dhule (Sakri). With a capacity of 125 Megawatt, it serves 2,20,000 households and generates annual CO2 savings of 155,000 tons.

Way forward

- Both leaders have agreed to step up their cooperation to tackle common challenges, with climate change on top of the agenda.
- While Germany will host the G7 meeting in 2022, India will host the G20 meeting in the same year. Both countries have an opportunity for joint and coordinated action.



Practice Questions

SET 1

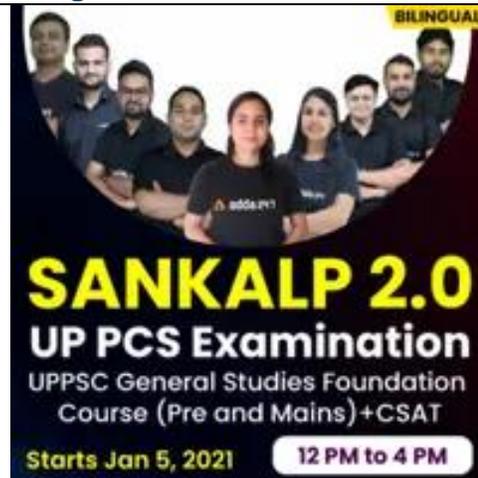
- Consider the following statements regarding Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)
 - It is an intergovernmental military alliance in Eurasia that consists of selected post-Soviet states.
 - It has its origins in the Tashkent Treaty of 1992
 - In the CSTO, aggression against one signatory is not perceived as aggression against allWhich of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1,2 and 3
- Drones can be used in-
 - Predicting transmissions of disease caused by parasitic worms
 - Collecting samples of mucus from whales.
 - Transporting passengers between destinationsSelect the correct code from below:
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1,2 and 3
- Consider the following statements regarding Special protection Group
 - The SPG was set up in April 1985
 - Currently the SPG security provides proximate security only to the prime minister and President of India.
 - The SPG force works under the aegis of the Ministry of Home AffairsWhich of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1,2 and 3
- Consider the following statements regarding Animal Welfare Board of India
 - The Animal Welfare Board of India is a statutory body created by The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act,1960
 - It works under the aegis of the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
 - It has regulatory oversight over any matter connected with animal welfare or the Prevention of infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1,2 and 3
- Consider the following statements regarding the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)
 - The membership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is open to Asian countries only
 - Japan holds the highest amount of voting share with the AIIB
 - Asian Infrastructure Finance report is published by AIIBWhich of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 3 only
- Which of the statements regarding the Cauvery River is incorrect?
 - Cauvery forms delta before falling in the Bay of Bengal
 - Mekadatu Dam is located on the Cauvery River.
 - Cauvery flows through Tamilnadu Karnataka and Andhrapradesh only
 - The river flow of Cauvery forms the famous Shivanasamudra Falls
- Recently the government decided to mark December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas in the memory of-
 - Guru Har Krishan Ji
 - Sons of Guru Hargobin ji
 - Sons of Guru Har Rai ji
 - sons of Gurugobind singh ji
- Consider the following statements regarding e-passport
 - The e-passport users will have physical storage of their biometric data in a chip.
 - It is launched as a part of the Passport Seva Programme (PSP) which is a mission mode project.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Consider the following statements
 - A Bhikku is a male priest in Buddhist monasticism.
 - Only male priests are members of the Sangha.
 - Pratimoksa is a set of rules that govern the lives of all Buddhist monastics.Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1,2 and 3

10. Consider the following statements regarding Model Code of Conduct

1. It is laid down in the Representation of People's Act, 1950
2. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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



Solutions

1. **(a):** It is an intergovernmental military alliance in Eurasia that consists of select post-Soviet states. It that was created in 2002.

Its' origin can be traced to the Collective Security Treaty, 1992 (Tashkent Treaty).

The CSTO membership presumes certain key security assurances and the most significant of which is deterring military aggression by third countries. In the CSTO, aggression against one signatory is perceived as aggression against all.

Current CSTO members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, and Tajikistan. Afghanistan and Serbia hold observer status in the CSTO.

