

**December  
2023**

# CURRENT AFFAIRS

## MONTHLY MAGAZINE

*For Integrated Preparation of  
CSE Prelims + Main + Interview*

**World's First  
AI Law**

**NCRB REPORT  
2022**

**IPC  
CrPC  
Indian  
Evidence  
Act**

**Bharatiya Nyaya  
Sanhita  
Bharatiya Nagarik  
Suraksha Sanhita  
Bharatiya  
Sakshya Bill**

**New Criminal Law Bills**

**COP28  
UAE**

**GOA  
LIBERATION  
DAY**

**ARTICLE  
370**

**INCLUDES**

**Practice  
Questions  
(Prelims\* &  
Mains) After  
each Topic**

*\*MCQs on Prelims 2023 Pattern*

**YOJANA  
(December 2023)  
Theme: Year-End  
Special**

**PRELIMS 2024  
SPECIAL**  
Constitutional Developments  
During British Rule

- New Criminal Law Bills Passed by Parliament
- CEC and Other ECs Bill, 2023, PM-JANMAN
- SC verdict upholds Article 370 abrogation
- World's First Law on AI Regulation
- UN Resolution on Gaza Ceasefire
- Reserve Bank of India's Reports

- Conference of the Parties (COP-28), Vision @2047
- Global Partnership on AI Summit and Delhi Declaration
- India's Security Infrastructure after Mumbai Terror Attacks
- NCRB 2022 Report, Goa Liberation Day
- Iftar added to UNESCO cultural heritage list
- Enforcement Directorate's Powers of Arrest

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## POLITY &amp; GOVERNANCE

## NEW CRIMINAL LAW BILLS PASSED BY PARLIAMENT

**Why in News:** Parliament passed three pivotal Bills: *Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita*, 2023; *Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita*, 2023; and *Bharatiya Sakshya (Second) Bill*, 2023.

Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita	Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita	Bhartiya Sakshya Bill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deals with criminal offences and their punishments</li> <li>Enforced by the Police who investigate and by the Courts who adjudicate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deals with the procedure for implementing the BNS</li> <li>It is enforced by the law enforcement agencies, lawyers, judges and other judicial authorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It guarantees that only credible and admissible proof is given in court, thereby improving the quality of justice.</li> <li>It protects the rights of witnesses and accused by defining the circumstances under which they can be forced to testify</li> </ul>

## BHARTIYA NYAYA SANHITA 2023

## Definitions and Punishments

- Transgender Definition:** Clause 2(9) defines “transgender” in alignment with the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**.
- Community Service as Punishment:** Clause 4(f) introduces community service for petty offenses such as non-appearance, attempt to compel a public servant, petty theft, etc.
- Abetment Outside India:** Section 48 enables prosecution of individuals located in foreign countries for abetment.
- Deceitful Sexual Intercourse:** Clause 69 makes sexual intercourse via **deceit** an **offense**, including false promises of employment or marriage by suppressing identity.
- Child Employment for Offenses:** Section 93 holds accountable those employing or engaging children for offenses like sexual exploitation or pornography.
- Murder by Group:** Amendment in Clause 101 punishes groups committing murder based on various grounds.
- Revised Punishment for Murder by Life-Convict:** Clause 102 introduces two alternate punishments running consecutively to replace existing section 303.
- Hit and Run Provision:** Clause 104(2) addresses the rising instances of hit and run cases.
- Offenses of Organized Crime:** Clause 109 prescribes punishments for organized crime offenses.
- Petty Organized Crime:** Clause 110 deals with petty organized crime, while Clause 111 addresses terrorism.
- Offenses Resulting in Hurt:** Clauses 115(3) and 115(4)

cover grievous hurt resulting in disabilities or caused by a mob.

- Endangering Sovereignty:** Clause 150 introduces an offense related to endangering India’s sovereignty.

## Other Amendments

- Suicide and Public Servant’s Power:** Clause 224 punishes those **attempting suicide to compel or restrain a public servant’s lawful power**.
- Snatching Offenses:** Clause 302 introduces imprisonment for **snatching offenses, addressing rampant chain or mobile snatching**.

## REPEALED/OMITTED SECTIONS

- Section 377:** Removed relating to **unnatural sex**.
- Section 497:** Deleted following Supreme Court’s reading down on **adultery**.
- Section 124A:** Omitted relating to **sedition**.

## AMENDMENTS FOR GENDER NEUTRALITY

## Gender-Inclusive Changes

- Gender-Neutral Provisions:** Sections on **disrobing, voyeurism, procurement, and importation** of minors from foreign countries have been made gender-neutral.

## Other Amendments/Changes

- Calendar Year Reference:** Changed to “**Gregorian calendar year**” in Clause 2(20).
- Terms Replacement:** Terms like “**idiot**,” “**lunatic**,” replaced with more appropriate terms in line with the **Mental Health Care Act, 2017**.



- **Life Imprisonment Definition:** Imprisonment for life redefined as **natural life** in Clause 4(b).
- **Enhanced Punishments:** Fines and terms of imprisonment for various offenses have been increased for better alignment with the severity of the crimes committed.

## MAJOR CHANGES IN THE BILL RELATED TO THE BHARTIYA SAKSHYA ADHINIYAM, 2023

### 1. Deletion of British Legacy References:

- Removed terminology such as 'Parliament of the United Kingdom,' 'notification by the Crown Representative,' 'London Gazette,' etc.
- Replaced terms like 'Vakil,' 'Pleader,' and 'Barrister' with 'Advocate' and updated outdated terms like 'lunatic' and 'unsound mind.'

### 2. Use of Technology and Digital Means:

- **Expanded the definition of documents** to include electronic or digital records from emails, server logs, computers, etc.
- **Broader definition of evidence** now encompasses electronically given information, enabling electronic appearances of witnesses, accused, experts, and victims.

### 3. Confession Impacting Joint Trials:

Added an explanation for joint trials when an accused absconds or fails to comply with issued proclamations.

### 4. Judicial Notice of Extraterritorial Jurisdiction:

Courts now recognize **international treaties**, agreements, decisions made in international bodies.

### 5. Primary Evidence Expansion:

Primary evidence now includes electronic or digital records stored in various devices.

### 6. Secondary Evidence Broadening:

Enlarged to encompass copies made by mechanical processes, counterparts of documents, oral accounts, etc.

### 7. Admissibility of Electronic Records:

Introduced a section to allow the admissibility of electronic or digital records.

### 8. Electronic Records Certification:

Added a certificate to authenticate electronic records under specific conditions.

### 9. Non-Inquiry into Privileged Communication:

A proviso has been added to prevent courts from inquiring into privileged communication between Ministers and the President of India.

## THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA (BNSS)

### 1. General Provisions and Citizen-Centric approach related changes

- **Repeal of CrPC, 1973:** Emphasis on technology and forensic sciences in investigations.
- **Time-Bound Procedures:** Specific timelines for investigations, trials, and judgments.

- **Victim-Centric Approaches:** Prioritizing victim rights, providing copies of first information reports and updates on investigations through digital means.
- **Victim's Hearing Opportunity:** Victims to be heard before the Government withdraws cases with severe punishments.

### 2. Amendment in Criminal Procedure:

- **Special Laws Superseding General Procedures:** Clarification that special laws take **precedence** over the Code of Criminal Procedure in cases of **conflict**.
- **Technology Integration:** Electronic serving of summons, warrants, etc., for efficiency.
- **Simplification of Court Structure:** Elimination of British-era designations in the court system.
- **Special Executive Magistrates:** Permission for police officers to act as Special Executive Magistrates.
- **Appointment of Public Prosecutors in Delhi:** Central Government appointment of Public Prosecutors in Delhi for trials and appeals.
- **Directorate of Prosecutions:** Establishment and definition of roles and powers of the Directorate of Prosecutions.
- **Fines and Arrest Conditions:** Increased maximum fines and conditions for arrests, requiring specific permissions.
- **Designated Officers for Arrested Individuals:** Mandating designated police officers to inform the public about arrested individuals.
- **Medical Examination of Arrested Persons:** Prompt medical examination of arrested individuals with reports forwarded to investigating officers.
- **Arrest Procedures for Women:** Specific provisions regarding the arrest of women, including informing relatives or designated individuals.
- **Guidelines for Handcuff Usage:** Guidelines for police officers regarding handcuff usage during arrests, considering the offense's nature.
- **Service of Summons to Adult Family Members:** Enabling summons to be served to any adult family member, ensuring gender parity.
- **Proclaimed Offenders' Forfeiture of Property Abroad:** Provisions introduced to identify, attach, and forfeit properties of proclaimed offenders overseas.
- **Videography of Search Operations:** Mandatory videography of search and seizure operations for transparency.
- **Safeguards for Armed Forces Personnel:** Safeguards to prevent cases against armed forces personnel without prior consent from Government.

- **Introduction of “Zero FIR”:** Facilitation of filing “Zero FIRs” for offenses occurring outside a police station’s jurisdiction but within the State.

### Challenges

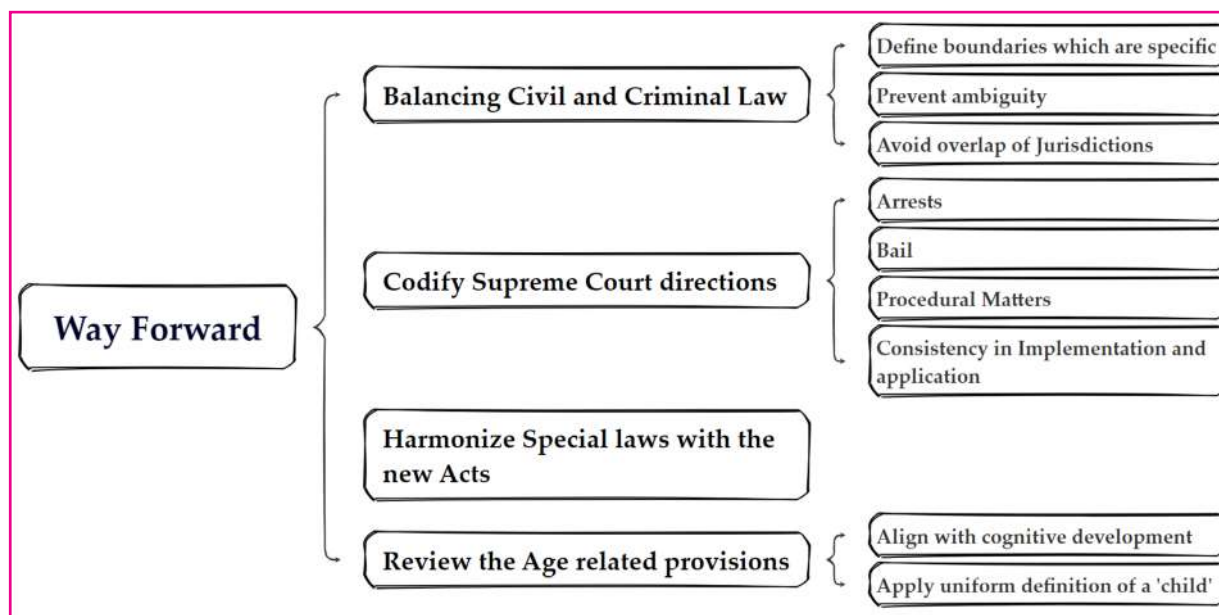
While the reform of colonial era justice system was necessary, there are some concerns that have been highlighted by the Parliamentary Committees in examining the bills. These are:

- General **lack of diversity** in the experts consulted and the haste with which new laws were introduced and passed.
- The aim of throwing off **colonial shackles** has remained a challenge as the definitions and words might have changed but the substance of many provisions remains the same.

- For instance, while **Sedition** has been removed, **Section 150** of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita essentially fulfils the same purpose.

- The absence of a **uniform sentencing policy** raises concerns about equitable justice. The definition of child varying across various laws also poses a challenge.
- while digitalisation initiatives are **commendable**, they **lack coherence** with existing electronic legal frameworks and face challenges in practical implementation.

Thus, while the Bills aim for a transformative shift in the justice system, their limitations call for extensive re-evaluation to ensure meaningful and effective reforms without disrupting established legal principles unnecessarily.



### Conclusion

- Over the years, India's criminal laws have undergone development, shaped by **indigenous legal traditions**, foreign incursions, and the **legacy of colonial rule**.
- Ongoing reforms in the legal system aim to **tackle modern challenges** while upholding the **fundamental principles of justice, equity, and human rights**.

*For a background on this issue and the need for amendment of criminal laws, kindly refer to Chahal's Monthly Magazine of August 2023 (Article titled "Bills to Overhaul India's Criminal Justice System").*

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita, 2023:

1. It adds community service as a form of punishment.
2. It does not treat Sedition as an offence.

3. It introduces a new offence for acts endangering the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
4. It gives the definition of terrorism.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: d

#### Descriptive Question

Q. Discuss the significance and challenges associated with the recent overhaul of criminal laws in India, replacing outdated statutes with new ones. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

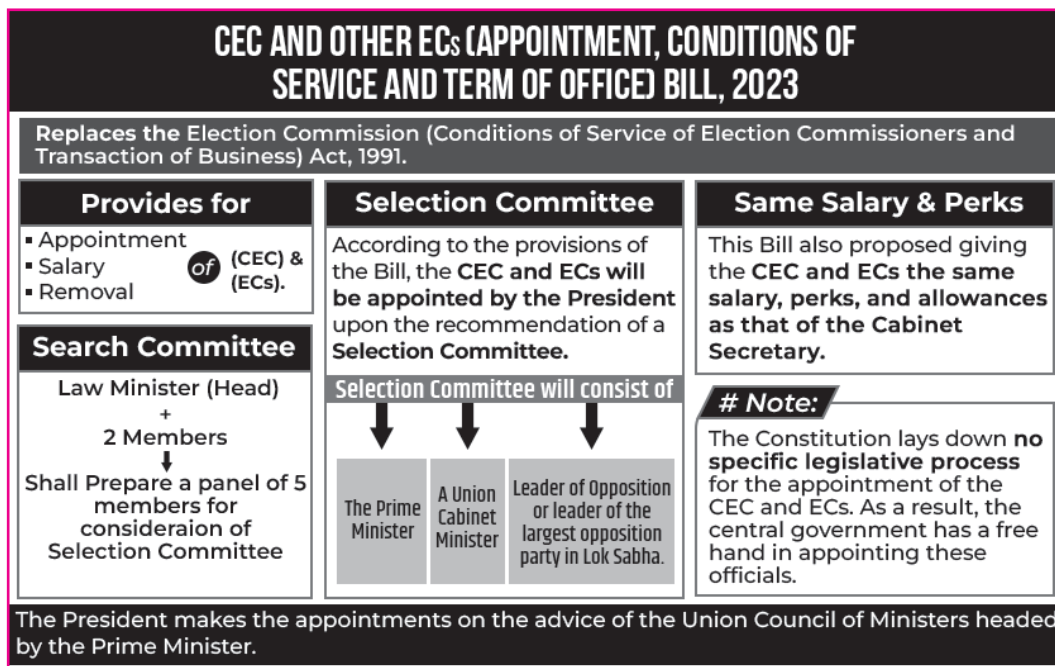
For Approach Answer, Scan:



## CHIEF ELECTION COMMISSIONER (CEC) AND OTHER ELECTION COMMISSIONERS (ECs) BILL, 2023

**Why in News:** The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Bill, 2023 was recently passed in the Parliament.

### About the Bill



### Criticism

- The selection process of the Election Commissioners may be dominated by the government, which has implications for its independence.
- Accepting the Selection Committee's recommendations in spite of a vacancy in its constitution may effectively lead to a monopoly of government members in selecting candidates.
- Making the CEC and EC's salary equivalent to the Cabinet Secretary may lead to government influence as it is fixed by the government. This is unlike the salary of a Supreme Court judge which is fixed through an Act of Parliament.
- CECs and ECs also perform quasi-judicial functions. Limiting these posts to senior bureaucrats may exclude other suitable candidates.
  - Although, till date most of the CECs and the Election Commissioners have generally been a member of the bureaucracy.
- The apparent **downgrading of the status of the Election Commissioners**.
  - While the **salaries of a Supreme Court judge and the Cabinet Secretary are the same**, there are **differences in the allowances and perks**.
- It is **argued** that the **Election Commissioners currently have the status of a Supreme Court judge** and can **summon senior officials** and even **Ministers**.

- If this **status is changed** to that of a government official, it would **affect their ability to do so**.

### Existing Provisions for Appointment to ECI

#### ✓ Constitutional Provisions

- **Part XV (Article 324-329)** of the Indian Constitution: It deals with elections and establishes a commission for these matters.

#### ✓ Structure of ECI

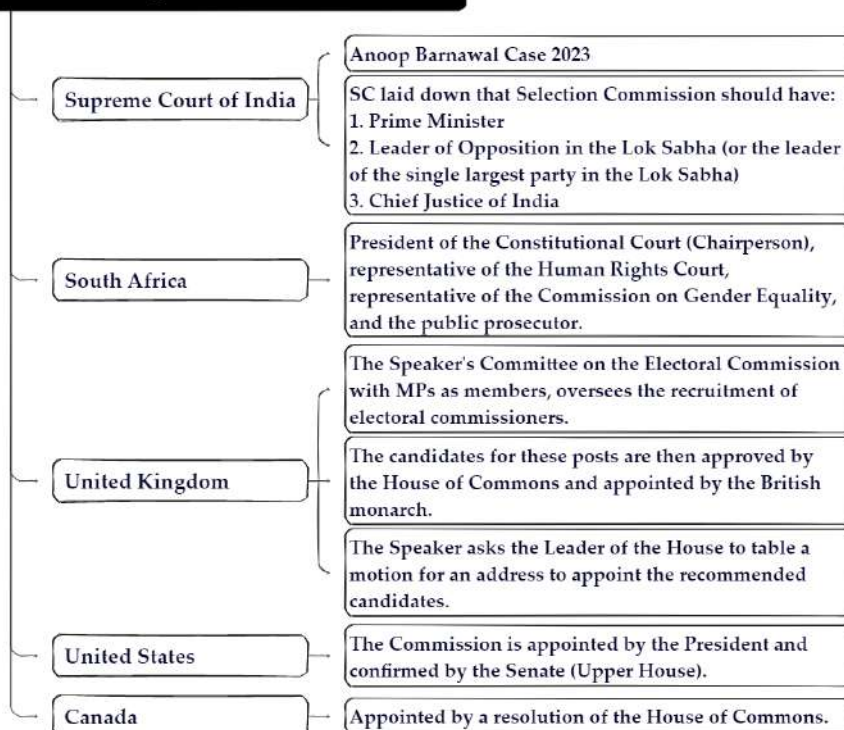
- Originally the commission had only one EC but after the Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989, it was made a multi-member body (1 CEC & 2 other ECs.).
- According to **Article 324**, the Election Commission shall consist of the CEC and such number of other election commissioners, if any, as the President may from time-to-time fix.

#### ✓ Appointment Procedure

- **Article 324(2)**: The appointment of the CEC and other Election Commissioners shall be made by the President, subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament.
- The **President determines the conditions of service** and tenure of office of the Election.

- They have **tenure of six years**, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- ✓ **Removal**
  - They can **resign anytime** or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.
  - The CEC can be removed from office only through a **process of removal similar to that of a SC judge by the President**.
  - Any other EC cannot be removed except on the recommendation of CEC.

## APPOINTMENT OF ELECTION COMMISSIONS (A look at different ways)



### Conclusion

To enhance the credibility of the selection process, the government **should involve independent experts, jurists, and civil society representatives in the Search Committee or as observers** in the Selection Committee. Their presence could help **maintain the integrity of the process**.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements: [UPSC CSE 2017]

1. The Election Commission of India is a five-member body.
2. The Union Ministry of Home Affairs decides the election schedule for the conduct of both general elections and bye-elections.
3. Election Commission resolves the disputes relating to splits/mergers of recognised political parties.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: d

#### Descriptive Question

Q. Election Commission of India has come under criticism in recent times. Discuss. Also suggest reforms that are needed to make the Election Commission of India more robust and to uphold its independence. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

For Approach Answer, Scan:





## SC VERDICT ON ABROGATION OF ARTICLE 370

**Why in News:** The Supreme Court gave its verdict on the Union government's 2019 move to amend Article 370 of the Constitution.

### ART 370 FOR INTEGRATION, NOT DISINTEGRATION: SC

WHAT ART 370 SAYS ABOUT SCRAPPING PROVISIONS	WHAT SC JUDGMENT SAYS
Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may, by public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative...	Erstwhile J&K state did not have internal sovereignty different from other states of the country after it became part of India
Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State... shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification	'Exercise of presidential power to issue constitutional order abrogating Article 370 of Constitution' is valid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Petitioners said that since J&amp;K constituent assembly had ceased to exist, Art 370 became a permanent feature</li> <li>➤ SC says 'President had the power to issue a notification declaring that Article 370(3) ceases to operate without the recommendation of the constituent assembly'. Also says 'President did not have to secure the concurrence' of the state govt or Union govt acting on behalf of the state govt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constituent assembly of J&amp;K was never intended to be a permanent body; Article 370 was a temporary provision</li> <li>Creation of the UT of Ladakh upheld; not necessary to look into the same for UT of Jammu &amp; Kashmir since it is temporary</li> <li>EC to conduct elections to J&amp;K legislative assembly by Sept 30, 2024. 'Restoration of statehood shall take place at the earliest</li> <li>➤ Bench pronounced 3 separate and concurring judgments</li> <li>➤ Justice SK Kaul sought 'impartial truth &amp; reconciliation' panel to probe human rights violations by state and non-state actors</li> </ul>

#### Key details

- What did the Centre do in 2019?
  - The abrogation ended the special status conferred to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
  - The Centre later moved to reorganise J&K into two Union Territories:
    - ◆ Jammu and Kashmir
    - ◆ Ladakh
- What did the Supreme Court (SC) rule on revocation of Article 370?
  - The court held the Constitutional order that revoked Article 370 as valid.
  - The SC held that Jammu and Kashmir held no internal sovereignty after accession to India.
  - There was no prima facie case that the President's 2019 orders were mala fide (in bad faith) or extraneous exercise of power.
  - The reorganisation of the erstwhile state into Union Territories in 2019 was a temporary move.
- It directed the Centre for the restoration of Jammu and Kashmir's statehood and for Legislative Assembly elections to be held by 2024.
- It also recommended that a Truth and Reconciliation Commission should be set up in J&K, for an acknowledgement of the acts of alleged rights violations in the region.

#### Key aspects of Supreme Court's Article 370 verdict

- On the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir
  - The petitioners had argued that J&K retained an element of sovereignty when it joined the Indian Union in 1947.
  - This arrangement was distinct from the relationship with the other princely states that merged with India.
  - The court examined the constitutional set-up of the erstwhile state to examine if it retained an element of sovereignty, which would allow Article 370 to operate in "unique circumstances".
  - The court held that constitutional provisions contradict the argument that an agreement of merger was necessary for Jammu and Kashmir to surrender its sovereignty.
  - It noted that when Yuvraj Karan Singh issued the Proclamation adopting the Indian Constitution on November 25, 1949, it effectively had the effect of a merger like any other princely state.
- On whether Article 370 is temporary or permanent
  - The CJI said that there were two aspects that showed the temporary nature of Article 370:
    - ◆ First, it was intended as an interim arrangement until the Constituent Assembly of the State was formed since in the interim, there was needed a legal bridge between J&K and India.
  - Once the J&K Constitution was enacted and it was adopted to be a part of India, this arrangement would not have been necessary.
    - ◆ Second, the provision was adopted because of the special circumstances in the state, which was experiencing war conditions.
- On the legality of the abrogation of Article 370
  - The legal route for the abrogation of Article 370 was two-fold.
    - ◆ First, on August 5, 2019, then President Ram Nath Kovind issued an order, which amended Article 367 of the Constitution.
  - Article 367 deals with interpretation of the Constitution, and the order added a new meaning to "Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir" to mean "legislative assembly of Jammu and Kashmir."
    - ◆ Then the Presidential Order was promulgated seeking the consent of Parliament (which had assumed powers of the J&K legislature) to

recommend that all clauses of the said Article 370 shall cease to be operative.

- The Court held that the **power under Article 370 (3) did not cease** to exist upon the **dissolution** of the **Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir**.
- When the Constituent Assembly was dissolved, **only the transitional power** recognised in the proviso to Article 370 (3) which empowered the Constituent Assembly to make its recommendations **ceased to exist**.
- It **did not affect** the **power held by the President under Article 370(3)**.
- **On the action that was taken under President's rule**
  - The **challenge** was to the **extent of powers** that can be appropriated when **Article 356 is in operation**.
  - The SC cited the **1994 ruling in S R Bommai v Union of India** that defined the contours of **proclamation of President's rule**.
  - Relying on the Bommai ruling, the court said that the **standard to decide the validity of the President's action** was to see **whether it was not mala fide** or **palpably irrational**, or that the **advisability and necessity** of the action was **not borne in mind by the President**.
  - The ruling **rejected the argument** that **irrevocable action** being taken **cannot be accepted as proof of mala fides**.
- **Restoration of Statehood and Elections**
  - SC said the **reorganisation** of the former state into Union Territories in 2019 was a **temporary move**.
  - It **upheld the carving out of Ladakh** as a Union Territory.
  - It ordered the Centre to **restore statehood** and called for elections by September 2024.
- **Decision of the Centre Can't Be Challenged**
  - The Supreme Court said **every decision taken by the Union** on behalf of the state during President's Rule is **not open to challenge**.
  - The court **rejected** the argument of petitioners that the **Union cannot take actions of irreversible consequences** when the **state is under President's Rule**.
- **Concurrence of State Government Not Required**
  - The Supreme Court stated that the **presidential power in a state** was **valid** and held that **consultation and collaboration** was **not required** to exercise this power and the **concurrence of the state government** was **not required** to apply all provisions of the Constitution using **Article 370(1)(d)**.
  - Thus, the President taking the concurrence of the Union Government was **not mala fide** and the **views of the state legislature** under **Article 3** proviso was **merely for reference**.

## ABOUT ARTICLE 370

### Enactment of Article 370

- The **original draft** was given by the **Government of J&K**.
- Following modification and negotiations, **Article 306A (now 370)** was **passed** in the Constituent Assembly on **May 27, 1949**.
- It is the **first article of Part XXI** of the Constitution.
- The heading of this part is '**Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**'.
- Article 370 could be **interpreted as temporary** in the sense that the **J&K Constituent Assembly had a right to modify/delete/retain it** and it decided to retain it.
- Another interpretation was that **accession was temporary** until a **plebiscite**.

### Arguments in favour of Special status for J & K (Article 370)

- ✓ **Better relationship** with Indians and Kashmir Population.
- ✓ There is **no distinct constitution** for Indians and Kashmiris.
- ✓ After Article 370 is repealed, **Kashmiris can work** in the Indians' newly established firms
- ✓ People of Kashmir will also **benefit economically** if they sell their lands to the Indians on a leasing basis.
- ✓ **Private business** owners can establish factories in Kashmir, creating **jobs for Kashmiris and Indians**.
- ✓ With the repeal of Article 370, all Kashmiris now have the **right to education**.

### Arguments against the repeal of Article 370

- Many proclaim it as **unconstitutional** and it was compared to a dictatorship
- The people of Kashmir believe that their **demands are being ignored**.
- J&K no longer has the **status of a state**; instead, it is now considered to be union territory.

### Conclusion

The judgement is historic and may pave the way to **resolving complex political and legal issues** within constitutional parameters. In essence, the Supreme Court's affirmation of the constitutional validity regarding the abrogation of Article 370 marks a significant milestone in India's journey toward **unity and integration**. This judicial affirmation not only upholds the constitutional principles but also **embodies the message of "Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat"**.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the followings states:

- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1. Himachal Pradesh | 2. Mizoram   |
| 3. Tripura          | 4. Meghalaya |
| 5. Uttarakhand      |              |

How many of the above have Special Category Status?

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

Answer d

### Descriptive Question

Q. Examine the positive outcomes and impacts of the abrogation of Article 370 on the integration and socio-economic development of Jammu and Kashmir. [10 Marks] [150 Words]

## SR BOMMAI JUDGMENT

**Why in News:** Recently, in upholding the abrogation of Article 370, the Supreme Court relied heavily on its landmark judgement in *SR Bommai v Union of India* (1994).

### About the SR Bommai case

- In *Bommai*, a **nine-judge bench** of the Supreme Court interpreted **Article 356** of the Constitution to **define the contours of proclamation of President's rule**.
- Article 356 contains provisions in case of **failure of constitutional machinery** in States, including that for the **imposition of President's rule**.
- While all nine judges unanimously upheld the provision, the **Court ruled** that the President's decision would be **subject to judicial review**.
- Bommai judgement* is still the **settled law on when and how President's rule can be imposed**.
- It was invoked in **recent cases** challenging President's rule in **Uttarakhand** (2016) and **Arunachal Pradesh** (2016), both of which were overturned by the Supreme Court.
- The main points of the judgement were:
  - The constitution is federal in nature and federalism is a basic structure of the constitution.
  - Greater power conferred on the centre vis a vis the states does not mean that state governments are mere appendages of the Centre. They have independent constitutional existence and are not satellites or agents of the Centre.
  - Power of the President to dismiss a State Govt. is not absolute.
  - President should use this power only after his proclamation has been approved by both houses of Parliament
  - The proclamation under Article 356 is subject to Judicial Review.
- The SC unanimously held that the **President's proclamation can be subject to judicial review** on grounds of **illegality, malafide, extraneous considerations, abuse of power, or fraud**.

- While the **President's subjective appraisal** of the issue **cannot be examined**, the Court said that the **material relied on for making the decision can be reviewed**.
- Verdict also made **Parliamentary approval necessary** for imposing President's rule.
- Only after the proclamation is **approved by both Houses of Parliament** can the President exercise the power.
  - Till then, the President can **only suspend the state legislature**.
- If the **Parliament does not approve** the proclamation **within two months**, then the **government** that was dismissed would **automatically stand revived**.
- The **imposition of President's rule drastically decreased after the Bommai verdict**.
  - Between **January 1950 and March 1994**, President's Rule was imposed **100 times** or an average of 2.5 times a year.
  - Between **1995 and 2021**, it has been imposed **only 29 times** or a little more than once a year.

### The Jammu and Kashmir reference

- The **key question involved**:
  - Whether **Article 370 could have been abrogated** when the **state was under President's rule**.
  - The erstwhile state had been **under President's rule since 2018**, and the question before the court was **whether the President could give consent** to the **revocation of J&K's special status**.
- Supreme Court relied on the Bommai ruling** to hold that the actions of the President are **constitutionally valid**.
- The Court said that the *Bommai* ruling held that the actions taken by the President after issuing a Proclamation are **subject to judicial review**.
- The Court cited **two standards**:
  - One where the court had set the standard of **whether the exercise of power was mala fide or palpably irrational**, and
  - Another where it had observed that the **advisability and necessity** of the action **must be borne in mind by the President**.

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Supreme Court judgement in *SR Bommai v Union of India* (1994), consider the following statements:

- The Supreme Court ruled that the proclamation of President's rule is subject to judicial review.
- This Verdict made the Parliamentary approval necessary for imposition of the President's rule.

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

Answer: c

### Descriptive Question

Q. Discuss the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court in the *SR Bommai v Union of India* (1994) case, focusing on its implications for the imposition of President's Rule in Indian states. [10 Marks] [150 Words]

## KARAN SINGH'S PROCLAMATION (1949)

**Why in News:** In upholding the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court recalled that in November 1949, Yuvraj Karan Singh, heir to the throne of Jammu and Kashmir, had issued a proclamation that reflected the full and final surrender of [J&K's] sovereignty to India.

### ACCESSION AND AFTER

**OCT 26, 1947:** Following the invasion by tribesmen supported by Pak army, Maharaja Hari Singh sought Indian assistance, eventually leading him to sign Instrument of Accession (IoA).

**MAY 27, 1949:** Constituent Assembly of India cleared draft Article 370, as per the terms in the IoA.

**MAY 1, 1951:** Dr Karan Singh issued a proclamation convening the Constituent Assembly for the State.

**1952:** Delhi Agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expanded the relationship between India and J&K.

**MAY 15, 1954:** Art. 35A introduced through a Presidential Order to protect laws passed by state legislature regarding permanent residents.

**NOV 17, 1957:** Constitution of State of J&K adopted; came into force on Jan 26, 1958.

### What was the proclamation by Karan Singh?

- ✓ Proclamation stated that the **Government of India Act, 1935**, which until then governed the constitutional relationship between J&K and the dominion of India, will **stand repealed**.
- ✓ It said that the Constitution of India will **govern the constitutional relationship** between this **State** and the **Union of India** and shall be **enforced** in this State in accordance with the tenor of its provisions.
- ✓ The provisions of the said Constitution shall, as from the date of its commencement, **supersede and abrogate** all other constitutional provisions **inconsistent therewith which are at present in force in this State**.

### Need for the proclamation

- The ambiguity was over **whether J&K became an integral part of India** after Karan Singh's father, Hari Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession (IoA).
  - IoA is the **legal document** that **finalised J&K's accession to India**.
- **Union government** had said the **1949 proclamation accepted the supremacy** of the **Indian Constitution** and **surrendered sovereignty** to it, where the sovereign was 'We, the people of India'.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The Karan Singh's Proclamation of 1949, recently mentioned in the news, is associated with which of the following?

- (a) Linguistic reorganization of the States
- (b) National Emergency
- (c) Indo-Pakistani war of 1971


(d) Final surrender of Jammu & Kashmir's sovereignty to India

Answer: d

## TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

**Why in News:** Recently, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, in his judgment upholding the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, has recommended the setting up of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

- The commission aims to address violations of human rights perpetrated in Jammu & Kashmir both by state and non-state actors since the 1980s.



# TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

### Also Known as

It is also known as a 'Truth and Justice Commission' or simply, a 'Truth Commission'.

### Objective


It is an official mechanism to not just **acknowledge**, but also **reveal wrongdoings** by a government (or sometimes non-state actors or combatants) so that **conflicts of the past can be addressed and resolved**.


### Definition


**It has been defined as one that:**


- Is **focused on the past**, rather than in ongoing events;
- Investigates a pattern of events that **took place over a period of time**;
- **Engages directly** and broadly with the **affected population**, gathering information on their experiences;
- Is a **temporary body**, with the aim of concluding with a final report;
- Is **officially authorized** or empowered by the state under review.

### Which countries have had such commissions in the past?

  
**Sri Lanka**

  
**Nepal**

  
**Canada**

  
**South Africa**

In South Africa, the first post-apartheid government of President Nelson Mandela established a TRC in 1995 with the aim of uncovering the truth of human rights violations during the decades of apartheid.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Recently, Supreme Court has recommended the establishment of the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' to

- (a) Ensure that animals are not subjected to unnecessary pain or suffering before, during or after performance of scientific experiments on them.
- (b) Focus on promoting international trade and economic interests of the country.
- (c) look into alleged violations of human rights by both state and non-state actors in J&K.
- (d) Address environmental concerns and promote sustainability.

Answer: c

## SUSPENSION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

**Why in News:** Recently, 146 MPs (100 from Lok Sabha and 46 from Rajya Sabha) all belonging to the Opposition INDI Alliance, were suspended.

### Why were the MPs suspended?

- MPs were suspended for **disrupting Parliamentary proceedings** while protesting a Parliament security breach.

### Why do MPs disrupt Parliament?

- There is an **old practice**, irrespective of which party or alliance is in opposition, of MPs **causing a ruckus inside Parliament**.
- Over the years, **four broad reasons** have been identified for disorder in legislatures. These are:
  - The **lack of time** available to MPs for raising important matters,
  - The **unresponsive attitude** of the government,

- **Deliberate disruption** by parties for political or publicity purposes, and
- The **absence of prompt action** against MPs disrupting Parliamentary proceedings.

### Process of suspension of MPs

- The **Presiding Officer** (the **Speaker of LS** and **Chairman of RS**) plays the major role in meting out suspensions.
- In **Lok Sabha**, the **Speaker** acts in accordance with **Rules 373, 374, and 374A** of the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business**.
- In **Rajya Sabha**, the **Chairman** acts as per **Rules 255 and 256** of the Rules.
- The **procedure** in both Houses is **largely similar**.

### The process

- First, the presiding officers can **direct an MP to withdraw from the House** for any disorderly conduct.
- If that does not work and the said MP continues to disrupt the House proceedings, the **presiding officer** can **"name"** the legislator.

- After that, the **House can move a motion to suspend the MP** until the end of the session.
- **Changes in Lok Sabha rules:**
  - While these rules have mostly remained unchanged since 1952, in 2001, the **Lok Sabha further empowered the Speaker** to deal with **"grave and disorderly conduct."**
  - As per the new rule, an **MP named by the Speaker** shall **automatically stand suspended** for a period of **five days** or the **remaining part of the session**.
  - This rule **removes the need** for the House to **pass a motion for suspension**.
  - The **Rajya Sabha** has **not incorporated this provision** in its procedures.

### Interventions by the Court

- ✓ **Article 122** of the Constitution says parliamentary proceedings cannot be questioned before a court.

## HOW LONG CAN MPs BE SUSPENDED ?



### Admonition or Reprimand

- ♦ **Mild offences** are punished by **admonition** or **reprimand**, with the latter being the more serious of the two punishments.

### Withdrawal

- ♦ After this comes the **punishment of "withdrawal."**
- ♦ Any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall **remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting**.

### Suspension

- ♦ **Continuing to disregard** the Presiding Officer's directions can invite the punishment of suspension.
- ♦ A member can be suspended, at the **maximum**, for the **remainder of the session only**.
- ♦ The House, at any point of time can **reinstate a suspended member** by passing a motion.

### Expulsion

- ♦ In cases of **extreme misconduct**, the House may expel a member to rid the House of persons who are unfit for membership.

### Revocation of Suspension of MPs

- **Lok Sabha**
  - The Speaker has the authority to suspend a Member, but the power to lift this suspension is not within her jurisdiction.
  - The House decides **through a motion to revoke the suspension**.

- **Rajya Sabha**
  - The **House by motion terminates the suspension.**

### Parliamentary Etiquette

- ✓ **Rules:** MPs are advised to adhere to certain rules of the parliament
  - **Examples:** Lok Sabha rule book says that MPs should not intervene in the speech of others.
- ✓ **Decorum of the house:** Members should members should **not shout slogans, display placards, tear up documents in protest**, and play a cassette or a tape recorder in the House.

### Conclusion

The recent suspension of 143 MPs from the Winter Session of the Indian Parliament has raised questions about impartiality of the highest decision-making body in India. However, one must keep in mind that these suspensions had valid causes. The privileges granted to the members of the Parliament are meant to be used to further the business of the House and not contribute to unruly, undignified and un-Parliamentary behaviour. Going forward, both sides of the aisle need to realise that effective functioning of the House requires cooperation and not perpetual confrontation.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, consider the following statements: (Prelims 2022)

1. As per the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, the election of Deputy Speaker shall be held on such date as the Speaker may fix.
2. There is a mandatory provision that the election of a candidate as Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha shall be from either the principal opposition party or the ruling party.
3. The Deputy Speaker has the same power as of the Speaker when presiding over the sitting of the House and no appeal lies against his rulings.
4. The well-established parliamentary practice regarding the appointment of Deputy Speaker is that the motion is moved by the Speaker and duly seconded by the Prime Minister.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

**Answer: a**

### Descriptive Question

- Q. Discuss the constitutional and ethical dimensions surrounding the suspension of Members of Parliament (MPs) as a measure to maintain decorum and discipline in parliamentary proceedings. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

## ADVOCATES AMENDMENT BILL

**Why in News:** The Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023, was passed in the Lok Sabha.

### Key details

- This Bill is a part of the Central government's effort to repeal all obsolete laws that have lost their utility.
- It is aimed at **weeding out 'touts'** from the legal system.
- The Bill **repeals the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879**, and **amends the Advocates Act, 1961**.