2. **(d):** The confusion may occur in 3rd statement. So, the explanations for every statement are given below

❖ While our definition of drones is typically limited to unmanned vehicles, certain emerging forms of autonomous transportation function similarly to drones. China-based EHang, which went public last year, built an autonomous aerial vehicle (AAV) recently that operates with 4 rotors (quadcopter) for vertical takeoff. The vehicle is intended to transport passengers between destinations, even in an urban environment with plenty of obstacles. The AAV requires minimal passenger input and incorporates built-in systems that aim to allow safe landings in the event of engine failure or a collision. 3rd statement is correct

❖ Tracking animals also allows researchers to track disease. The ability to follow these animals provided further insight into the possible movement of infectious disease and its jumps from animals to humans. A team of researchers made up of scientists from the University of Washington and Stanford pioneered an experimental method for tracking the spread of and predicting transmissions of schistosomiasis tropical disease caused by parasitic worms. So, 1st statement is correct

❖ The Ocean Alliance is an example of an organization that has used drones (such as the marine SnotBot) to collect samples — specifically, mucus from whales. In addition to facilitating research on ecosystems, drones can also allow conservationists to combat poachers. So, 2nd statement is correct

3. **(c):** The SPG was set up in April 1985 under the Cabinet Secretariat by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and eventually by an act in 1988 it came into force.

The Act has been amended several times since its inception. When the law was notified in 1988, it provided for the security of only the PM and the members of their immediate family. Consequently, former PMs and their immediate family members were also brought under the umbrella of the SPG Act to provide security for a period of five years after demitting office.

The latest amendments in the Act came in 2019. The law was changed to provide for SPG security to the family of PMs only when they stay at the official residence. Similarly, security cover is to be provided to former PMs and their immediate families, living at the residence allotted to them. In August 2019, the government had withdrawn former PM Manmohan Singh's SPG cover along with the removal of the SPG security to the family members to Ex-prime minister Rajeev Gandhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is currently the only leader with SPG security.

4. **(a):** The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI), headquartered at Ballabgarh in Haryana state, is a statutory advisory body advising the Government of India's Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying (Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying). It also works under the aegis of the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying. It only advises the Government on any matter connected with animal welfare or the Prevention of infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals.
5. **(d):** Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is a multilateral development bank with a mission to improve social and economic outcomes in Asia and beyond. Its membership is not limited to Asian countries. Established in 2016 The bank currently has 103 members which include members from Europe Latin America, Oceania, and North America. China is the largest shareholder with 26.61 % voting shares in the bank followed by India (7.6%), Russia (6.01%), and Germany (4.2 %). Recently published AIIB's Asian Infrastructure Finance 2021 report examines how Asian economies have integrated global value chains (GVCs) into their growth models.
6. **(c):** The Kaveri river rises at Talakaveri in the Brahmagiri range in the Western Ghats, Kodagu district of the state of Karnataka. Cauvery river flows through Karnataka and Tamilnadu only. After the river leaves the Kodagu hills and flows onto the Deccan plateau, it forms two islands in Mandya district's Srirangapatna and Shivanasamudra. At Shivanasamudra the river drops 98 meters, forming the famous Shivanasamudra Falls. Mekedatu dam project on the Cauvery river is bone of content between the two states Tamilnadu and Karnataka.