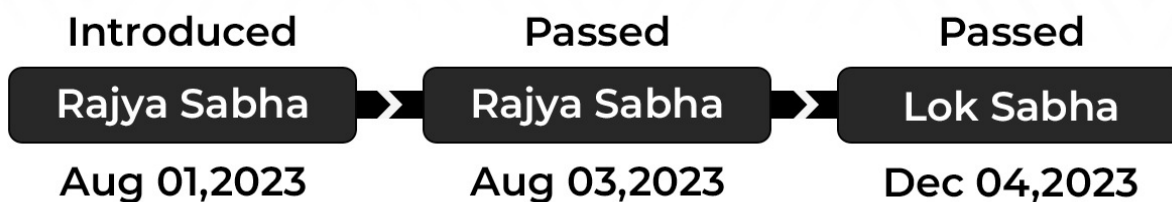
### The 1879 Act

- The Legal Practitioners Act came into force in 1880 to **consolidate and amend** the law relating to **Legal Practitioners** in certain provinces.
- The Act initially extended to areas in **West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, and Delhi**.
- Any **state government** could, by notification in the Official Gazette, **extend it to their states**.
- **Definitions:**
  - Legal Practitioner:
    - ◆ It **defined** the term "**legal practitioner**" to include **advocates, vakils, or attorneys** of any **High Court**.
  - **Tout:**
    - ◆ It also introduced a **new definition** of the term "**tout**".
    - ◆ A tout is someone who **procures clients** for a legal practitioner in **exchange for payment**.
    - ◆ The definition also **included** people who **frequented civil or criminal courts, revenue offices, railway stations, etc.** for such **procurement purposes**.

### Advocates Act of 1961

- It was passed to create a **single Act** to **regulate the legal profession**.
- The Advocates Act, 1961, was enacted to amend and consolidate the law relating to legal practitioners.
- It provided for the **constitution of Bar Councils and an All-India Bar**.
- **Before this**, legal practitioners were governed by **three Acts:**
  - the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879,
  - the Bombay Pleaders Act, 1920, and
  - the Indian Bar Councils Act, 1926.

# ADVOCATES AMENDMENT BILL, 2023



## New Provisions

This Bill amends the **Advocates Act, 1961** and repeals certain sections of the **Legal Practitioners Act, 1879**.

It provides for the insertion of a new section, namely **Section 45A** in the Advocates Act, 1961.

It incorporates the provisions of **Section 36** (power to frame and publish lists of touts in courts) of the **Legal Practitioners Act, 1879** in the Advocates Act, 1961.

## Key Details

The Bill provides that every High Court, district judge, sessions judge, district magistrate, and revenue officer (not below the rank of a district collector) may **frame and publish lists of touts**.

## Touts

Either proposes to **procure or procures the employment of a legal practitioner in a legal business** in return of any payment,  
  
**Frequents places** such as the precincts of civil or criminal courts, revenue-offices, or railway stations to **procure such employment**.

## Punishment

Any person who acts as a tout while his name is included in the list of touts will be punished with **imprisonment up to three months, a fine up to Rs 500, or both**.

## Preparation of Lists

The authorities empowered to frame and publish the list of touts may **order subordinate courts to hold an inquiry** into the conduct of persons alleged or suspected to be touts.

Once such a person is proven to be a tout, his name may be **included by the authority in the list of touts**.

**No person will be included** in such lists without getting an opportunity of showing cause against his inclusion.

## Conclusion

These changes are expected to **enhance the integrity and efficiency of legal practice** in India, contributing to a more transparent and accessible legal system.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2023:

1. It amends the Advocates Act, 1961.

2. This bill repeals certain sections related to touts under the Legal Practitioners Act, 1879.
3. This bill empowers every district judge and district magistrate to frame and publish lists of touts.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c



## TELECOM BILL 2023

**Why in News:** Telecommunications Bill, 2023 was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Union minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology recently.



### About the Telecommunications Bill, 2023

- The Telecommunications Bill, 2023 **amends and consolidates** the laws relating to:
  - **development, expansion and operation** of telecommunication services and telecommunication networks;
  - **assignment of spectrum**; and
  - for **matters connected therewith**.
- Bill seeks to **replace** the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933**, and the **Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950**.

### Highlights of the Bill

- **National Security:**
  - The Bill allows the government to **take over telecom services** and **intercept messages** in the interests of **national security** and in **case of emergencies**.
  - The Bill says that on the occurrence of any **public emergency**, including **disaster management**, or in the **interest of public safety**, the **Central Government** or a **State Government** can:
    - ◆ take **temporary possession** of any telecommunication service or telecommunication network from an authorised entity; or
    - ◆ provide for **appropriate mechanism** to ensure that messages of a user or group of users authorised for response and recovery during public emergency are **routed on priority**.
- **Simplification of licensing:**
  - The Bill seeks to **simplify the current licensing regime** for telecom networks by moving towards an **authorisation system**.
- **Voluntary disclosure:**
  - A **voluntary undertaking** mechanism to facilitate voluntary disclosure of **inadvertent lapses** and to **facilitate compliance** has been introduced.
- **Biometric authentication:**
  - Entities have been mandated to carry out biometric authentication of their users as a **measure to curb fraud**.
- The provision has raised concerns about the **privacy of users**.
- **Powers of government:**
  - The Bill empowers the **central and state governments** or a **specially authorised officer** to seek **interception, disclosure**, and **suspension** powers in case of a **public emergency** or **interest or safety**.
- **Authorisation for telecom-related activities:**
  - **Prior authorisation** from the central government will be required to:
    - ◆ provide telecommunication services,
    - ◆ establish, operate, maintain, or expand telecommunications networks, or
    - ◆ possess radio equipment.
  - **Existing licences** will **continue** to be valid for the **period of their grant**, or for **five years**, where the **period is not specified**.
- **Assignment of spectrum:**
  - Spectrum will be **assigned by auction**, except for specified uses, where it will be **allocated on an administrative basis**. These **include** purposes such as:
    - ◆ national security and defence,
    - ◆ disaster management,
    - ◆ weather forecasting, (iv) transport,
    - ◆ satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and
    - ◆ BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services.
  - The central government may permit **sharing, trading, leasing**, and **surrender** of spectrum.
- **Powers to specify standards:**
  - The **central government** may prescribe standards and assessments for telecom equipment, infrastructure, networks, and services.
- **Right of way:**
  - Facility providers may **seek a right of way** over public or private property to **establish telecom infrastructure**.

- Right of way must be provided on a **non-discriminatory and non-exclusive basis** to the extent possible.

- **Protection of users:**

### PROTECTION OF USERS

Govt to frame rules to provide measures for user protection

- 1 Prior consent to be taken for receiving certain specified messages
- 2 DND register to be prepared
- 3 Online mechanism to enable users to report malware, complaints

**FIRST OFFENSE**  
Civil penalty up to **₹50k**

**EACH SUBSEQUENT OFFENSE**  
Civil penalty up to **₹2 lakh** or suspension of service or both

- **Digital Bharat Nidhi:**

- **Universal Service Obligation Fund** is renamed as **Digital Bharat Nidhi** and also allows its use for research and development.

- **Adjudication process:**

- The central government will appoint an adjudicating officer to **conduct inquiries and pass orders** against civil offences under the Bill.
- The officer must be of the **rank of joint secretary** and above.

**Issues:**

- Telecom services and networks will **need authorisation** from the government, **unless it decides to exempt certain entities** in public interest.
- There are concerns that the current **definition of telecommunication** could be interpreted in a way to potentially open the door for the telecom department to **regulate online platforms**.
- The **Allocation of Business Rules** could **stand in the way** of that since the telecom department's remit is **limited to regulating the 'carrier' layer**, that is telecom services, under those rules.

## Status of the Telecom Sector in India

**1**

The Telecom industry in India is the **second largest in the world** with a **subscriber base of 1.179 Billion** as of August 2023 (wireless + wireline subscribers).

- It is also the **4th largest sector in terms of FDI inflows**, contributing **6% of total FDI inflow**.

**2**

India has an overall **tele-density of 84.69%**. **Tele-density** denotes the number of **telephones per 100 population**, and is an important indicator of telecom penetration.

- The average monthly data consumption per wireless data subscriber has also **increased to 17.36 GB in March 2023 from 61.66 MB in March 2014**.



**Conclusion**

The Telecommunications Bill, 2023, represents a significant step in updating India's legal framework for telecommunications, keeping pace with global technological trends.

**EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE**

**Prelims MCQ**

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Telecommunications Bill, 2023:

1. It amends and consolidates the laws relating to assignment of spectrum.
2. It seeks to replace the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885.

Which of the following statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

### Descriptive Question

Q. Discuss the evolution and challenges of the Telecom Sector in India, examining the role of regulatory frameworks, government policies, and the impact of technological advancements. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

## CONSTITUTION DAY

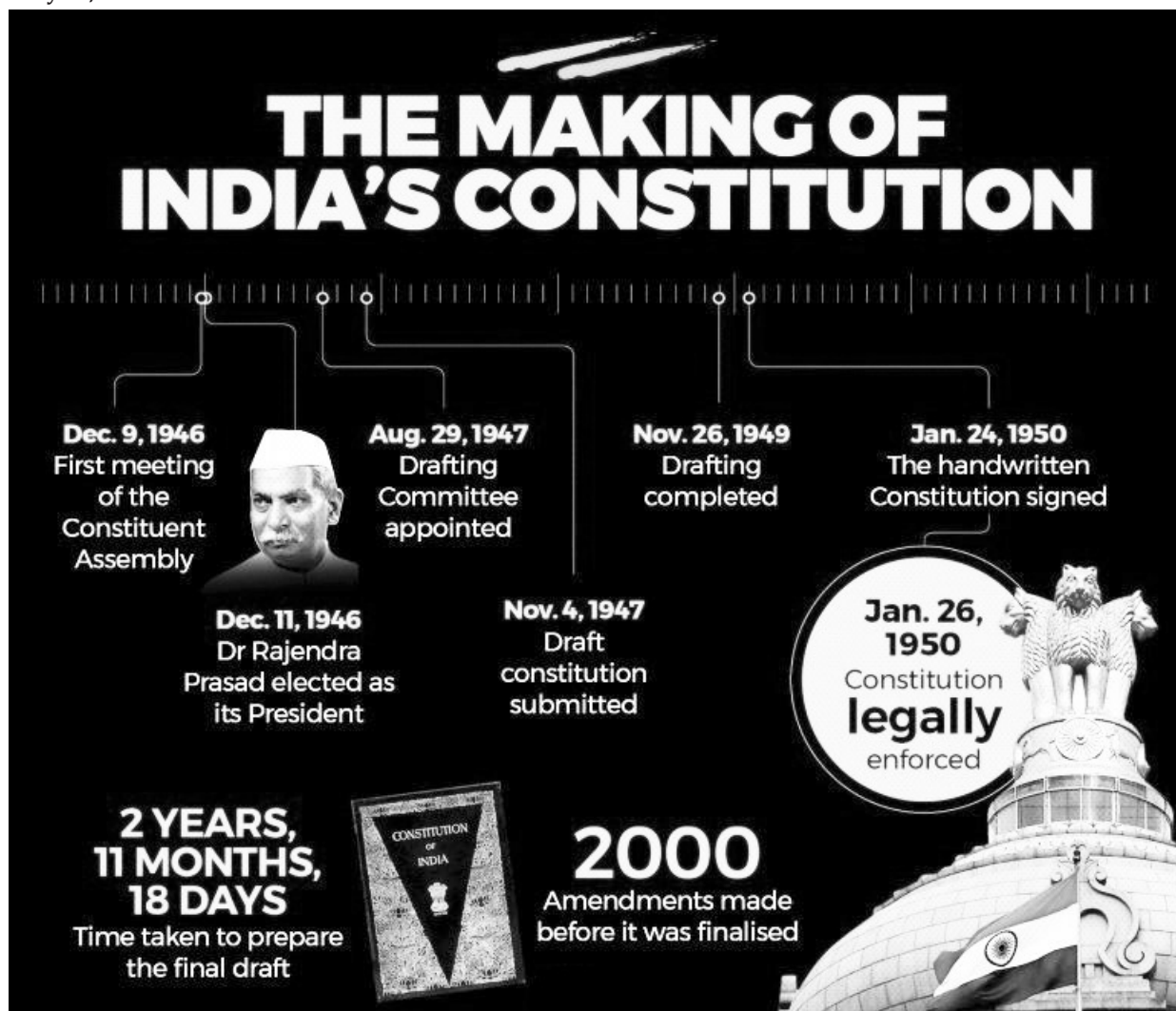
**Why in News:** Marking Constitution Day on November 26, President of India unveiled a statue of Dr. BR Ambedkar at the Supreme Court premises in New Delhi.

### Key details

- Dr. Ambedkar was the **Chairman** of the **Drafting Committee** of the Constitution of India, which was adopted on **26<sup>th</sup> November, 1949** and **came into effect** on **January 26, 1950**.
- Dr. Ambedkar remarked, "Constitution is not a mere lawyers' document, it is a vehicle of Life, and its spirit is always the spirit of Age."

### About Constituent Assembly

- The **Constituent Assembly** was the body meant to draft the Constitution of India, held its **first session on December 9, 1946**.
- Initially, it had **389 members** -
  - 292 members were elected through the **Provincial Legislative Assemblies**;
  - 93 members represented the **Indian Princely States**; and
  - 4 members represented the **Chief Commissioners' Provinces** (British Baluchistan, Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara, Coorg and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands).
- Members were chosen by **indirect election** by the members of the Provincial Legislative Assemblies elected through the 1946 elections, according to scheme recommended by the **Cabinet Mission of 1946**.
- After independence** and the **partition** of India, the strength was **reduced to 299**.



## The Constitutional debates

- Fundamental issues such as the **language of business** for the Indian government, **citizenship**, and the **name of the country** itself were debated.
- PS Deshmukh**, who would go on to become the **first Union Minister of Agriculture**, said that **making it difficult to amend provisions** of the Constitution was **not advisable**.
- The idea was that **having amendments** require a **significant percentage of votes**, say two-thirds, would make the Constitution a **document not in sync with the times**, and build a perception among the people that it is **obsolete and not worth adhering to**.
- But **Ambedkar argued** that making all amendments **easily movable** would make the document **susceptible to changes** on the **whims of legislators** and be **against the interests of states**.

## Ambedkar's arguments

- Ambedkar **gave examples** of procedures for amendments in the **Irish, Canadian, Australian** and other constitutions to make a point about **how there was no one way of making amendments**.
- In **India's case**, he suggested **three options** from the committee:
  - a set of Articles that can be amended by a **simple parliamentary majority** (what is called a simple majority),
  - another set requiring a **two-thirds majority** (what is a special majority), and
  - a few more that required a **two-thirds majority and ratification** by half of all states.
- This would **depend on whether the Articles** related to matters of the **Centre or both the states and the Centre**.
- The purpose of a Constitution is **not merely to create the organs of the State** but to limit their authority, because if **no limitation was imposed** upon the authority of the organs, there will be **complete tyranny and complete oppression**.
  - The **legislature** may be **free to frame any law**.
  - The **executive** may be **free to take any decision**.
  - The **Supreme Court** may be **free to give any interpretation** of the law.
  - It would **result in utter chaos**.

## Facts about the Constitution of India

- ✓ World's longest Constitution.
- ✓ Federal System with Unitary Features.
- ✓ Parliamentary Form of Government.
- ✓ The framing of the Constitution took over 2 years, 11 months and 18 days.
- ✓ The **original copies** of the Indian Constitution weren't typed or printed. They have been handwritten and are

now kept in a **helium-filled case** within the library of the **Parliament**.

- ✓ **Prem Bihari Narain Raizada** had written the unique copies of the Constitution of India.
- ✓ Originally, the Constitution of India was **written in English and Hindi**.

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following pairs:

Committee in the Constituent Assembly	Chaired by
1. Provincial Constitution Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Drafting Committee	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar
3. Steering Committee	Jawaharlal Nehru
4. Finance and Staff Committee	Dr. Rajendra Prasad

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Answer: b (2 and 4 only)

### Descriptive Question

Q. When is constitution day celebrated in India? Elaborate the historical underpinnings of Indian constitution and their influence on evolution of constitution. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

For Approach Answer, Scan:



## ASSAM-MEGHALAYA BOUNDARY DISPUTE

**Why in News:** Recently, the regional committees on the boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya have been asked to submit their reports.





## Key details

- Assam and Meghalaya had **12 disputed sectors** along their **884.9-km boundary**.
- The **disputes in six of these sectors** were **settled** through an **agreement** signed on March 29, 2022.
- The **six disputed sectors** that **remain** are:
  - Langpih, Borduar,
  - Nongwah-Mawtamur,
  - Deshdoomreah,
  - Block-I,
  - Block-II, and
  - Psiar-Khanduli.
- Three regional committees** for three districts were **set up by both States** to study the disputed sectors, meet the stakeholders, and **submit a report** to their respective governments.
- The boundary dispute between the two States has persisted since **Meghalaya was carved out of Assam in 1972**.

## More about the border dispute

- During the **British rule**, undivided **Assam included** present-day **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram**.
- Meghalaya was **carved out in 1972**, its boundaries demarcated as per the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**, but has held a different interpretation of the border since.
- In **2011**, the **Meghalaya government** had identified **12 areas of difference** with Assam, spread over approximately **2,700 sq km**.
- Some** of these disputes stem from recommendations made by a **1951 committee** headed by then **Assam chief minister Gopinath Bordoloi**.
- The **Bordoloi Committee's recommendations**:
  - ✓ Blocks I and II of Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya) be transferred to the Mikir Hill (Karbi Anglong) district of Assam,
  - ✓ Some areas from Meghalaya's Garo Hills to Goalpara district of Assam.
- 1969 Act is based on these recommendations**, which **Meghalaya rejects**, claiming these areas originally belong to the Khasi-Jaintia Hills.
- Assam says **Meghalaya does not have the requisite documents** to prove these areas historically belonged to Meghalaya.

- Both state governments **identified six out of 12 disputed areas** for resolution in the first phase:
  - ✓ three areas contested between West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya and Kamrup in Assam,
  - ✓ two between RiBhoi in Meghalaya and Kamrup-Metro, and
  - ✓ one between East Jaintia Hills in Meghalaya and Cachar in Assam.
- A **final set of recommendations** were made jointly:
  - ✓ out of **36.79 sq km** of disputed area taken up for settlement in the first phase, **Assam** would get **full control of 18.46 sq km** and **Meghalaya** of **18.33 sq km**
    - The **remaining six areas** are **more complex** and may **take longer to resolve**.

## Other disputes

- **Assam and Arunachal Pradesh** also resolved their boundary disputes **over 37 of 123 villages** with the signing of the **Namsai Declaration in 2022**.
- Assam also has an **ongoing boundary dispute** with **Mizoram and Nagaland**.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

- The Original Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court extends to the any dispute between the two or more states.
- Article 263 of the Constitution of India empowers the Governors of the state to jointly establish the inter-state council for resolution of the dispute between two or more states.

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

Answer: d

## BIHAR'S DEMAND FOR SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS

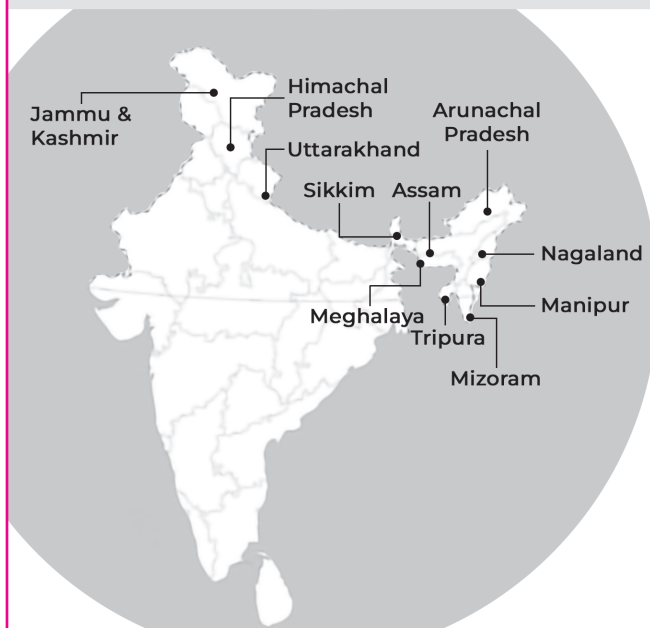
**Why in News:** Recently, Bihar government passed a resolution seeking the grant of special category status (SCS) to Bihar.

## Why the demand?

- The demand comes in the backdrop of the findings from the "**Bihar Caste-based Survey, 2022**", which revealed that **nearly one-third** of Bihar's population **continues to live in poverty**.

# SPECIAL CATEGORY STATUS (SCS)

- It is a classification **granted by the Centre** to **assist the development of states** that face **geographical or socio-economic disadvantages**.
- The **SCS** was **introduced in 1969** on the **recommendation** of the **V<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (FC)**.



## Factors considered before granting SCS:

- ⌚ Hilly and difficult terrain
- ⌚ Low population density and/or sizeable share of tribal population
- ⌚ Strategic location along international borders
- ⌚ Economic and infrastructural backwardness
- ⌚ Non-viable nature of state finances.

## BENEFITS AS PER GADGIL-MUKHERJEE FORMULA

On account of their location and backwardness, Special Category States have been allocated assistance as grants

- ⌚ They are **provided 30% of the total central assistance** (90% of it as grants)
- ⌚ In the SCS States, the **Centre-State funding** of centrally sponsored schemes is **divided** in the ratio of **90:10**.
  - Which is more than the typical **60:40 or 80:20 for the general category states**.
- ⌚ After the **abolition of the Planning Commission** and the **recommendations of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commissions**, this assistance to SCS States has been subsumed in an **increased devolution of the divisible pool funds** for all States.
  - It **increased to 41%** in the 15<sup>th</sup> FC from 32%.
- ⌚ Assistance for externally aided projects (90% grant)
- ⌚ Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) assistance (90% as grant)
- ⌚ Untied special central assistance (100% of it provided as grant)

## Why is Bihar demanding the SCS?

- ⌚ The **poverty and backwardness** of the State are argued to be because of the:
  - Lack of natural resources
  - Lack of continuous supply of water for irrigation
  - Regular floods in the northern region
  - Severe droughts in the southern part of the State
- ⌚ **Impact of bifurcation**
  - Simultaneously, the **bifurcation of the State** led to the **shifting of industries** to Jharkhand and created a **dearth of employment and investment opportunities**.
  - With a **per-capita GDP** of around **₹54,000**, Bihar has consistently been one of the **poorest States**.

## Is Bihar's demand justified?

- Although Bihar meets most of the criteria for the grant of SCS, it **does not fulfil** the requirement of **hilly terrain** and **geographically difficult areas**, which is considered to be the **primary reason for difficulty in infrastructural development**.
- In 2013, the **Raghuram Rajan Committee** set up by the Centre, placed Bihar in the "**least developed category**" and suggested a **new methodology** based on a '**multi-dimensional index**' for devolving funds instead of

a SCS, which can be **revisited** to address the State's backwardness.

## Other States demanding SCS

- ✓ Since its bifurcation in 2014, **Andhra Pradesh** has asked for a grant of SCS on the grounds of **revenue loss** due to **Hyderabad going to Telangana**.
- ✓ **Odisha** has also been requesting for the SCS, highlighting its **vulnerability to natural calamities** such as cyclones and a large tribal population (nearly 22%).

## Conclusion

- Given Bihar's situation, there's a need to **revisit the criteria for SCS, especially considering Bihar meets most criteria**, except for the hilly terrain and geographically difficult areas.
- Bihar urgently needs **significant support for poverty alleviation**, focused aid for disaster management and agriculture, and policies that attract new industries and create job opportunities.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Special Category Status, consider the following statements:

- The Chhattisgarh and Odisha have the Special Category Status.
- One of the qualifying criteria for this status is the presence of hilly and difficult terrain.
- States granted Special Category Status receive Centre-State funding for centrally sponsored schemes in a ratio of 90:10.
- It was introduced on the recommendation of the fifth Finance Commission (FC).

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c (2, 3 and 4 only)

#### Descriptive Question

Q. Should the criteria for special category status (SCS) for Indian states be revisited? Critically examine. [15 Marks, 250 words]

For Approach Answer, Scan:



## UNITED NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT SIGNS PEACE AGREEMENT

**Why in News:** Union Home Minister announced the **signing of a peace agreement with the Meitei separatist group United National Liberation Front (UNLF) in Manipur.**

### What is Insurgency in Manipur?

- There is an ongoing armed **conflict between India and a number of separatist rebel groups** in Manipur.
- This insurgency in **Manipur is part of the wider Insurgency in Northeast India** which combines elements of a national liberation war as well as an ethnic conflict.

## Historical background

- After the brief Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, the Kingdom of Manipur was conquered by Britain.
- After this war, Manipur kingdom became a British protectorate.
- Manipur became a part of India in October 1949** and became a **separate state in 1972.**

## Rise of insurgency

- Manipur's incorporation into India led to the **formation of a number of insurgent organisations.**
- These groups demanded the creation of an independent state within the borders of Manipur, and dismissed the merger with India as involuntary.
- The **insurgency problem in Manipur came into existence in the late 1960s** and 1970s.
- The **first separatist faction, UNLF** was founded in November 1964.
- Now, the region is infested with many insurgent groups.

## Reasons for insurgency in Manipur

- Merger with India**
  - Meiteis are the majority community of Manipur whose influence declined after Indian Independence.
  - This led to resentment in a section of Meities about the merger of the State with the Indian Union, which led to the Meitei insurgency from the 1960s.
- Ethnic conflict**
  - Manipur has a diverse ethnic population with Meitis controlling the Valley, Nagas on the surrounding hills and Kukis interspersed in between.
  - **Kukis and Nagas** of Manipur have overlapping and conflicting territorial interests over almost all the hill districts of Manipur.
  - Similarly, there are competing interests between the **Nagas and Meitis.**
  - The demand for Nagalim or Greater Nagaland includes the Naga inhabited areas of Manipur.
  - On the other hand, the Meitis want to preserve what has been a single geographic entity for centuries.

## Low socio-economic development

- Owing to its topographical structure, the state has had problems of economic development and socio-economic transformation for a long period.
- Endless corruption, mismanagement of funds** and failure to devolve power to common people have led to the rise of dissatisfaction.

## About UNLF

- UNLF was formed on **November 24, 1964**, and is the **oldest valley-based insurgent group.**



- It is **distinct** from the **insurgent groups** active in the state's **Naga-dominated** and **Kuki-Zomi dominated hills**.
- It was formed with the **demand of secession from India** under the leadership of **Arembam Samarendra Singh**, who was the general secretary of the group.
- The UNLF is believed to have received its **initial training** from the **NSCN (IM)**, the largest Naga insurgent group.
- Its **armed wing**, the **Manipur People's Army**, was formed **in 1990** and over the years, it has carried out multiple attacks targeting Indian security personnel.
- Its **area of operation** includes the valley areas of **Manipur**, as well as some villages in the **Kuki-Zomi hill districts**.
- It is **banned** under the **Unlawful Activities Prevention Act**.
- It has largely been **functioning** from camps and training bases in **Myanmar's Sagaing Region, Chin state, and Rakhine state** with the patronage of the Myanmar military.
- The UNLF is **one of the seven "Meitei Extremist Organisations"** banned by the Union government.



## WHAT IS UNLF

The United National Liberation Front or UNLF, an extremist group operating in Manipur, was formed on November 24, 1964.

It is the oldest Imphal valley-based armed group in the northeastern state.

Its objective was the secession of Manipur from India for the formation of an independent socialist Manipur.

Its founder was Arambam Samarendra. He was killed on June 10, 2000 by KYKL, a breakaway faction of UNLF.

The first council comprised Kalalung Kamei (a Naga) as President, Thankhopao Singsit (a Kuki) as Vice-President, Arambam Samarendra (a Meitei) as its General Secretary.



## Breakaway Factions



**Revolutionary Government of Manipur** formed in 1968 by **Oinam Sudhir Kumar**

**Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)**, another proscribed outfit, formed in 1994 by **N Oken**

The UNLF launched its armed struggle in 1990 with the formation of its armed wing, Manipur People's Army (MPA)

## Major incidents carried out by UNLF

November 23, 2009 | 15 Assam Rifles personnel, including two officers, were killed in an ambush at Old Somtāl area in Chandel district.

February 25, 2007 | 16 security personnel were killed in an ambush at Khoirok Lamkai

October 9, 2005 | 5 soldiers were killed at Zoupi in Chandel district

November 20, 2002 | 7 CRPF men were killed at Jivan Nagar in Bishnupur district

November 21, 2000 | 15 security personnel were killed at Jiribam in Imphal East district

February 15, 1999 | 19 security personnel were killed in Churachandpur district



## Factions of UNLF

- There are **two factions**, one under the chairmanship of Khundongbam Pambei and the other under the chairmanship of NC Koireng.
- **Pambei has been open to talks**, and the process to begin ceasefire negotiations goes back to 2020.
- However, the faction under the chairmanship of NC Koireng **has stayed away from talks**.

## Current situation

- A **tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO)** agreement between the Centre, Manipur state and the Kuki-Zomi insurgent groups had been reached in 2008.
- The primary objective of this pact was to **initiate political dialogue**.
- In March 2023, the **Manipur government pulled out of the agreement** with the Zomi Revolutionary Army and the Kuki National Army.
  - It said that they were influencing agitation among forest encroachers.

## Key highlights of the peace deal

- Although the deal has not been made public, analysts say the agreement at the moment is **largely on suspension of operations (SoO)**.
  - i.e., Both the UNLF and the security forces will not undertake operations against each other.
- In due course, areas would be identified to build camps for UNLF within the valley where their cadres would stay along with their arms and ammunition **under the supervision of the Manipur government** and the armed forces.
- Talks for a **final peace accord between the government and UNLF will continue** after the SoO arrangements are put in place.

## About Unlawful Activities Prevention Act

- **Origin of UAPA**
  - In 1966, the **President** had promulgated the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Ordinance** to provide for the **more effective prevention** of unlawful activities of individuals and associations.
  - The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**, which was **not identical to the ordinance**, was passed.
- **Evolution:**
  - The Act provided for **declaring an association or a body of individuals "unlawful"** if they indulged in any activity that included:
    - ◆ **acts and words**, spoken or written, or
    - ◆ **any sign or representation**, that supported any claim to bring about the **cession of a part of the territory of India**, or
    - ◆ its **"secession"**, or which questions or disclaims

the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity

- **Status prior to UAPA:**
  - Associations were being declared unlawful under the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1952**.
- **Provision for Tribunal:**
  - UAPA included provisions for a **Tribunal** which has to **confirm within six months** the notification declaring an outfit unlawful.
- **Extension of ban:**
  - The ban on organisations was **initially for two years**, but from 2013, the period of proscription has been **extended to five years**.
- **2004 amendments:**
  - The 2004 amendments were aimed at giving effect to **various anti-terrorism resolutions** of the **United Nations Security Council**.
- **2012 amendments:**
  - The 2012 amendments sought to bring the UAPA **in line with** various requirements of the **Financial Action Task Force**, an inter-governmental body, to combat money laundering and terrorism financing.
- **2019 amendment:**
  - In 2019, the Act was amended to **empower the government to designate individuals as terrorists**.

## Process of Banning an Organisation

- ✓ **Issuing notification**
  - **Before issuing a notification** under the UAPA, the government **conducts an analysis** of **threat perception** to peace in the country, secession activities, territorial safety, terrorism etc.
  - The **recommendations and complaints** by a **state government** can also be considered.
  - UAPA also allows the government to **implement an "immediate ban"** on an organisation, if the central government is of the opinion that circumstances exist which render it necessary.
- ✓ **Setting up tribunal**
  - **Within 30 days** of the notification, the government has to **set up a tribunal**, headed by a **sitting Judge of a High Court**, to consider the evidence and allegations.
  - The tribunal has the **power to consider the evidence, hear the objections** from the organisation or its members/supporters and then **take a decision to confirm or deny the ban**.
  - The Tribunal has **six months** under the law to **conduct proceedings and either accept or reject the proposed ban**.
  - If the tribunal upholds the ban, the **organisation can also move an appeal** before the concerned **High Court**.

- **Powers of Tribunal**

- The tribunal shall have **power to regulate its own procedure** in all matters arising out of the discharge of its functions.
- The section says that the **tribunal possesses the same powers** as are vested in a **civil court** under the **Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**.
- Any proceedings before the tribunal shall be **deemed judicial proceedings**.

## Meaning of various terms and phrases under the Act

- ✓ An **Unlawful activity** in relation to an **individual or association** means:
  - Any **action** taken by such an **individual or association**:
    - ◆ which is intended, or supports any claim, to bring about the **cession of a part of the territory of India** or the **secession of a part of the territory of India** from the Union, or which **incites** any individual or group of individuals **to bring about such cession or secession**; or
    - ◆ which disclaims, questions, disrupts or is intended to **disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India**; or
    - ◆ which causes or is intended to **cause disaffection against India**;
- ✓ The UAPA also **defines** an “**Unlawful Association**” as meaning any association:
  - which has for its object any unlawful activity, or which encourages or aids persons to **undertake any unlawful activity**,
  - which has for its object any activity which is **punishable** under section 153A (45 of 1860) or section 153B of the **Indian Penal Code**.
- ✓ Under the Act, therefore, ‘**unlawful activity**’ is **not limited to terror activities** relating to causing direct violence or attacks, it **also includes** any activities that:
  - **disrupt the sovereignty and territorial integrity** of the country,
  - **disrupts the economic stability** of the country or
  - **causes disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will** between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities in the country.

## Way Forward

- The peace agreement with UNLF marks a crucial step in addressing the long-standing insurgency in Manipur.
- It reflects a shift in approach of Meitei insurgent groups towards dialogue and potential reconciliation.

## Conclusion

The success of this peace agreement could **pave the way for further peace initiatives** in the Northeast, contributing to stability and development in Manipur and the region.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCO

Q. With reference to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019, consider the following statements:

1. Both organizations and individuals can be declared terrorists under this Act.
2. It empowers the officers of the rank of inspector in the National Investigation Agency (NIA) to investigate cases.

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

**Answer: c**

## ENFORCEMENT DIRECTORATE'S POWERS OF ARREST

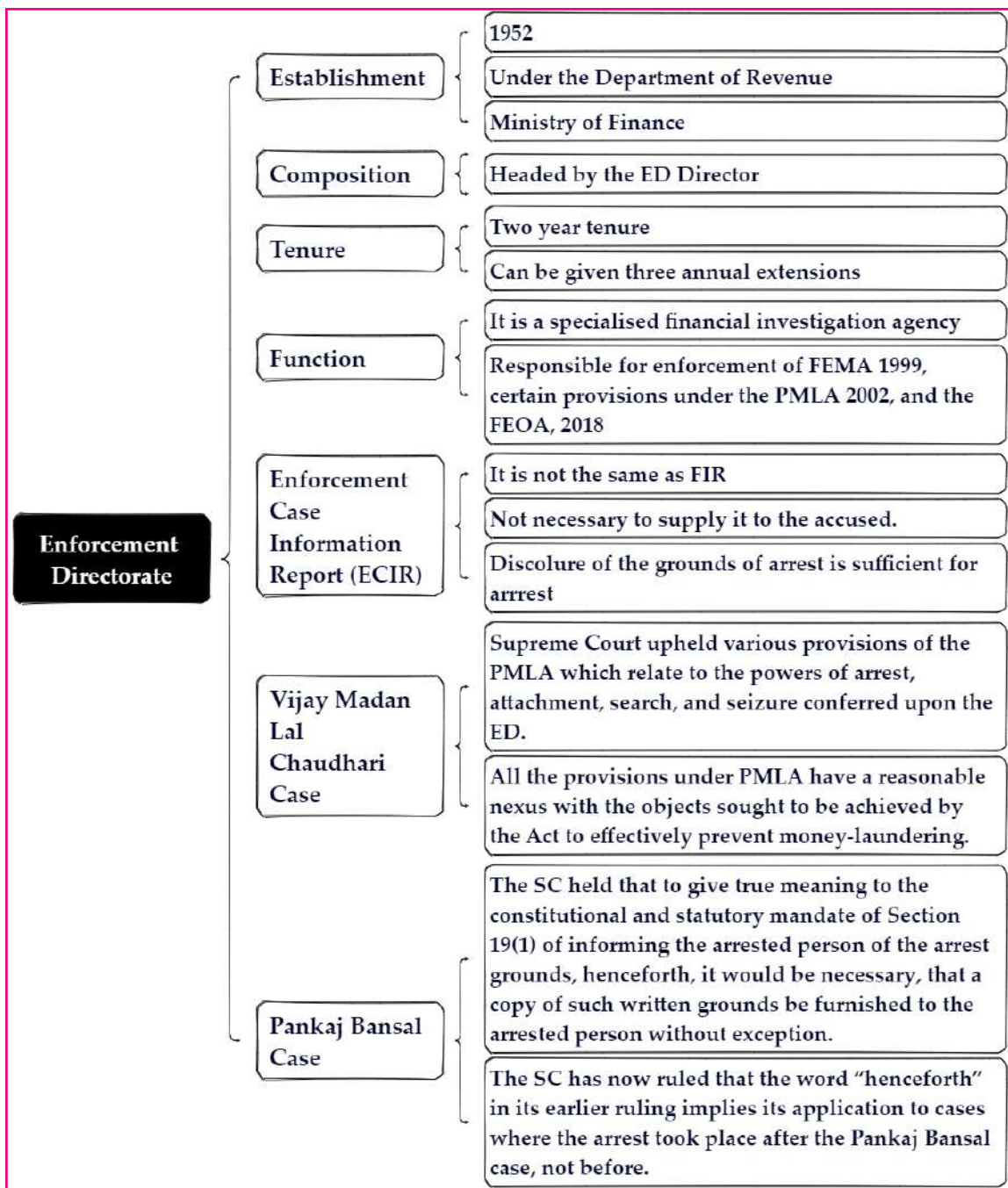
**Why in News:** The Supreme Court ruled that it is enough for the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to orally inform an accused of the grounds of their arrest at the time of arrest.

## Key details

- The court said that the **written grounds of arrest** must be supplied to the accused **within 24 hours of their arrest**.
- The recent Supreme Court ruling **dilutes a previous ruling** of the Supreme Court that **mandated the ED to furnish the grounds of arrest** to the accused in writing **when they are being taken into custody**.

## What are ED's powers of arrest?

- **Section 19 of PMLA 2002** allows authorised ED officials to **arrest persons based on material in their possession**, which gives them a reason to believe that one is **guilty of an offence punishable under that law**.
- The **reasons** for such belief **must be recorded in writing**, and the **grounds of arrest** be **informed** to the accused as soon as may be.
- Anyone arrested shall, **within 24 hours**, be **taken to a Special Court, Judicial Magistrate, or Metropolitan Magistrate**.
- **Article 22(3)(b)** exempts the **application of these safeguards** to persons held under any preventive detention law, such as:
  - Gujarat Prevention of Antisocial Activities Act, 1985
  - Bihar Control of Crimes Act, 1981



### What happens when two Benches of equal strength differ?

- ✓ There is **no constitutional or statutory prescription** on the issue.
- ✓ The **rule of precedents** has evolved by practice in India to **prevent the possibility of inconsistent decisions** on similar points of law by **different benches of equal strength** - the SC said in its 1989 ruling in **UOI vs. Raghubir Singh**.
- ✓ The court also ruled that a **statement of law by a Division Bench** is considered **binding** on a Division Bench of the same or lesser number of Judges.
- ✓ In **Pradip Chandra Parija vs. Pramod Chandra Patnaik (2002)**, a Constitution Bench ruled that if **two Benches of equal strength** arrive at **different conclusions** on the **same question of law**, the matter must be **referred to a higher Bench**.
  - If the Bench of **three Judges** also comes to the conclusion that the **earlier judgment** of a Bench of three learned Judges is **incorrect**, reference to a Bench of **five Judges** is justified.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Enforcement Directorate (ED):

1. It is enough for the ED to orally inform an accused of the grounds of their arrest at the time of arrest.
2. It processes and recommends cases for preventive detention under the Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA).
3. It adjudicates cases of violations of the erstwhile FERA, 1973 and FEMA, 1999.
4. It undertakes survey, search, seizure, arrest, prosecution action etc. against offender of PMLA offence.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: d

## INCLUSION OF CASTES IN CENTRAL OBC LIST

**Why in News:** Recently, the National Commission for Backward Classes recommended inclusion of five castes from Andhra Pradesh in Central OBC list.

### Key details

- The five classes included are:
  - Turpu Kapus,
  - Kalinga Vysyas,
  - Sistakaranalu,
  - Sondi and
  - Arava
- The **NCBC recommendation** is a **prerequisite** for the **inclusion** of any caste in the **Central OBC list**.
- **Turpu Kapus** have **OBC reservation** even now but that is **limited only to Uttarandhra districts**.
  - With this recommendation, the OBC reservation for Turpu Kapus will be **extended to all districts of Andhra Pradesh**.

### Related Constitutional Provisions

- ✓ **Article 15(4)** of the Constitution, the State has the power to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class i.e., the OBC.

- ✓ The term “**special provision for advancement**” includes several aspects like reservation of seats in educational institutions, financial assistance, scholarships, free housing etc.

- ✓ Under **Article 16(4)**, the state is empowered to enact laws for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of OBCs.

### About NCBC

- The National Commission for Backward Classes is a **constitutional body** under **Article 338B** of the Indian Constitution.
- It comes under the jurisdiction of **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- It was constituted **pursuant** to the provisions of the **National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993**.
- **Composition**
  - **Chairperson,**
  - **Vice-Chairperson** and
  - **three other Members**
- The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members of the Commission shall be **appointed by the President** by **warrant under his hand and seal**.

### Process of Inclusion

- **NCBC** examines requests for inclusion of castes in Central OBC list.
- NCBC constitutes a Bench to examine proposals and **forwards its decision to the Union government**.
- Cabinet approves the additions and brings legislation; President notifies the change.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following:

1. Employees holding equivalent posts to Group 'B' / Class II Officers in PSUs
2. Persons who are in the rank of colonel and above in the Army
3. Persons having gross annual income of more than ₹7 lakh

How many of the aforementioned criteria can place a person in the creamy layer within the OBC category?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)



## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIA-MALDIVES TIES

**Why in News:** Maldives Cabinet decided against renewing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India for cooperation in hydrography.

## What is Hydrography?

- It is the **science of studying oceans, seas, and other water bodies**, by compiling and analysing data, maps, and charts.
- Branching off from applied sciences, it looks at **measuring and describing the physical attributes of water bodies** and predicting how they might change over time.
- Hydrographical measurements include **tidal, current and wave information**.

Uses		Safety of Navigation
		Economic Development
		Security and Defence
		Scientific Research
		Environmental Protection

- India has been an active member of the **International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)** since 1955.
- The **Indian Naval Hydrographic Department (INHD)** was established in 1874 in **Kolkata**.
  - It is the **nodal agency** for **hydrographic surveys** and has a fleet of indigenously built modern survey ships.
- India **partners with many countries** in the Indian Ocean Region and African and East Asian countries such as Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania, Maldives, Mozambique, Vietnam, Myanmar, Kenya, and Sri Lanka.
- Personnel from **39 countries** have **trained** at the National Institute of Hydrography, functioning under the INHD.

## The 2019 MoU

- The two Indian Ocean neighbours committed to **close cooperation** in **development, defence and maritime security**.

- The first meeting of the **Joint Commission on Hydrography** was held in the Maldives in September 2019.
- Following the agreement, the **Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF)** and the **Indian Navy** have carried out three joint hydrographic surveys in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

## Why against renewing the agreement?

- The administration's pledge to **terminate all agreements with foreign parties** that are **detrimental** to or **endanger the national security** of the Maldives.
- Maldivian government held that best interest of **Maldivian sovereignty** that this capacity is **improved** within our **own military**, entrusting them with the **responsibilities of surveilling and policing** our waters, and **excluding the participation of any foreign party** in such an endeavour.

## What does this mean for India-Maldives ties?

- **Maldives** is a member of the **Colombo Security Conclave**
  - An initiative aimed at enhancing Indian Ocean maritime security which **includes India**, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.
- The **Maldives skipped** the latest round of the Conclave's NSA-level meet held in Mauritius.
  - Maldives attended the **China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation** to explore **novel avenues** of collaboration and **cooperation with China**.

## India-Maldives relations

- **Location**
  - Maldives is located **south** of India's **Lakshadweep Islands** in the Indian Ocean.
- **Early ties**
  - Established **diplomatic relations** after the **independence of Maldives** from British rule in 1966.
  - India was one of the first nations to **recognise Maldives' independence**
- **Bilateral treaties and strategic partnership**
  - 1976 Maritime treaty
    - ◆ Treaty explicitly places **Minicoy** on the **Indian side** of the boundary.
    - ◆ India and Maldives **officially and amicably** decided their maritime boundary in 1976.

- 1988 Comprehensive trade agreement
  - ◆ Both nations are **founding members** of the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**, the **South Asian Economic Union** and signatories to the **South Asia Free Trade Agreement**.
- **Commercial relations**
  - Since the success of **Operation Cactus**, the relations between India and Maldives have expanded significantly.
  - India has provided **extensive economic aid** and has participated in **bilateral programmes** for the development of **infrastructure, health, telecommunications** and **labour resources**.
  - It established the **Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital** in Malé, expanded **telecommunications and air links** and **increased scholarships** for Maldivian students.
- **Military relations**
  - **Ekuverin**, an **annual joint military exercise** is held every year since 2009 between India and Maldives.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Descriptive Question

Q. Analyze the factors influencing the dynamics between India and Maldives and their implications for regional stability and cooperation. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

## UN RESOLUTION ON GAZA CEASEFIRE

**Why in News:** Recently, India voted in favour of UN resolution demanding Gaza ceasefire.

#### Key details

- India voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) that demanded an **immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict** and the **unconditional release of all hostages**.
- This was the **first time India supported such a resolution** since the war broke out more than two months ago.

#### About the UNGA resolution

- The resolution expressed grave concern over the **catastrophic humanitarian situation** in the **Gaza Strip** and the suffering of the **Palestinian civilian population**.
- It said Palestinians and Israelis **must be protected** in accordance with **international humanitarian law**.
- It put forward **two key demands**, including:
  - an **immediate humanitarian ceasefire** and
  - the **immediate and unconditional release** of all **hostages**, as well as **ensuring humanitarian access**.

#### Opposition to the resolution

- The resolution was **opposed by 10 countries**:
  - Austria, The Czech Republic, Guatemala, Israel, Liberia, Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, and the United States.

#### Implications

- Unlike Security Council resolutions, **General Assembly resolutions** are **not legally binding**.
- It reflects the growing **isolation of the US** as it refuses to join demands for a ceasefire.
- More than the United Nations or any other international organisation, the **United States is seen as the only entity capable of persuading Israel** to accept a cease-fire as its closest ally and biggest supplier of weaponry.

#### Why did India abstain from the previous UNGA resolution?

- ✓ India abstained in a UNGA vote on a resolution that called for an **immediate humanitarian truce in the Israel-Hamas conflict**.
- ✓ The country's decision was **in line** with the **Russia-Ukraine war**.
- ✓ While the **circumstances, politics, and conditions** of the two wars are **vastly different** and not comparable, the **diplomatic toolkit** of **hedging and balancing** between the warring sides has been a **consistent feature** of India.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Descriptive Question

Q. India voted in favor of the UN resolution demanding a ceasefire in Gaza during the recent conflict. Analyze the potential impact of India's stance on its international relations and the implications for regional stability. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

## ARTICLE 99 OF THE UN CHARTER

**Why in News:** Amid Israel's ongoing military attacks on the Gaza Strip, particularly in its southern region, United Nations Secretary-General **had invoked Article 99 of the UN Charter** in a bid to establish a ceasefire.

#### About Article 99 of the UN Charter

- The UN Charter is the **founding document** of the United Nations.
- Based on the powers conferred through it, the UN can **take action** on a wide variety of issues.
- The Charter is considered an **international treaty**, meaning **UN Member States** are **bound by it**.
- Article 99 states that the **Secretary-General** may **bring to the attention of the Security Council** any matter which in his opinion may **threaten the maintenance of international peace and security**.
- It is seen as a **discretionary power**.

Humanitarian ceasefire	Humanitarian Pause
✓ The UN defines it as a “suspension of fighting agreed upon by the parties to a conflict, typically <b>as part of a political process</b> ”, with the goal being to “allow parties to engage in dialogue, including the possibility of reaching a <b>permanent political settlement</b> ”.	✓ The United Nations defines a “humanitarian pause” as a “ <b>temporary cessation of hostilities purely for humanitarian purposes</b> ”.
	✓ Such pauses are usually <b>limited to a defined period</b> , and to a specific area where the humanitarian activities are to be carried out.

#### When has Article 99 been invoked in the past?

- The provision has been rarely invoked. **Past examples include:**
  - Republic of Congo (1960), East Pakistan (Bangladesh) (1971), Iran (1979) & Lebanon (1989)

## UN Security Council (UNSC)

The UN Charter vests the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security to the UNSC

About	Headquarters	First Session	Membership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the 6 principal organs of UN;</li> <li>Established in 1945 by UN Charter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New York</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17 January 1946 at Church House, Westminster, London</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 members - 5 Permanent Members (P5), 10 Non-Permanent Members elected for two-year terms (5 elected each year)</li> <li>P5-the US, the UK, Russia, France and China</li> </ul>

Presidency	Voting Powers	UNSC Committees/Resolutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rotates every month among the 15 members</li> <li>India's Presidency for year 2022-December</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 member = 1 vote</li> <li>P5 have veto power</li> <li>Members of UN sans membership of UNSC participate without vote</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Terrorism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolution 1373 (Counter Terrorism Committee)</li> <li>Resolution 1267 (Da'esh and Al Qaeda Committee)</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Non-Proliferation Committee</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resolution 1540 (against nuclear, chemical and biological weapons)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

India and UNSC	G4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Served 7 times as non-permanent member; elected for the 8th time for 2021-22; advocates for a permanent seat</li> <li>Arguments for a permanent seat: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>43 peacekeeping missions</li> <li>Active participation in formulating Human Rights Declaration (UDHR)</li> <li>India's population, territorial size, GDP, economic potential, cultural diversity, political system etc.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group of 4 countries (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) which advocate each other's bids for permanent seats in the UNSC</li> </ul> 

Uniting for Consensus (UFC) Movement	Major Challenges in UNSC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informally known as the Coffee Club</li> <li>Countries oppose the expansion Permanent Seats of UNSC</li> <li>Prime movers of the club - Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, South Korea, Argentina and Pakistan</li> <li>Italy and Spain are opposed to Germany's bid; Pakistan - India's bid; Argentina Brazil's bid and Australia - Japan's bid</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usual UN rules don't apply to UNSC deliberations; no records of meetings kept</li> <li>Powerplay in UNSC; anachronistic veto powers of P5</li> <li>Deep polarisation among P5; frequent divisions end up blocking</li> <li>Key decisions Inadequate representation of many regions among of the world</li> </ul>

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the United Nations:

1. Under Article 99 of the United Nations Charter, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has the authority to independently announce a ceasefire in any global conflict.
2. Article 99 within the United Nations Charter provides the Secretary-General of the United Nations with full discretionary authority regarding global conflicts.

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

Answer: d

## ASEAN INDIA GRASSROOTS INNOVATION FORUM

**Why in News:** India along with 10 ASEAN Member States (AMS) were represented by 200 participants, at the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation Forum (AIGIF) that was launched in *Langkawi, Malaysia*.

### Key details

- The AIGIF is an **annual programme** focused on fostering a **strengthened relationship** between **India and AMS** on the premise of cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).
- **Objectives:**
  - To give **exposure** to **social innovations** in different countries.
  - To **strengthen governance** in the **grassroots innovation ecosystem**.
- The annual program is a **collaboration** between:
  - **India:**
    - ◆ the ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation (COSTI);
    - ◆ Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India;
    - ◆ National Innovation Foundation (NIF) – India and
  - **Malaysia:**
    - ◆ the Science and Technology Ministry.

### • Significance

- Platforms like AIGIF can **create opportunities** for students and the grassroots population in each of the participating countries to **learn something new every year**.
- It should translate into **greater co-operation** between **India and AMS**.
- The industry should connect with grassroots innovations and translate them into **sustainable solution for the society**.

## ASEAN

### ✓ Establishment

- On 8 August 1967, the Foreign Ministers of **Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand** came together in **Bangkok**.
- The five Foreign Ministers signed a document and were hailed as the **Founding Fathers** of The **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**.
- The document that they signed was known as the **ASEAN Declaration**.

### ✓ Joining of other countries

- Over the next few decades, **five other countries** joined them:
  - Brunei Darussalam,      ▪ Lao PDR,
  - Cambodia,                ▪ Myanmar and
  - Vietnam.

### ✓ Main features

- They have an **anthem**, a **flag** and **biannual summits** (twice a year) with a **rotating chairmanship**.
- **Official motto** - "One Vision, One Identity, One Community".

### ✓ Aim and purpose

- The ASEAN Declaration conveyed the aspiration to further **regional cooperation**.
- These were about **cooperation** in the **economic, social, cultural, technical, educational** and other fields, and in the **promotion of regional peace and stability** and adherence to the **principles** of the **United Nations Charter**.

### ✓ Main pillars

- Political-Security Community (APSC),
- Economic Community (AEC) and
- Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).





## Gains for India

- ✓ India would get an **opportunity to contribute** substantially in the **International standard setting process** for different food product categories
- ✓ It will also be involved in the **decision-making process**.
- ✓ India's **proposal** for setting up **group standards for millets** was also **accepted** by the Commission.
- ✓ India's initiative for **establishing global standards for millets** was **acknowledged** by the Commission and supported by the member countries.

## About Codex Alimentarius

- The Codex Alimentarius, or "**Food Code**" is a **collection of standards, guidelines and codes of practice** adopted by the Codex Alimentarius Commission.

### CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (CAC)

It is an <b>international food standards body</b> .	1	7	<b>Sessions</b> - The Commission meets in regular session <b>once a year</b> alternating between <b>Geneva and Rome</b> .
<b>Established in</b> - 1963	2		
<b>Established jointly by</b> - Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO).	3	8	<b>Language</b> - The Commission works in the <b>six UN official languages</b> . These are: <b>Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish</b> .
<b>Aim:</b> To <b>protect consumer health</b> and <b>promote fair practices</b> in food trade.	4		
<b>First meeting</b> - 1963	5	9	<b>Membership</b> - Membership of the Commission is <b>open</b> to all <b>Member Nations</b> and <b>Associate Members of FAO and WHO</b> which are interested in international food standards.
<b>Members:</b> Currently the Codex Alimentarius Commission has <b>189 Codex Members made up of 188 Member Countries and 1 Member Organization</b> (The European Union).	6	10	<b>When did India become a member?</b> 1964.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), consider the following statements:

1. It was jointly established by the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
2. It aims to protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade.

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

Answer: c

## MIGRATION ATTEMPTS BY INDIANS TO THE DEVELOPED WORLD

**Why in News:** The recent incident involving the forced return of 303 Indians from a Legend Airlines flight originating from Dubai has brought attention to suspected human trafficking. The flight grounded in France on trafficking suspicions has raised the larger questions regarding illegal migrations used by Indians to avail better opportunities in western countries.

### Causes for Illegal Migration at Great Cost to Lives

- Distress in farming
- Plummeting Incomes from Primary Sector Activities
- Exploitation of farmlands
- Allegations of religious prosecution
- The prevalent trafficking racket across rural Punjab and Haryana takes advantage of vulnerable individuals, offering promises of a brighter future abroad

### Donkey Flights/Donkey Routes and the Movie "Dunki"

The 'donkey routes', depicted in the movie "Dunki," represent perilous journeys where migrants navigate through

lenient visa policies in various countries to reach their desired destinations like the U.S., U.K., and Canada. These routes involve dangerous crossings through forests, harsh weather conditions, and hazardous travel methods.

#### How does 'dunki' method work?

The **first step** in the most popular donkey route from India is to **reach a Latin American country**.

- Countries like **Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guyana** have **visa on arrival** for Indian citizens.
- Some other countries, including **Brazil and Venezuela**, give tourist visas to Indians easily.
- A migrant's route also depends on which countries his agent has '**links**' in — **links to human trafficking networks**.
- Most agents land their clients in a Latin American country, and then **take them to Colombia**.
- **Crossing a dangerous forest**
  - From Colombia, the **migrants enter Panama**.
  - This involves **crossing the Darién Gap**, a dangerous forest between the two countries.
  - **Risks** here include a **lack of clean water, wild animals, and criminal gangs**.
- **At the US border**
  - The **3,140-km border** separating the **United States and Mexico** has fencing, which the migrants have to jump across.
  - Many choose to cross the dangerous **Rio Grande river**.
  - It is **after crossing over** that **migrants are detained** and then kept in camps.

#### Popularity of 'Donkey Routes' among Gujaratis and Punjabis

The prevalence of '**donkey routes**' has expanded beyond **Punjab** into **Gujarat**, as evidenced by the 303 passengers from various districts of north Gujarat on the recently grounded flight. Special police teams in Gujarat aim to crack down on agents facilitating these illegal migrations.

#### Way Forward

- The root causes driving migration such as farming distress and lack of opportunities should be addressed by appropriate policies
- Trafficking Networks which are particularly prevalent in Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat should be tackled effectively.
- To address this issue, we also need a crack-down on exploitative middlemen within the labour market.
- Efforts should be made to improve living standards, generate employment opportunities, and curb corruption in government recruitment exams could deter individuals from resorting to risky illegal migrations.

- Raising awareness about the dangers and uncertainties involved in illegal migration is crucial.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. The term, 'Donkey route', recently mentioned in the news, is associated with

- (a) Human Trafficking (b) Drug delivery  
(c) Wildlife corridor (d) In Vivo Experiment

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

## HOUTHI ATTACKS IN THE RED SEA

**Why in News:** Increased Houthi attacks in the Red Sea and the hijacking of two Indian commercial vessels near the region has brought the safe maritime transit into question.

#### RED SEA

- The Red Sea is a **seawater inlet** of the **Indian Ocean**, lying between **Africa and Asia**.
- Its connection to the ocean is in the **south**, through the **Bab al Mandeb strait** and the **Gulf of Aden**.
- One of the most saline bodies of water in the world.
- Bordering Countries: **Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea and Djibouti**.
- The Red Sea is the **world's northernmost tropical sea**, and has been designated a **Global 200 eco-region**.

#### About the issue

- The Red Sea crisis has been escalating due to the **recent missile and drone attacks** on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by **Houthi rebels in Yemen**.
- The attacks have led to firms pausing shipments, raising the possibility of a shock to the world economy.
- The Red Sea is one of the **world's most densely packed shipping channels**, with about **12% of global trade** passing through it, including **30% of global container traffic**.
- Billions of dollars of traded goods and supplies pass through the Red Sea every year, meaning that delays there **can affect petrol prices, the availability of electronics and other aspects of global trade**.

#### Free Flow of Maritime trade

- The attacks threaten the free flow of commerce in the Red Sea, a key shipping artery for global trade, and some shipping companies have decided to avoid the route and take a longer and costlier route around Africa.



- To counter the attacks and protect the maritime traffic in the Red Sea, the U.S. has initiated **Operation Prosperity Guardian**, a multinational security operation under the leadership of the Combined Maritime Forces and Task Force 153.
- The US also recently sunk many small boats and anti-ship machinery carried by the rebels in the Red sea under the same operation.
- India has deployed **Navy and Coast Guard ships and aircraft** to the region to monitor the situation and assist the Indian crewed vessels that have been attacked or are at risk.
- The **Indian Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR)** is coordinating operational responses and assistance.
- The situation has assumed grave dimensions as it could affect the availability of critical goods, and potentially even threaten India's energy security.
- Shipping companies are diverting their vessels around the Red Sea, where a series of missile and drone attacks by **Houthi fighters in Yemen** have threatened shipping.
- The disruption affects **12% of global trade** as the Bab-al-Mandab strait is a crucial chokepoint.

- Following the attacks, several global shipping majors have announced their decision to **avoid the route** and take a **longer route through the Southern Indian Ocean** adding to both **fuel and operating costs** in addition to the time.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

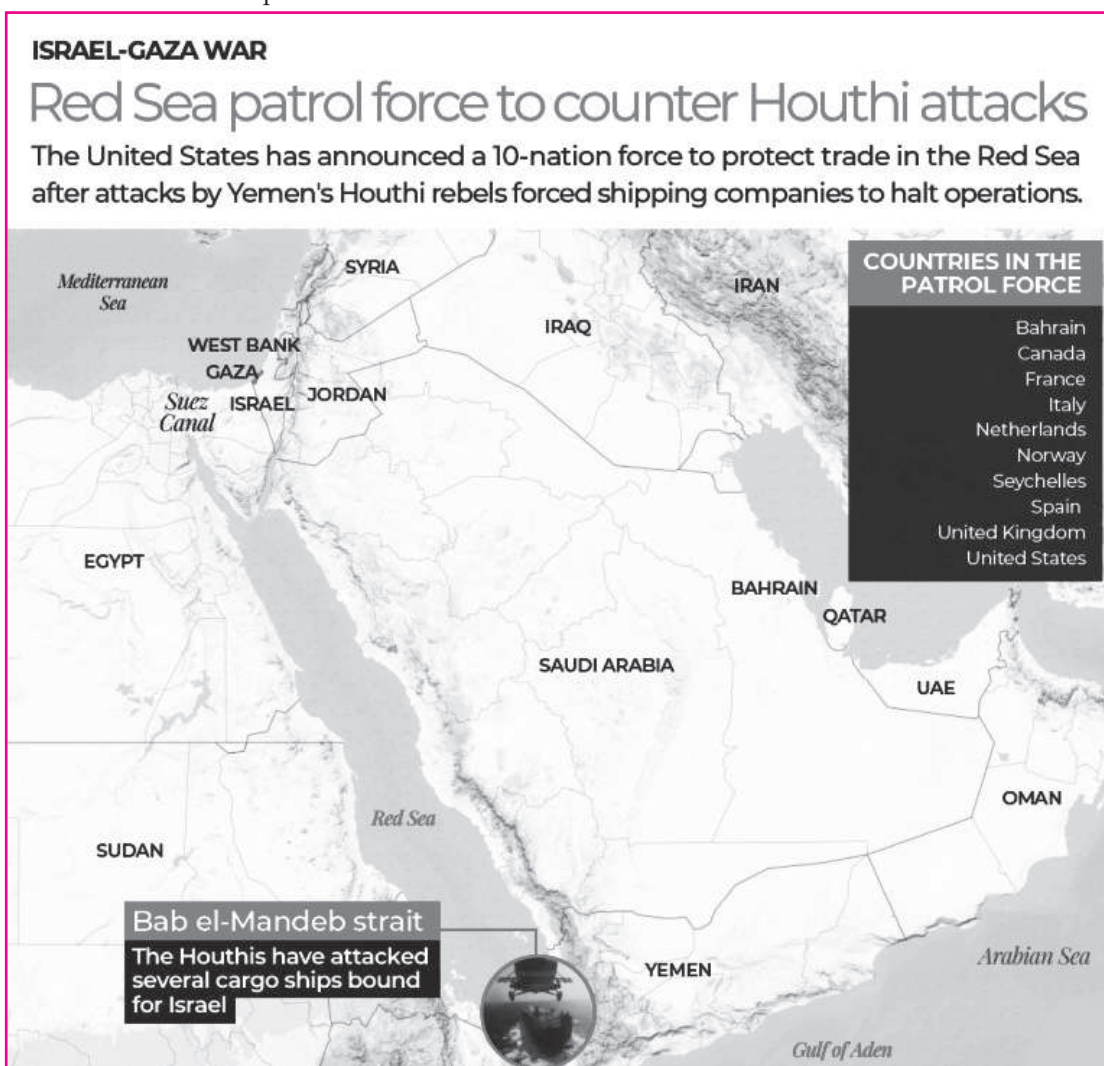
Q. Consider the following countries:

- |                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| 1. Saudi Arabia | 2. Qatar   |
| 3. Sudan        | 4. Somalia |

How many of the above countries bordering the Red Sea?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)





## REPORT ON CRYPTO ASSET INTERMEDIARIES

**Why in News:** International Financial Stability Board (FSB)'s latest report on crypto-asset intermediaries sought measures to enhance cross-border cooperation and information sharing among local authorities.

- **Cryptoassets** are secure **digital assets** traded electronically via **blockchain technology**.

#### Key details

- This aims to effectively **regulate** and **address gaps** in operating globally.
- Report highlights **potential risks** associated with MCIs that combine different activities within the platform.

#### What are MCIs?

- MCIs are **individual firms** or **groups of affiliated firms** that offer a range of **crypto-based services, products and functions** which primarily revolve around operating of the trading platform.
  - Examples **Binance, Bitfinex** and **Coinbase**.
- In the **traditional financial landscape**, the **functions** are provided by **separate entities**, instead of the same entity.
  - This **prevents conflict of interest** and **promotes market integrity, investor protection** and **financial stability**.
- The **primary source of revenue** for these platforms are the transaction fees generated from trading-related activities, the traded security here being **self-issued crypto assets**.

#### Implications

- The **threat to global financial stability** and to the real economy from the **failure of an MCI** is presently **limited**.
- An **ensuing loss of confidence** (in crypto-assets) that resulted in a '**run-off**' (investors moving away from riskier to safer assets).

#### Financial Stability Board (FSB)

An international body that monitors and makes recommendations about the global financial system. Established in the G20 Pittsburgh Summit (2009) as a successor to the Financial Stability Forum.

- **FTX Trading Ltd (Futures Exchange)** is a **bankrupt company** that formerly operated a **fraud-ridden cryptocurrency exchange** and **crypto hedge fund**.
- **FTX crashed due to:** Mismanagement of funds, lack of liquidity and the large volume of withdrawals.

### CHAHAL's PERSPECTIVE

#### Report on Multi-Function Crypto-Asset Intermediaries (MCIs)

Issues and Concerns	Way Forward
<b>Transparency</b> The report reveals that most <b>Multinational Companies</b> are <b>generally not transparent</b> about their corporate structure, only disclosing information of a small part of their business specific to a jurisdiction, & <b>failing to provide a clear account of transactions or audit practices</b> .	<b>Cross-Border Cooperation and Information Sharing</b> The proposal aims to promote cross-border cooperation and information sharing among local authorities to regulate and address MCI operations, while establishing international transparency standards for comprehensive understanding.
<b>Barriers to entry of new firms</b> A high concentration of services in a single location can lead to <b>anti-competitive behavior</b> , making the system more vulnerable, making it <b>harder for new competitors to enter</b> and increasing costs for users switching providers.	<b>Regulatory Frameworks</b> Implement clear regulatory frameworks to tackle MCIs' unique challenges, promoting market integrity, investor protection, and financial stability.
<b>Investor Losses</b> The closure of banks supporting crypto assets underscores the risk of a significant concentration of deposits linked to businesses relying on these assets, leading to <b>substantial investor losses</b> and <b>weakened market confidence</b> .	<b>Corporate Transparency</b> Mandate MCIs to improve corporate transparency by providing detailed information about their structure, business lines, and operations, and enforce penalties for non-compliance, ensuring comprehensive regulatory oversight.
<b>Risk associated with Banks</b> MCIs rely on banks and payment providers for transaction services, including cryptocurrencies conversion. However, counterparty issues can occur if trading platforms stop or banks fail to offer real-time operations. Banks also face credit risk when providing loans and credit lines.	

## Conclusion

The FSB's report underscores the need for robust regulatory frameworks to manage the complex risks associated with MCIs.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The International Financial Stability Board (FSB)'s latest report focuses on which of the following?

- (a) Multi-function crypto-asset intermediaries (MCIs)
- (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- (c) Cooperative Societies
- (d) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

Answer a

## RBI INCREASED RISK WEIGHTS FOR LENDING

**Why in News:** Seeking to rein in an observed rise in unsecured personal loans and credit cards, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) directed banks and non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) to reserve more capital for risk weights.

### Key details

- The mandatory risk weight requirement has been **increased by 25 percentage points**.
- This would be applicable to **unsecured personal loans, credit cards and lending to NBFCs**.

### What is credit risk and risk weights?

- The idea is to **address the notion of 'credit risk.'**
- **Credit risk** refers to the risk **entailed by a borrower** being **unable to meet their obligations** or **defaulting on commitments**.
- **'Risk weights'** are an essential tool for banks to **manage this risk**.
- This metric, in **percentage factors**, **adjusts for the risk** associated with a certain asset type.
- In other words, it is an **indicator of the essential holding the lender** should ideally have to adjust the associated risk.
- This is what the **RBI** has directed to be increased.

## RBI's proposal

- The **primary purpose** of effective risk management by banks is to **maximise their returns** by **maintaining credit risk exposure** within acceptable parameters.
  - RBI had raised concerns about the growth seen in consumer credit and **increased dependency of NBFCs on bank borrowings**.
- Now, it has **directed** that the **risk weight for consumer credit exposure** be **increased by 25 percentage points** to **125%**, for all **commercial banks and NBFCs**.
  - **At present**, exposures in this realm mandate a **risk weight of 100%**.
  - This would **apply to** personal loans (and retail loans for NBFCs), **excluding** housing loans, education loans, vehicle loans and loans secured by gold and gold jewellery.
- **Credit card loans** of **scheduled commercial banks (SCBs)** currently attract a risk weight of **125%** while that of **NBFCs** attract **100%**.
- RBI has decided to **increase the risk weight** to **125%** for **NBFCs** and **150%** for **SCBs**.
- **Bank credit to NBFCs**, excluding core investment companies, also had their risk weights **increased by 25 percentage points**.
  - This would **not apply to housing finance companies and loans to NBFCs** classified into the **priority sector**.

## Need for the changes

- Concerns have been raised about the **high growth** in **certain components of consumer credit**.
- It was **advised to banks and NBFCs** to:
  - strengthen their internal surveillance mechanisms,
  - address the build-up of risks, if any, and
  - institute suitable safeguards, in their own interest.
- RBI figures stipulate that **unsecured personal loans** have **increased by 23%** on a year-over-year basis.

## CONCERNS OF RBI ON UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS

### Capital adequacy and profitability

- The primary concerns relate to the **impact on capital adequacy** and the **bank's overall profitability**.
- **Slower loan growth** and an **increased emphasis on risk management** will likely support **better asset quality** in the Indian banking system.

### Immediate Effect will likely be

- Higher interest rates for borrowers
- Slower loan growth for lenders
- Reduced capital adequacy
- Some hit on profits

### Effect on NBFCs

- **NBFCs** face a **double-loss** because of **higher risk weights** on their unsecured loans and on account of the **bank lending mandates** to NBFCs.
- **Bank lending to NBFCs** remained the **principal source of funding** for NBFCs — constituting **41.2% of the total borrowing** of entities.
- It is expected that the **increased costs** would be **passed onto borrowers**.

### Effect on finance companies

- **Finance companies** might be **worst-affected**, as their **incremental bank borrowing** might **surge**.

### Capital Adequacy Ratio

- ✓ Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) is the **ratio of a bank's capital** in relation to its **risk weighted assets** and **current liabilities**.
- ✓ It is **decided** by **central banks and bank regulators** to **prevent** commercial banks from **taking excess leverage** and becoming **insolvent in the process**.
- ✓ It is **measured as**
  - **Capital Adequacy Ratio** = (Tier I + Tier II + Tier III (Capital funds)) / Risk weighted assets
  - The risk weighted assets **take into account**:
    - ◆ credit risk,
    - ◆ market risk and
    - ◆ operational risk.
- ✓ The **Basel III norms** stipulated a capital to risk weighted assets of 8%.
- ✓ However, as per RBI norms, **Indian scheduled commercial banks** are required to maintain a **CAR of 9%** while Indian **public sector banks** are emphasized to maintain a **CAR of 12%**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following:

1. Inflation
2. Appreciation of rupee
3. Increased interest rates
4. Increase in aggregate demand

How many of the above are the potential impacts of the increase in the risk weights by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)?

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

Answer: a (3 only)

### RODTEP SCHEME

**Why in News:** The U.S. and the European Union have imposed countervailing duties (CVD) on four Indian products, as a retaliation against the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme introduced for outbound shipments in January 2021.

- In financial year 2023-24, the GoI has allocated a budget of Rs. 15,070 crores to support the RoDTEP Scheme.

### Aim

- To boost exports which were relatively poor in volume previously.
- To support domestic industry and make it more competitive in the international markets.
- Export centric industries are being reformed and introduced to better mechanisms to increase their competitiveness, boost exports, generate employment and contribute to the overall economy.
- Achieving our vision of building an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

### Key details

- The **products** for which countervailing investigations have been conducted and a final determination of CVD has been made **include**:
  - paper file folders,
  - common alloy aluminum sheet and
  - forged steel fluid end blocks.

### About RoDTEP Scheme

- RoDTEP scheme is aimed to **neutralize the taxes and duties** suffered on exported goods which are **otherwise not credited or remitted or refunded** in any manner.
- The benefit is given as **percentage of Free On Board (FOB)** or fixed amount per unit of measurement.
- RoDTEP scheme was **notified** by the **Department of Commerce**.
- RoDTEP has been made effective in respect of **those exports** where **intention to claim the benefit** has been **manifested on the shipping bills**.
- There are **some sectors** i.e. **steel, pharmaceuticals, chemical, textiles** etc. which have presently **not been given benefit under the Scheme**.
- **Whether RoDTEP benefit can be claimed for the services provided outside India?**
  - The benefit under the scheme can be claimed **only** in respect of the **duties/ taxes/ levies etc.** borne on the **exported product** either used for **production** of the exported product or for its **distribution**.
  - Therefore, the present scheme **does not allow the benefit in case of service exports outside India**.

### Key Features

- The new export incentive scheme covers **8,555 export items** for a cost of around **Rs 12,500 crore** to the exchequer.



- The **refund rate** ranges to around **4 per cent** of Free on Board (FOB) value.
- Rebates on certain export products will also be subject to a **value cap per unit of the exported product**.
- Rebates will be issued in the form of a **transferable duty credit/electronic scrip** (e-scrip) which will be maintained in an electronic ledger by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC).

### What is Countervailing Duty?

- Countervailing duty (CVD) is a specific form of duty that the **government imposes** in order to **protect domestic producers** by countering the **negative impact** of **import subsidies**.
- CVD is thus an **import tax** by the **importing country** on imported products.
- **Need:**
  - To make their products **cheaper** and **boost their demand** in other countries, foreign governments sometimes **provide subsidy** to their producers.
  - To **avoid flooding** of the market in the **importing country** with these goods, the government of the **importing country imposes countervailing duty**, charging a **specific amount on import** of such goods.
- **Impact:**
  - The duty **nullifies and eliminates** the **price advantage** (low price) enjoyed by an imported product when it is given subsidies or exempted from domestic taxes in the country where they are manufactured
  - The duty **raises the price** of the imported product, bringing it closer to its true market price.
  - In this way, the government is able to **provide a level playing field** for domestic products.
- **International recognition:**
  - The **World Trade Organization (WTO)** permits the imposition of countervailing duty by its member countries.

### Scenario in India:

- The levy of anti-dumping duty is both **exporter-specific** and **country-specific**.
- It **extends** to the **imports from only that country** in respect of which **dumping has been alleged** and the **complaint has been filed** and **duty recommended**.
- Such duty **does not apply** to **imports from other countries** in respect of which the domestic industry has not alleged dumping.

### Who imposes countervailing measures in India?

- CVD is imposed as an **additional duty** besides customs on imported products when such products are given tax concession in the country of their origin.
- Administered by the **Directorate General of Anti-dumping and Allied Duties (DGAD)**, in the commerce and industry ministry's department of commerce.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the 'Remission of Duties and Taxes on Export Products (RoDTEP) scheme', consider the following statements:

1. It aims to neutralize the taxes and duties suffered on exported goods.
2. The benefit is given as percentage of Free on Board (FOB) or fixed amount per unit of measurement.
3. The steel and pharmaceuticals are presently are not covered under this scheme.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c

## RESERVE BANK OF INDIA'S REPORTS

**Why in News:** The RBI has released three reports recently: Report on Trend and Progress of Banking, 2023 list of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs) and the Financial Stability Report, 2023.

Report	Concepts and Highlights
Financial Stability Report (FSR) 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FSR (biannual report) is based on the assessment of the Sub-Committee of the <b>Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)</b>.</li> <li>• FSR highlighted that resilience of the <b>non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)</b> sector has improved.</li> <li>• Capital-to-risk weighted assets ratio (<b>CRAR</b>) has improved.</li> <li>• Gross Non-Performing Asset (<b>GNPA</b>) ratio is on downward trajectory.</li> <li>• Credit growth in the post-pandemic period has accelerated</li> </ul>



<p><b>List of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D-SIBs are systemically important due to their <b>size, cross-jurisdictional activities, complexity</b> and <b>lack of substitute</b> and <b>interconnection</b>.</li> <li>• It also means that the <b>bank is too big to fail</b>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ If DSBs fail, there would be significant disruption to the essential services to the banking system and the overall economy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Declaration/Regulation of D-SIBs:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ It is based on the <b>D-SIBs Framework of RBI</b> which was released in 2014.</li> <li>➤ This Framework is based on <b>Basel Committee on Banking Supervision's (BCBS's) framework</b> for dealing with D-SIBs.</li> <li>➤ Banks are placed in 5 buckets.</li> <li>➤ As per latest list, India's <b>D-SIBs</b> are <b>State Bank of India</b> (bucket 4) and <b>HDFC Bank</b> (bucket 2), <b>ICICI Bank</b> (bucket 1).</li> <li>➤ D-SIBs have to maintain <b>Additional Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1)</b> requirement as a percentage of <b>Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs)</b>.</li> <li>➤ Bucket 1 banks have to maintain lowest CET1 i.e. 0.20% and Bucket 5 have to maintain highest CET i.e. 1%</li> </ul> </li> <li>• In case a foreign bank having branch presence in India is a <b>Global Systemically Important Bank (G-SIB)</b>, it has to maintain <b>additional CET1</b> capital surcharge.</li> <li>• <b>Financial Stability Board (FSB)</b> releases the list of G-SIBs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2022-23</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a <b>statutory publication</b> in compliance with <b>Section 36 (2)</b> of the <b>Banking Regulation Act, of 1949</b>.</li> <li>• The report presents the performance of the banking sector during 2022-23 and 2023-24 so far.</li> <li>• <b>Key highlights:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The <b>Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio</b> of Indian scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) fell to a decadal low of 3.9% at end-March 2023.</li> <li>➤ The consolidated balance sheet of SCBs grew by <b>12.2%</b> in 2022-23, the highest in nine years.</li> <li>➤ In 2022-23, the combined balance sheets of Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) expanded by 2.3% while that of NBFCs expanded by 14.8%.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Concerns raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>Lack of asset diversification</b>, and <b>geographical concentration</b> of <b>Small Finance Banks (SFBs)</b>.</li> <li>➤ <b>Concentration risks of corporate credit</b> in NBFCs and significant exposure of banks to NBFCs.</li> <li>➤ <b>Long tenure of directors</b>, <b>absence of comprehensive risk management</b> policy and <b>deficient compliance culture</b> in UCBs.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Strengthening of quality of <b>governance</b> of co-operative banks based on three pillars of <b>compliance, risk management</b>, and <b>internal audit</b>.</li> <li>➤ NBFCs should focus on <b>broadbasing</b> their <b>funding sources</b> and reduce overdependence on bank funding.</li> <li>➤ <b>Capital Adequacy Framework</b> accounting for risks to <b>SFBs</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following:

1. Report on Trend and Progress of Banking, 2023

2. List of Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)

3. Financial Stability Report, 2023

4. International Debt Report, 2023

How many of the above are released/published by the Reserve Bank of India?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 3 only)

## DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE (DPI)

**Why in News:** According to a recent report, DPIs have not just impacted governance but also the private sector, especially startups.

### Key details




- It has a **symbiotic relationship** with the startup ecosystem adding over **\$100 billion** in value across multiple sectors of the Indian Internet economy.
- The landscape is currently **expanding beyond the JAM trinity**:

- It has usage in:
  - Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA),
  - DigiLocker 2.0,
  - Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC),
  - Account Aggregator (AA),
  - Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (Diksha) among others.
- The availability of **zero merchant discount rates (MDR)** have boosted the popularity of UPI in the e-commerce space.
  - The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is an **instant payment system** developed in India, by the **National Payments Corporation of India**.
  - The interface facilitates **inter-bank peer-to-peer and person-to-merchant transactions**.
- Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)** itself could generate a Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) ranging from **\$250-300 billion by 2030**.