7. **(d):** Recently the government has announced the decision to mark December 26 as Veer Bal Diwas in the memory of Guru Gobind Singh's sons namely Sahibzada Ajit Singh, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, and Sahibzada Fateh Singh. All four of his sons were initiated into the Khalsa and all were executed by Mughal forces before the age of 19. Sikhism honors the illustrious martyred sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji in the prayer of ardas for their valor and sacrifice as 'Char Sahibzade', that is the four princes of the Khalsa warrior order.
8. **(c):** Passport Seva Programme (PSP), is one of the several Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) of the Government of India. The latest agreement will facilitate the next phase of the PSP termed PSP-V2.0. New features of PSP-V2.0: Under this Issuance of the new generation of passports called e-passports. Under this, new and renewed passports will be fitted with a microchip that will hold all biometric information regarding the applicants. It will ease the immigration process across the world and will also increase digital safety for passport holders. The e-passport users will have physical storage of their biometric data in a chip which will reduce the risk of data leakage.
9. **(c):** Bhikkhu literally means "beggar" or "one who lives by alms". In the Dhammapada commentary of Buddhaghosa, a bhikkhu is defined as "the person who sees danger in samsara or cycle of rebirth". He, therefore, seeks ordination to obtain release from it. A bhikkhu is an ordained (to make somebody a priest) male in Buddhist monasticism. Male and female monastics are members of the Sangha (Buddhist community). The lives of all Buddhist monastics are governed by a set of rules called the pratimoksa or patimokkha.
10. **(b):** The Model Code of Conduct for the guidance of political parties and candidates is a set of norms that have been evolved with the consensus of political parties who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit. It does not have any statutory backing. The Model Code of Conduct comes into force immediately on the announcement of the election schedule by the commission for the need of ensuring free and fair elections.

3. Diabetes Insipidus occurs when the body is unable to respond or produce the Antidiuretic hormone (ADH), which is secreted by the hypothalamus. This hormone helps the kidneys manage the amount of water in the human body.
 4. Gestational Diabetes occurs in pregnant women who develop high blood sugar levels without a previous history. This condition usually resolves after delivery. India is home to more than 70 million diabetes people, it is the second-highest in the world after China.
9. (a): Biomining is the technique of extracting metals from ores and other solid materials typically using prokaryotes, fungi, or plants (phytoextraction also known as phytomining or biomining). These organisms secrete different organic compounds that chelate metals from the environment and bring it back to the cell where they are typically used to coordinate electrons. It was discovered in the mid-1900s that microorganisms use metals in the cell. Some microbes can use stable metals such as iron, copper, zinc, and gold as well as unstable atoms such as uranium and thorium.

A recent series of experiments on the international Space Station ISS has shown that biomining could be used to harvest useful materials for human settlements on the moon or Mars .

Also, note that mostly statements related to futuristic technology are generally correct. So you can safely mark it correct.

10. (b): 5G Technology is the next-generation cellular technology that will provide faster and more reliable communication with ultra-low latency. With 5G the peak network data speeds are expected to be in the range of 2-20 Gigabit per second (Gbps). South Korea was the first country to commercially launch 5G services. In India, 5G is expected to create a cumulative economic impact of \$1 trillion by 2035. The reserve price for the 5G spectrum has been set at ₹492 crores per MHz of spectrum in the 3,300-3,600MHz bands, which are considered ideal for 5G telecom services. It operates in the millimeter wave spectrum of 30-300 GHz which have the advantage of sending large amounts of data at very high speeds.

SET 3

1. Consider the following statements regarding The Ring of Fire
 1. Around 90% of the world's earthquakes and 80% of the world's largest earthquakes occur in the Ring of Fire,
 2. The stretch of the Ring of Fire which is a transform boundary, is responsible for the majority of earthquakes in the region.
 3. The Volcanic eruptions occur along the divergent boundary of tectonic plates in the ring of fire

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3
2. Recently an Undersea Volcanic Eruption consisted of two small uninhabited islands, Hunga-Ha'apai and Hunga-Tonga. These islands are part of-

(a) Japan (b) Malaysia
(c) Indonesia (d) Tonga
3. The ICARE program of the Ministry of Textiles was launched to promote-

(a) Cotton cultivation (b) Jute Cultivation
(c) Geotextiles innovation (d) Ramie Cultivation

4. Consider the following statements regarding Livestock Health and Disease Control (LH&DC) programme
 1. It is the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Ministry of Agriculture and farmer welfare.
 2. It aims to prevent the ingress of exotic animal diseases into the country through imported Livestock and Livestock Products
 3. Vaccination against Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis are provided to the livestock under this scheme