**What is Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)?**

# DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

## A STRONG DPI HAS THREE FOUNDATIONAL SYSTEMS

 Identity	 Payments	 Data exchange
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being able to prove who you are - <b>using a legal form of identity</b> - enables a person to <b>fully participate in society</b> and the economy.</li> <li>A digital identity allows people to <b>access a wide range of goods and services</b>, including bank accounts, lines of credit, supplies, markets for their businesses and government benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rise in digital payment platforms has allowed millions of people, especially women, to conduct <b>secure financial transactions</b> without cash for the first time.</li> <li><b>Secure and interoperable digital payment systems</b> can help close this gap.</li> </ul>	<p>A data exchange system allows <b>data to be shared</b> between otherwise unconnected institutions in ways that benefit people, while also giving <b>individuals more control over their data</b> and helping them make <b>informed decisions</b> about its use.</p>

## BENEFITS OF DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

 Individuals	 Businesses	 Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They can <b>safely and cheaply</b> receive wages, pay bills, access services, and conduct transaction.</li> <li>In a little over <b>10 years</b> after launching its digital identity system, the number of <b>adults with bank accounts</b> more than <b>doubled, to 78%</b>, and <b>women's account ownership</b> grew even faster, from <b>26% to 78%</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Businesses benefit because <b>DPI stimulates the market</b>.</li> <li>Digital service providers have <b>equal opportunity to compete and reach new customers and markets</b>, and entrepreneurs can use the infrastructure to <b>innovate and launch new businesses</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governments benefit because they can <b>provide essential services</b> to every resident.</li> <li>For example, <b>Estonia's X-Road digital infrastructure</b> enables the government to provide <b>99% of public services online</b>.</li> </ul>

- DPI is a **digital network** that enables countries to **safely and efficiently deliver economic opportunities** and social services to all residents.
- DPI can be **compared to roads**, which form a **physical network** that connects people and provides **access to a huge range of goods and services**.
- DPI allows people to **open bank accounts** and receive wages faster and more easily.
- It allows governments to **support citizens** more quickly and efficiently, especially during emergencies.
- It enables entrepreneurs to **reach customers far and wide**.

#### DPI and Sustainable Development Goals:

- **DPI reduces inequality:**
  - It does so by making it **easier for the public and private sectors** to expand banking, credit, and payment services, especially to women and others who have traditionally been left behind.
- **DPI promotes health and well-being:**
  - **Aggregated health data** can help providers **share information** to improve patient care, and governments can better **track illness and disease across communities**.
- **DPI promotes sustainable and inclusive economic growth:**
  - Small landholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs can **access:**
    - ◆ **global weather forecasting data,**
    - ◆ **digital early warning systems,** and
    - ◆ **digital payments.**
  - With this they can:
    - ◆ **better plan their cropping cycles,**
    - ◆ **protect against pests and weather shocks,** and
    - ◆ **find new markets.**
  - The **increases** in their **crop yields** can, in turn, **improve their income** while **reducing food insecurity** in the community.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. In India, the term 'Public Key infrastructure,' is used is used in the context of: [UPSC CSE 2020]

- Digital security infrastructure
- Food security infrastructure
- Health care and education infrastructure
- Telecommunication and transport infrastructure

Answer: a

## METHODOLOGIES OF GLOBAL CREDIT RATING AGENCIES

**Why in News:** Finance Ministry released a document titled "**Re-examining Narratives: A Collection of Essays**", in which there is a criticism of what the government calls the "**opaque methodologies adopted by credit rating agencies to arrive at sovereign ratings**".

#### Key details

- It **flags issues** with the **methodology** adopted by the **three main global credit rating agencies**,
- And also shows how these gaps affect India adversely.

#### Significance of sovereign ratings

- **Significance for governments**
  - Sovereign ratings are about the **creditworthiness of governments**.
  - They provide a **marker for investors** around the world about the **ability and willingness of governments to pay back debt**.
  - **Sovereign ratings affect a country's ability to borrow money from global investors**.
  - Governments with **lower sovereign ratings** have to **pay higher interest rates** when they borrow.
- **Significance for businesses:**
  - **Government** is considered to be the **safest bet in a country**.
  - If the **sovereign rating** of a country's **government is low**, the **businesses** of that country end up **paying out an even higher interest rate** when they borrow from global investors.
- **Significance for welfare policies and optimum usage of natural resources:**
  - Most **developing countries** (such as India), while **rich in either labour resources or land or mineral resources**, suffer from a **lack of capital** (money available to put to use).
  - A poor sovereign rating can **inhibit the ability** of these countries to **borrow money from rich investors** as a good rating can make it easier to become more productive and remove mass poverty.

#### Which are the main rating agencies?

- Sovereign credit ratings **predate** the **Bretton Woods institutions**, i.e., the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
- There are **three main globally recognised credit rating agencies**:
  - **Moody's,**
  - **Standard & Poor's** and
  - **Fitch.**

- **Moody's** is the **oldest**. It was **established in 1900** and issued its **first sovereign ratings** just **before World War I**.
- In the **1920s**, **Poor's Publishing and Standard Statistics**, the predecessor of **S&P**, started rating government bonds.

### Criticism of the government vis-à-vis methodologies of credit rating agencies

- **Issue of transparency**
  - ◆ They are **opaque** and appear to **disadvantage developing economies** in certain ways.
  - ◆ For instance, the **Fitch document** mentions that the rating agency takes comfort from **high levels of foreign ownership** in the banking sector and that **public-owned banks** have historically been subject to **political interference**.

- ◆ Such an assessment tends to **discriminate** against developing countries, where the **banking sector is primarily run by the public sector**.

#### ➤ Selection process of experts not transparent

- ◆ The experts generally **consulted** for the rating assessments are selected in a **non-transparent manner**.

#### ➤ Unclear parameters

- ◆ The rating agencies **do not convey** clearly the **assigned weights** for each parameter considered.
- ◆ **Fitch** does lay out **some numerical weights** for each parameter, they do go on to state that the **weights are for illustrative purposes only**.

No	S&P	Moody's	Fitch	Meaning and Color
1	AAA	Aaa	AAA	Prime
2	AA+	Aa1	AA+	High Grade
3	AA	Aa2	AA	
4	AA-	Aa3	AA	
5	A+	A1	A+	Upper Medium Grade
6	A	A2	A	
7	A-	A3	A-	
8	BBB+	Baa1	BBB+	Lower Medium Grade
9	BBB	Baa2	BBB	
10	BBB-	Baa3	BBB-	
11	BB+	Ba1	BB+	Non Investment Grade Speculative
12	BB	Ba2	BB	
13	BB-	Ba3	BB-	
14	B+	B1	B+	Highly Speculative
15	B	B2	B	
16	B-	B3	B-	
17	CCC+	Caa1	CCC+	Substantial Risks
18	CCC	Caa2	CCC	Extremely Speculative

### Additional information

- There are **four main pillars** such as:
  - macroeconomic outlook,
  - structural features,
  - external finances
  - public finances
- Each pillar has a **specific weight**. Within each of these pillars there are **sub-components**, again with **individual weights**.
- But apart from the quantitative variables, each vertical also has "**Qualitative Overlay**" variables.

- The **essential points of contention** are:

- the use of the **composite governance indicator** (which has a weight of 21.4) is **only based on the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)**; and
- the use of **Qualitative Overlay** implies a **subjective assessment**.

- The **WGI uses a host of indices and reports** such as the World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report, Economist Intelligence Unit, etc. to assess several aspects of a country that may not be captured by hard economic data.



- The government argues that there is an **excessive reliance** on such **subjective appraisals**.
- The **influence** of the **composite governance indicator** and **perceived institutional strength** surpasses the **collective influence** of all other macroeconomic fundamentals when it comes to the **chances of earning India** and other developing **economies an upgrade**.
- It implies that to **earn a credit rating upgrade**, developing economies need to demonstrate **progress along arbitrary indicators**, which are also criticised for being constructed from a set of several **one-size-fits-all perception-based surveys**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following:

1. ICRA
2. CRISIL
3. CARE
4. FITCH

How many of the above are examples of credit rating agencies?

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

Answer d

## PRESSMUD

**Why in News:** Sugarcane byproduct pressmud can help generate 460,000 tonnes of compressed biogas (CBG).

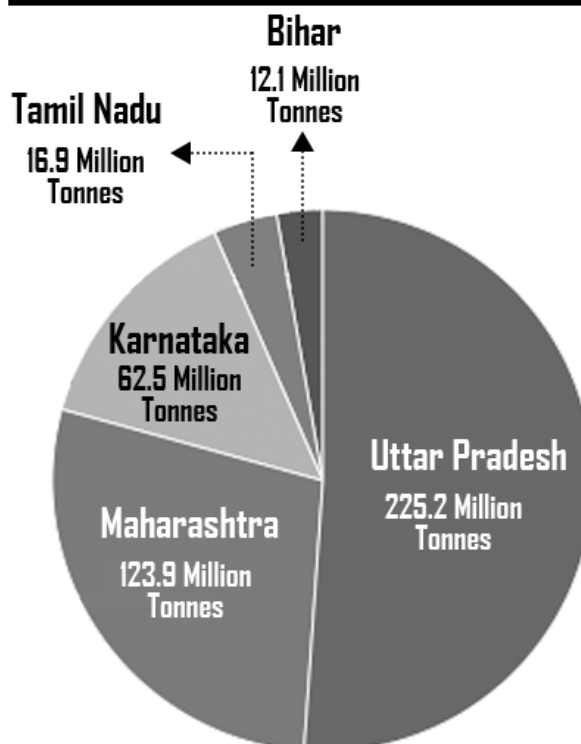
#### About Pressmud

- Pressmud is a **residual byproduct** in the sugar industry often known as **filter cake** or **press cake**.
- It has been acknowledged as a **valuable resource** for **green energy production**.
- The byproduct can help Indian sugar mills **generate extra revenue** by utilising it as a **feedstock for biogas production** through **anaerobic digestion** and subsequent **purification** to create **compressed biogas (CBG)**.

#### Sugarcane Industry in India

- **Uttar Pradesh** and **Maharashtra**, the primary sugarcane-growing states, contribute to approximately **65 per cent** of the total sugarcane cultivation area.

## Key Sugarcane-Producing States



- Collectively, this is around **440 million tonnes** out of India's overall sugarcane production, which reached about **495 million tonnes** in 2022-23.
- India's **sugar production** for the fiscal year 2022-23 amounted to **32.74 million tonnes**, along with approximately **11.4 million tonnes** of **pressmud**.
- This quantity has the potential to **generate 460,000 tonnes** of CBG valued at **Rs 2,484 crore**, considering the **minimum guaranteed price** of **Rs 54/kg** under the central government's **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation** scheme.

#### Position of India's sugar industry

- ✓ India has assumed a **key position** in the **worldwide sugar economy**, emerging as the **foremost sugar producer** since 2021-22, surpassing **Brazil**.
- ✓ It stands as the **second-largest sugar exporter** globally.
- ✓ The expansion of the **ethanol biofuel** sector over the past five years has not only **strengthened the sugar industry** but also contributed to the **improved financial standing** of sugar mills.

#### Advantages of Pressmud

- ✓ It **eliminates** the **complexities** associated with the **feedstock supply chain**, as found in the case of agricultural residue, where biomass harvesting machinery is required for harvesting and aggregation.

- ✓ The feedstock is **sourced** from **one or two producers** or sugar mills, as opposed to agricultural residue, which involves multiple producers / farmers within a narrow window of 45 days per year.
- ✓ Pressmud's **quality is not a concern**, unlike municipal solid waste, where the presence of inorganic material can damage anaerobic digesters, leading to lower gas output.
- ✓ It **eliminates pre-treatment costs** as it lacks the organic polymer lignin, unlike agricultural residue.
- ✓ In terms of **conversion efficiency**, approximately **25 tonnes** of pressmud are needed to produce a **tonne** of CBG.
  - In comparison, **cattle dung** requires **50 tonnes** for the same gas output.

### Challenges with pressmud

- **Increase in prices**
  - The realization in revenue generating potential of pressmud has resulted in a **substantial increase in pressmud prices** over the last two years, rising from **Rs 100 per tonne to Rs 500-600 per tonne**.
- **Competing uses**
  - Pressmud faces competition for use as **fertiliser** and in **bio-composting**, contending with **spent wash** and being used as **fuel in brick kilns**.
- **Lack of agreements**
  - The **lack of long-term agreements** with sugar mills and the **involvement of mediators** in procurement further compound the challenges.
- **Storage of feedstock**
  - Storing pressmud proves challenging as it **undergoes gradual decomposition**, resulting in the **breakdown of organic compounds**.
  - This **complicates long-term storage** and **raises production costs**.

### Way forward

- States with the **highest CBG potential** from pressmud should **implement bio-energy policies** that **streamline the approval process** for projects.
  - ◆ Two examples of states taking progressive steps are **Uttar Pradesh** and **Bihar**, which have introduced **supportive bioenergy policies** for CBG plants.
- The government should **establish a mechanism** to **control pressmud prices** below a specified threshold.
- Encouraging sugar mills to commit to **extended agreements** (10-15 years) with CBG plants, featuring an **annual rate increase** of 5-10 per cent, will **ensure economic viability**.
- Comprehensive research is essential to **developing**

technologies for **pressmud storage** that **prevent methane emissions** into the environment and **minimise gas loss** from the feedstock.

- State renewable energy nodal agencies and biogas development and training centres should **conduct periodic training sessions** to **educate operators** on the functioning of CBG plants, handling scientific equipment and feedstock characterisation.

### Conclusion

Pressmud is a **low-hanging fruit** for the CBG industry and it should be **harnessed promptly** to **address waste management** issues in sugar mills, create a **sustainable energy source** and **supply organic fertiliser** to soil.

### About CBG

- ✓ **Compressed Bio Gas (CBG)** is the **mixture of hydrocarbon gases and vapours** consisting mainly of **Methane**.
- ✓ It is produced by the **decomposition** of animal and plant waste, **purified and compressed** for use as an automotive fuel and industrial application.
- ✓ **Chemically**, it is the **same as Compressed Natural Gas** (both are compressed methane) and has the **same calorific value**.
- ✓ The advantage of CBG over CNG is that while CNG is a **by-product of petroleum**, **CBG can be produced from any biomass**.
  - This makes CBG a commercially viable option as it can be directly used to replace CNG in transportation fuel.
- ✓ **Features and uses**
  - Its solid by-products can be **used as bio-manure**.
  - It is a **rich source of silica** that aids in the growth and yield of crops.
  - It can help reduce the **requirement of chemical fertilisers**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which of the following statements well describes the term 'Pressmud'?

- (a) Mud-grade clastic-sediment or semi-liquid mixture of water and soil generated during the mining operations.
- (b) A biproduct formed in the rubber calendering process.
- (c) It is a residual byproduct in the sugar industry often known as filter cake or press cake.
- (d) Sediment transported and deposited by glaciers in mountainous regions.

Answer: c

## NEED TO TRANSFORM AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

**Why in News:** A report from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has laid bare the staggering hidden costs of our global agri-food systems, surpassing an astonishing \$10 trillion.

### Key details

- In middle-income countries like **India**, these costs constitute nearly **11% of the GDP**, which manifests as **higher poverty, environmental harm, and health-related impacts**, including **undernourishment** and **unhealthy dietary patterns**.
- The report blames **unsustainable business-as-usual activities and practices** for these escalating costs, pointing to a need to **transform agri-food systems**.
- One way to do so is to **shift to multi-cropping systems** that have the potential to
  - protect farmers' well-being
  - improve nutritional outcomes for our communities
  - positively impact ecological health

### Impacts of intensive agriculture





- Impressive improvements in agricultural productivity have been achieved in India over the last five decades by mainstreaming **mono-cropping systems** and **chemical-intensive farming practices**.
- The **Green Revolution** focused on the marketing of **high-yielding varieties of paddy and wheat** on agricultural lands, which now constitute **more than 70% of India's agricultural production**.
- The infusion of seeds purchased from multinational corporations and fertilizers **undermined**
  - seed sovereignty,
  - dismantled Indigenous knowledge systems, and
  - fuelled a shift from diverse crop varieties and staples such as pulses and millets to monoculture plantations.
- This trend also **compromised the nutritional needs** of households & resulted in **adverse ecological consequences** including excessive extraction of groundwater.
- This **privatisation and deregulation of agricultural inputs** also increased **indebtedness** among agrarian households.
  - In 2013, the **debt to asset ratio** of a farmer's household in India was **630% higher** than in 1992.
  - **Agriculture** in India has increasingly become **unviable** as the **average monthly household income** of a farming household sits at **₹10,816**.

### Which are the crops being favoured?



- **Dominance of rice and wheat**
  - The procurement policy **heavily favours rice and wheat**.

- In 2019-2020, the FCI procured **341.32 lakh million tonnes (MT) of wheat** and **514.27 lakh MT of rice**.
- In contrast, the Indian govt. approved the **procurement** of a total of **only 3.49 lakh MT of coarse grains** such as jowar, bajra, ragi, maize, and barley by State governments for the central pool & local distribution, which is **less than 1% of total foodgrain procurement**.
- The **area under cultivation of coarse grains** dropped by **20%** between 1966-1967 and 2017-2018, whereas the **area under rice and wheat** increased by nearly **20% and 56% respectively**.

### How can Crop Diversification help?

 <b>Shift in Value Chain</b> The <b>systemic shift</b> from <b>local to global value chains</b> is crucial for addressing complex systemic issues, with <b>local efforts</b> like <b>farm diversification</b> serving as a starting point.	 <b>Revitalisation of Land and Soil</b> Agro-ecology-based <b>multi-cropping systems</b> , like ' <b>akkadisaalu</b> ' in Karnataka, <b>revitalize land and soil</b> by <b>intercropping</b> legumes, pulses, oilseeds, trees, shrubs, and livestock, providing cash, food, and ecosystem services.
 <b>Benefits of Millets</b> ▶ Millets, whose <b>yield per hectare</b> is <b>comparable</b> to those of <b>rice and wheat</b> , are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>More nutritious</b></li> <li>➤ Grow in <b>semi-arid conditions</b> without burdening groundwater tables</li> <li>➤ Require <b>minimal input</b></li> <li>➤ Provide a <b>diversified food basket</b></li> </ul>	 <b>Benefits of Farmers</b> ▶ Crop diversification, while causing <b>some productivity loss</b> , <b>preserves natural capital</b> and <b>ensures nutritional security</b> for farmers. ▶ By redirecting subsidies, we can <b>reward farmers for their contribution to sustaining natural capital</b> , rather than incentivizing depletion.

### Transitioning to Sustainable Agriculture

 <b>Lowering Ratio of Commercial Crops</b> Over time, the <b>fraction of commercial crops</b> could be <b>lowered to 50%</b> and border crops could be <b>replaced</b> with <b>locally-suitable tree species</b> for fruits and fodder.	 <b>Integration of Livestock Rearing</b> <b>Livestock rearing integration</b> could <b>enhance farm incomes</b> , potentially enhancing ecological outcomes and <b>sustaining farm incomes</b> for up to 25 years, according to preliminary economic modeling.
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- **Other crops**
  - **Water-intensive cash crops** like sugarcane and areca nut have also flourished under policies **favouring investments in dams and canal irrigation** (favourable for sugarcane) and **free electricity for borewells** (favourable for areca nut).

- This trend **threatens food security** and the **production of nutritional crops**.
- The expansion of **sugarcane** cultivation
  - ◆ affects biodiversity,
  - ◆ increases the pressure on groundwater resources, and
  - ◆ contributes to air and water pollution.

### Conclusion

Scaling up these practices requires **collaboration** among institutions, policymakers, and social groups to **articulate economic incentives** for farmers to **shift from high-input monoculture to diversified cropping**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. India is the largest producer as well as the largest exporter of cereal products in the world.
2. Millets are gluten-free and can be consumed by celiac disease patients.
3. Millets have a low Glycaemic Index (GI) and also associated with the prevention of diabetes.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c

## VISION @2047

**Why in News:** NITI Aayog is in the final stages of harmonising reports from secretaries of sectoral groups to prepare a blueprint for 'Viksit Bharat @2047'.

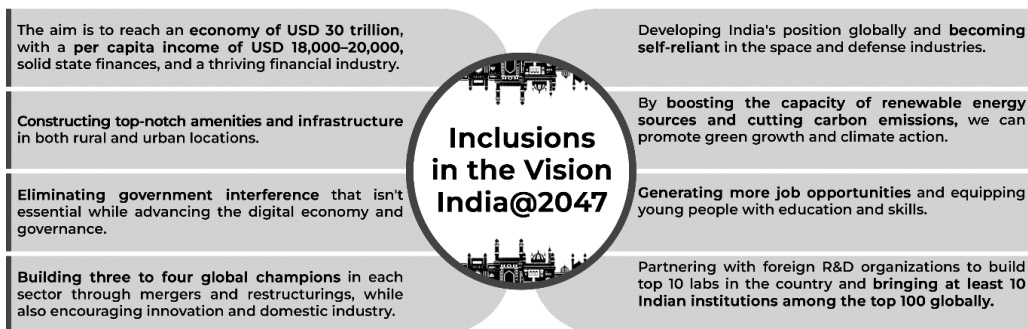
### About Vision @2047

- It is an ambitious vision document **aiming** to make India a **developed economy** of \$30 trillion by 2047.
- It is a project initiated by the **NITI Aayog** to create a **blueprint for India's development** in the next 25 years.
- It aims to make India:
  - a **global leader** in innovation and technology
  - a model of **human development** and **social welfare**
  - a champion of **environmental sustainability**
- The vision hinges on the idea that India will have **successfully dealt with most of its post-independence problems** over the next 25 years,

- India will need to **transcend a different set of challenges**:
  - a **middle-income trap**, where the country's per capita income may stabilise around \$5,000-6,000,
  - a **slowdown in economic growth**.
- The vision encompasses **various aspects of development**, including **economic growth**, **social progress**, **environmental sustainability**, and **good governance**.

### During the Amrit Kaal the government aims to:

- **Complement the macro-economic level growth** focus with a micro-economic level all-inclusive welfare focus.
- **Promote digital economy and fintech**, technology-enabled development, energy transition, and climate action.
- Rely on a **virtuous cycle** starting from private investment with public capital investment helping to crowd-in private investment.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to Vision India @2047, consider the following statements:

1. It is an ambitious vision document aiming to make India a developed economy of \$60 trillion by 2080.
2. It is a project initiated by the NITI Aayog to create a blueprint for India's development in the next 25 years.

3. To champion of environmental sustainability is one of the goals under it.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

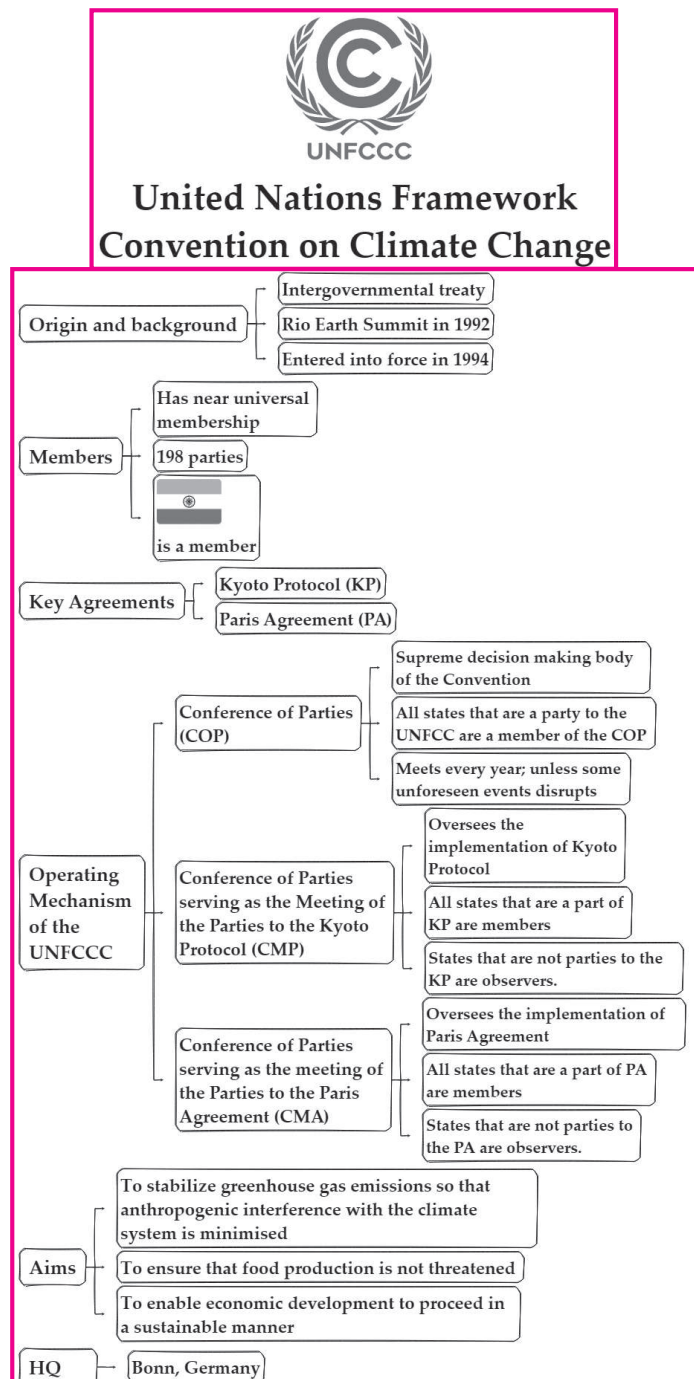
Answer: b (2 and 3 only)



## ENVIRONMENT &amp; GEOGRAPHY

## CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES (COP) 28

**Why in news:** Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) recently hosted the world's biggest climate negotiation – 28<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties, better known as COP.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM COP28

Areas of Discussions	Important Developments	Key Concepts
<b>Loss and Damage Fund</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COP28 adopted the decision on the operationalization of the new funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage.</li> <li>The decision was adopted by consensus by all Parties including India.</li> <li>The purpose of the Fund is to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in responding to economic and non-economic loss and damage</li> <li>The new fund is to be hosted by the World bank for an initial period of four years.</li> <li>It will allocate resources based on the available evidence and with a minimum percentage allocated to least developed countries and Small Islands Developing States.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What is Loss and Damage?</b></p> <p>The concept often falls into two categories:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic loss and damage refer to negative impacts where the costs are quantifiable, such as damage to infrastructure or reduced crop yields.</li> <li>2. Non-economic loss and damage refers to negative impacts that are not easily traded in markets, and typically harder to measure in monetary terms, such as loss of culture, displacement and way of life. These tend to be more irreparable and irreversible.</li> </ol> <p>The term '<b>loss and damage</b>' was formally recognised in 2013 at the 19th Conference of the Parties (COP 19) in Warsaw, where the world saw the establishment of the <b>Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage</b>.</p>
<b>Transitioning away from all fossil fuels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This was part of the UAE Consensus and commits a just, orderly and equitable manner in this critical decade to enable the world to reach net zero emissions by 2050.</li> <li>This is the first time a COP final decision has singled out fossil fuels, whose combustion is by far the leading cause of the climate crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"Transitioning away from fossil fuels" means that renewable energy will increase over time and be gradually substituted for fossil fuels</li> <li>Fossil fuels – coal, oil and gas – are by far the largest contributor to global climate change, accounting for over 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions.</li> </ul>
<b>Global Stocktake</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaders indicated that there is an urgent need to set the world on appropriate pathways for deep, rapid, and sustained global greenhouse gas emission reductions, as indicated by science.</li> <li>Significant adaptation and finance gaps were identified as per <b>UNEP Adaptations Gap Report</b></li> <li>Stressed on the need for all countries to strengthen adaptation with a focus on countries that are particularly vulnerable.</li> <li>Need to rapidly scale up support for adaptation — beyond meeting the target of doubling adaptation finance— and loss and damage</li> <li>While global climate finance flows have increased, they are not measuring up to the required investments, needs and priorities to meet the Paris Agreement targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Global Stocktake</b>- It means looking at everything related to where the world stands on climate action and support, identifying the gaps, and working together to chart a better course forward to accelerate climate action.</li> <li><b>Adaptation</b>- Means preparing for the effects of climate change that is already underway. For ex- flood defences, setting up early warning systems for cyclones, switching to drought-resistant crops, etc.</li> <li><b>Mitigation</b>- Means addressing the root causes of climate change. For ex- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, phase down of coal, etc.</li> </ul>

Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A work programme to further strengthen the indicators at the heart of the new framework will kick off in 2024.</li> <li>Countries need to provide written inputs to help inform this by March 2024.</li> </ul>	
Just Transition Work Programme	At least two dialogues to be convened before COP29 in a hybrid format to ensure inclusivity, and countries to provide further written evidence and inputs for the work programme by March 2024.	<b>What is meant by Just Transition?</b> The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines it: "Greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind."
Presidency Youth Climate Champion (YCC)	Decision has been taken to institutionalize the role of the YCC within the (UNFCCC) process.	To enhance meaningful participation and representation of youth in future COPs.
ALTERRA-UAE Climate Investment Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A climate finance fund launched by the UAE that will drive forward international efforts to create a fairer climate finance system, with an emphasis on improving access to funding for the Global South.</li> <li>It is the world's largest private investment vehicle (USD 30bn) for climate change action and will aim to mobilize US\$250 billion globally by 2030.</li> <li>It has two components:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ALTERRA Acceleration- \$25bn component aimed towards scalable climate investments for Net Zero goal</li> <li>➤ ALTERRA Transformation- \$5bn component aimed towards the Global South to incentivize investments</li> </ul> </li> <li>The UAE also announced a Finance Forum to be held in 2024 to track progress against commitments made at COP28 and to report back on the implementation of the global climate finance framework.</li> </ul>	It aims to steer private markets towards climate investments and focus on transforming emerging markets and developing economies, where traditional investment has been lacking due to the higher perceived risks.
UAE Declaration on Climate and Health	A statement issued by 143 countries on the occasion of the first Health Day at the COP28, expressing their concern and commitment to address the health impacts of climate change.	<b>India is not a signatory.</b>
Waste to Zero: The Global Initiative for Waste Decarbonization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched by UAE COP28 Presidency and UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment</li> <li>This global voluntary initiative to decarbonize the waste management sector will include all the ecosystem (Governments, international institutions, financial entities, waste management companies, waste producers, NGOs, and academics) to collaborate and activate concrete scalable solutions to decarbonize the waste management value.</li> </ul>	



<b>GLOBAL RENEWABLES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY PLEDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a voluntary initiative launched at the COP28 climate summit in Dubai.</li> <li>• To accelerate the transition away from unabated fossil fuels and towards renewable energy and energy efficiency.</li> <li>• Tripling renewable energy capacity</li> <li>• Doubling energy efficiency improvements</li> <li>• Supporting domestic and international actions</li> <li>• Ensuring just and responsible transitions</li> <li>• The pledge is joined by more than 100 countries, alongside the COP28 Presidency and the European Union.</li> <li>• It is not legally binding.</li> </ul>
<b>COP28 GENDER-RESPONSIVE JUST TRANSITIONS AND CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIP</b>	<div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It confirms the relevant outcomes of previous UN conferences and documents on gender equality and climate change.</li> <li>• It recognises the disproportionate impacts of climate change on all women and girls and stresses the need to strengthen and expand access to gender-responsive social protection systems.</li> <li>• It outlines measures to implement gender-responsive just transitions. The declaration also commits to reconvene for a dialogue at the next UN Climate Change Conference to report on the progress.</li> </ul> </div> <div> <b>What is Gender Responsive Just Transition?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is an approach to climate action that respects, promotes and considers the rights and needs of women and men in the transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient economies.</li> <li>• It aims to create decent work opportunities, social protection and empowerment for all, while ensuring that no one is left behind.</li> <li>• It can also contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement</li> </ul> </div> </div> <p><b>India is not a signatory.</b></p>
<b>COALITION FOR HIGH AMBITION MULTILEVEL PARTNERSHIPS (CHAMP) FOR CLIMATE ACTION</b>	<div> <div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance cooperation in the planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies, including but not limited to Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) and Long-Term Low-Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS)</li> <li>• To maximise climate action, including through coalitions such as the NDC Partnership</li> <li>• While collectively pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and increasing adaptation and resilience.</li> </ul> </div> <div> <p>India is not a signatory</p> </div> </div>

#### THE UAE CONSENSUS

At this COP, countries came together to deliver the 'UAE Consensus' - the most ambitious and comprehensive set of negotiated outcomes to come out of the UNFCCC process since COP21. The following initiatives are a part of the UAE Consensus:

- Global Stocktake
- Emirates Framework for Global Climate Resilience
- Just Transition Work Programme
- Mitigation Work Programme
- Presidency Youth Climate Champion

REPORTS IN COP28	
Reports	Details
<b>Global Cooling Watch: "Keeping it Chill" 2023 by the UNEP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lays out sustainable cooling measures in three areas: passive cooling, higher-energy efficiency standards, and a faster phase down of climate-warming refrigerants.</li> <li>The report is released in support of the <b>Global Cooling Pledge</b>, a joint initiative between the United Arab Emirates as host of COP28 and the <b>Cool Coalition</b>.</li> <li>India is not a signatory to the pledge.</li> <li>It demonstrates the potential and the pathways to achieve near-zero emissions from cooling.</li> <li>Using a model created, it presents pathways to get to near-zero emissions in the key cooling sectors and provides a call to action for countries to pursue the policies and strategies that have the greatest impact in reducing cooling-related emissions and advancing sustainable cooling for all.</li> </ul>
<b>An Eye on Methane: International Methane Emissions Observatory 2023 Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It takes stock of progress harnessing an imminent data revolution that can accelerate methane reduction on a global scale.</li> <li>The International Methane Emissions Observatory's third annual report provides decision makers a framework of action to track and monitor methane emissions to plan targeted and ambitious action for their mitigation.</li> </ul>
<b>State of Finance for Nature 2023 by UNEP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It tracks finance flows to nature-based solutions (NbS) and compares them to the finance needed to maximise the potential of NbS to help tackle climate, biodiversity and degradation challenges.</li> <li>It estimates the scale of nature-negative finance flows from both public and private sector sources globally.</li> <li>Nature based Solutions (NbS) provide critical investment opportunities as they are cost-effective and provide multiple benefits.</li> <li>It focuses on current levels of NbS implementation and finance and how much finance for NbS is needed to reach specific Rio targets – limit climate change to 1.5°C, protect 30 per cent of land and sea by 2030 (30x30 target) and reach land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030.</li> </ul>
<b>What's Cooking? Report by UNEP</b>	It focuses on the potential environmental, health, social and animal welfare implications of the uptake of novel meat and dairy alternatives, in particular novel plant-based, fermentation-derived and cultivated products.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQs

Q1. What is the COP28, often mentioned in the news?

- It is a Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization.
- It is a Conference of the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change.
- It is a supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It is a Conference of the Member Countries of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Answer: c

Q2. With reference to the COP28, consider the following statements:

- It comprises the annual meetings of the three decision-making bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the Madrid Protocol.
- It acknowledges the scientific findings stating that global greenhouse gas emissions need to be cut 43% by 2030, to limit global warming to 1.5°C.
- It decided on the world's first 'global stocktake' to accelerate climate action before the end of the 2030.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

- Only one
- Only two
- All three
- None

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

Q3. Which of the following statements well describes the term “Global Stocktake”?

- (a) These are the stocks belong to companies that are relatively immune to economic fluctuations and provide steady returns.
- (b) It is a process for countries to collectively assess their progress towards meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.
- (c) These are stocks belong to companies expected to grow at an above-average rate compared to other companies.
- (d) The process of physically counting and recording the quantities of goods or materials held by a business at a particular point in time.

Answer: b

Q4. With reference to the Debt-for-climate swaps, consider the following statements:

- 1. It reduces the borrower country’s debt in exchange for a commitment to invest in verified climate projects.
- 2. It is a financial instrument that increases the foreign exchange inflow in the country.
- 3. It also involves the exchange of an external debt instrument for an internal debt instrument.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

### Descriptive Question

Q. In the backdrop of recently concluded COP 28, explain ‘loss and damage’ fund? Critically examine its effectiveness in providing financial support to vulnerable countries and communities that are most affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. (15 marks, 250 words)

For Approach Answer, Scan:



### INDIA AND COP 28

- India welcomed the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund as also the establishment of ALTERRA fund at COP 28.
- India called on the COP 28 to deliver on:
  - New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)- \$100bn per year
  - Replenishment of Green Climate Fund and Adaptation Fund
  - Affordable Finance to be made available by MDBs for Climate Action
  - Developed Countries must deliver on Net Zero Commitments by 2050.
- Other Indian Initiatives at the COP 28 are:

INITIATIVES	FEATURES
<b>Phase II of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition (LeadIT 2.0)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co launched by India and Sweden</li> <li>Focuses on following aims:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Inclusive and Just Industry Transition</li> <li>➤ Co-development and Transfer of low carbon technology</li> <li>➤ Financial support to emerging economies for Industry Transition</li> </ul> </li> <li>Phase I of the same had been launched by India and Sweden in 2019 at UN Climate Action Summit in New York.</li> </ul>
<b>Industry Transition Platform</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co launched by India and Sweden</li> <li>It will connect the governments, industries, technology providers, researchers and think tanks of the two countries.</li> </ul>
<b>High Level Event on Green Credits Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held in collaboration with UAE</li> <li>The Green Credit Initiative has been conceptualized as a mechanism to incentivize voluntary pro-planet actions, as an effective response to the challenge of climate change.</li> <li>It envisions the issue of Green Credits for plantations on waste/degraded lands and river catchment areas, to rejuvenate and revive natural eco-systems.</li> <li>It had been highlighted by India during the G20 Summit as well, with the PM inviting other countries to join it.</li> </ul>



<b>Quad Working Group (QCWG) Side Event</b>	<b>Climate Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organised by the MoEFCC under the Climate Ambition Pillar of the Quad Climate Working Group (QCWG)</li> <li>It focused on recognizing and amplifying the role of local communities, local and regional Governments in supporting sustainable lifestyles.</li> </ul>
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## UNABATED FOSSIL FUELS

**Why in News:** At COP 28 climate summit, one phrase that took the centre stage was “unabated” fossil fuels.

### Key details

- In a **new deal**, countries recognised the need to **accelerate efforts** towards the **phase-down of unabated coal power**.
- The phrase “unabated or abated” is inextricably tied to **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technologies**.

### What are ‘unabated’ fossil fuels?

- When it comes to fossil fuels, “**unabated**” means **doing nothing to reduce the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases that are released from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas**.
- Abated** refers to the **attempts to decrease the release of polluting substances** to an **acceptable level**.
- The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scientific advisory body says **unabated fossil fuels** are those **without interventions** that **substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.
- That would mean **capturing at least 90% of CO<sub>2</sub>** from power plants, or **up to 80% of the methane** that leaks during energy production and transport.
- Discussions around fossil fuel abatement largely revolve around **CCS technologies**.
  - They **capture emissions** from **power stations** or **industrial facilities** and **store them underground**.

### Watsonx.ai

At the recent COP28, NASA and IBM announced that an Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool called watsonx.ai would be available on the open-source AI platform Hugging Space. It will help users **monitor the Earth from space**, measuring environmental changes that have already happened while also making predictions about the future.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which of the following statements well describes the term ‘Unabated Fossil Fuels’?

- It is fuel that is converted in to the fuel gas by using carbonaceous (carbon-based) raw material such as coal.
- The fossil fuel which is blended with the alcohol to reduce the emission of the Green House gases.

(c) Doing nothing to reduce the emission of the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are released from the burning of coal, oil, and natural gas.

(d) The natural hydrogen to be used as fuel, obtained from the fossil fuel reservoirs.

Answer: c

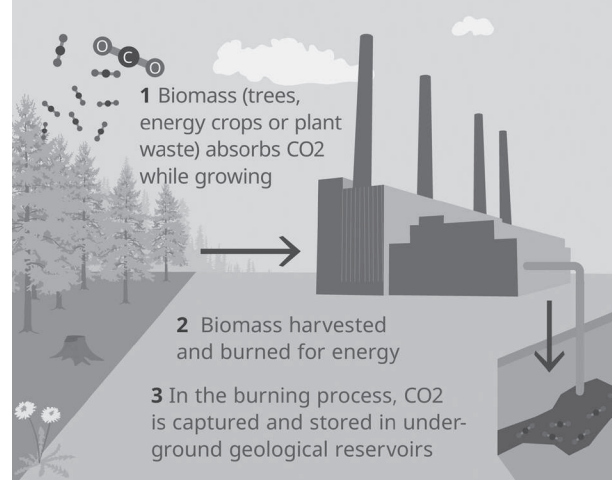
## CARBON CAPTURE & STORAGE (CCS) AND CARBON-DIOXIDE REMOVAL (CDR) TECHNOLOGIES

**Why in News:** At the COP28 climate talks, draft decisions thus far have referred to the abatement and removal of carbon emissions using carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon-dioxide removal (CDR) technologies.