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3
5. Consider the following statements
 1. Kathak is found in three distinct forms, called "gharanas" namely Jaipur, Banaras, and Lucknow
 2. Kathak was made popular by the vaishnavite cult of the Bhakti movement.
 3. Pandit Birju Maharaj was associated with the Kathak dance form

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3

6. Which of the dance form is not correctly matched with the state it has been majorly practiced?
 (a) Sattriya dance-Odisha
 (b) Kuchipudi-Andhra Pradesh
 (c) Mohiniattam-Kerala
 (d) Bharatanatyam-Tamil nadu
7. The term 'herding' with respect to economics refers to-
 (a) A situation when increased interest rates lead to a reduction in private investment spending
 (b) Crowding behaviour that leads to an increase in prices of stocks due to fear of missing out.
 (c) When economic productive capacity is unable to keep pace with growing aggregate demand.
 (d) None of the above
8. Consider the following statements
 1. A supermoon occurs when the orbit of the moon is close to the Earth at the same time when the moon is full.

2. An exomoon or extrasolar moon is a natural satellite that orbits an exoplanet
 Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
 (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
 (c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2

9. Recently launched 'Hyderabad Declaration' is associated with-
 (a) Promoting accessible building plans
 (b) Promoting cyber security initiatives
 (c) Promoting E-governance
 (d) Promoting digital payments
10. Which among the following are the regions that form the part of China's "One country two systems"
 1. Taiwan 2. Macau
 3. Hong kong 4. Xinjiang
 Select the correct code from below:
 (a) 1,3 and 4 (b) 1,2 and 3
 (c) 2,3 and 4 (d) 1,2,3 and 4

Solutions

1. **(a):** The Ring of Fire is a string of volcanoes and sites of seismic activity, or earthquakes, around the edges of the Pacific Ocean. Roughly 90% of all earthquakes occur along the Ring of Fire, and the ring is dotted with 75% of all active volcanoes on Earth.
 The Ring of Fire is the result of plate tectonics (convergent plate boundary). Tectonic plates are huge slabs of the Earth's crust, which fit together like pieces of a puzzle.
 Most tectonic activity in the Ring of Fire occurs in these geologically active zones. A convergent plate boundary is formed by tectonic plates crashing into each other.
 Convergent boundaries are often subduction zones, where the heavier plate slips under the lighter plate, creating a deep trench. Then this subduction changes the dense mantle material into buoyant magma, which rises through the crust to the Earth's surface leading to the most devastating volcanic eruptions.
 The stretch of the Ring of Fire where it is a transform boundary, plates that move sideways past one another generates a large number of earthquakes as tension in Earth's crust builds up and is released.

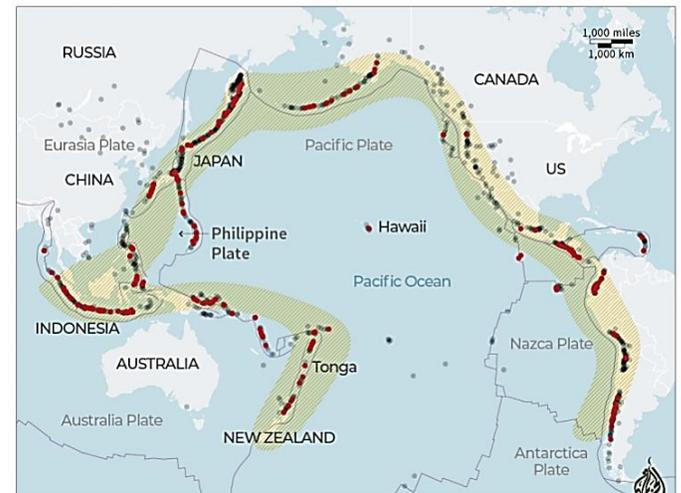
2. **(d):** Recently, a volcano erupted in the southern Pacific Island of Tonga, which triggered Tsunami waves around the Pacific. It is an Undersea Volcanic Eruption consisting of two small uninhabited islands, Hunga-Ha'apai and Hunga-Tonga. The Tonga Islands occur along the Ring of Fire—a perimeter of heightened volcanic and seismic activity that encircles the Pacific Ocean basin.

VOLCANOES

Where are the world's volcanoes?

There are some **1,350 potentially active volcanoes** around the world, Many are located along a **40,000km arc known as the "Ring of Fire."**

● Ring of Fire — Tectonic plate boundary ● Active volcano* ● Volcano



* With last known eruption documented from 2000.
 Source: Reuters; Global Volcanism Program, Smithsonian Institution; US Geological Survey

@AJLabs ALJAZEEHA

3. **(b):** Improved Cultivation and Advanced Retting Exercise for Jute (ICARE-Jute) Initiative:
The Jute-ICARE (Improved Cultivation and Advanced Retting Exercise) scheme was implemented for the improvement of quality and yield of raw jute production.
In 2015, ICARE-Jute was launched with a distribution of only about 60 MT Certified Jute Seeds which has been increased to over 600 MT in 2017.
Through the ICARE Program Government have supported 2.60 lakhs, farmers, by providing them 100% certified seeds at subsidized rates and by raising awareness of scientific jute cultivation practices
. The Jute Raw Material Bank (JRMB) Scheme is for supplying jute raw materials at mill gate price to MSME jute diversified product units.
4. **(b):** For the promotion of the health of livestock and animals, the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, a subsidiary department of the Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries implements a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Livestock Health & Disease Control" (LH&DC).
Aim: It envisages control & containment of economically important animal diseases by providing central financial assistance to the States. It also envisages To prevent the ingress of exotic animal diseases into the country through imported Livestock and Livestock Products and for 6 Animal Quarantine and Certification Services Centers (AQCS) in the country has been set up setup.
Under this scheme, Vaccination is carried out for the control of diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), Brucellosis, Anthrax, Hemorrhagic Septicemia (HS), Black Quarter (BQ), Classical Swine Fever, Ranikhet disease, etc.
5. **(d):** The word Kathak has been derived from the word Katha which means a story. *Kathakars* or storytellers, are people who narrate stories largely based on episodes from the epics, myths, and legends. The Vaishnavite cult which swept North India in the 15th century. and the resultant bhakti movement contributed to a whole new range of lyrics and musical forms. The Radha-Krishna theme proved immensely popular along with the works of Mirabai, Surdas, Nandadas, and Krishnadas.

Kathak is found in three distinct forms, called "gharanas", named after the cities where the Kathak dance tradition evolved – Jaipur, Banaras, and Lucknow. While the Jaipur Gharana focuses more on the foot movements, the Banaras and Lucknow gharanas focus more on facial expressions and graceful hand movements.
Recently the Kathak legend and Padma Vibhushan awardee Pandit Birju Maharaj (1938-2022) Passed away. He belonged to Jaipur Gharana.

6. **(a):** (a) Sattriya dance-Assam
(b) Kuchipudi-Andhra Pradesh
(c) Mohiniattam-Kerala
(d) Bharatanatyam-Tamil nadu
7. **(b):** Herding can be defined as the phenomenon of individuals deciding to follow others and imitating group behaviors rather than deciding independently and atomistically on the basis of their own, private information. When faced with uncertainty, people often copy the behavior of others. The stock market provides a great example. In fact, the behavior of crowds is often what causes large amounts of volatility in the stock markets--both on the upside and on the downside--because everyone wants to get in or out at the same time.
Other terms:
1. A situation when increased interest rates lead to a reduction in private investment spending such that it dampens the initial increase of total investment spending is called the crowding out effect.
2. when its productive capacity is unable to keep pace with growing aggregate demand it is called the Overheating of an economy.
Source:
8. **(c):** Astronomers have recently found evidence for a second supermoon beyond our solar system.
Exomoon
Close to 5,000 planets beyond our solar system, or exoplanets, have been identified, compared to only two such moons, called exomoons. An exomoon or extrasolar moon is a natural satellite that orbits an exoplanet or other non-stellar extrasolar body. It is inferred from the empirical study of natural satellites in the Solar System that they are likely to be common elements of planetary systems.
Supermoon
A supermoon occurs when the Moon's orbit is closest to the Earth at the same time that the Moon is full. As the Moon orbits the Earth, there is a point of time when the distance between the two is the least (called the perigee when the average distance is about 360,000 km from the Earth).