### About CCS and CDR

- CCS** refers to **technologies that can capture carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)** at a **source of emissions** before it is released into the atmosphere.
- These sources include:**
  - the **fossil fuel industry** (where coal, oil and gas are combusted to generate power)
  - industrial processes** like steel and cement production.
- CDR** takes the forms of both:
  - Natural means** like afforestation or reforestation
  - Technologies** like direct air capture, where machines mimic trees by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub> from their surroundings and storing it underground.

### Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS)



- There are also more **complex CDR technologies** like:
  - **enhanced rock weathering**, where rocks are broken down chemically; the resulting rock particles can remove CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.
  - **bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS)** capture and store CO<sub>2</sub> from burning biomass, like wood.

#### How well do CCS and CDR need to work?

- The **Sixth Assessment Report (AR6)**, prepared by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), deals with **climate mitigation**.
- It relies a lot on the **use of CDR** for its projections related to the world achieving the goal of **limiting the world's average surface temperature** increase to 1.5 degrees C with no or limited **overshoot**.
  - Overshoot means the **temperature limit** is temporarily exceeded.
- The emission scenarios that the IPCC has assessed that have **more than a 50% chance** of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees C (with no or limited overshoot) assume the world can **sequester 5 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> by 2040**.
- There is **no pathway to 1.5 degrees C** in AR6 that **doesn't use CDR**.

#### Other pitfalls of CCS and CDR

- By removing CO<sub>2</sub> from their environs, there are concerns that CCS and CDR create more 'room' to emit the greenhouse gas.
- CCS has also been used to **inject captured CO<sub>2</sub> is into oil fields to extract more oil**.
- In **future emissions scenarios** that the IPCC has assessed, the world's **use of coal, oil, and gas in 2050** needs to **decline** by about 95%, 60%, and 45% respectively from their use in 2019 to keep the planet from warming by **less than 1.5 degrees C** with **no or limited overshoot**.
  - But **without CCS**, the **expected reductions are 100%, 60%, and 70%** for coal, oil, and gas by 2050.
- An international group of researchers wrote that **higher use of CCS and CDR** make way for **emissions pathways** with a **higher contribution from gas**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology captures the carbon from emission of the industrial processes prior to release into the atmosphere.
2. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) technology can store carbon in saline formations.

3. In Carbon-Dioxide Removal (CDR) technology the carbon can be removed from the atmosphere by enhanced rock weathering.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c

## GLOBAL COOLING PLEDGE

**Why in News:** 66 countries, including the US, Canada, and Kenya, signed up to the world's **first-ever pledge to drastically cut cooling emissions** at the ongoing COP28 climate summit.

#### Key details

- The Global Cooling Pledge commits the countries to **reduce their cooling emissions by at least 68% below 2022 levels by 2050**.
- These kinds of emissions now account for **7% of global greenhouse gas emissions** and are expected to **triple by 2050**.
- The situation is set to **get worse** as rising global temperatures will lead to a **large-scale cooling demand** — the use of **more ACs and refrigerators** would cause **more cooling emissions**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Global Cooling Pledge:

1. Under this pledge countries have to ratify the Kigali Amendment by 2024.
2. The signatory countries commit to work together with the aim of reducing cooling-related emissions across all sectors by at least 68% by 2050.
3. It has been signed at COP28 climate summit.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c

## SANTIAGO NETWORK

## SANTIAGO NETWORK

The **Santiago Network** was established at **COP 25 in Madrid** as part of the **Warsaw International Mechanism** for Loss and Damage (WIM) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

## WHAT WILL IT DO?



- Santiago Network will **connect vulnerable developing countries with providers of technical assistance, knowledge, resources** they need to address climate risks comprehensively in the context of averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage.

## GOVERNANCE



- **Overseen by:** Executive Committee of the **Warsaw International Mechanism** for Loss and Damage.
- **Secretariat hosted by:** United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)

## BENEFITS



- **Enhanced capacity** of developing countries to address loss and damage.
- **Increased access** to finance and technology.
- **More effective implementation** of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.
- **Improved understanding** of the risks and impacts of climate change.

## Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage

- ✓ This was **established at the UNFCCC** climate negotiations in November 2013 (**the 19th Conference of the Parties**).
- ✓ Objective: Is to promote implementation of approaches to address loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change.
- ✓ **Loss and damage:**
  - The collaborative framework aims to **connect vulnerable developing countries with technical support and resources** to effectively address and manage **loss and damage** caused by climate change.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Santiago Network:

1. It was established at COP 25 in Madrid as part of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage (WIM).
2. It will connect vulnerable developing countries with providers of technical assistance, knowledge, resources.
3. It is overseen by the Executive Committee under the Montreal Protocol.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer

### NATIONAL TRANSIT PASS SYSTEM (NTPS)

**Why in News:** The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change launched the *National Transit Pass System (NTPS)*.

- It is envisioned as a “One Nation-One Pass” regime.

#### What is the NTPS system and what has it changed?

- NTPS aims to **streamline** the **transportation** of **timber, bamboo**, and other forest produce across India.
- This system replaces the cumbersome **state-specific transit rules** with a **unified, online** mode to facilitate **seamless movement** of forest products throughout the country.
- Under the existing system, **individual states issue permits** for the transportation of timber, bamboo and forest produce, **resulting in a time-consuming process** due to varying regulations across states.
- It seeks to simplify this by managing transportation records for both inter-state and intra-state movements sourced from private lands, government-owned forests, and private depots.
- It issues **QR coded permits** that can be verified at check gates, ensuring validity across various states.
- NTPS aims for **user convenience** with desktop and mobile applications for easy registration and permit applications.
- Users can also self-generate **No Objection Certificates (NOCs)** for exempted species.
- Presently, 25 States and Union Territories have adopted this unified permit system.

#### Benefits of NTPS

- **Ease of Doing Business:** By introducing an online, unified mode for permit issuance, the system significantly streamlines operations, fostering a more business-friendly environment across states.
- **Boost to Agroforestry Sector:** NTPS actively promotes agroforestry and tree farming, not only encouraging cultivation but also incentivizing the entire value chain associated with these activities.
- **Time and Cost Efficiency:** Through its seamless integration and standardized permits, NTPS saves transportation time and costs, allowing for smoother movements across state borders.

#### Complimentary initiatives by the Government

- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana:** This scheme focuses on developing value chains for forest-based products, aiming to enhance the income of tribal communities.
- **Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme:** Through voluntary third-party certification, this scheme promotes sustainable forest management and agroforestry practices.
- **Marketing Mechanism for MFP:** Involves Minimum Support Price (MSP) strategies and the development of value chains for Minor Forest Produce, ensuring fair pricing and enhanced market access for these products.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. It issues QR coded permits that can be verified at check gates, ensuring validity across various states.
2. It allows users to self-generate No Objection Certificates (NOCs).
3. It replaces the cumbersome state-specific transit rules.
4. It aims to streamline the transportation of timber, bamboo, and other forest produce across India.

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer

## UJJAIN AND THE PRIME MERIDIAN

**Why in News:** Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister has said that India, more specifically Ujjain, set the world's time some 300 years ago, before the Prime Meridian was shifted, first to Paris, and then to Greenwich (London).

### Key details

- **Ancient Indians** recorded dates using the unit of the **lunar day** (tithi), and the **solar calendar** was known from Gupta times onward.
- **Astrological and mathematical calculations** required fairly accurate measurements.
- The **Industrial Revolution** changed things in **two ways**:
  - Better and more accurate clocks began to be produced by the **second half of the 18th century**.
  - With the **advent of the modern factory**, it became important not only to keep time, but to also make the most of it.

### When did the concept of a national time arise?

- In the early part of the **Industrial Age**, time remained essentially **local**.
- There was **no standardisation**, nor was there any need for it.
- The **need for standardisation** first arose in the **19th century**, as the world became more interconnected due to the spread of technological innovations such as railways, steamships, and telegraph.
- The **British Empire**, for instance, saw **standardised time** as a **tool to synchronise** its vast overseas possessions, ease the spread of information and transportation, and help maintain control.
- Thus, there came to be **national prime meridians** — reference points to determine time worldwide, but differing from country to country.
- These respective Prime Meridians of these empires were **defined as 0° longitude** in their respective maps, and their colonial possessions' time was determined accordingly.

### Move from national to global time

- In 1883, a **convention of railroad executives** met in **Chicago** and agreed to the implementation of **five time zones** in North America, using the **Greenwich Mean Time** as the basis.
- Representatives from **26 countries** met in Washington DC at the **International Meridian Conference**.
- Conference adopted the meridian **passing through the centre** of the transit instrument at the **Observatory of Greenwich** as the initial meridian for longitude.

### Basis of the claim about Ujjain

- The **earliest postulation** of standard time in the Indian context came from the **4th century CE Sanskrit treatise Surya Siddhanta**.

- It described a **Prime Meridian** passing through the cities of **Rohitaka** (modern-day Rohtak) and **Avanti** (modern-day Ujjain).
- **Ujjain** has always occupied a **central position**, with some modern scholars calling it **India's Greenwich** (although Indian Standard Time is mentioned with respect to the observatory in Mirzapur).
- In 1719, **Sawai Raja Jai Singh** of Jaipur built a famous **observatory** in the city, one of the five he built during his reign.

### What is a meridian?

- ✓ A meridian is a **north-south line**, selected as the **zero reference line** for astronomical observations.
- ✓ By comparing thousands of observations taken from the same meridian it's possible to **build up an accurate map of the sky**.

### Why does the Prime Meridian run through Greenwich?

- There were **two main reasons** for the choice.
  - The first was the fact that the **USA** had **already chosen Greenwich** as the basis for its own **national time zone system**.
  - **72% of the world's commerce** depended on **sea-charts** which **used Greenwich as the Prime Meridian**.
- The decision was based on the argument that by naming **Greenwich as Longitude 0°**, it would be **advantageous** to the **largest number of people**.
- Therefore, the Prime Meridian at Greenwich became the **centre of world time**.

### What is Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)?

- Since the late 19th century, the **Prime Meridian at Greenwich** has served as the **reference line** for **Greenwich Mean Time**, or GMT.
- There were **no national or international conventions** which set how time should be measured, or when the day would begin and end, or what length an hour might be.
- When the **railway and communications networks** expanded in the 1850s and 1860s, there needed to be an **international time standard**.
- **Greenwich** was chosen as the **centre for world time**.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following continents:

1. Antarctica      2. Africa
3. Asia              4. Europe

The Greenwich Meridian passes through how many of the above?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 4 only)

## ASSAM CATKIN YEW

# ASSAM CATKIN YEW



## Why in News

Experts raised concern that there is a need to conserve Assam catkin yew.



## Key Details

- ➔ It is also known as **Amentotaxus assamica**.
- ➔ It is an **endemic species** found only in **two locations** in **Arunachal Pradesh**:
  - Changlagam in Anjaw district
  - Deb village in Toru Hills, Papum Pare district.
- ➔ The species, a **conifer** and part of the **Taxaceae genus**, primarily grows in the **subtropical biome** at altitudes of **1,600 to 2,000 metres**.
- ➔ The **original habitat** and **ecology** of this plant have undergone **severe land transformation**, rendering it critically endangered due to its **low reproduction rate**.
- ➔ It is believed to have evolved during the **age of the dinosaurs**.

## Conservation Status

- ★ **IUCN Status:**  
Critically Endangered
- ★ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:**  
Schedule 6

## Why does it need Conservation?

- This species is critical and is found nowhere else worldwide, except in two regions in **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The species holds a unique identity in the context of Arunachal's flora, and has great potential for wildlife tourism in the state.

## Threats

- ➔ The species faces a severe **risk of extinction** due to unknowing and reckless **exploitation** in the area.
- ➔ Owing to its strength and fortification, it is highly threatened by **accidental cutting for construction purposes**, or use in households and other utilities.
- ➔ Amentotaxus has significant **economic and ecological value**, considered for **medicinal treatment**, besides the extraction of a **poisonous chemical** from yew.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Assam Catkin Yew?

1. It is a coniferous plant species found only in Arunachal Pradesh.
2. It is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

3. It is nocturnal animal listed as endangered on the International Union of Conservation of Nature's red list.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)

## SAURAUIA PUNDUANA PLANT

# SAURAUIA PUNDUANA PLANT

### Why in News?

**Critically endangered plant species *Saurauia Punduana* recorded for first time in Manipur.**

### Key Details

- ▶ The *Saurauia Punduana* plant was recorded during a recent **Rapid Biodiversity Assessment (RBA) field survey**.
  - Rapid biodiversity assessment (RBA) refers to **time efficient tools** that allow to **collect information** on the **present biodiversity** in a given area.
- ▶ *Saurauia punduana* is a species of plant in the **Actinidiaceae family**.
- ▶ It is found in **Tamenglong district of Manipur**.
- ▶ Flowers of *Saurauia Punduana* **turn white to pink on maturity**.
- ▶ Its fruits are used in **veterinary medicine**.
- ▶ The native range of this species is from **Bhutan to Southeastern Tibet**.
- ▶ Locally this plant is known as **Anoibang**.
- ▶ **IUCN status: Critically endangered.**



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The term, 'Saurauia Punduana,' recently mentioned in the news, is used in the context of

- (a) Plant species
- (b) Reptiles found in western ghats
- (c) Marine algae
- (d) Freshwater fish

Answer: a

## GREENWASHING

**Why in News:** United Kingdom's ad regulator banned advertisements from Air France, Lufthansa, and Etihad were accused of 'greenwashing' for allegedly misleading consumers regarding the environmental impact of air travel.

### What is Greenwashing?

- Greenwashing is when firms or governments give a **false impression** that all of their products or activities are **climate-friendly** or **help in reducing emissions**.
- Greenwashing may also occur when a **company highlights sustainable aspects** of a product to **overshadow its environmentally damaging activities**.

- It is performed through the use of **environmental imagery, misleading labels, and hiding tradeoffs.**
- Greenwashing is a play on the term 'whitewashing,' which means using **false information to intentionally hide wrongdoing, error, or an unpleasant situation** in an attempt to make it **seem less bad than it is.**



#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

- Q. Which of the following statements well describes the term "Greenwashing"?
- Planting trees along the contours of the hill slopes to slow down water runoff and soil erosion.
  - Use of the natural dyes derived from plants, insects, and minerals instead of synthetic dyes in textile production.
  - Using natural predators, parasites, or pathogens to manage agricultural pests instead of chemical pesticides.
  - Process of conveying false impressions or misleading information to consumers about how a company's products are environmentally sound.

Answer: d

### GREEN CREDITS SCHEME

**Why in News:** Prime Minister of India launched an initiative focusing on generating Green Credits through plantation on degraded wasteland.

#### About the Green Credits Programme

- The Green Credits Programme was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

- It is an effort to create a **market-based incentive** for different kinds of environment-positive actions, **not just for carbon emission reductions.**
- **Carbon Market:**
  - Such a market-based system **already exists for carbon**, at the national as well as international level, that allows **trade in carbon credits.**
  - Companies, or nations, can **claim carbon credits** if they take action to **reduce their carbon footprint.**
  - These credits can they be **traded for money.**
  - Companies **unable to achieve their emission standards** pay to **buy these credits and improve their performance.**
- Replicating the carbon credit market:
  - Green Credits programme attempts to **replicate this mechanism for other environmental actions**, like **water conservation or soil improvements.**
  - **Methodologies and standards** to measure and verify such actions are **still being developed.**
  - As a starting point, it is envisaged that **private companies would buy these green credits** as part of their **CSR obligations.**
    - ◆ Corporate Social Responsibility is a **management concept** whereby companies **integrate social and environmental concerns** in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders.
  - Unlike the **carbon markets**, which are more **focused at industry and corporations**, **green credit programme** can **benefit individuals and communities** as well.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

- Q. With reference to the Green Credits Scheme, consider the following statements:
- This initiative focuses on generating carbon credits through plantation on degraded wasteland.
  - The private companies would buy green credits as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility obligations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: b

## NUGU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

**Why in News:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has recommended to the authorities that the Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary be declared as a core critical tiger habitat.

### About Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is situated **north of Bandipur National Park** in **Mysore District, Karnataka**.
- It is located near **Bandipur Tiger Reserve**.
- It was **declared a Wildlife Sanctuary** in 1974.
- The **backwaters of Nugu dam** forms the part of the Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary and lies on the western side of the sanctuary.
- The sanctuary's **landscape includes**:
  - scrub forests,
  - cultivation areas near the reservoir, and
  - adjacent degraded dry deciduous forests.
- The Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary is also **part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** and the sanctuary supports a **very high-density of elephant population**.
- The sanctuary also harbours two important **riverine wildlife species**:
  - smooth coated otter, and
  - marsh crocodile.
- Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary has been **declared** as an **eco-sensitive zone** because of the number of **commercial tourism ventures** in the sanctuary.

### National Tiger Conservation Authority

- ✓ The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was established in **2005**, following a **recommendation of the Tiger Task Force**.
- ✓ **Purpose**
  - The **Prime Minister of India** established it to **reorganise the management of Project Tiger** and many **Tiger Reserves in India**.
- ✓ **WPA, 1972**
  - The **Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** was **amended in 2006** to provide for **constituting the National Tiger Conservation Authority** responsible for implementation of the Project Tiger plan to protect endangered tigers.
- ✓ **Chairman**
  - The **Minister for Environment and Forests**.
- ✓ **Other members**
  - **Eight experts or professionals** having qualifications and experience in wildlife conservation and welfare of people.

- **Three Members of Parliament** of whom **two** will be **elected by the Lok Sabha** and **one** by the **Rajya Sabha**.
- The **Inspector General of Forests**, in charge of project Tiger, will be **ex-officio Member Secretary**.

### ✓ Main function

- The Authority would lay down **normative standards, guidelines** for tiger conservation in the **Tiger Reserves**, apart from **National Parks and Sanctuaries**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Nugu Wildlife Sanctuary, consider the following statements:

- This sanctuary is part of the Bandipur National Park in Karnataka.
- This sanctuary supports a very high-density elephant population.
- This sanctuary has been declared as a core critical tiger habitat.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a (2 only)

## VALPARAI PLATEAU & ELEPHANTS

**Why in News:** Annual migration season of elephants nearing its peak in the Valparai plateau, the Forest Department, NGOs and residents of the hill station are all prepared to ensure free movement of elephants.

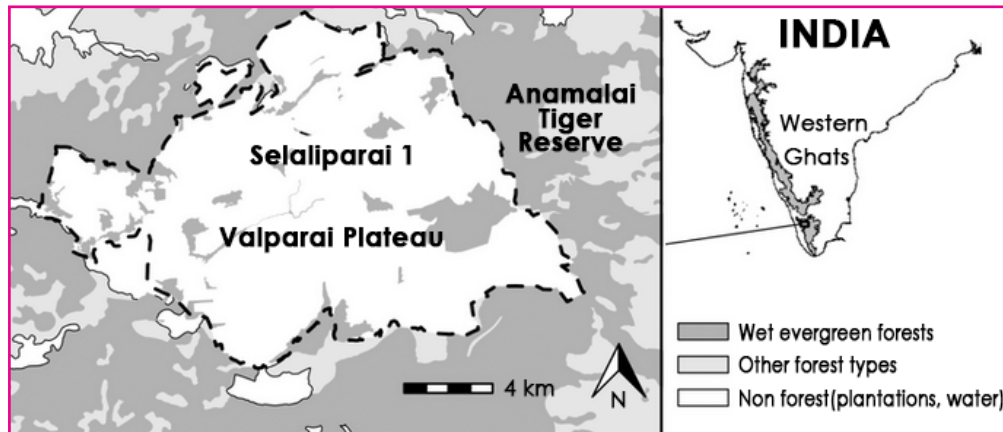
### Key details

- The migration of elephants **from the Kerala side starts in September** and Valparai's mosaic landscape of estates and fragmented forest patches serves as key habitats for them.

### About Valparai Plateau

- Valparai was originally known as Poonachimalai is located in **Tamil Nadu**.
- It is a part of **Anamalai Tiger Reserve**.
- It is located **3,474 feet above sea level** on the Anaimalai Hills range of the Western Ghats.

- While **major portions of the land** are owned by **private tea companies**, large forest areas continue to be out of bounds.
- It is close to the **border** with Thrissur district of the **Kerala state**.
- Valparai has a **mild tropical monsoon climate** (Am) with a short dry season and a long rainy season.
- It is one of the **wettest places** in Tamil Nadu.



## ELEPHANTS

- The **Natural Heritage Animal** of India.
- A “**Keystone Species**”.
- Known for their **exceptional intelligence** (Because of largest brain size among land animal)

### Statistics about Elephants in India

- India has the **largest number of wild Asian Elephants**.
- Nearly **30,000 i.e. 60 per cent** of the current global population.
- **Highest Population: Karnataka (6,049) > Assam (5,719) > Kerala (3,054)**



## Conservation Status

### IUCN RED LIST

African Forest Elephant ( <i>Loxodonta Cyclotis</i> )	Critically Endangered (CR)
African Savanna Elephant ( <i>Loxodonta Africana</i> )	Endangered (EN)
Asian Elephant ( <i>Elephas maximus</i> )	Endangered (EN)

### Convention of the Migratory species (CMS)

African Forest Elephant	Appendix II
Asian Elephant	Appendix I

### Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I

### Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

African Savanna Elephant	Appendix II
Asian Elephant	Appendix I



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The Valparai plateau is located in

- (a) Anaimalai Hills, Western Ghats
- (b) Venukonda hills, Eastern Ghats.
- (c) Balaghat range, Sahyadris.
- (d) Garhjat hills

Answer: a

## GREEN TURTLES

**Why in News:** As per Scientific Reports, rising global temperatures could lead to an increase in the nesting range of green turtles in the Mediterranean Sea.



### About Green Turtle

- The green turtle is one of the **largest sea turtles** and the **only herbivore** among the different species.
- It is also known as the **green turtle, blacksea turtle** or **Pacific green turtle**.
- They are named for the **greenish color** of their **cartilage and fat, not their shells**.
- Found mainly in **tropical and subtropical waters**.
- Like other sea turtles, they **migrate long distances** between feeding grounds and the beaches from where they hatched.

- IUCN status: Endangered**
- Threats:**
  - Overharvesting of their eggs,
  - Hunting of adults,
  - Being caught in fishing gear and
  - Loss of nesting beach sites.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Green Turtles:

- They are the only sea turtle that become strictly herbivore after becoming mature.
- The sex of their offspring is dependent on incubation temperature
- They found mainly in tropical and subtropical rainforest.
- They are listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 4 only)

## DEMAORCHESTIA ALANENSIS

**Why in News:** Researchers in Odisha have discovered a new species of marine amphipod — a shrimp-like crustacea of genus *Demaorchestia* — in the state's Chilika lake.

### About Demaorchestia Alanensis

- The present contribution has added **one more species** to the genus *Demaorchestia*, raising the **global species number** in the group to **six**.
- It belongs to the **subfamily** Platorchestiinae found along the **Indian coast**.

## ABOUT AMPHIPODS



- **Amphipods** comprise an order of **crustacea**, shrimp-like in form, which contains mostly marine and freshwater forms.
- Amphipods are a significant group in the marine ecosystem and play a **vital role in the marine food chain**.
- They serve as **indicators** for **studying the impact of climate change** and health of coastal ecosystems.

## TALITRIDAE



- The family **Talitridae** was considered one of the **oldest groups of amphipods**, and it was believed to have been on the planet since the **Jurassic age**.
- It is divided into **four subfamilies**:
  - Talitrinae
  - Floresorchestiinae
  - Pseudorchestoideinae
  - Platorchestiinae
- In the **Indian context**, the family Talitridae is represented by only **Talitrinae** and **Floresorchestiinae**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The term, 'Demaorchestia Alanensis,' recently mentioned in the news, is used in the context of

- (a) Plant cells                      (b) Desert biome  
(c) Genetic disorder              (d) Amphipods

Answer: d

## NAMDAPHA FLYING SQUIRREL

**Why in News:** A nocturnal flying squirrel has resurfaced in Arunachal Pradesh after going missing for 42 years.

### About Namdapha flying squirrel



- The **Namdapha flying squirrel** (*Biswamoyopterus biswasi*) was **last described in 1981** based on a single individual found in the **Namdapha Tiger Reserve** in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district.
- The Namdapha flying squirrel is an **arboreal, nocturnal flying squirrel endemic to Arunachal Pradesh**.
- **No population estimate** is available for it.
- Its **known habitat** is tall **Mesua ferrea** jungles, often on hill slopes in the catchment area of **Dihing River**.
- It was the **sole member** in the genus **Biswamoyopterus** until the description of the **Laotian giant flying squirrel** (*Biswamoyopterus laoensis*) in 2013.
- In 2018, a **new squirrel** was discovered in the same genus while studying specimens in their collection, called the **Mount Gaoligong flying squirrel** (*Biswamoyopterus gaoligongensis*).

### About Namdapha Tiger Reserve

- Namdapha National Park & Tiger Reserve is located in the **Changlang district** of **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- The area covered by the Namdapha Tiger Reserve was **originally a reserve forest**.

- It was declared a **Wildlife Sanctuary** under the **Assam Forest Regulation 1891** in 1972.
- It was later declared a **National Park** in 1983, under **Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972**.
- In 1983 it was also declared as a **tiger reserve** under **Project Tiger Scheme**.
- Biogeographically, the area falls within the **Eastern Himalayan biogeographic province** of the Himalayas Biogeographic zone in the Indian Biogeographic Region which covers the **Palaeo-arctic Realm** and the **Indo-Malayan (Oriental) Realm**.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Namdapha flying squirrel, consider the following statements:

1. It is an arboreal and nocturnal animal.
2. It is endemic to Himachal Pradesh.

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

Answer: a

## THE DODO BIRD

# THE DODO BIRD

## RAPHUS CUCULLATUS

### Why in News

A collaboration between genetic engineering company Colossal Biosciences and the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation - promises to not just bring the dodo back to life, but also re-introduce it in its once-native habitat in Mauritius.



1

Extinct Flightless Bird

4

Closest Living Relative - Nicobar pigeon

2

Endemic to the Island of Mauritius

5

Last Widely Accepted Sighting - 1662

3

Closest Relative - Rodrigues Solitaire (It is also-extinct and flightless)

6

IUCN Status: Extinct

## WHY DODOS WENT EXTINCT?

Dutch colonists first landed in Mauritius in 1598. The Dutch hunted the meaty bird. Dodos disappeared around 80 years later. Its extinction is seen as the inevitable outcome of human interaction with nature.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. "The bird was endemic to the island of Mauritius and became extinct due to the excessive hunting by the Dutch colonists. The ongoing de-extinction project under the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation not only promises to bring this bird back to life, but also to re-introduce it in its once-native habitat." The bird in the question refers to

- (a) Dodo (b) Serpent Eagle  
(c) Barn owl (d) Grey Hornbill

Answer: a

## CYCLONE MICHAUNG

**Why in News:** Recently, the Cyclone Michaung (pronounced mig-jaum) made landfall over Nellore in Andhra Pradesh as a super-cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal.

### Key details

- Cyclone Michaung is the **fourth tropical cyclone** of the year over the Bay of Bengal.
- The **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** classifies cyclones broadly into **two categories**:
  - Extratropical cyclones and
  - Tropical cyclones.

### National Crisis Management Committee

- ✓ NCMC is a committee set up to **coordinate and implement relief measures** and operations in the wake of a natural calamity.
- ✓ It **coordinates and oversees the response to major crises, emergencies**, and disasters that may affect India.
- ✓ NCMC is **headed by the Cabinet Secretary**.

For basic information about 'Cyclones', kindly refer to Chahal's Monthly Magazine of June 2023 (Article titled "Cyclones").

### Naming of Tropical Cyclones

- The process of naming cyclones involves several countries in the region and is done **under the aegis of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**.
- For the Indian Ocean region, a formula for naming cyclones was agreed upon in 2004.
- Eight countries in the region - Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand - **all contributed a set of names** which are **assigned sequentially** whenever a cyclonic storm develops.
- Hudhud, Titli, Phethai, Fani, Vayu and Amphan are among the names of cyclones in the Indian Ocean region.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following cyclones:

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Cyclone Michaung | 2. Cyclone Biparjoy |
| 3. Cyclone Hamoon   | 4. Cyclone Mocha    |

How many of the above were generated over the Bay of Bengal?

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

Answer: c (1, 3 and 4 only)

## WMO REPORTS AND INITIATIVES

**Why in News:** Recently, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has released the following reports:

1. Provisional State of the Global Climate in 2023
2. The Global Climate 2011-2020: A decade of acceleration
3. Global Status of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems 2023
4. The WMO and the Early Warnings for All Initiative

WMO REPORTS	FEATURES
<b>The Global Climate 2011-2020: A decade of acceleration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report was released at the UN Climate Change Conference, COP28, and emphasizes the need for much more ambitious climate action to try to limit global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era.</li> <li>• 2011-2020 was the warmest decade on record</li> <li>• Unprecedented glacier and ice sheet loss</li> <li>• Acceleration in Sea Level Rise (SLR)</li> <li>• Marine ecosystems faced increased damage from Ocean Acidification and increased Ocean temperatures</li> <li>• Extreme weather undermines sustainable development</li> <li>• The ozone layer is on track to recovery</li> <li>• Improvements in forecasts, early warnings, coordinated disaster management, and response are making a difference.</li> <li>• Public and private climate finance almost doubled between 2011 and 2020. However, it needs to increase at least seven times by the end of this decade to achieve climate objectives.</li> </ul>



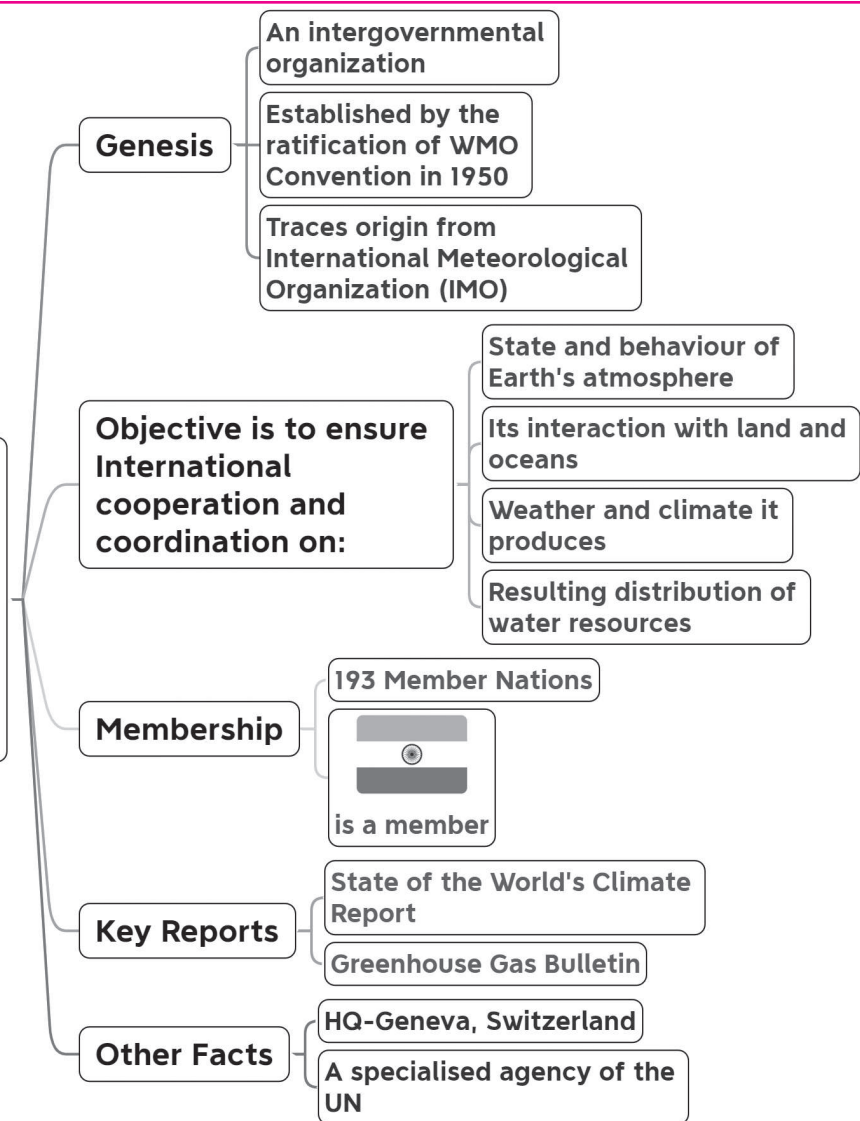
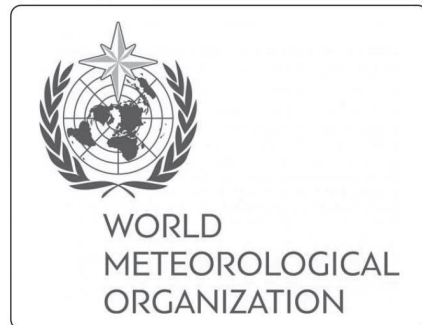
Provisional State of the Global Climate in 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The WMO provisional State of the Global Climate report confirms that 2023 is set to be the warmest year on record.</li> <li>• Data until the end of October shows that the year was about 1.40 degrees Celsius above the pre-industrial 1850-1900 baseline.</li> <li>• Greenhouse gas levels continue to increase</li> <li>• Record sea surface temperatures and sea level rise</li> <li>• Record low Antarctic Sea ice</li> <li>• Extreme weather causes death and devastation</li> </ul>
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Global Status of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outlines the progress that has been made under the Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative.</li> <li>• It seeks to highlight good practices through case studies and examples of both global and regional initiatives which are contributing to the achievement of the goal set by the United Nations Secretary-General.</li> <li>• Africa has doubled the quality of early warning systems coverage, but still falls below the global average.</li> <li>• Less than half of the Least Developed Countries and only 40% of small island developing States have a multi-hazard early warning system.</li> <li>• In the Arab States, risk knowledge to underpin early warning systems was found to be particularly low.</li> <li>• It was launched at COP28 by United Nations Secretary-General at a high-level event attended by ministers and stakeholders.</li> </ul>
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## INITIATIVE BY THE WMO

### Features of Early Warnings for All (EW4All) initiative

1. It is a groundbreaking effort to ensure everyone on Earth is protected from hazardous weather, water, or climate events through life-saving early warning systems by the end of 2027.
2. Despite the urgent need, only half of the countries worldwide report having adequate multi-hazard early warning systems.
3. Early warning systems are not a luxury but a cost-effective tool that saves lives, reduces economic losses, and provides a nearly tenfold return on investment.
4. The EW4All is co-led by the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** and the **United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**, with support from the **International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** and other partners.
5. Pillars of EW4All initiative:
  - Disaster risk knowledge
  - Detection, observation, monitoring, analysis, and forecasting
  - Warning dissemination and communication
  - Preparedness and response capabilities
6. Pillar 2 is led by WMO with support from **UN Development Programme (UNDP)**, **UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** and **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)**.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

- Q. The “Status of Multi-Hazard Early Warning Systems 2023” report has been published by which of the following?
- European Environment Agency (EEA)
  - World Meteorological Organization (WMO)
  - Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)
  - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Answer: b

### SAFAR SYSTEM

**Why in News:** The Founder-Director of SAFAR (System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting Research) spoke about issues related to air pollution.

#### About SAFAR system

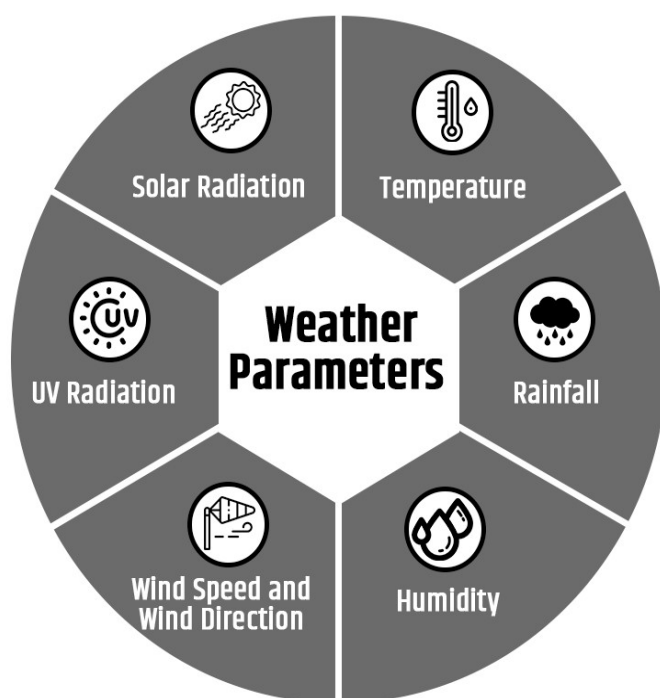
- SAFAR stands for **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research** (SAFAR).
- It is a **government-backed initiative** to **monitor and forecast air quality** in some **metropolitan cities**.
- Developed by:** Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune
- Operationalized by:** India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)
- SAFAR envisages a **research-based management system** where strategies of air pollution mitigation go hand in hand with nation's economic development to target a win-win scenario.

## Framework developed by SAFAR

- The framework was **first developed** and **implemented** for **Delhi** in 2010, used in **Pune** from 2013 and in 2015 it was extended to **Mumbai** and in **Ahmedabad** (2017).
- SAFAR chose to demonstrate its forecasting model in **four different and contrasting micro-climates** of Indian cities.



- It monitors **all weather parameters** like:



- SAFAR framework considers almost **all pollutants levels**—PM10, 1, 2.5, CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>2</sub>, Volatile Organic Compounds etc.—through **automatic analysers**.

## Range of the air quality forecast

- We can give air quality forecasts **24, 48 and 72 hours** in advance.
- And in case of **extreme pollution events** like dust storms or stubble burning issues, we also started **extended range forecasts** which give forecasts **five days in advance**.

## What is emission inventory?

- An emission inventory is nothing but **accounting for all sources of pollutants** in a **particular area** at a **particular time**.
- It details the:
  - amount and **types of air pollutants** released into the air
  - provides information on the **types of sources** that are emitting the pollutants and
  - **their location**.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR), consider the following statements:

- It is launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)
- Its main objective is to provide forecasting information on air quality.
- It provides the information about the Ultraviolet (UV) radiation in the region.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

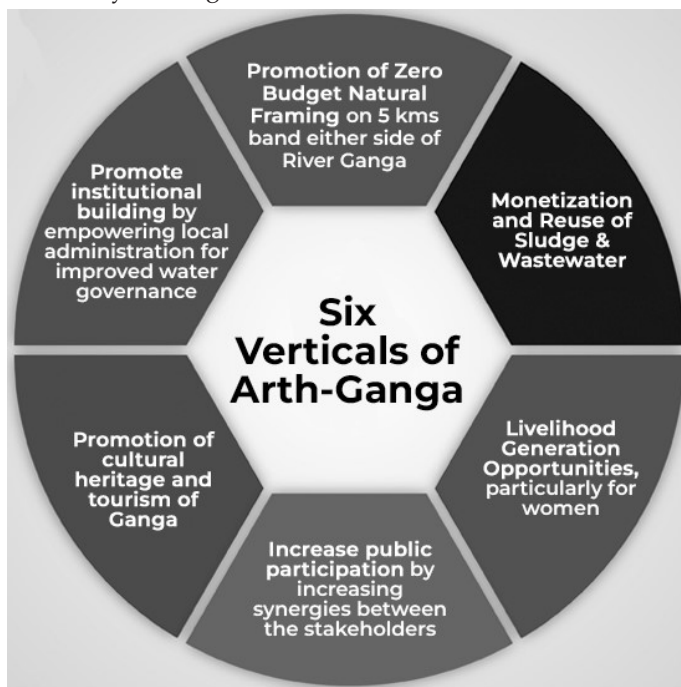
## PROJECT ARTH GANGA

**Why in News:** Minister of State for Jal Shakti informed Rajya Sabha about Project Arth Ganga.

### About Project Artha Ganga

- Arth Ganga is an initiative added recently to the **Namami Ganga Program** launched by the Union Government in 2014.
- Arth Ganga is a **sustainable and viable economic development** model to strengthen the **river-people connect** through an **economic bridge**.