4. **(d):** Recently the parliament cleared the Dam safety act 2021.
It mandates the constitution of two national bodies: the National Committee on Dam Safety, whose functions include evolving policies and recommending regulations regarding dam safety standards; and the National Dam Safety Authority, whose functions include implementing policies of the National Committee, providing technical assistance to State Dam Safety Organisations (SDSOs), and resolving matters between SDSOs of states or between an SDSO and any dam owner in that state.
5. **(c):** Mullaperiyar Dam is a masonry gravity dam located on the Periyar River.
Vaigai river was seen in the news as recently an application was filed in the Supreme Court seeking appropriate direction to Government of Tamil Nadu to construct a new dam to augment the storage capacity of the Vaigai dam downstream or to take such steps to strengthen the [Mullaperiyar dam](#) till an alternative dam is constructed.
Vaigai is not an ephemeral river.
It originates in Varusanadu Hills, the Periyar Plateau of the Western Ghats range, and flows northeast through the Kambam Valley, which lies between the Palani Hills to the north and the Varushanad Hills to the south and eventually empties into the Palk Strait near Uchipuli, close to Pamban bridge in Ramanathapuram District.
Additional Info:
The Vattaparai Falls are located on this river.
6. **(d):** Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has approved a kit that will be used to detect Omicron. The kit is manufactured by Tata Medical and Diagnostics and is named OmiSure.
Currently, the kit that is being used to detect the Omicron variant in India is developed by US-based scientific instrumentation company Thermo Fisher. It uses the S Gene Target Failure (SGTF) strategy to detect the variant.
7. **(a):** A surety bond is provided by the insurance company on behalf of the contractor to the entity, which is awarding the project. When a principal breaks a bond's terms, the harmed party can make a claim on the bond to recover losses.
Recently The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has unveiled the final guidelines, facilitating the launch of various types of surety bonds in the country. The move has come after the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways last year requested Irdai to examine the possibility of offering surety bonds by general insurance companies.
8. **(c):** Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) is a common counter-terrorism grid under the Intelligence Bureau (IB) that was made operational in 2001 post-Kargil war.
MAC is the nodal agency for the exchange of intelligence collected by various agencies and police forces across the country.
As many as 28 organisations, including the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), armed forces and State police are part of the platform and various security agencies share real-time intelligence inputs on the MAC.
9. **(b):** Different types of Vaccines
Traditional vaccines such as a virion (entire virus particle) and subunit ones (pathogen fragment) contain inactivated parts of the virus that enter the body as antigens and trigger an immune response. A subunit vaccine is a vaccine that contains purified parts of the pathogen that are antigenic, or necessary to elicit a protective immune response. A "subunit" vaccine doesn't contain the whole pathogen, unlike a live-attenuated or inactivated vaccine, but contains only the antigenic parts such as proteins, polysaccharides or peptides. Thus statement 1 is incorrect.
Advantage of Sub-unit vaccines:
Because the vaccine doesn't contain "live" components of the pathogen, there is no risk of introducing the disease and is safer and more stable than a vaccine containing whole pathogens. Well-established technology and is suitable for immunocompromised individuals. Subunit vaccines can be created via genetic engineering.
Disadvantages include:
Relatively complex to manufacture compared to some vaccines (such as RNA vaccine), possibly requiring adjuvants and booster shots, and requiring time to examine which antigenic combinations may work best. mRNA or DNA vaccines contain modified genes that use the body's cells to make the immune-triggering antigen.
10. **(a):** Chilika Lake is a brackish water lake, with lagoonal characteristics, spread over the Puri, Khurda and Ganjam districts of Orissa state on the east coast of India.
- It is situated at the mouth of the Daya river which flows into the Bay of Bengal. In 1981, Chilika Lake has designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
 - The Nalaban Island within the lake is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
 - The Irrawaddy dolphin (*Orcaella brevirostris*) is the flagship species of Chilika lake.
 - It is the largest wintering ground for migratory birds on the Indian subcontinent. The lake is home to a number of threatened species of plants and animals

2. (a): The Henley Passport Index is released on the basis of the data provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which keeps a repository of the world's most accurate database of travel information

In a significant improvement from the ranking of last year, the Indian passport has strengthened as the country improved its passport ranking in the Henley Passport Index 2022. Climbing from its earlier ranking of 90th, the country's passport has now reached the 83rd rank. And Japan retained the top rank.

3. (a): India's Polymetallic Nodules program is oriented towards the exploration and development of technologies for harnessing nodules from the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) allocated to India.

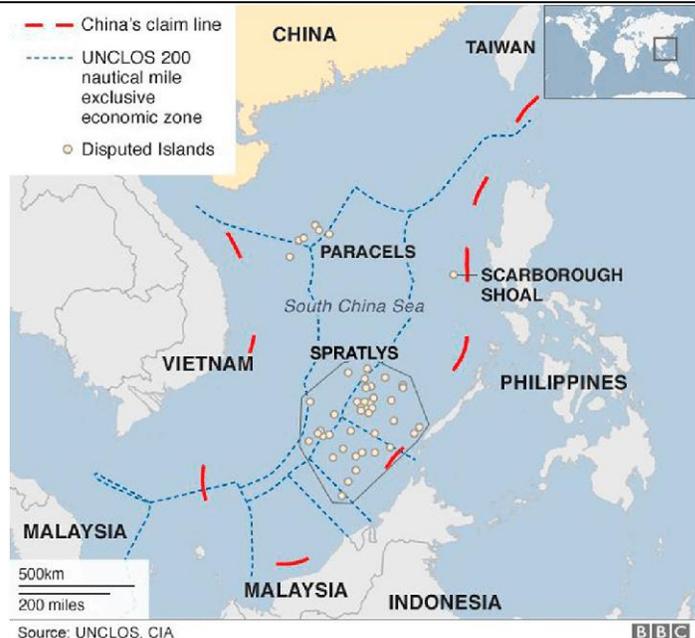
India has entered into a 15-year contract with the International Seabed Authority in the year 2002 for pursuing developmental activities for polymetallic nodules in the Indian Ocean.

Ministry of earth sciences is the nodal agency for this.

4. (c): Siachen Glacier: It is located in the Eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayas. It is the Second-Longest glacier in the World's Non-Polar areas. It borders the Shaksgam valley.



5. (b): The nine-dash line, at various times also referred to as the ten-dash line and the eleven-dash line (by the ROC), is the demarcation line used by the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China, for their claims of the major part of the South China Sea. The contested area in the South China Sea includes the Paracel Islands, the Spratly Islands, of which Taiping Island, the largest of the islands, is controlled by the ROC, and various other areas including Pratas Island and the Vereker Banks, the Macclesfield Bank, and the Scarborough Shoal. The claim encompasses the area of Chinese land reclamation known as the "Great Wall of Sand".



6. (a): Assam's border disputes with Meghalaya and Mizoram are currently in the phase of resolution through negotiations. The border dispute with Mizoram recently turned violent, leading to intervention from the Centre.

The Assam-Meghalaya border dispute is the areas of Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli, and Retacherra.

Meghalaya was carved out of Assam under the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971, a law that it challenged, leading to disputes.

7. (b): Indian Accounting Standard (abbreviated as Ind-AS) is the Accounting standard adopted by companies in India and issued under the supervision of the Accounting Standards Board (ASB) which was constituted as a body in the year 1977. ASB is a committee under the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). ICAI is an independent body formed under an act of parliament.

ASB formulates Accounting Standards with a view to assisting the Council of the ICAI in evolving and establishing Accounting Standards in India.