- It strives to contribute **at least 3% of the GDP from the Ganga Basin itself.**
- It was added as a **vertical** of Namami Ganga Program, in addition to the **4 verticals**:
  - Nirmal Ganga,
  - Aviral Ganga,
  - Jan Ganga and
  - Gyan Ganga.



- The **long-term objective** of Arth Ganga is to **link people and Ganga** through the economic bridge in line with **river rejuvenation**, by garnering **people's participation** for Ganga conservation and **promoting sustainable development**.

### Namami Gange Program

- ✓ The "Namami Gange" programme was launched to **integrate the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga River** in a comprehensive manner.
- ✓ The program is being implemented by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga**, and **State Program Management Groups**.
- ✓ In order to implement "Namami Gange" Programme, a **three-tier mechanism** has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of:
  - A **high-level task force** chaired by **Cabinet Secretary** assisted by National Mission for Clean Ganga at the **national level**,
  - **State level committee** chaired by **Chief Secretary** assisted by State Programme Management Group at the **state level** and

- **District level committee** chaired by the **District Magistrate**.
- ✓ Namami Gange will focus on **pollution abatement interventions**.
- ✓ **Salient Features**:
  - It will cover 8 states.
  - Several ministries are working with nodal Water Resources Ministry for this project includes –
- ✓ Environment, Urban Development, Shipping, Tourism and Rural Development Ministries.
  - **Urban Local Bodies** and **Panchayati Raj institutions** will be involved in this project.
  - Setting **river-centric urban planning process** to facilitate better citizen connects, through interventions at Ghats and Riverfronts.
  - Development of **rational agricultural practices** and **efficient irrigation methods**.
  - **Ganga Knowledge Centre**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the "Project Artha Ganga":

1. It is an initiative added recently to the Namami Ganga Program.
2. Production of Green Hydrogen is one of the pillars of this project.
3. Its long-term objective is to link people and Ganga through the economic bridge in line with river rejuvenation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

### CLIMATE CHANGE PERFORMANCE INDEX 2024

**Why in News:** India ranked 7th in this year's Climate Change Performance Index, up by one spot from the previous one, published at COP 28, Dubai.

- **First three ranks** in the 'very high' performance category remained vacant.

#### Key details

- The Index monitored Climate Mitigation Efforts of **63 Countries** plus the **EU** covering more than **90 per cent** of the **Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions**.



- India has received a **high ranking** in the greenhouse gas **Emissions and Energy Use** categories, but a **medium** in **Climate Policy and Renewable Energy**
- While India is the world's **most populous country**, it has relatively **low per capita emissions**.
- In the **per capita GHG category**, the country is **on track** to **meet a benchmark** of well **below 2 degrees Celsius**.
- The Index reported that **India** is trying to **meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, with clear **long-term policies** in place that focus on **promoting renewable energy** and **providing financial support** for domestic manufacturing of renewable energy components.
  - India has relatively **high taxes** on **petrol and diesel**, which are intended to **act as carbon taxes**.

### Key global findings

- ✓ The **current energy crisis** clearly demonstrates how the **world remains dependent** on fossil fuels.
- ✓ **None of the 60 largest emitters** is on a **1.5°C pathway** yet, which means that the **first three ranks of the index remain unoccupied**.

### Way forward

- Policymakers should adopt **ecosystem-based solutions** and consider **equity**.

- India's announcement at COP26 that India will **achieve net-zero emissions** by 2070 shows **ambition and political will**.
- There is a need for:
  - ◆ a **faster phase-out of coal**,
  - ◆ **reduced reliance on gas**, and
  - ◆ **expanded renewable energy**.
- There is a need for the **creation of people-friendly, climate-friendly, sustainable infrastructure** that is affordable, accessible, and available to all while taking the location's cultural and social context into account.

### About CCPI

- ✓ **Published annually** since **2005**, the Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) tracks **countries' efforts to combat climate change**.
- ✓ Published by **Germanwatch**, the **New Climate Institute** and the **Climate Action Network**.
- ✓ Aims to **enhance transparency** in international climate politics and enables **comparison of climate protection efforts** and **progress** made by individual countries.

Ranking	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4. — Denmark	75.59
5. △ Estonia	72.07
6. △ Philippines	70.70
7. △ India*	70.25
8. △ Netherlands	69.98
9. ▽ Morocco	69.82
10. ▽ Sweden	69.39

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

- Q. The "Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) 2024", was developed and published by
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
  - International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
  - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
  - Germanwatch.

Answer: d

### MEGHALAYA'S LAKADONG TURMERIC

**Why in News:** Meghalaya's Lakadong Turmeric has earned the Geographical Indication (GI) tag from the Registrar of Geographical Indications (GI), Chennai. Here are the details and significance of this recognition:

#### Key Details:

- Cultivated in Lakadong's alluvial valleys in Jaintia Hills.
- Three times more potent than regular turmeric.
- Grown traditionally without chemical fertilizers or pesticides.

### Special Attributes of Turmeric:

- Integral to Siddha, Unani, Ayurvedic, and Chinese traditional medicines.
- Used in South Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines and cultural practices.
- Contains curcumin with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties.

### Unique Characteristics of Lakadong Turmeric:

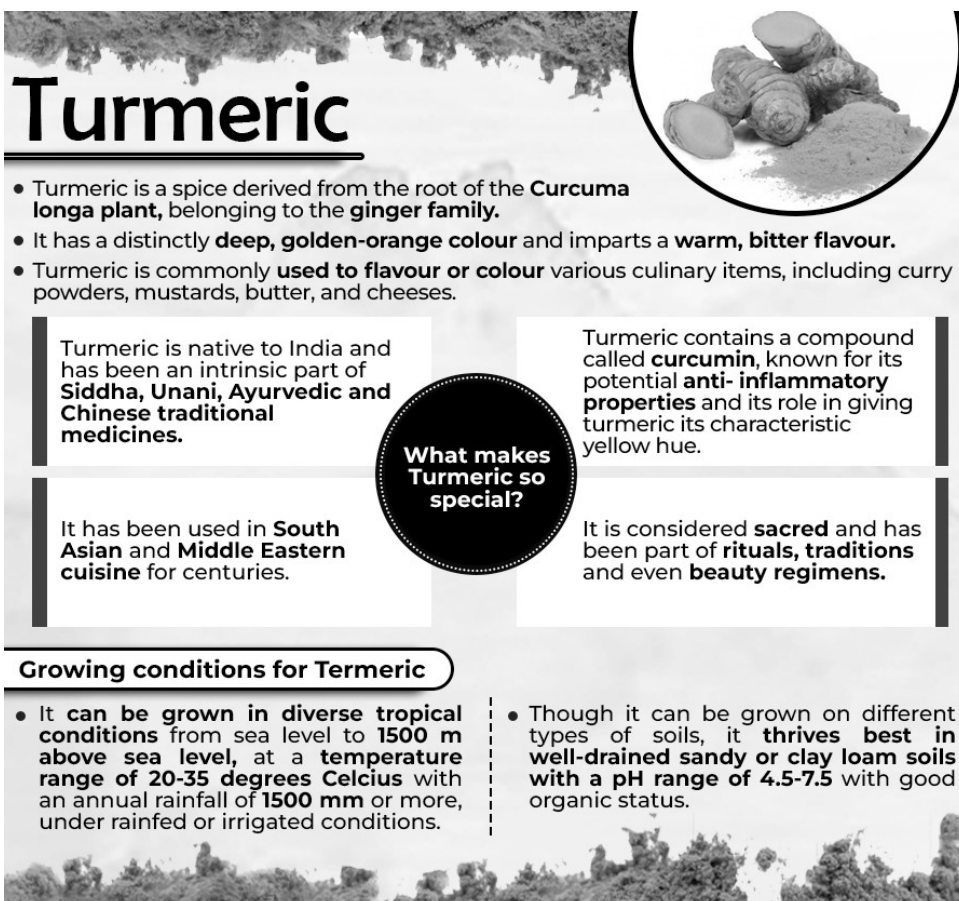
- High curcumin content (7 to 12%) compared to regular turmeric (2 to 3%).
- Valued in Meghalaya for enhanced health and culinary benefits.

### Significance of the GI Tag:

- Provides a unique market identity, benefiting small farmers.
- Safeguards traditional methods and local knowledge.
- Expands market opportunities, both domestically and internationally.
- Contributes to rural development by preserving heritage and boosting local economies.
- Strengthens product branding by highlighting its distinctive origin and characteristics.

### GI Tag

- ✓ Geographical Indication (GI) Tags act as a **special identification** ascribed to any **region, town, or state**.
- ✓ These tags are assigned to **certain products** like agriculture or handicraft that symbolise the **uniqueness** of that particular region or place.
- ✓ The **Geographical Indication Registry**, which grants the tag, is located in **Chennai**.
- ✓ India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999**.
  - It came into force with effect from **2003**.
- ✓ GI has been defined as **Indications** which identify a good as **originating in the territory** of a member, or a region or a locality in that territory, where a given **quality, reputation or characteristic** of the good is essentially **attributable to its geographic origin**.
- ✓ One can also view this tag as a **means of protection from any sort of copyright violation**.
- ✓ The **Darjeeling Tea** was the **first product in India** that was given a GI tag around 2004-2005.



**Turmeric**

- Turmeric is a spice derived from the root of the **Curcuma longa plant**, belonging to the **ginger family**.
- It has a distinctly **deep, golden-orange colour** and imparts a **warm, bitter flavour**.
- Turmeric is commonly **used to flavour or colour** various culinary items, including curry powders, mustards, butter, and cheeses.

Turmeric is native to India and has been an intrinsic part of **Siddha, Unani, Ayurvedic and Chinese traditional medicines**.

Turmeric contains a compound called **curcumin**, known for its potential **anti-inflammatory properties** and its role in giving turmeric its characteristic yellow hue.

It has been used in **South Asian and Middle Eastern cuisine** for centuries.

It is considered **sacred** and has been part of **rituals, traditions** and even **beauty regimens**.

**What makes Turmeric so special?**

**Growing conditions for Turmeric**

- It can be grown in diverse tropical conditions from sea level to **1500 m above sea level**, at a **temperature range of 20-35 degrees Celsius** with an annual rainfall of **1500 mm** or more, under rainfed or irrigated conditions.
- Though it can be grown on different types of soils, it **thrives best in well-drained sandy or clay loam soils** with a **pH range of 4.5-7.5** with good organic status.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The 'Lakadong Turmeric' has recently received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for its specific geographical origin in

- (a) Meghalaya (b) Himachal Pradesh  
(c) Tripura (d) Andhra Pradesh

Answer: a

## WILD OKRA (ABELMOSCHUS ODISHAE)

**Why in News:** Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) scientist discovered disease resistant wild okra.

### About wild okra

- The new plant species of 'wild okra' can be used for **hybridisation** to create a **better variety having high disease resistance**.
- It can also play a vital role in **widening the genetic base** of okra.
- For the **first time** a new plant species of 'wild okra' has been **discovered anywhere** in the country.
- Till now **13 different species** of wild okra have been discovered of which **two are being harvested for consumption**.
- The new species is the **14th variety** of the plant species and has been named '**Abelmoschus Odishae**' after the state from where the type specimens were originally collected.
- The plant species is a **perennial shrub** up to 5 metre high.
- The species also has a **seeds viability** of **95 per cent**.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Okra:

1. It is cultivated as crop in India.

2. It is a perennial shrub with height up to 5 meter's high.  
3. It is a millet that has very high drought resistant properties.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)

## FAME-II SCHEME

**Why in News:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry recently recommended that the Centre should extend the deadline of the Faster Adoption & Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) - II Scheme by at least three more years.

### About FAME-India scheme

- FAME-India stands for **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles** in India.
- A **government scheme** launched in **2011** as a part of the **National Mission on Electric Mobility**.
- Aim**
  - The scheme aims to promote the **adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles** in India, with the ultimate goal of:
    - reducing the country's dependence on fossil fuels,**
    - reducing air pollution, and**
    - mitigating the impact of climate change.**
- The scheme provides **incentives to manufacturers and buyers** of electric and hybrid vehicles and aims to **increase demand for these vehicles** by making them **more affordable and accessible**.
- The incentives provided under the scheme are determined **based on the category of the vehicle** and the **battery specification**.
- The scheme also provides funding for the **development of charging infrastructure** for electric vehicles.

### Phases of the scheme

- Phase I** of the scheme was implemented by the concerned authorities and focused on **four key areas**:
  - demand creation,
  - technology platform,
  - pilot projects, and
  - charging infrastructure.

- Phase II of the scheme focuses on the electrification of public and shared transportation.

### Concerns

- Inadequate demand:
  - It is **not ensuring enough demand** for electric and hybrid vehicles before encouraging their manufacture.
  - This could lead to an **oversupply** of such vehicles that **may not find buyers**, leading to **losses for manufacturers**.
- Impact on smaller EVs:
  - FAME is **discouraging the use of smaller electric vehicles**, such as electric scooters, which have the potential to revolutionize urban transportation in India.
  - This is because the **incentives** provided by the scheme are **linked to the size of the battery of the vehicle**.
  - As a result, approximately **95% of electric two-wheeler models** made in India will **not receive incentives** under **FAME-II**, as they have batteries smaller than 2.5 kWh.

### Benefits of Fame India Scheme

- Issues related to environmental and fuel conservation will be significantly reduced.
- Vehicles from different segments will receive subsidy benefits accordingly.
- Citizens can avail themselves of eco-friendly public transportation.
- Allow individuals to reap the benefits of renewable energy sources through charging systems.
- The establishment of charging stations in close proximity further encourages individuals to opt for electric vehicles.

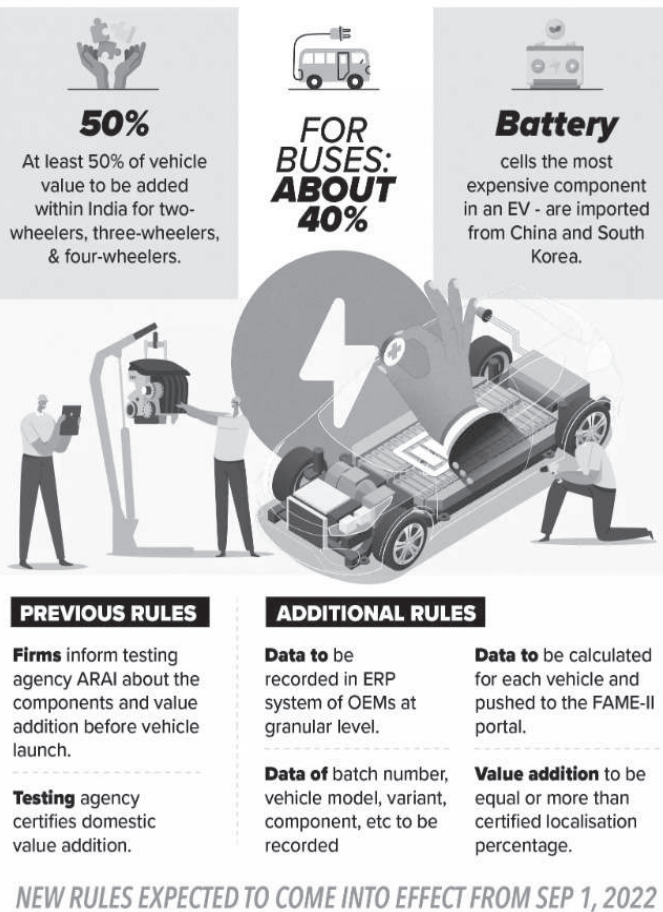
### Way Forward

- India needs auto industry's active participation to ease electric mobility transition.
- Auto and battery industries could collaborate to enhance customer awareness, promote domestic manufacturing, promote new business models, conduct R&D for EVs and components, consider new business models to promote EVs.

### Conclusion

- A phased manufacturing plan to promote EVs, provide fiscal and non-fiscal incentives for phased manufacturing of EVs and batteries.
- Government departments can consider a bouquet of potential policies, such as congestion pricing, ZEV credits, low emission/exclusion zones, parking policies, etc. to drive adoption of EVs.

### FAME-II domestic value addition norms



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Faster Adoption & Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME) - II Scheme:

1. It aims to promote the adoption of electric and hybrid vehicles in India.
2. It was launched as part of the Make in India initiative.
3. It provides funding for the development of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles.
4. Phase II of the scheme focuses on the electrification of public and shared transportation.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

**Answer: c** (1, 3 and 4 only)



## JOURNEY TOWARDS A PLASTIC-FREE WORLD

**Why in News:** The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) under the United Nations Environment Programme, met in Nairobi for its third round of negotiations to **develop an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution worldwide.**

### Key details

- Under the UN Environment Assembly Resolution, INC is responsible for **delivering a global plastics treaty by 2025.**
- The INC-3 was a make-or-break opportunity as countries came together to **negotiate the 'zero draft'** text developed by the committee's secretariat, with various options for core obligations and control measures.

### About the 'zero draft'

- This draft contained strong options for an **international legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution.**
- Most countries agreed that the treaty's **objective** should be to **end plastic pollution and protect human health and the environment.**
- A group of like-minded countries argued to include the **clause "while contributing to the achievement of sustainable development"**, to ensure their **economic interests and investments.** These countries included:
  - **Saudi Arabia, Russia, China, Iran, and some members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.**

### Primary polymers

- The most important provision, that is a **reduction in the production of primary polymers**, also stirred controversy because of its **implications for industry.**
- The industry's influence was apparent by its presence with **36% more fossil fuels and chemicals sector lobbyists** at INC-3 than in INC-2 at the negotiations.

### Discussion on Finance

- The **zero draft contains options** such as:
  - imposing a **plastic-pollution fee** to be paid by **plastic polymer producers**, and
  - **fee on reducing the financial flow** into projects with a **high carbon footprint.**
- If these provisions are included, they will have **considerable implications** in particular, countries will have to **cut**, if not eliminate, **fossil-fuel subsidies and investments in environmentally disfavoured technologies** such as **incineration and waste-to-energy plants.**

### Are there limits on plastic trade?

- While the plastics treaty is expected to **plug the holes** left open by the **Basel Convention**, any restrictions on trade is considered to be **impinging on the freedom and sovereignty of nations.**
  - The **Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their**

**Disposal**, usually known as the Basel Convention, is an international treaty that was designed to **reduce the movements of hazardous waste between nations**, and specifically to **prevent transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries.**

- The WTO rules provide for **sufficient scope for trade restrictions** when they are necessary to **protect human, animal or plant life or health** and nothing prohibits states under international law to regulate or restrict the trade of certain products and materials.
- Excluding the provision on waste management**, almost **all other provisions were watered down** to account for **"national circumstances and capabilities"**.
- Even under **waste management**, there is a **high risk of these countries** insisting on the treaty accommodating unsound solutions.
  - This is because the phrase **environmentally sound management isn't well-defined** even as terms such as best available science and best available technology continue to be used.

### Issue with the rules of procedure

- The rules of procedure **continued to apply provisionally** at INC-3, without any final determination.
- The **African group** of countries and **Small-Island Developing States (SIDS)** advocated for **strong binding provisions** for the high-impact elements in the treaty.
  - Their submissions stood out from the rest as they **championed the voices of waste-pickers and indigenous peoples**, and approached the treaty from a **human-rights and public health perspective.**

### Conclusion

- INC-3's outcomes **underscore the complexities and challenges** in formulating a global treaty on plastic pollution.
- Divergent interests of member states**, influenced by economic and industry considerations, pose significant hurdles.
- Upcoming negotiations will be crucial in **balancing these interests** with the urgent need for effective global action to tackle the plastic pollution crisis.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Zero draft text of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution:

- It restricts the transboundary movement of plastic waste
- It has proposed the imposition of plastic-pollution fee to be paid by plastic polymer producers.

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

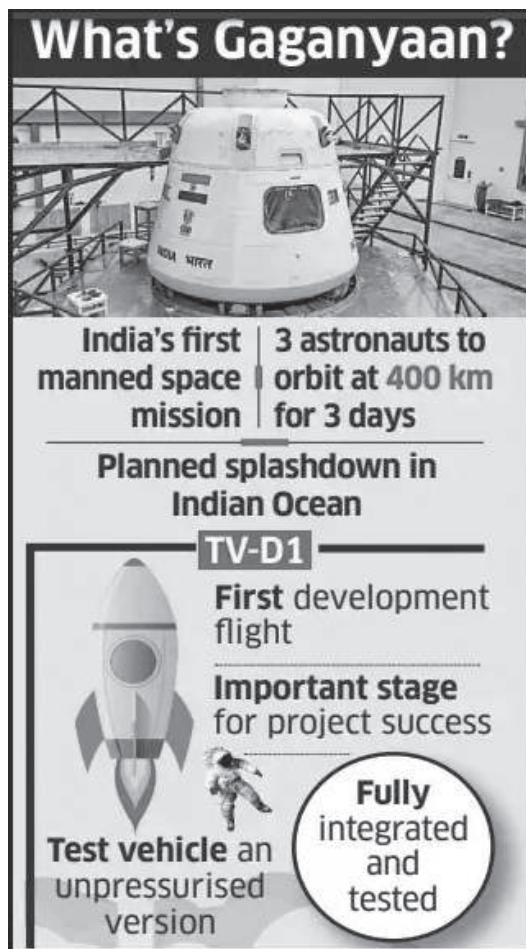
Answer: c

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL AND LIFE SUPPORT SYSTEM (ECLSS)

**Why in News:** ISRO to develop ECLSS for Gaganyaan mission after failing to get it from other countries.

**Key details**

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will develop the **environmental control and life support system (ECLSS) indigenously** for the **Gaganyaan mission**.
  - The **Gaganyaan project** aims to **demonstrate India's human spaceflight capability** by launching a crew to a **400 km orbit** and safely **returning them to Earth**.
  - The **LVM-3, India's heaviest rocket**, will be used to launch Gaganyaan Mission. It is expected to be launched in **2025**.
- ISRO initially hoped to **acquire the ECLSS from other countries** but was **unsuccessful**.

**About ECLSS**

- The Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS) is a **subsystem** typical of **crewed space vehicles** which provides all the **necessary conditions** in order to **make life in space possible**.
- The ECLSS for the space station performs **several functions**:
  - Provides oxygen** for breathing
  - Removes carbon dioxide** from the cabin air
  - Recovers and **recycles oxygen** from carbon dioxide to resupply the crew
  - Filters particulates** and **microorganisms** from the cabin air and **maintains cabin pressure, temperature and humidity levels**
  - Removes volatile organic trace gases**, such as ethanol, that are **colorless, odorless** and can build up over time
  - Distributes cabin air** between each room or module, of the station
  - Provides **potable water** for consumption, food preparation and hygiene
  - Purifies recycled water** from multiple sources back to potable water.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

**Prelims MCQ**

Q. Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS), recently mentioned in the news is associated with

- Project Elephant
- Gaganyaan Mission
- National Health Mission (NHM)
- Samudrayaan Mission

Answer: b

## SOVEREIGN AI

**Why in News:** Recently, Minister of State for Electronics said that India is in the process of developing and making its own sovereign Artificial Intelligence.

### What is Sovereign AI?

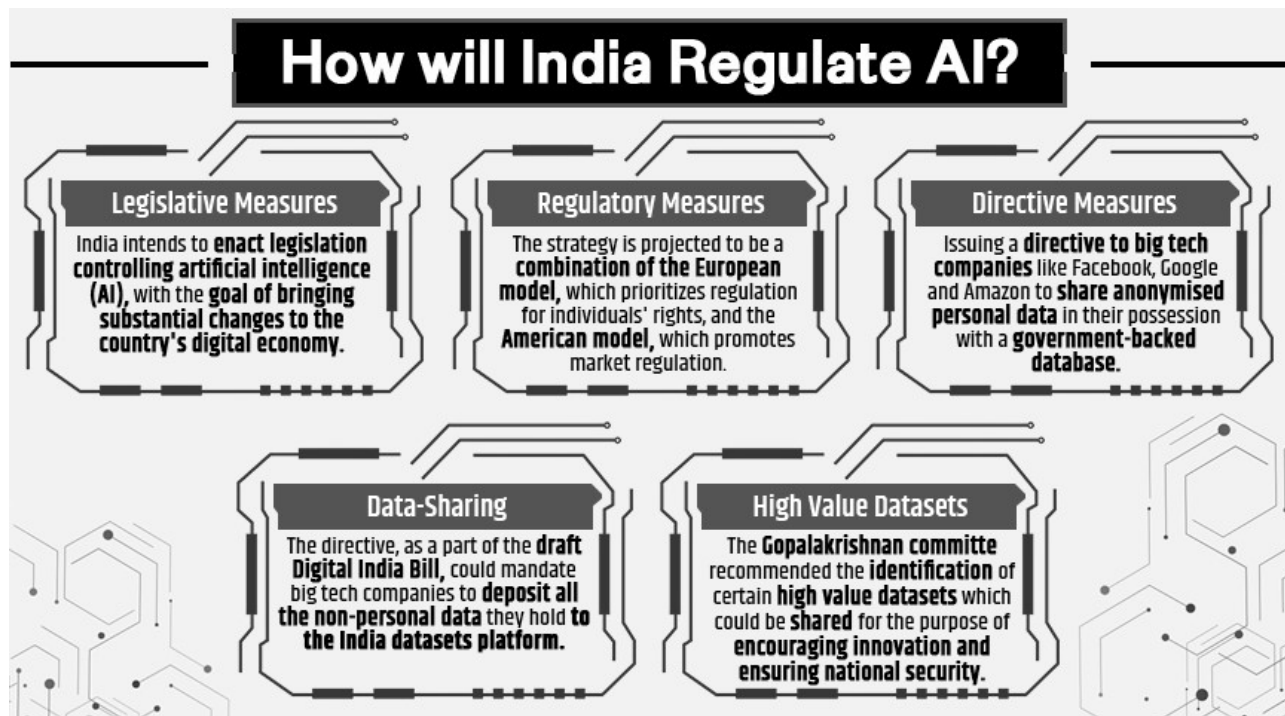
“Sovereign AI” refers to an approach where AI systems are developed and utilized with a strong emphasis on **independence**, **control**, and **security**, especially when handling sensitive or critical information. It ensures a higher degree of autonomy and control over AI processes.

This concept can be categorized into three levels:

AI Type	Features	Examples
Public AIs (externally- determined)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are AI systems that rely on widely available tools, accessible to everyone, and trained on internet knowledge.</li> <li>They continuously improve themselves based on user input.</li> </ul>	ChatGPT Playground
Sovereign AIs (self-determined)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These AIs combine capabilities with greater control over data.</li> <li>They might operate within specific boundaries or regions, adhere to certain data regulations, and can be fine-tuned for particular purposes.</li> </ul>	LLama2, Azure OpenAI
Sovereign AIs (self-sufficient)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These AI models maximize control at the expense of performance.</li> <li>They are operated locally without relying on third parties, trained on their own data, and highly specialized for specific tasks.</li> </ul>	Models created with AutoML.

The key aspects of sovereign AI include independence from individual providers, adherence to legal and regulatory frameworks, compliance with data protection and transparency obligations (such as the EU AI Act), consideration of copyright laws, self-determined selection of models, and the avoidance of using sensitive data for training publicly accessible AI models without explicit consent.

This approach aims to balance the advantages of AI technologies with the need for control, security, and compliance in handling sensitive information or critical processes.



### National Data Governance Framework Policy

- Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) released a draft of the **National Data Governance Framework Policy** under which it proposed the creation of an **India Datasets platform**.

- It will consist of **non-personal and anonymised datasets** from Central government entities that have **collected data** from Indian citizens or those in India.
- The **non-personal data** housed within this programme would be **accessible to startups and Indian researchers**.
- Objective is to **modernise the government's data collection**, with an aim to **improve governance** and to **enable artificial intelligence (AI) and data-led research** and startup ecosystem in the country.
- The platform will play a crucial role in **boosting the artificial intelligence ecosystem** in India by providing a **robust foundation for data-driven innovation and development**.

### Global Perspectives on Sovereign AI

- ✓ **China emphasizes "AI sovereignty"** to control technology development and reduce dependency on foreign AI.
- ✓ **European Union's focus on "European AI"** aims for ethical AI, data protection, and technological sovereignty.
- ✓ **India's "National AI Strategy"** focuses on AI for social empowerment, economic growth, and addressing societal challenges.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQs

Q1. Consider the following:

1. Credit card frauds prevention
2. GPS mapping technology
3. Identify nutrient deficiencies in the soil
4. Self-driving vehicles
5. Personalized online Shopping

Artificial Intelligence is beneficial in how many of the above areas?

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

Answer: d

Q2. With reference to Generative Artificial Intelligence, consider the following statements:

1. It uses a deep neural network.
2. It describes algorithms that can be used to create new content.

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

Answer: c

### Descriptive Question

Q. In order to utilize Artificial Intelligence to the fullest, robust governance mechanism is needed. Analyse [15 Marks] [250 Words]

For Approach Answer, Scan:



## GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON AI SUMMIT & DELHI DECLARATION

**Why in News:** The Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) has unanimously adopted the New Delhi declaration underscoring the need to mitigate risks arising from the development and deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) systems.

### Key details

The declaration stands out as a **contrast** from the agreement signed at the **United Kingdom AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park**, Buckinghamshire, a month ago, where countries had committed to first **tackle the risks emanating from AI systems**.

The **New Delhi declaration** has attempted to **find a balance** between **innovation and the risks** associated with AI systems.

While it is largely upbeat about the economic benefits that AI can bring, it also **flags issues** around **fairness, privacy, and intellectual property rights** that will have to be taken into consideration.



# GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON AI



## About

- The GPAI is an alliance of 28 countries.
- India is the **lead chair of GPAI** in 2024.
- India is a **founding member of GPAI**, having joined the in **June 2020**.
- **Aims:** to **bridge the gap between theory and practice** on AI by supporting **cutting-edge research** and **applied activities** on AI-related priorities.
- It also **brings together people** involved in the fields of **science, industry, and civil society**, along with **governments, international organisations and academia** for greater international cooperation.
- The **first three GPAI summits** were held in **Montreal, Paris and Tokyo**, respectively.
- The GPAI declaration will have **two aspects** highlighting India's stance around AI.
  - ▶ The **first** is to **evaluate the use of AI in sustainable agriculture**, adding to the previous GPAI themes including **healthcare, climate action and building a resilient society**.
  - ▶ The **second** is on **collaborative AI** in line with India's Digital Public Infrastructure or DPI approach.

### Global scenario around regulating AI

- **European Union**
  - EU passed the **AI Act** which introduces **safeguards on the use of AI**, including:
    - ◆ **clear guardrails** on its adoption by law enforcement agencies, and
    - ◆ empowering to **launch complaints** against any **perceived violations**.
    - ◆ tough penalties for companies breaking the rules
  - The deal includes **strong restrictions** on:
    - ◆ facial recognition technology,
    - ◆ on using AI to manipulate human behaviour,
- **United Kingdom**
  - In **November 2023**, the UK hosted the **AI Safety Summit (At Bletchley Park)** where **28 major countries** agreed to sign a **declaration** saying **global action is needed to tackle the potential risks of AI**.
- **United States**
  - It issued an **executive order** aimed at **safeguarding against threats posed by AI** and exerting **oversight over safety benchmarks** used by companies to **evaluate generative AI bots** such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

To know about Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), refer article titled "Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)" under Economy section.

### The GPAI New Delhi declaration



The declaration also agreed to **support AI innovation** in the agriculture sector as a **new thematic priority**.

### New Delhi declaration vs Bletchley declaration

#### Essence of Delhi Declaration

- The GPAI New Delhi declaration **addresses the need to tackle AI-related risks**.
- It largely **supports innovation** in the technology in various sectors, including **agriculture and healthcare**.

#### Essence of Bletchley Declaration:

- UK AI Safety Summit put **security and safety risks** related to AI in the **centre of the discussions**.
- At the Bletchley Park meeting, 28 major countries agreed to sign on a declaration saying **global action is needed to tackle the potential risks of AI**.
- The declaration **noted** the potential for serious, even **catastrophic harm** stemming from the most significant capabilities of these AI models, as well as **risks beyond frontier AI**, including those of **bias and privacy**.
  - **Frontier AI** is defined as **highly capable foundation generative AI models** that could possess **dangerous capabilities** that can pose **severe risks to public safety**.

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQs

Q1. With reference to the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), consider the following statements:

1. It aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice on Artificial Intelligence (AI) by supporting cutting-edge research and applied activities on AI-related priorities.
2. India is a founding member of GPAI.
3. Its secretariat is hosted at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: c

Q2. With reference to the Bletchley Declaration, consider the following statements:

1. It was signed in the 28th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in United Arab Emirates.

2. It aims to address the risks and responsibilities involved in the uses of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
3. India is one of the signatories to this declaration.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

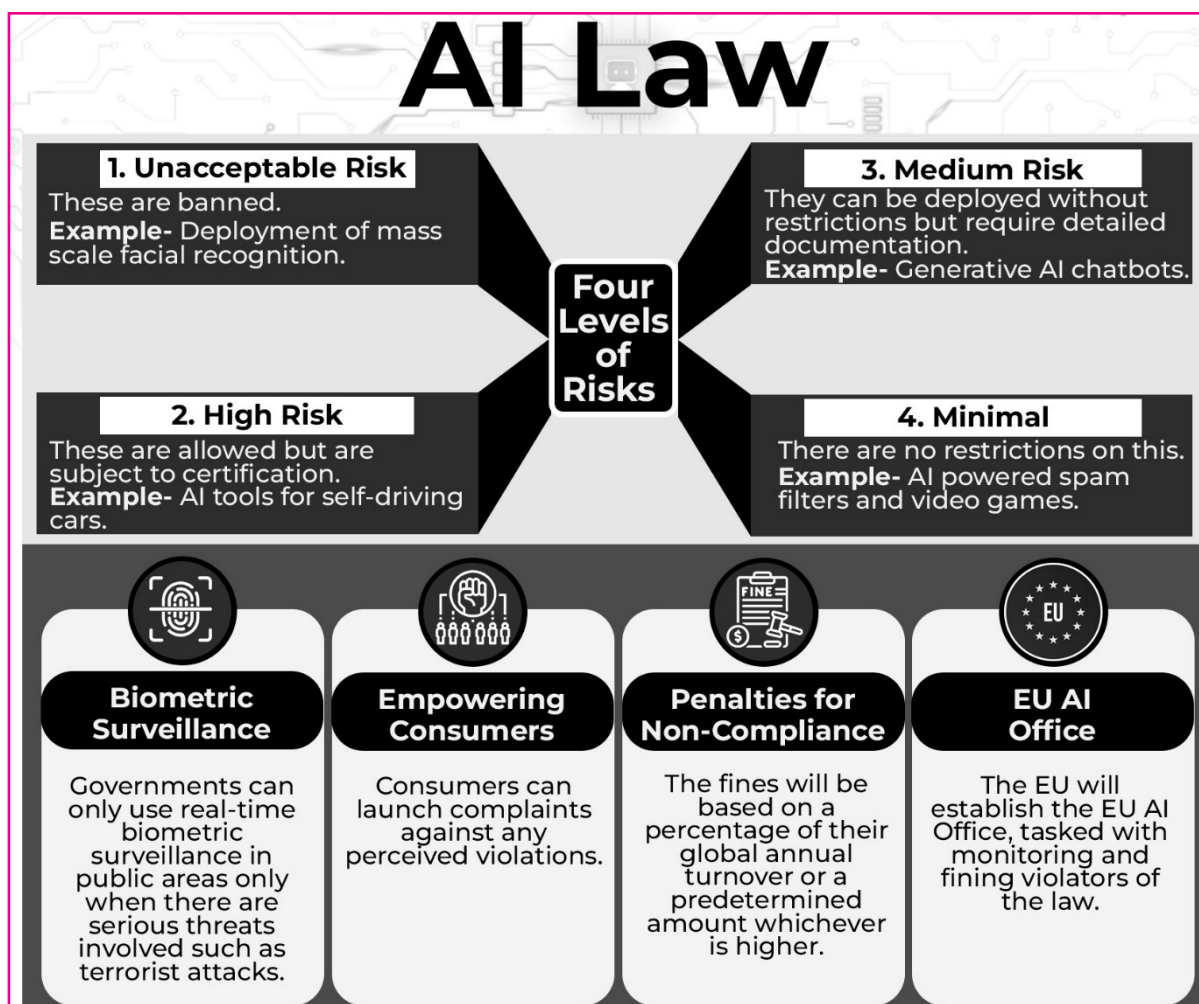
Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

## WORLD'S FIRST LAW ON AI REGULATION

**Why in News:** European Union reached a provisional deal on the world's first set of comprehensive laws to regulate the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

### About the EU framework

- The legislation includes **safeguards** on the **use of AI within the EU**, including **clear guardrails** on its adoption by law enforcement agencies.
- **Consumers** have been empowered to **launch complaints** against any perceived violations.



- The deal includes **strong restrictions** on **facial recognition technology**, and on using AI to **manipulate human behavior**.
- It has provisions for **tough penalties** for companies breaking the rules.
- **Governments** can only use **real-time biometric surveillance** in public areas **only** when there are **serious threats involved**, such as terrorist attacks.

### Classification of AI applications

- Some applications will be **largely banned**, including:
  - the deployment of facial recognition on a mass-scale, with **some exemptions for law enforcement**.
  - AI applications focused on **behavioural control** will be also banned.

### India's approach

- ✓ India has pitched itself, especially to nations in the Global South, as a country that has effectively used technology to **develop and deliver governance solutions**, at a **mass scale**.
- ✓ India is **yet to have a comprehensive framework for regulating AI**.
  - India has shifted from a stance of not considering AI regulation to actively formulating regulations based on a **risk-based, user-harm approach**.
- ✓ **Advocacy for Inclusive and Responsible AI**:
  - India's initial **national AI strategy #AIFORALL**, aimed at inclusivity, debuted in 2018.
  - NITI Aayog's **National Strategy for AI (2018)** included a chapter on responsible AI.
- ✓ Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology introduced **IndiaAI**, the national program on AI, aimed at serving as a **comprehensive initiative to cover all AI-related research and innovations**.
- ✓ New Delhi is hoping to focus on **real-life applications** of the tech in **healthcare, agriculture, governance, language translation**, etc., to catalyse economic development.

**Global concerns of AI** encompass **Privacy**, where personal data misuse raises ethical questions; **System Bias**, as algorithms may perpetuate societal biases; and **Violation of IPRs**, posing challenges in safeguarding intellectual property rights.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With the present state of development, Artificial Intelligence can effectively do which of the following? [UPSC CSE 2020]

1. Bring down electricity consumption in industrial units

2. Create meaningful short stories and songs
3. Disease diagnosis
4. Text-to-speech conversion
5. Wireless transmission of electrical energy

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer: d

## GOOGLE'S GEMINI

**Why in News:** Google Gemini, a new multimodal general AI model is now available to users across the world.



### What is Google's Gemini?

- It is being seen as **Google's answer to ChatGPT** which has been ahead of the game so far when it comes to GenAI.
- Google Gemini comes in **three sizes**: Ultra, Pro and Nano.

### ChatGPT

- ✓ ChatGPT is an **AI chatbot** capable of **natural language generation, translation, and answering questions**.
- ✓ GPT stands for **Generative Pre-trained Transformer**.
- ✓ **GPT-3** was the largest language model in existence at the time of its 2020 launch, with **175 billion parameters**.
- ✓ The latest version, **GPT-4**, accessible through ChatGPT Plus or Bing Chat, has **one trillion parameters**.

- Gemini is **multimodal**, which means it is **not limited** to the **type of information** it can process and can work understand and operate across **text, code, audio, image** and **video**.
  - In contrast, **ChatGPT cannot work on video** at the moment.
- It is also much **more powerful** than **existing models**.
- Gemini can **understand, explain** and **generate high-quality code** in the world's most popular programming languages, like Python, Java, C++ and Go.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. In the context of recent advances in information and communication technology, the 'ChatGPT and Google Gemini are the examples of:

- Deep Web
- Internet of Things
- Emotional intelligence
- Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Answer d

#### Descriptive Question

Q. Define ChatGPT. Evaluate the opportunities and threats associated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) language models, including ChatGPT? [15 Marks] [250 Words]

For Approach Answer, Scan:



### CERT-IN

**Why in News:** The Union government has added the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) among a list of organisations that are exempted from the ambit of the Right to Information Act (RTI).

#### Key details

- There are **26 other intelligence and security organisations** are exempt under RTI.
- The **RTI Act, enacted in 2005**, said the legislation **shall not apply to intelligence and security organisations** specified in the **Second Schedule**.

#### Exception:

- ◆ Provided that the information pertaining to the allegations of corruption and human rights violations shall not be excluded.

#### Exempted organisations

- As per **section 24 (2) of the Act**, **intelligence and security organisations** are **exempted** from the RTI Act except in cases of corruption or human rights violation:

- ◆ Intelligence Bureau
- ◆ Research and Analysis Wing including its technical wing, Aviation Research Centre
- ◆ Directorate of Revenue Intelligence
- ◆ Central Economic Intelligence Bureau
- ◆ Directorate of Enforcement
- ◆ Narcotics Control Bureau
- ◆ Special Frontier Force
- ◆ Border Security Force
- ◆ Central Reserve Police Force
- ◆ Indo-Tibetan Border Police
- ◆ Central Industrial Security Force
- ◆ National Security Guard
- ◆ Assam Rifles
- ◆ Sashastra Seema Bal
- ◆ Directorate General of Income-tax (Investigation)
- ◆ National Technical Research Organisation
- ◆ Financial Intelligence Unit, India
- ◆ Special Protection Group
- ◆ Defence Research and Development Organisation
- ◆ Border Roads Organisation
- ◆ National Security Council Secretariat (secretariat of the National Security Council, in the Cabinet Secretariat).

#### What is CERT-In?

- 'Indian Computer Emergency Response Team' (CERT-In) is the **national nodal agency** for **cyber security incident response** and proactive measures for the **prevention of cyber incidents** in the country.
- One of its primary objectives is **enhancing security awareness** among common citizens.
- CERT-In has been **appointed by Central Government** in under **The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act, 2000)**.



# Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)



## About

- CERT-In is a functional organisation of the **Ministry of Information & Electronics Technology**.
- It is the **National Nodal Agency** for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur.

## Objective

**Securing Indian cyberspace**

## Operational

CERT-In has been operational since **January 2004**

## Functions

- **Collection, analysis and dissemination** of information on cyber incidents
- **Forecast and alerts** of cyber security incidents
- **Emergency measures** for handling cyber security incidents
- **Coordination** of cyber incident response activities
- Issue **guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers** relating to **information security** practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents

### What is RTI Act

- ✓ Right to Information Act means that any **Indian citizen can request any information** (which is supposed to be public knowledge) from the **offices and departments of the state or central governments**.
- ✓ The act mandates that the said offices and departments **must process such requests in a timely manner**.
- ✓ RTI Act **replaced the Freedom of Information Act 2002**.
- ✓ **Mandate of the RTI Act**
  - The RTI Act mandates that any **Indian citizen is free to seek any information** from any public or government authority and the authority is under liability to respond to such a request **within a period of 30 days** from the date of receiving such an application.

- However, the information sought **must not be related to defense, national security, or personal details**.
- Before the advent of the RTI act, the disclosure of information in India was **restricted** by the **Official Secrets Act** and some other special laws.
- The RTI Act **relaxed** many such laws in the country.
- The RTI act has also made it **mandatory** for computerizing the records.

### ✓ Features

- The **authorities** under RTI Act are called **public authorities**.
- The **Public Information Officer (PIO)** perform **quasi-judicial function** of deciding on the application and appeal respectively.

- Since RTI is **implicit in the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression** under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution, it is an **implied fundamental right**.

✓ What Information can be sought under the RTI Act?

- Any Indian citizen is free to seek answers from a Government Authority like:
  - ◆ Applying for a delayed IT refund
  - ◆ Driving license or passport
  - ◆ Details of a repair or infrastructure project completed or going on
  - ◆ The funds allotted under the different kinds of relief funds in the country.
  - ◆ Enables students to get copies of answer sheets from the universities

- 3. This act prohibits judiciary from entertaining any suits or proceedings in respect of any order made under it.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

## BETELGEUSE

**Why in News:** Betelgeuse, one of the brightest stars in the sky, will be eclipsed by an asteroid named Leona.

### About Betelgeuse

- Betelgeuse is a **red super giant star** located in the **Orion constellation**.
- **Leona**, the **asteroid** is a slowly rotating, **oblong space rock** situated in the primary asteroid belt **between Mars and Jupiter**.
- Betelgeuse, located approximately **700 light-years away**, is **observable with the naked eye**.
- Betelgeuse is **thousands of times brighter** than our **sun** and around **700 times larger**.
- Its colossal size is such that **if it replaced our sun**, it would **extend beyond Jupiter**.
- Despite being considerably **younger at 10 million years old** compared to our sun's 4.6 billion years, Betelgeuse is expected to be **short-lived** due to its mass and the rapid rate at which it's consuming its resources.
- In **2019**, Betelgeuse experienced a **significant dimming** when a substantial amount of surface material was expelled into space.
- This resulted in a **temporary blockage of starlight** due to a dust cloud, and within six months, Betelgeuse had returned to its previous brightness.
- Scientists anticipate Betelgeuse to undergo a **supernova explosion** within the **next 100,000 years**.

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQs

Q1. Consider the following:

1. Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)
2. Central Economic Intelligence Bureau
3. Border Roads Organisation (BRO)
4. Assam Rifles

How many of the above are exempted from the ambit of the Right to Information Act (RTI)?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 4 only)

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to the Right to Information Act (RTI):

1. This act led to the establishment of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).
2. This Act states that no legal action shall lie against any person for an act done in good faith.

### What is a Supernova?

- ✓ A supernova is the name given to the **cataclysmic explosion of a massive star**.
- ✓ They are the **largest explosion that takes place in space**.
- ✓ A star can go supernova in one of two ways:
  - **Type I supernova:** Star accumulates matter from a nearby neighbour until a runaway nuclear reaction ignites.
  - **Type II supernova:** Star runs out of nuclear fuel and collapses under its own gravity.
- ✓ It can **emit more energy in a few seconds than our sun will radiate in its lifetime of billions of years**.
- ✓ They're also the **primary source of heavy elements in the universe**.
- ✓ On average, a supernova will occur **once every 50 years in a galaxy the size of the Milky Way**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

- Q. The term, 'Betelgeuse,' recently mentioned in the news, is used in the context of
- (a) Marine mammal
  - (b) Insect having role in pollination
  - (c) Star
  - (d) Traditional medicines

Answer: c

## WORLD MALARIA REPORT

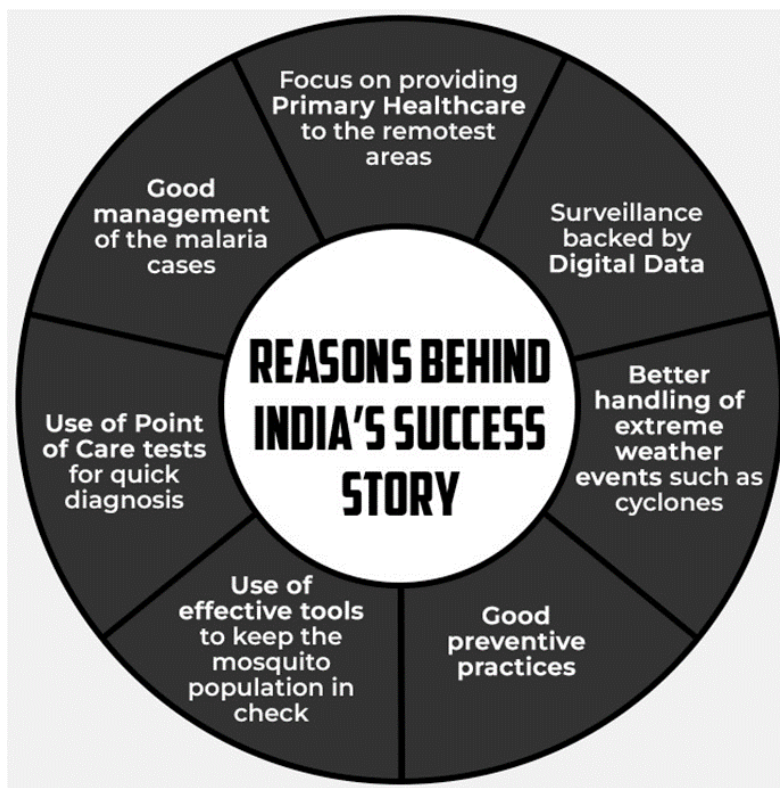
**Why in News:** The recently released World Malaria Report showed that the number of cases and deaths due to the mosquito-borne infection in India have continued to decline, but they are up globally.

#### Key details

- India's **downward trend** was reflected in the larger **WHO South East Asian region** that remained on track to **achieving the 2030 target** of reducing cases and deaths by 90 per cent.
- The number of **malaria cases** had **dropped** from **243 million to 233 million** globally between **2000 and 2019**.
- However, there was an **increase of 11 million cases** in **2020**.
- They remained **stable in 2021**, before seeing another increase of 5 million in 2022 to 249 million.

#### Status of Malaria in India

- Malaria cases have been on the decline in India, there was an 85.1 per cent decline in malaria cases and an 83.36 per cent decline in deaths between 2015 and 2022.
- In 2021, **1.7 per cent** of the **malaria cases** in the world and **1.2 per cent** of all the **deaths** were reported in India
- Most malaria cases are mainly concentrated in **tribal and remote areas** of the country.
  - **Six states** along with tribal areas of **MP** and **Maharashtra** account for **90% disease burden**.





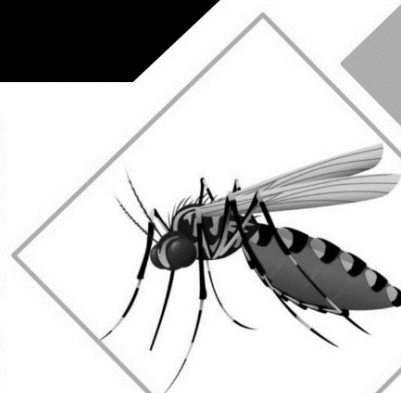
# MALARIA

## What is Malaria?

Malaria is disease caused by **plasmodium parasites** that is transmitted to people through the bites of infected **female Anopheles mosquitoes**.

## Types of Malaria

- *Plasmodium falciparum*
- *Plasmodium malariae*
- *Plasmodium vivax*
- *Plasmodium ovale*
- *Plasmodium knowlesi*



## SYMPTOMS



Headache



Fatigue



Nausea



Muscle Pain



Chills



Fever

## World Malaria Report, 2023

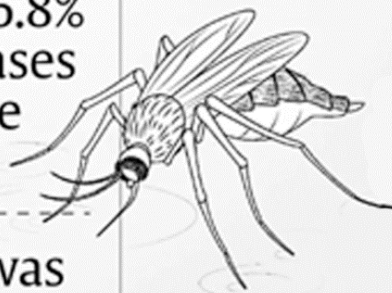
- India saw a 30% reduction in cases
- It accounted for 0.99% of global malaria deaths
- India reported 1.4% of the total malaria cases in 2022
- Globally, 5 million additional malaria cases were recorded

in 2022, taking the total to 249 million

- Nigeria has the highest malaria burden with 26.8% of the global cases and 31.1% of the deaths

- The highest was in Pakistan (2.1 million)

that had a flood in 2022



According to National Vector-borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP) approximately 5 lakh people suffered from malaria (63% were of *Plasmodium falciparum*) in India.

- *P. falciparum* is the world's most dangerous malaria parasite.



## Climate change and malaria

- With increasing frequency of **extreme weather events**, the annual report for the **first time** focused on **climate change and malaria**.
- The malaria parasite and mosquito are both **extremely sensitive to temperature, humidity, and rainfall**, which can **expand the reach of the disease**.
- Climate change can
  - **increase geographies** for malaria spread
  - affect the impact of the disease by **reducing access to healthcare facilities and timely treatment**.
- Climate change is likely to lead to an **increase in temperatures**, with newer areas especially in the **Himalayan belt** suitable for the spread of the disease.

- **High risk zones** will also emerge in states that face **very high rainfall periodically**.

## Challenges

- Biological threats
  - drug resistance,
  - insecticide resistance,
  - gene deletions in parasites which make diagnosis difficult
- Challenge of vivax malaria
  - Another challenge is vivax malaria, which accounts for **over 40 per cent of malaria cases in India**.
  - The vivax plasmodium is known to **hide in the liver** and cause **recurrent infections**.

What are the Initiatives Related to Malaria?	
Global 	India 
<b>WHO's Global Malaria Program (GMP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The WHO's GMP is responsible for coordinating WHO's global efforts to control and eliminate malaria.</li> <li>➤ Its work is guided by the "Global technical strategy for malaria 2016-2030" adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2015 and updated in 2021.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The strategy sets the target of reducing global malaria incidence and mortality rates by <b>at least 90% by 2030</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>National Framework for Malaria Elimination 2016-2030</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Aligned with WHO's strategy, aims to <b>eliminate malaria across India by 2030</b> and maintain malaria-free zones.</li> </ul>
<b>Malaria Elimination Initiative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spearheaded by the <b>Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation</b>, this initiative focuses on eradicating malaria through diverse strategies such as treatment accessibility, mosquito population reduction, and technology development.</li> </ul>	<b>National Vector-Borne Disease Control Programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Addresses various <b>vector-borne diseases</b>, including malaria, through prevention and control measures.</li> </ul>
<b>E-2025 Initiative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The WHO launched the E-2025 initiative in 2021. The initiative aims to stop the transmission of malaria in 25 countries by 2025.</li> <li>➤ The WHO has identified <b>25 countries</b> that have the <b>potential to eradicate malaria by 2025</b>.</li> </ul>	<b>National Malaria Control Programme (NMCP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To combat devastating effects of Malaria, the NMCP was launched in 1953 built around three key activities - insecticidal residual spray (IRS) with DDT; monitoring and surveillance of cases; and treatment of patients.</li> </ul>
	<b>High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) Initiative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Initiated in four states (West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh) in 2019, focusing on malaria reduction through insecticidal net distribution.</li> </ul>
	<b>Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Established by the <b>Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)</b>, collaborates with partners on malaria control research.</li> </ul>

## Way forward

- There has to be **intensified efforts to find and treat the scattered cases**.
- When the **burden of disease is higher**, any **intervention** in areas reporting most of the cases results in **drastic reduction in numbers**.
- It is important to have **real-time digital data** of these cases to help local administrations **better plan the interventions**.

- In this pursuit, India's aim to be **malaria-free by 2027** and to **eliminate the disease by 2030**, is worth noting.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The "World malaria report 2023" has been published by which of the following?

- (a) Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH)

- (b) European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)
- (c) World Health Organization (WHO)
- (d) Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)

Answer: c

## CASGEVY THERAPY FOR SICKLE CELL DISEASE

**Why in News:** The UK drug regulator recently approved a gene therapy for the **cure of sickle cell disease and thalassaemia**, seen as a landmark breakthrough.

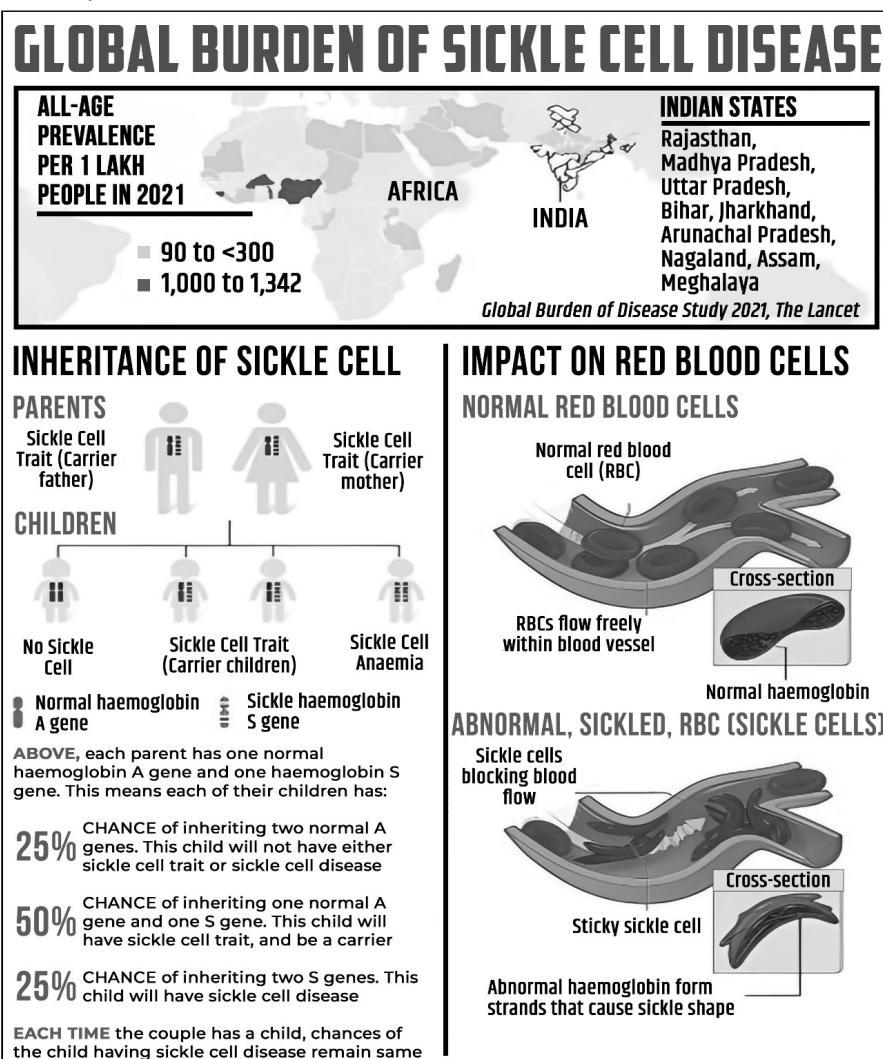
### Key details

- This is the **first licensed therapy** in the world based on the gene editing technology **Crispr-Cas9** that earned its innovators a Nobel Prize (Chemistry) in 2020.
- **Casgev** therapy **edits the faulty gene** that leads to these blood disorders, potentially **curing the person for life**.

- The **only permanent treatment** has been a **bone marrow transplant**, for which a closely matched donor is needed.
- Casgev is a **one-time treatment** for which the doctor has to first **collect blood stem cells** from the bone marrow using a process called **apheresis** — used to filter out the blood for different components.

### How does the therapy work?

- Both **sickle cell disease** and **thalassaemia** are caused by **errors in the gene for haemoglobin**, a protein in the red blood cells that carry oxygen to organs and tissues.
- The therapy uses the **patient's own blood stem cells**, which are precisely **edited using Crispr-Cas9**.
- A gene called **BCL11A**, which is crucial for switching from foetal to adult haemoglobin, is **targeted by the therapy**.
- **Foetal haemoglobin** which is naturally present in everyone at birth, **does not carry the same abnormalities** as adult haemoglobin.
- The therapy uses the **body's own mechanisms** to start producing more of this foetal haemoglobin, **alleviating the symptoms of the two conditions**.



### Sickle cell disease

- The genetic error in sickle cell disease leads to **red blood cells assuming a crescent shape**.
  - In India alone, an **estimated 40,000 children** annually are born with Sickle cell disease.
- Unlike the disc shaped normal cells, the **sickle-like cells cannot move** around easily in the vessels, resulting in **blocked blood flow**.
- This can lead to episodes of **severe pain, life-threatening infections, anaemia**, or a **stroke**.
- The symptoms manifest in people who inherit a **pair of damaged genes** from **both parents**.
- Those who carry only **one copy** of the gene from one parent can **lead a normal life**.

### Thalassaemia

- People who **inherit a pair of genes** from both parents experience symptoms like severe anaemia.
- Thalassaemia leads to **low levels of haemoglobin**, leading to fatigue, shortness of breath, and irregular heartbeats.
- People with the condition **need blood transfusion throughout their life**.
- The transfusions also lead to **accumulation of excess iron** in the body, for which they need chelation.
- **India** also has the **largest number of children with thalassaemia** major in the world — about 1-1.5 lakh.

### Challenges of this treatment

- **Cost is likely to be very high**.
  - Estimates suggest it could be as much as **\$2 million per patient**, which is in line with other gene therapies.
- Absence of local manufacturing
  - Which means that the harvested blood stem cells have to be sent across countries.

### Government initiatives to eliminate SCA

- ✓ Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) are **implementing outreach programmes** for better disease management and control.
- ✓ **Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched a portal for data collection individuals** with SCA to register, aiding in the collation of disease-related information.
- ✓ **2047 Elimination Mission** aims for universal screening of 0-40 years age group in tribal areas, backed by awareness and counselling, funded under the **National Health Mission**.
- ✓ National **Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Programme** aiming to eliminate the disease by 2047, could be supported by the introduction of advanced treatments like Casgevy.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Sickle Cell Anaemia, consider the following statements:

1. It is a genetic disorder caused by a mutation in the Hemoglobin- $\beta$  gene.
2. It is a polygenic disorder.
3. It is particularly common among people whose ancestors originated from sub-Saharan Africa and India.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

**Answer: b (1 and 3 only)**

### H9N2 AVIAN FLU

**Why in News:** One of the viruses in circulation in the recent outbreak of a mysterious respiratory illness in China is H9N2, a subtype of the Influenza A virus.

#### About H9N2

- Avian influenza, commonly known as **bird flu**, is a **viral infection** that primarily **affects birds**.
- It primarily affects birds with a **high prevalence in poultry** such as **chickens** and **turkeys** and can **easily jump to humans**.
- **H9N2 avian influenza** virus has gained attention due to its **ability to infect a wide range of bird species** and occasional transmission to humans.
- It is **highly transmissible** and while it is known to cause mild illness, sometimes it manifests as a severe infection that can result in complications.
- H9N2 is a subtype of the **Influenza A virus**, belonging to the **Orthomyxoviridae** family.
- The virus can undergo **genetic reassortment**, leading to the emergence of **new strains**.
- The transmission of H9N2 occurs through **direct contact** with infected birds, their respiratory secretions, or contaminated environments.
- The virus can **persist in water** and on **surfaces**.



# Influenza Type A Viruses



## Subtypes

- Hemagglutinin (HA)
- Neuraminidase (NA)

(Viruses are divided into subtypes on the basis of two proteins on the surface of the virus)

■ 18 known HA subtypes

■ 11 known NA subtypes

## Different combinations of HA and NA proteins are possible

- An H7N2 virus designates an influenza A virus subtype that has an HA7 protein and an NA2 protein
- H5N1 virus has an HA5 protein and an NA1 protein

All known subtypes of Influenza A viruses can infect birds, except subtypes H17N10 and H18N11, which have only been found in bats

## Influenza A H5

- There are nine known subtypes of H5 viruses
- H5N1, H5N2, H5N3, H5N4, H5N5, H5N6, H5N7, H5N8, H5N9

## Signs and symptoms

- The infection is **self-limiting** and similar to any other flu virus, usually accompanied by **pink eyes**.
- The **other symptoms** include high fever, cough, sore throat, body and muscle aches, nausea, diarrhoea and a runny nose.
- **Severe respiratory symptoms** and conditions include:
  - shortness of breath,
  - pneumonia and
  - acute respiratory distress.
- In **extreme cases**, there might be **seizures** and **septic shock**.

## Treatment protocol

- Treatment is largely **symptomatic with antivirals**.
- Those with more severe symptoms may need **nebulisation and steroids**.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the 'H9N2 avian influenza virus,' consider the following statements:

1. It causes bird flu in chickens and turkeys.
2. It infects humans when exposed to an infected environment and causes severe fever.
3. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed first indigenous vaccine for this virus.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c



## POMPE DISEASE

**Why in News:** India's first Pompe disease patient, passed away at the age of 24 years, after battling the disease.

### About Pompe Disease

- Also known as **Glycogen Storage Disease Type II**
- Pompe disease is a **rare genetic disorder** caused by a **deficiency** of the enzyme acid **alpha-glucosidase (GAA)**.
- This enzyme is crucial for **breaking down glycogen** into glucose within the **lysosomes of cells**.
- Its prevalence estimates range from **1 in 40,000** to **1 in 300,000** births.

### Key Symptoms of Pompe Disease

#### Progressive Muscle Weakness

The condition affects both **skeletal and smooth muscles**, causing mobility and daily activities issues, and can also lead to **breathing difficulties** due to weakness in respiratory muscles.

#### Motor Skill Delay

Motor skill delays, **including sitting, crawling, and walking**, can vary in severity, and some individuals may never achieve certain milestones.

#### Degenerative impact on

**Prolonged muscle weakness and reduced mobility** can have a degenerative impact on bones, leading to **joint contractures and skeletal deformities**.

#### Respiratory Complications

**Shortness of breath, respiratory infections, weakening of respiratory muscles**, and in severe cases, **respiratory failure**.

#### Cardiac Involvement

Pompe disease can **affect the heart muscles**, leading to complications.

#### Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Pompe disease can lead to hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, characterized by the **thickening of heart muscle walls**, resulting in **impaired heart functions** and cardiovascular symptoms.

### Diagnosis

- ✓ **Enzyme assays** are conducted to measure the activity of acid **alpha-glucosidase (GAA)**, the deficient enzyme.
- ✓ **Genetic testing** identifies mutations in the responsible **GAA gene**.
- ✓ **Clinical evaluations** consider the patient's symptoms and medical history.

### Treatment

- While there is **currently no cure** for Pompe disease, there are treatment options available to **manage symptoms** and improve the patient's quality of life.
- **Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT)** is a standard treatment, involving the infusion of the missing enzyme to alleviate glycogen buildup.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Pompe disease:

1. The Enzyme Replacement Therapy (ERT) is the only cure for this disease.
2. In this disease a complex sugar called glycogen builds up in the lysosomes of body's cells.
3. It is a rare genetic disorder caused by a deficiency of the enzyme acid alpha-glucosidase (GAA).

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

## FLIP MUTATIONS

**Why in News:** The omicron subvariant JN.1. is likely to soon become the dominant lineage of the SARS-CoV-2 virus worldwide and the subvariant has a mutation in its spike protein, L455S, also called a “FLip” mutation.

### About “FLip” Mutations:

- L455S and L455F are called “FLip” mutations because they **switch the positions of amino acids F and L** on the spike protein.
- It **increases** their **transmissibility**.
- Such substitution **dampens the receptor binding capacity of angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2)**.
  - ACE2 is a **protein** found in the **epithelial cells** in different parts of the body, such as the **lungs, heart, and kidneys**.
  - SARS-CoV-2 virus **binds** to ACE2 as an **entry point** through the **virus’ spike-like protein on its surface**.
- The L455F and F456L mutations are **nicknamed FLip mutations** because they **switch the positions of two amino acids** on the spike protein labelled **F and L**.

### Mutation

It is a phenomenon which results in **alteration of DNA sequences** and consequently results in **changes in the genotype and the phenotype** of an organism. In addition to **recombination**, mutation is another phenomenon that leads to variation in DNA.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

- Mutation results in changes in both genotype and phenotype of an organism.
- The point mutation occurs due to the change in the single base pair of the DNA.
- Ultraviolet radiation can cause mutation in organism.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- Only one                      Only two  
All three                      None

Answer: c

## KETAMINE

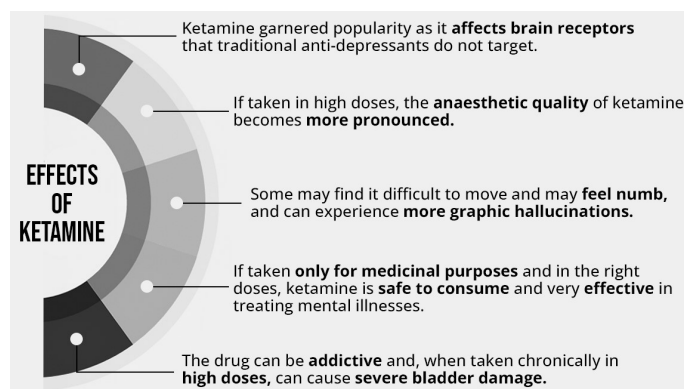
**Why in News:** An actor recently passed away from the acute effects of ketamine.

### About ketamine

- Ketamine is an **anaesthetic** that has been listed as a **hallucinogen** by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
- It’s referred to as a “**dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen**” because it creates a **feeling of detachment from pain and the environment**.
- In the **US**, ketamine was first used as an **anaesthetic** for **animals** in the 1960s.
- Around a decade later, the US Food and Drug Administration **approved it for humans**.
- The drug’s use for **treating depression** and other mental illnesses is **recent**.
- Owing to its powerful effects, ketamine is consumed by those patients who **haven’t responded to traditional therapies**.
- Ketamine is also used as a **recreational drug**, popularly known as **K or Special K** among club goers.

### How is ketamine consumed?

- Mental illness patients usually take ketamine **through an IV, nasal spray or tablet**.
- Ketamine can also be **injected or smoked**.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which of the following statements well describes the term ‘Ketamine’:

- An anesthetic that is listed as a hallucinogen by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.
- Explosives that are commonly used in a variety of applications, including mining, construction, military operations, and pyrotechnics.

- (c) Chemical messengers produced by various glands throughout the body's endocrine system.
- (d) Rare earth metals that have unique properties that make them important in various modern technologies, including electric batteries.

Answer: a

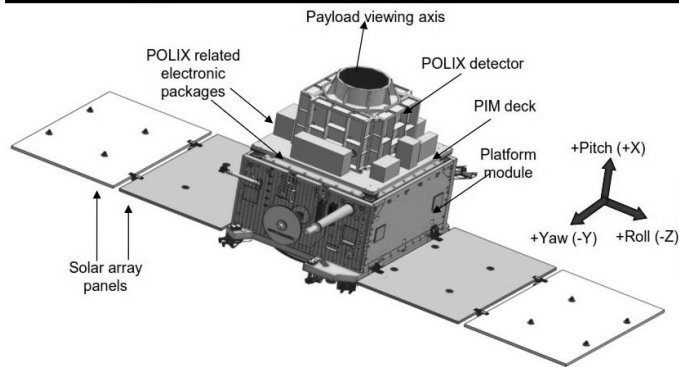
## X-RAY POLARIMETER SATELLITE

**Why in News:** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced that India is set to **launch its first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat)**, aiming to investigate the polarisation of intense X-Ray sources.

### About the mission

- The XPoSat spacecraft is designated for **observation from Low Earth Orbit**, carrying two scientific payloads.
- With these two payloads, the XpoSat mission is capable of simultaneous studies of **temporal, spectral, and polarization features** of the **bright X-Ray sources**.
- The **mission objectives** include:
  - **measurement of X-Ray polarization** in the energy band of **8-30 keV** emanated from X-Ray sources,
  - **long-term spectral and temporal studies** of cosmic X-Ray sources in the energy band of **0.8-15 keV**.
- **Mission life** is expected to be approximately **five years**.
- The payloads onboard XpoSat will observe the X-Ray sources during the spacecraft's transit **through the Earth's shadow**, i.e., during the eclipse period.
- The XpoSat will be launched by the **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV)**, from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota.
- XpoSat (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) is **India's first dedicated polarimetry mission** to study various dynamics of **bright astronomical X-ray sources** in extreme conditions.
- The spacecraft will **carry two scientific payloads** in a **low earth orbit**.
  - The **primary payload POLIX** (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays) will measure the **polarimetry parameters** (degree and angle of polarization) in medium X-ray energy range photons of astronomical origin.
  - The **XSPECT** (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing) payload will give **spectroscopic information**.

## Deployed View of XPoSat



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. "The satellite comprises polarimeter instrument in X-Ray to measure the polarimeter parameter of the photons of the astronomical origin such as black hole, Neutron Star, etc. It aims to investigate the polarization of intense X-Ray sources." The satellite in question refers to

- (a) NISAR
- (b) TeLEOS-2
- (c) WESAT
- (d) XPoSat

Answer: d

## OPERATION GANGOTRI

**Why in News:** Members of India's first expedition to Antarctica were felicitated at an 'Antarctica Day event'.

### Historical Background

- Celebrated on **December 1** each year, Antarctica Day marks the **signing of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959**.
- In **1981** India decided to send its **first scientific expedition** to Antarctica.
- Marine biologist **Dr. S Z Qasim** headed the **21-member team**, which travelled on a chartered **Norwegian vessel** called the **Polar Circle**.
- The historic expedition, code-named **Operation Gangotri**, was **kept under wraps** from the public, since the outcome was uncertain.

### About the Operation

- Under Indira Gandhi, India began formulating its **first strategies for Antarctica** during the same time when the **United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea** was being finalized.
- India **launched** its **first Antarctic expedition** in December **1981** from the **shores of Goa**, with a pit stop in **Mauritius** to pick up equipment and supplies.

- India had hired the **icebreaker ship MV Polar Circle** from Norway.
- The expedition took **77 days**, carrying **21 scientists, personnel, technicians** and **navy officers**, successfully covering a **journey of 21,366km**.
- The launch of this first expedition caught many by surprise as it was **organized and executed discreetly**.
- At that time **India was not a signatory** to the **Antarctic Treaty of 1959**.
  - Till date India only holds “**consulting**” status.
- **India only joined the Antarctic Treaty** in **1983** as it flagged off its **third expedition** to the frozen continent.
- In **1983**, **Dakshin Gangotri**, the **country’s first scientific base station** in Antarctica was set up.

### Significance of Antarctic expeditions for India

- ✓ **Strategic interest:** There are only a few islands between India and Antarctica which makes Antarctica a significant element in India’s attempts to build a foothold in the Indian Ocean.
- ✓ **Scientific interest:** India has strived to become a world leader in oceanography and exploration of the seas.
  - Expeditions to the Antarctic will help collect information and conduct research that will help India implement projects in this sector successfully.
  - For example, the planned Samudrayaan Mission.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The ‘Operation Gangotri,’ recently mentioned in the news, is associated with

- Scientific expedition to Antarctica
- Evacuate Indian nationals from Israel
- A naval operation launched to bring back Indian citizens from overseas during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Evacuation of Indian nationals from Ukraine

Answer: a

## ALGAE-ASSISTED FUEL CELLS

**Why in News:** IIT Jodhpur’s innovative technology uses algae-assisted fuel cells to capture carbon dioxide, treat wastewater and generate power.

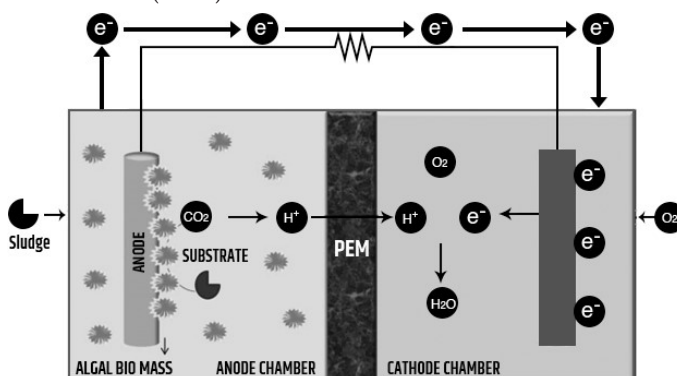
### What are these algae assisted fuel cells?

- Algal Fuel Cells (AFC) are **bioelectric devices** that use **photosynthetic organisms** to turn light and biochemical energy into electrical energy.

- The process uses **wastewater**, where the chosen algal strain —**Chlorella vulgaris**— is **thermo-tolerant** and can grow in wastewater.
- **Algae assisted microbial fuel cells (MFC)** is a **bio-electrochemical device** that generates electricity by harnessing the **metabolic activity of microorganisms**.
- ✓ When microorganisms **break down organic matter** (which wastewater is rich in) into simpler molecules, **electrons are released** in the process.
- ✓ If these electrons are made to **flow through an external circuit**, we get **electric current**.
- Only a **small fraction of algae** is used for **power generation**.
  - The **remaining** is available for **bioenergy**.

### The process

- First step is to **cool the flue gas** (the gas produced from the flue or chimneys of thermal power stations and other industrial plants) in a **heat exchanger** and then direct it to a **sieve-plate absorption column**.
- The sodium carbonate supplemented wastewater absorbs the  $\text{CO}_2$ , generating **flue-gas-derived bicarbonates (FGDBs)**.
- The FGDBs are added in **plastic bag photobioreactors (PBRs)**, coupled with **algae-assisted microbial fuel cells (MFC)**.



### Benefits over conventional method

- ✓ The **conventional method** of carbon capture from flue gases is not only **energy intensive** but also requires **dilution of the gas with nitrogen**, which restricts implementation.
- ✓ The **absorbent** used — **monoethanolamine (MEA)** — is **corrosive**, has **low oxidative stability** and takes energy for regeneration.
- ✓ It is a more efficacious **indirect method** for converting  $\text{CO}_2$  into **carbonates** and then use it for **algal growth**.
- ✓ **Solubility of sodium bicarbonate** in water is **significantly higher** (93.2 g/l) at room temperature and atmospheric pressure.



- ✓ Therefore, the **indirect biochemical route** of CO<sub>2</sub> fixation is **advantageous** since **more inorganic carbon can stay in the water**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. In the context of the recent developments in the green Energy, the Algal Fuel Cell is associated with

- (a) Electrical Energy (b) Biodiesel  
(c) Ethanol (d) Biogas

Answer: a

### NATIONAL AUTOMATED FINGERPRINT IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

**Why in News:** National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) has been established at 1022 locations across the country.

#### About NAFIS

- It is conceptualized and managed by the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** at the Central Fingerprint Bureau (CFPB) in **New Delhi**.
- The National Automated Fingerprints Identification System (NAFIS) project is a **country-wide searchable database of crime- and criminal-related fingerprints**.
- The web-based application functions as a **central information repository** by consolidating fingerprint data from **all states and Union Territories**.
- It will enable **law enforcement agencies** to upload, trace and retrieve information from the **database 24\*7 in real time**.
- NAFIS assigns a **unique 10-digit National Fingerprint Number (NFN)** to each person arrested for a crime.
- This unique ID will be **used for the person's lifetime**, and different crimes registered under different FIRs will be **linked to the same NFN**.
- The ID's **first two digits** will be that of the **state code** in which the person arrested for a crime is registered, followed by a **sequence number**.

#### Past automation projects

- Upon the recommendations of the **National Police Commission in 1986**, the Central Fingerprint Bureau first began to automate the fingerprint database by digitizing the existing manual records through **India's first Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFI)** in 1992, called **Fingerprint Analysis & Criminal Tracing System (FACTS 1.0)**.
- The **latest iteration, FACTS 5.0**, which was upgraded in **2007**, was considered to have **outlived its shelf life** and thus needed to be replaced by NAFIS.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS), consider the following statements:

1. It is a country-wide searchable database of crime and criminal related fingerprints.
2. A web-based application under this project acts as a central repository of fingerprint data across the country.
3. It is conceptualized and managed by the Ministry of Science and Technology.
4. It assigns a unique 10-digit National Fingerprint Number (NFN) to each person arrested for a crime.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 4 only)

### LASER SIGNAL FROM SPACE

**Why in News:** Recently, NASA's Psyche spacecraft, currently over 16 million kilometres away in space, **successfully fired a laser signal at Earth**.

#### Key details

- The spacecraft is on its way to a **unique metal-rich asteroid**, orbiting the Sun between Mars and Jupiter.
- Simultaneously, it will also **carry out another mission** that might hold the key to **future space exploration**.

#### How communication in space takes place

- Communicating with spacecraft far away from Earth poses many challenges, of which the **problem of data rates** might be the most critical.
- Most space communication is carried out **using radio waves** — having the **highest wave lengths** but **lowest frequencies** in the electromagnetic spectrum.
- This is primarily because of their **desirable propagation properties**, stemming from their **large wavelength**.
- They have the **ability to pass through the atmosphere** regardless of weather, pass through foliage and most building materials, as well as bend around obstructions.

- **Shorter wavelengths/higher frequencies** tend to **scatter** when in contact with any interference.