8. (c): The Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) is an agreement between Malaysia and India to strengthen bilateral trade. India has a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with South Korea and Japan. India and Afghanistan have a free trade agreement

9. (a): India's wholesale price index (WPI) for December 2021 eased marginally to 13.56% compared with the record-high of 14.23% last November but remained in double digits for the ninth consecutive month. Month over Month Change in Major Groups of WPI:

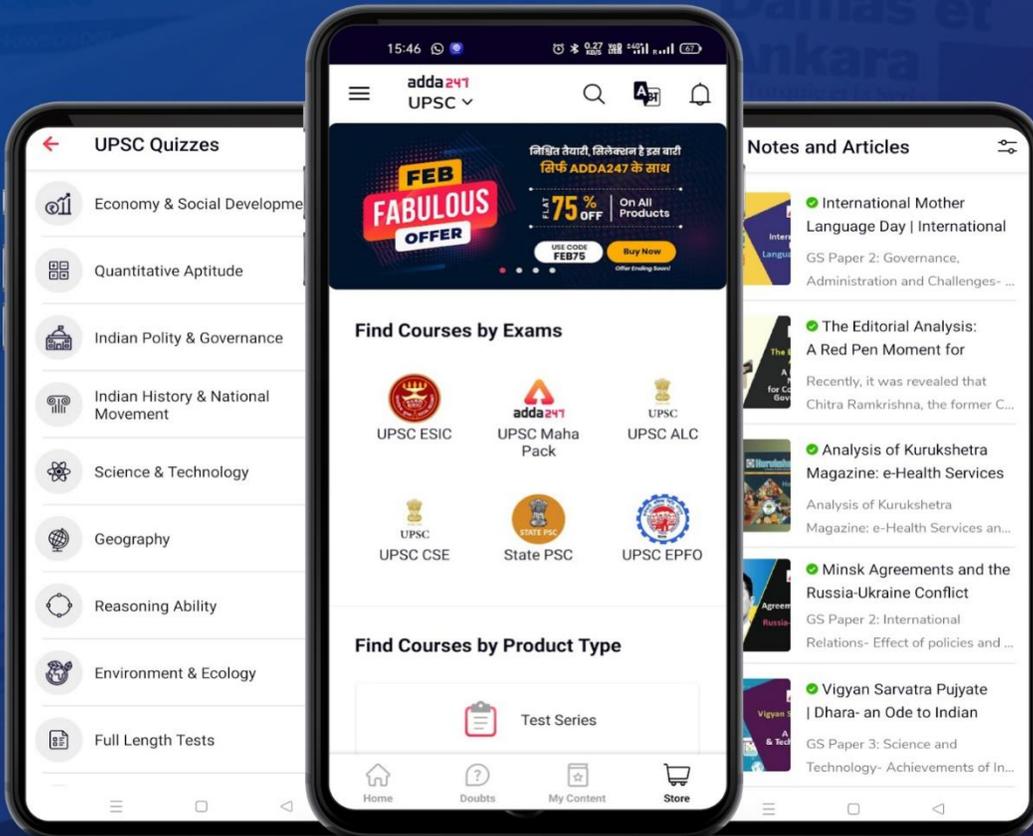


10. (a): Article 190 (4) of the Constitution, says, "If for a period of sixty days a member of a House of the Legislature of a State is without permission of the House absent from all meetings thereof, the House may declare his seat vacant."

Under Section 151 (A) of The Representation of the People Act, 1951, "a bye-election for filling any vacancy... [in the House] shall be held within a period of six months from the date of the occurrence of the vacancy". This means that barring exceptions specified under this section, no constituency can remain without a representative for more than six months.



Prepare for
UPSC & STATE PSC EXAMS



UPSC Adda247 App Features

- Daily Top News & Headlines
- Daily Current Affairs Articles
- Daily Editorial Analysis
- General Studies Revision Notes
- Daily Current Affairs Quiz with Detailed Solutions
- Topic Wise GS & CSAT Quizzes
- Monthly Current Affairs Magazine
- Gist of Yojana, Kurukshetra & Down to Earth Magazines
- Analysis of Sansad TV Discussions
- All Content Available in Hindi Medium as well!



Download
Our App Now!