### NASA's Deep Space Optical Communications (DSOC)

- The **Psyche mission** will test a sophisticated new laser communication technology that **encodes data in photons** at **near-infrared wavelengths** (rather than radio waves) to communicate between a probe in deep space and Earth.
- Using **light instead of radio** allows the spacecraft to communicate more data in a given amount of time.
- The **Psyche spacecraft** is the **first to carry a DSOC transceiver**, and will be **testing high-bandwidth optical communications** to Earth during the first two years of the spacecraft's journey to the main asteroid belt.

#### NASA's Psyche Spacecraft

- This spacecraft is traveling to a unique metal-rich asteroid with the same name (Psyche).
  - Asteroid Psyche is orbiting the Sun between Mars and Jupiter.
  - Psyche is only the 16th asteroid to ever have been discovered.
  - This asteroid is believed to be **rich in metal content**, which is why it holds the interest of astronomers.
  - There is a chance that it is made of metal from the **core of a planetesimal**.
- The mission is led by Arizona State University.
- **Goals of Psyche Expedition**
  - Understand a previously unexplored building block of planet formation: iron cores.
  - Look inside terrestrial planets, including Earth, by directly examining the interior of a differentiated body, which otherwise could not be seen.
  - Explore a new type of world. For the first time, examine a world made not of rock and ice, but metal
- **Scientific Instruments and Investigations to be carried on by Psyche:**
  - Multispectral Imager
  - Gamma Ray and Neutron Spectrometer
  - Magnetometer
  - X-band Gravity Science Investigation

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. "With the objective to unfold the unique insights into the impenetrable iron core of the Earth, this spacecraft is on its way to a unique metal-rich asteroid having nickel-iron core, orbiting the Sun between Mars and Jupiter. This spacecraft recently fired a laser signal at the Earth." The spacecraft in the above question refers to

- |             |                       |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| (a) Rosetta | (b) OSIRIS-REx        |
| (c) Lucy    | (d) Psyche spacecraft |

Answer: d

### NOMA DISEASE

**Why in News:** WHO has officially recognized Noma as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD) to boost global attention, research, and funding for its control.

#### What is Noma Disease?

- Severe gangrenous disease affecting the mouth and face.
- Mainly afflicts malnourished children (2-6 years old) in extreme poverty with poor oral health, predominantly in Africa.
- This devastating disease has a significant presence in Africa, impacting those in impoverished communities the hardest.

#### What are Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)?

- NTDs are a group of 20 diverse conditions prevalent in tropical regions.
- They affect over 1 billion people in impoverished communities due to various pathogens.
- They are caused by a range of pathogens, including viruses, bacteria, parasites, fungi, and toxins.
- They encompass a variety of ailments such as Dengue, Chikungunya, Rabies, Leishmaniasis, Leprosy, Lymphatic Filariasis, and others.

#### India's Initiatives to Counter NTDs

India has made commendable strides in combating NTDs, successfully eliminating certain diseases like guinea worm, trachoma, and yaws. Some key initiatives include:

- **Accelerated Plan for Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis, 2018:** An ambitious program aimed at eradicating Lymphatic Filariasis.
- **National Kala-Azar (Visceral Leishmaniasis) Elimination Programme:** Focused on eliminating Visceral Leishmaniasis.

- **National Vector-Borne Disease Control Programme:** Targeting diseases like Dengue and other vector-borne illnesses.

### Global Efforts to Tackle NTDs

On a global scale, concerted efforts have been made to address NTDs:

- **London Declaration on NTDs:** A significant commitment involving various stakeholders to combat NTDs.
- **Kigali Declaration on NTDs:** This declaration adopts ambitious targets aiming to eradicate or control NTDs by 2030, outlining a comprehensive strategy toward this goal.

The recognition of Noma as an NTD by the WHO aims to prioritize interventions and global cooperation to alleviate its impact, in line with efforts to address other neglected tropical diseases.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The Kigali Declaration adopted ambitious targets aiming to eradicate or control Neglected Tropical Diseases by 2050.
2. Noma disease is a highly contagious viral disease that affects both domestic and wild birds.
3. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has officially recognized Noma disease as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTD).

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

## DEFENCE &amp; TECHNOLOGY

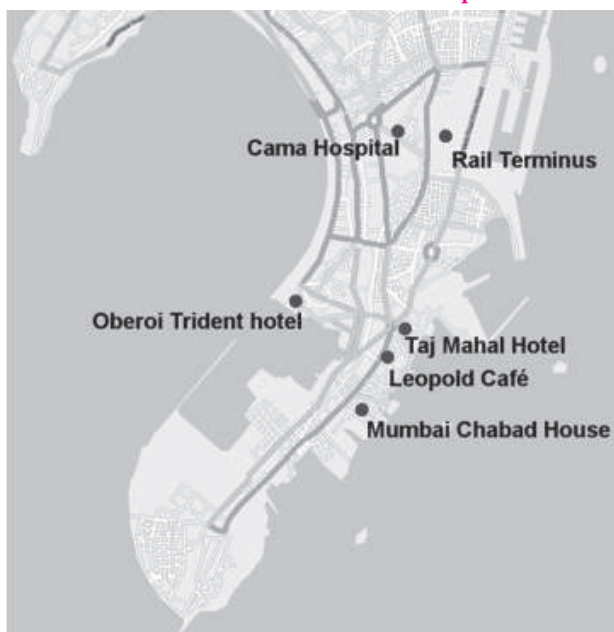
## INDIA'S SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE AFTER MUMBAI TERROR ATTACKS

**Why in News:** Fifteen years to the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai has brought renewed focus on India's preparedness and counterterrorism measures.

## Background

- In 2008, 10 Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) gunmen sailed across the Arabian Sea, from Karachi to Mumbai, and went on the rampage in the city for four long days.
- It exposed the gaping holes in India's maritime security, the chinks in its internal security grid, and the inadequacy of its counter-terrorism infrastructure and local police.
- Soon after the attacks, some key decisions on the security front were taken by the government.
- These included:
  - the tightening of maritime security,
  - fixing of loopholes in the intelligence grid,
  - strengthening of the legal framework to deal with terrorism, and
  - creation of special agencies to probe terror cases.

## Places where the terrorists attacked (in map)



## Changes in India's security infrastructure

## ✓ Maritime security revamp

- Post 26/11, the Indian navy was given overall charge of maritime security.
- The Indian Coast Guard was given the responsibility for territorial waters and to coordinate with hundreds of new marine police stations that came up along India's coastline.
- The government also made it mandatory for all vessels longer than 20 metres to have an Automatic Identification System (AIS) that transmits its identification and other information.

## ✓ Intelligence coordination

- A decision was taken to strengthen the Intelligence Bureau's (IB's) Multi Agency Centre (MAC).
  - ◆ Primary job is to coordinate exchange of intelligence between central agencies, the armed forces, and the state police.
  - ◆ Subsidiary MACs that had gone defunct were re-invigorated.
- National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) has been constituted to create an appropriate database of security-related information.

## ✓ Change in laws: UAPA and NIA Act

- The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) was amended to expand the definition of terrorism.
- The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act was passed by Parliament to create the first truly federal investigation agency in the country.

## ✓ Modernisation of police forces

- The Centre trained its focus on modernisation of state police forces.
- More funds were allocated by the MHA to state governments to:
  - ◆ make their police stations state-of-the-art,
  - ◆ equip them with modern technology,



- ◆ train their policemen to deal with challenges of modern day policing that included terrorism, and
- ◆ to give them better weapons.
- The **National Security Guard (NSG)** established **four regional hubs** across the country.
- ✓ **Cooperation from global community**
  - The biggest impact of the 26/11 attacks, however, was the **willingness of the West to cooperate with India** on matters of security.
  - The **USA** not only **provided real time information** during the attacks, but also a lot of **prosecutable evidence** through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that helped India nail **Pakistan's culpability and embarrass it internationally**.
  - India began to get unprecedented **cooperation** from **Saudi Arabia** and the **Persian Gulf countries**, and **China**, too, began to respond to requests for information on these groups.
  - It was this spirit of cooperation and global understanding on the need to deal with Pak-sponsored terrorism that helped **put Pakistan in the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF's) grey list in 2018**, forcing the country to **take action against the terror infrastructure** of the **LeT and Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM)**.

### Challenges that remain

- **State police** forces continue to **remain ill equipped** and **poorly trained** with continued political interference.
- On **maritime security**, there are **limited options to track ships** that do not transmit AIS signals.
- Many of India's **smaller shipping vessels** have **no transponders**.
- An official from the security establishment said that of the **2.9 lakh fishing vessels** in India, around **60% are smaller than 20 m**, and most of them are **without transponders**.

### Way Forward

- Speed up the fitting of automatic identification systems in fishing boats.
- All coastal states should beef up their marine police sufficiently.
- Air and coastal sea patrols should be conducted regularly.

- The sea has no checkpoints or perimeter fencing. Sanitizing it is very difficult, so the unity of command and control is essential.

### Conclusion

**Terrorism remains a major threat** and with modern refinements, new terrorist methodologies and terrorism mutating into a global disease.

India needs to further tighten its preparedness to cope with such situations as the **social fabric of the country has to be held firm**. So that it should not get harmed and create security concerns from outside extremist pressure.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following:

1. National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)
2. National Security Guard (NSG)
3. National Investigation Agency (NIA)
4. Intelligence Bureau (IB)

How many of the above were established after the terror attacks on Mumbai in 2008?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

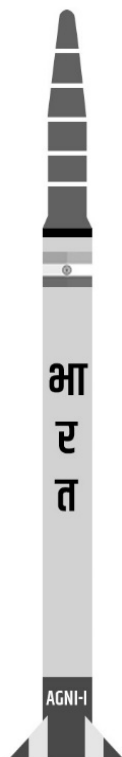
#### Descriptive Question

Q. Discuss the significant changes in India's security infrastructure that occurred in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks in 2008. Evaluate the effectiveness of these changes and analyze the persisting challenges in India's security landscape. [15 Marks] [250 Words]

### AGNI-1 MISSILE

**Why in News:** Training launch of Short-Range Ballistic Missile 'Agni-1' was carried out successfully from APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha recently.

# AGNI-I MISSILE



**Type:** Medium-Range Ballistic Missile

**Developed by:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

**Stages:** Single-Stage Missile

**Capable of:** Can carry a nuclear warhead with an estimated payload of 1,000 kg

**Fuel:** Propelled by solid fuel

**Range:** 700–1,200 km

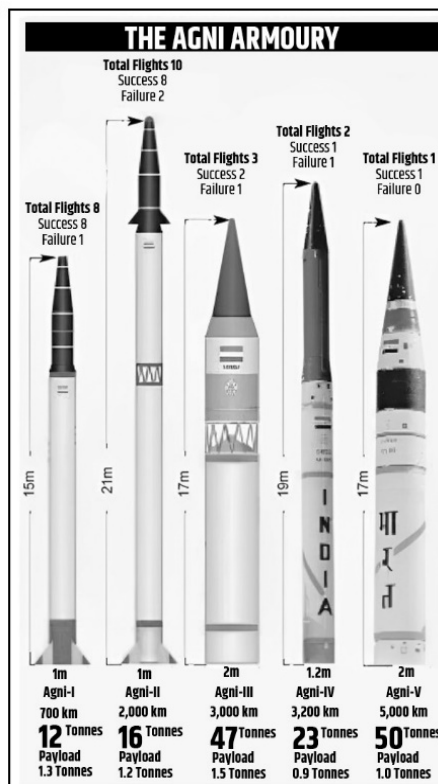
**Latest upgrade:** A new guidance system

**Mobility:** Road-mobile which gives it a high degree of mobility

**First test-fired:** 2002.

**First deployed by Army:** 2007

**Origin:** India's 1983 Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP)



## About Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP)

- It was a programme for the R&D of the comprehensive range of missiles in India, started in 1982–83 under the leadership of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.
- It was a Ministry of Defence programme managed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Types of missiles under the programme:** APJ Abdul Kalam started multiple projects simultaneously to develop the following types of Indian Guided Missiles -



Short Range Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) 'Prithvi'



Long Range Surface to Surface Missile (SSM) 'Agni'



Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (SAM) 'Akash'



Short Range Surface to Air Missile (SAM) 'Trishul'



Anti-tank Guided Missile (ATGM) 'Nag'

### What is a ballistic missile?

- A ballistic missile uses **projectile motion** to deliver warheads on a target.
- These weapons are powered **only during relatively brief periods**—most of the flight is unpowered.
- Short-range ballistic missiles** stay within the Earth's atmosphere, while **intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs)** are launched on a **sub-orbital flight**.

**Answer: b**

# ANTI-SUBMARINE WARFARE SHIPS FOR INDIAN NAVY

## A stylized black and white icon of a ship or vessel. The ship has a prominent conical mast or funnel at the top, a rectangular superstructure below it, and two rows of small, white, rectangular windows or portholes. The hull is a simple, rounded shape. Below the ship, there are three wavy lines representing the water.

**INS Mangrol**

Each vessel would carry **57 personnel**, including **seven naval officers**.

**Answer: C**



## EXERCISE VINBAX-2023

## EXERCISE VINBAX-2023



## Why in News

The Indian Armed Forces contingent reached Hanoi, Vietnam to take part in the fourth edition of Joint Military Exercise VINBAX-2023.

## Key Details

The exercise will be conducted at Hanoi, Vietnam.

Exercise VINBAX was **instituted** in **2018**.

The first edition was conducted at Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

It is an **annual training event** conducted alternatively in **India and Vietnam**.

The Exercise will culminate with a **Validation Exercise**, wherein standards attained by both contingents will be showcased.

## Aims

Foster collaborative partnership

Promote inter-operability

Share best practices between the two sides



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q. The joint military exercise 'VINBAX 2023,' recently mentioned in the news is conducted between which of the following countries?

- (a) India & Bangladesh      (b) India & Nepal  
(c) India & Vietnam          (d) India & Russia

Answer: c



## EXERCISE MILAN

**Why in News:** The Indian Navy is gearing up to host its largest multilateral exercise in February 2024.

### Key details

- It is expected to see the **participation** of over **50 countries**.
- This reflects the significant **expansion** of the Navy's engagements as well as capacity to **assist countries** in the

**Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** as the **first responder** and **Preferred Security Partner**.

- Exercise Milan is a **biennial multilateral naval exercise**.
- It **began in 1995**, and has since significantly expanded in scope and scale to become the **largest exercise held by India**.
- The **last edition** of Milan, which is held off **Visakhapatnam**, saw participation from over **40 countries**.

## EXERCISE ASTRASHAKTI

**Why in News:** India has demonstrated the firepower of its Akash surface-to-air (SAM) weapon system during the Air Force Exercise Astrashakti 2023.

### Key details

- A single firing unit engaged and destroyed four unmanned targets simultaneously, marking the first time India has demonstrated this capability using command guidance.



**AKASH MISSILE**

INDIA'S FIRST HOME-MADE SUPERSONIC MISSILE

**Mission**  
To track & destroy hostile aircraft, helicopters, drones & sub-sonic cruise missiles.

**TARGET TYPES**  
Aerial targets like:

- FIGHTER JETS
- DRONES
- CRUISE MISSILES
- BALLISTIC MISSILES
- AIR-TO-SURFACE MISSILES

Can be launched from mobile platforms like battle tanks or wheeled trucks

- The Akash weapon system developed by DRDO has been deployed by the Indian Air Force and Army for the last decade.
- India has become the first to demonstrate the capability of engaging four targets simultaneously at such ranges by command guidance using a single firing unit.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The Akash Weapon System (AWS), recently mentioned in the news, is a:

- Surface to Surface missile (SSM)
- Surface to Air Missile (SAM)
- Air to Surface Missile
- Air to Air Missile

Answer: b

## CAPABILITIES

**WEIGHT**  
720 kg

**WINGSPAN**  
1105 mm


**SPEED**  
2.5 mach

**WARHEAD PAYLOAD**  
50-60 kg

**LENGTH**  
5.6 metre

**INTERCEPTION RANGE**  
25 km

▪ Low reaction, all weather capability



Integrated two-stage Ramjet rocket propulsion technology; powered by an air-breathing engine.

**96% Indigenous**

Can handle multiple aerial threats from several directions simultaneously

**88% kill probability within a specified kill zone**

## PILATUS PC-7 MK II

**Why in News:** Two Indian Air Force (IAF) pilots were killed after their Pilatus PC-7 Mk II trainer aircraft crashed during a routine training.

### What is a trainer aircraft?

- ✓ A trainer is a class of aircraft **designed specifically to facilitate flight training** of pilots and aircrews.
- ✓ They **fly slower, have less complex systems**, and are designed to be **resistant to and recoverable** from stalls and spins.
- ✓ They are **much cheaper**, allowing air forces to buy them in bulk to train cadets.

### About the aircraft

- The PC-7 is a **low-wing, turbo-prop aircraft** with **tandem seating** (the cadet sits in the front, the instructor behind him).

- It is powered by a **Pratt & Whitney engine**, it has a **maximum speed of 412 km/h**, can reach over 10,000 m in height, and has a range of 1,200 km without external tanks, providing slightly over 4 hours of flying time.
- Currently, there are **75 Pilatus PC-7 Mk II aircraft** in service with the IAF.
- These are used for **basic training**, the first stage in a rookie cadet's flight training.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The term, 'Pilatus PC-7 Mk II', recently mentioned in the news, is

- (a) Quantum Computer (b) Remote Sensing Satellite  
(c) Aerial Torpedo (d) Trainer aircraft

Answer: d

## SOCIAL ISSUES

## CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN

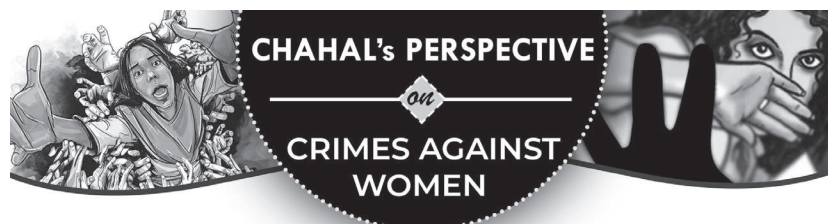
**Why in News:** The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report for 2022 highlighted a decline in overall crime rates but a worrying **4% increase** in crimes against women compared to the previous year. This surge signifies enduring challenges in ensuring women's safety and justice.

## Relevant Statistics from NCRB Report

- **Cruelty by Husband/Relatives:** 31.4%
- **Kidnapping and Abduction:** 19.2%

- **Assault to Outrage Modesty:** 18.7%
- **Rape:** 7.1%
- **Dowry-related Cases:** 13,479 instances
- **High Incidence:** Over 4.45 lakh cases of crimes against women in 2022, averaging nearly 51 FIRs per hour.
- **Underrepresentation:** Only 11.7% of the total state police force comprises women, impacting effective resolution and causing undue stress on existing personnel.
- **Significance of Reporting:** Cautions against equating increased registrations solely with a proportional rise in actual crimes.

**What does an increase in the registration of crimes against women indicate?**



- The high crime rate is an indicator of the persistent **"lower status and inequality"** faced by women and girls.
- Women and girls continue to be treated as **permanent shock absorbers** across class, caste and other axes.
- It is an outcome of **reconstruction of patriarchy** in the neo-liberal economy era.
- The rise can also be attributed to the fact that though **India has tough laws** for protection of women, their **implementation remains a challenge**.

## Conclusion

Addressing these multifaceted challenges demands a holistic approach, intertwining legislative reforms, robust law enforcement, societal awareness campaigns, and gender-inclusive policies.

Through concerted efforts, India can aspire to create a safer and more equitable environment for women, ensuring their safety and access to justice.

## Causes of Crimes Against Women

## Societal Observations

- **Activist Insights:**
  - Experts attribute rising crimes to entrenched patriarchy and stagnant societal attitudes.
- **Regressive Trends:**
  - Antagonism towards women's movements has resulted in the glorification of anti-women practices.
- **Patriarchal Society:**
  - Deeply ingrained mindsets and societal attitudes contribute significantly to these crimes.
- **Regressive Value Systems:**
  - Despite educational progress, antiquated practices like dowry continue, underscoring the need for policy changes.
  - There is a glorification of anti-women practices.
  - Dowry or bride price both connote commodity status of women who are traded between families for their productive and reproductive labour.
  - Situations of conflict, post conflict and displacement may exacerbate existing violence.

## Traditional and cultural practices affect women well-being

- Female genital mutilation, acid attacks, killing in the name of family honour, early marriages.
- These practices undermine the health and autonomy of millions of girls.

## Policy and Social Shifts

- **Need for Strong Political Will:** Advocacy for policies elevating women's status is crucial.
- **Educational Initiatives:** Reformatory measures to challenge societal norms and perceptions are necessary.

## Law Enforcement Hurdles

- Challenges persist in investigations due to insufficiently trained police officers.

## Judicial Delays

- Slow judicial processes contribute to prolonged resolution, with cases often taking years.

## Way Forward

## Enhanced Training

- Invest in comprehensive training programs for police officers handling cases related to crimes against women.

## Fast-Track Courts

- Actively address the backlog of cases through efficient judicial processes.

## Education Initiatives

- Implement educational programs challenging societal norms and promoting gender equality.

## Community Engagement

- Foster dialogue and community involvement to shift cultural perceptions.

## Recruitment and Support

- Encourage and support the recruitment of more women in law enforcement to alleviate workload and improve effectiveness.
- Capacity building and training to service providers and law enforcement officers to handle cases of violence against women.
- Ensure male involvement in devising program for abusers.
- Through early identification of women and children who are experiencing violence and providing appropriate referral and support.

# Protections for Women in India

## Constitutional Provisions

Article 14: Provides equal rights and opportunities for men and women in political, economic, and social spheres.

Article 15: Prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, etc.

Article 16: Ensures equality of opportunities in employment or appointment to any state office.

Article 39(a)(d): Ensures policy security for both men and women, right to livelihood, and equal pay for equal work.

## Legal Provisions

Factories Act, 1948: Limits women's working hours and prohibits employment beyond specified times.

The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961: Criminalizes demands of dowry before, during, or after marriage.

The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976: Ensures equal wages for equal work and prohibits gender-based recruitment discrimination.

The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1976: Raises the minimum marriage age for girls to 18 years and for boys to 21 years.

Indian Penal Code (Sections 354 and 509): Safeguards women's interests against various offenses.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act: Safeguards women in abortion cases

Amendments to Criminal Law, 1983: Prescribes punishment for rape cases.

The National Commission for Women Act, 1990: Established to review constitutional and legal safeguards for women.

The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993:

Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005: Protects women from various forms of domestic abuse.

Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace (POSH) Guidelines

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Dowry prohibition Act, 1961, consider the following statements:

1. This act designates the Stridhan given to the women during the wedding as dowry.
2. It defines the dowry as property given by either party to the bride or groom during the marriage.
3. The law mandates the listing of gifts given to the bride or groom during the wedding along with their prices.

How many of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

### Descriptive Question

Q. Examine the socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors contributing to the prevalence of crimes against women. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures and suggest innovative approaches to create a safer environment for women. [15 Marks] [250 Words]



## NCRB 2022 REPORT

**Why in News:** Recently, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released its annual report on crime in India for the year 2022.

# NATIONAL CRIME RECORDS BUREAU (NCRB)

- Established in **January 1986**
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi
- **Nodal Ministry:** Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- It is an Agency **responsible for collecting and analyzing crime data** as defined by the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** and **Special and Local Laws**.
- NCRB brings out the **annual comprehensive statistics of crime** across the country - **'Crime in India'** report.



## Other Functions

Collection, coordination and exchange of information on inter-state and international criminals to the respective states.

NCRB also acts as a “national warehouse” for the fingerprint records of Indian and foreign criminals, and assists in locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search.

The report is a compilation of data on reported crime from across the country, and provides the big picture of broad trends in crime registration.

### Key takeaways from the 2022 NCRB report

- **Total crimes**
  - In 2022, a total of **58,24,946 cognizable crimes** were registered comprising:
    - ◆ 35,61,379 Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes and
    - ◆ 22,63,567 Special & Local Laws (SLL) crimes.
- **Crime rate**
  - The crime rate, or crimes registered per lakh population, has declined from 445.9 in 2021 to 422.2 in 2022.
  - This is seen as a better indicator, since **absolute numbers** on crime **increase** as the **population increases**.
- **Crime against women**
  - **4,45,256 cases** of crime against women were registered in 2022.
  - This was an increase of 4% over the 2021 numbers.

- **Cyber crime**
  - Reporting of cyber-crime increased significantly by 24.4 percentage points compared to 2021.
  - Around **64.8%** of registered cases were of fraud, followed by **extortion (5.5%)**, & **sexual exploitation (5.2%)**.
- **Suicides**
  - An increase of 4.2% was observed in suicides reported during 2022 as compared to 2021.

### Headline trends in state-wise data in the report

- The states/ UTs reporting the **highest chargesheeting rate** under IPC crimes are:
  - Kerala (96.0%),
  - Puducherry (91.3%), and
  - West Bengal (90.6%).
- This is the percentage of cases in which the **police reached the stage of framing charges** against the accused, **out of the total true cases**.

- True cases are where a **charge sheet was not laid** but a **final report submitted** as true, plus the total cases chargesheeted.

### Limitations of NCRB report

- **The Principal Offence Rule**
  - Since the publication caters to the '**Principal Offence Rule**' for classification of crime, the actual count of each crime head may be **under reported**.
  - The Principal Offence Rule states that in a case where **multiple offences** are registered, only the "**most heinous crime**", carrying the **most stringent punishment**, will be considered when counting.
  - For example, '**Murder with Rape**' is accounted as '**Murder**', leading to **undercounting of the crime of rape**.
- **Data submission at local level**
  - Since the report **only compiles data that are submitted at the local level**, inefficiencies or gaps in data at that level have an impact.
- **Shortage of officers**
  - **Vacancies** or a **shortage of police officers** at the local level may hinder the collection of data.
- **Actual crime not recorded**
  - The data **record the incidence of registered crime rather than of actual crime**.
  - When **reported crimes against women** in Delhi **rose significantly** in the aftermath of the 2012 bus gangrape case, it may have been a reflection of **increased awareness** about the need for registering crimes, both among those affected and the police, **rather than an actual increase in the incidence of crime against women**.
- **Actual numbers vs registered numbers**
  - '**Rise in crime**' and '**increase in registration of crime by police**' are clearly **two different things**.
  - Since actual numbers will be mostly **higher for the bigger states**, a "**crime rate**" is calculated per unit of population.
  - The data used at present for determining the total population is old — from the **2011 Census**.
- **Fear of police**
  - Because of a range of reasons, including the **fear of an uncooperative** or a **hostile response** from the police, certain groups may **not be willing to come forward and register cases**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report of 2022, the State/UT that reported the highest number of the chargesheets filed for offences registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) is:

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| (a) Bihar       | (b) Uttar Pradesh |
| (c) Maharashtra | (d) Kerala        |

**Answer: d**

### GIAN INITIATIVE

**Why in News:** The Education Ministry is geared up to restart the fourth phase of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN).

#### Key details

- It is a project to **rope in eminent scholars** from across the world to **teach at Indian universities**.
- Each **foreign faculty member** is **paid** a sum of **\$8000 (₹7 lakh)** for a **week of teaching** and **\$12,000 (₹12 lakh)** for conducting a **two-week course**.
- As many as **39%** of the 1,772 courses were delivered on **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)** campuses, while the **second largest number** of lectures, 24.6%, took place at the **National Institute of Technology (NITs)**.
- Compared with those in Central institutes, **fewer courses** took place in **State universities** — **10.8%** of all courses.
- The **rest were conducted at:**
  - the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs),
  - Indian Institute of Sciences (IISC),
  - Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs),
  - Management institutes,
  - Central universities and
  - All India Council of Technical Education's engineering colleges.
- Up to **41.4% (668)** of academics who visited India **belonged to the U.S.**

#### About GIAN

- GIAN stands for **Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN)** in Higher Education.
- GIAN is envisaged to **catalyse higher education institutions** in the country and that it will initially include all IITs, IIMs, Central Universities, IISc.

## • GIAN Objectives

- To **increase the footfalls** of reputed **international faculty** in the Indian academic institutes
- To provide **opportunity to our faculty to learn and share knowledge** and teaching skills in cutting edge areas
- To provide **opportunity** to our students to **seek knowledge and experience** from reputed international faculty
- To create **avenue** for possible **collaborative research** with the international faculty
- To **increase participation** and presence of **international Students** in the academic institutes
- To motivate the best **international experts** in the world to **work on problems related to India**
- To develop **high quality course material** in niche areas both through video and print that can be used by larger body of students and teachers
- To **document and develop new pedagogic methods** in emerging topics of national and international interest

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which of the following statements well describes the aim of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) initiative?

- (a) To rope in eminent scholars from across the world to teach at Indian universities.
- (b) To provide scholarships to Indian students to pursue research in emerging technologies in universities abroad.
- (c) To fund the foreign scholars to participate in research projects in Indian educational institutions.
- (d) To organise an annual science fair to provide students with a global platform where they can compete in new and emerging technologies.

Answer: a

## GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY 2023

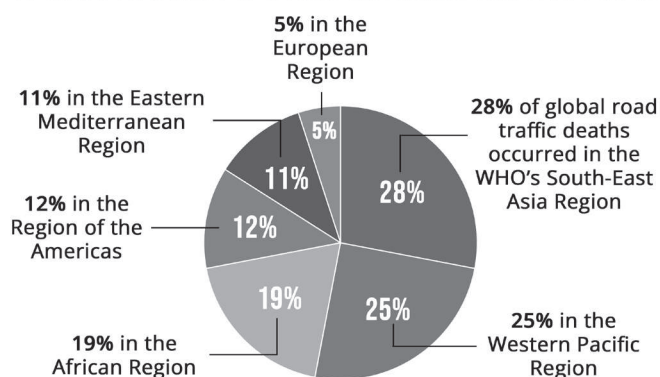
**Why in News:** World Health Organization released a report on road fatalities.

#### Key details

- Road traffic deaths **fell by 5%** to 1.19 million annually **worldwide between 2010 and 2021**,
- **108 United Nations member countries** reporting a drop in road accidents.

- India registered a **15% increase in fatalities**.
  - The **total number** of road traffic fatalities in India **went up to 1.54 lakhs in 2021** from 1.34 lakhs in 2010.
- **Ten countries** succeeded in **reducing road traffic deaths by over 50%**. These are:
  - Belarus, Brunei Darussalam, Denmark, Japan, Lithuania, Norway, Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.
- As of 2019, **road crashes** were the **leading cause** of deaths among children and youth aged five to 29 years, and were the **12th leading cause of deaths** when all ages are considered.
- **Regional variations:**

### GLOBAL STATUS REPORT ON ROAD SAFETY 2023



- **Nine in 10 deaths** occur in **low- and middle-income countries**, and fatalities in these countries are **disproportionately higher** when set **against the number of vehicles and roads** they have.
- The **risk of death is three times higher** in **low-income** than high-income countries, yet **low-income countries** have just **1% of the world's motor vehicles**.

#### Initiatives Related to Road Safety

##### Global

##### ✓ Brasilia Declaration on Road Safety (2015):

- The declaration was signed at the second Global High-Level Conference on Road Safety held in Brazil. India is a signatory to the Declaration.
- The countries plan to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 3.6** i.e., to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents by 2030.

##### ✓ Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030:

- UN General Assembly adopted resolution "Improving global road safety" with the ambitious target of preventing at least 50% of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030.
- The Global Plan aligns with the **Stockholm Declaration**, by emphasizing the importance of a holistic approach to road safety.

##### ✓ The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) :



- It is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads.

#### India

- ✓ **Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019:**
  - The Act hikes the penalties for traffic violations, defective vehicles, juvenile driving, etc.
  - It provides for a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, which would provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India for certain types of accidents.

- It also provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the Central Government.

#### ✓ National Highways Authority of India Act, 1998:

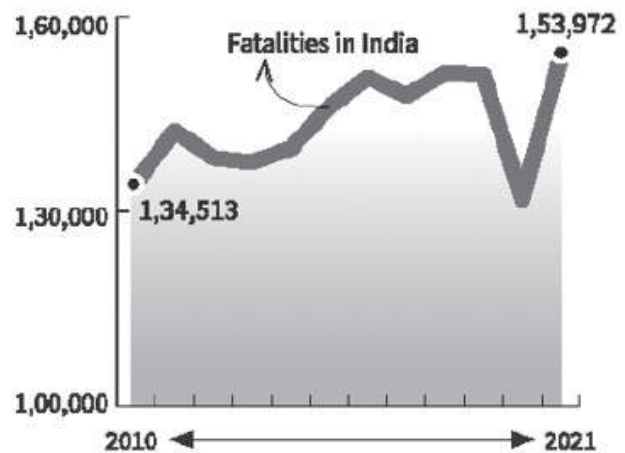
- The Act provides for the **constitution of an authority for the development, maintenance and management of NHs.**

## Deadlier roads

Road traffic-related fatalities in India reached a 11-year high in 2021 after a dip in 2020



**Killer roads: Charred wreckage of a car after an accident in Bareilly. PTI**



### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The 'Global Status Report on Road Safety 2023' report has been published by which of the following?

- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- International Road Federation (IRF)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
- World Health Organization (WHO)

Answer: d

#### Descriptive Question

Q. Discuss the challenges and prospects of road safety in India, considering both domestic and global perspectives. [10 Marks] [150 Words]

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

**Why in News:** Seventy-five years ago, UN General Assembly approved the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** at a meeting in Paris – laying one of the foundation stones of the international order that emerged following the horrors of World War II.

#### What is the Universal Declaration?

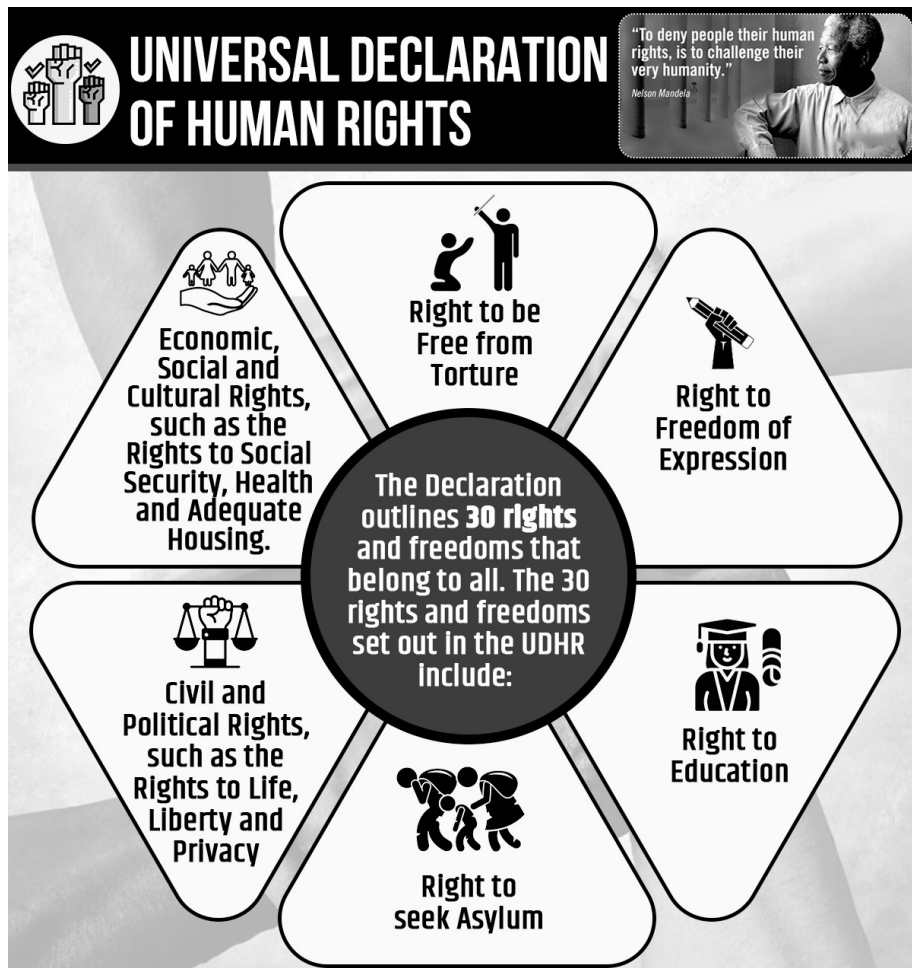
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is an **international document** adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly** that enshrines the **rights and freedoms** of all human beings.
- It was drafted by a **UN committee** chaired by **Eleanor Roosevelt** on **10 December 1948** at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France.
- The declaration was proclaimed as a **common standard of achievement** for all peoples and all nations.
- It is a relatively **compact document** and consists of a **preamble** and 30 articles setting out **fundamental rights and freedoms**.

#### Key details

- **Article 1** states that all **human beings** are **born free** and **equal** in dignity and rights.



- **Article 2** says that everyone is **entitled** to all the **rights and freedoms** the declaration sets out **without distinction** of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- The declaration says that “**all are equal before the law**” and that everyone is entitled to “**a fair and public hearing** by an independent and impartial tribunal.”
- It says that everyone has the **right to seek** and to **enjoy** in other countries **asylum from persecution**.
- The declaration enshrines the rights:
  - to freedom of religion;
  - to freedom of opinion and expression;
  - to freedom of peaceful assembly.
- It also says that everyone has the **right to education**.



“To deny people their human rights, is to challenge their very humanity.”  
Nelson Mandela

#### What did it achieve?

- ✓ The declaration **isn't a treaty** and **isn't legally binding** in itself.
- ✓ Principles it sets out have been **incorporated into many countries' laws** and it is viewed as the **basis for international human rights law**.
- ✓ It is recognized as having **inspired** and paved the way for more than **70 human rights treaties** at global and regional levels.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)?

1. This declaration is not a treaty, but it is legally binding in itself.
2. These rights provide equality before the law and equal protection of the law to all human beings.

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

Answer: b

## FAO REPORT ON ASIA PACIFIC REGION

**Why in News:** Recently, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations released a report.

#### Key findings of the report

- The report is titled “**Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends**”.
- **Rising food costs**, if not matched by rising income, would lead to **more people being unable to afford a healthy diet**.
- If **food costs rise** at the same time **incomes fall**, a **compounding effect** occurs that can result in even more people unable to afford healthy diets.
- The region, with **370.7 million undernourished people**, continues to represent **half of the global total**.
- Asia and the Pacific region accounts for **half of the world's severe food insecurity**, with **more women than men being food insecure**.

## Specific Findings on India

### Undernourishment:

- More than **74%** of Indians **could not afford a healthy diet** in 2021.
- It said that **16.6%** of the country's population was **undernourished**.
- The **impacts of undernourishment** extend beyond health and nutritional well-being to include **economic and social costs**.



### Stunting:

- It said that **31.7%** of children in **India under the age of five** showed **stunted growth**.
- Stunted growth and development are the **result of**:
  - Poor maternal health and nutrition
  - Inadequate infant and young child feeding practices
  - Repeated infections

### Wasting:

- For **wasting** (low weight for height), India recorded the **highest rate** in the region, with **18.7% children under five** facing this major health problem.



### Anaemia:

- It said that **53% of women** aged between **15 to 49** in India had anaemia, which was the **largest prevalence rate** in the region in 2019. It impairs health and well-being in women and increases the risk for **adverse maternal and neonatal outcomes**.

### Breastfeeding:

- On exclusive breastfeeding among infants in the age group of 0-5 months, India had **improved the prevalence** with a percentage of **63.7%**, which is **higher than the world prevalence of 47.7%**.



### Low birth weight:

- India had the **highest prevalence** of low birth weight in the region (27.4%), followed by **Bangladesh and Nepal**.

- Southern Asia** showed **higher prevalence** of **severe food insecurity** compared with the other subregions.
- Compared with the world, **Southern Asia** had **higher percentages** for both **moderate or severe** and **severe food insecurity** since 2015.
- In **Pakistan**, the figure was **82.2%** and in **Bangladesh**, **66.1%** of the population faced difficulties in finding healthy food.

### About FAO

- ✓ It is a **specialized agency** of the **United Nations**.
- ✓ It leads international efforts to **defeat hunger** and **improve nutrition** and **food security**.
- ✓ It was **founded** on **16 October 1945**.
- ✓ The FAO comprises **195 members**, including **194 countries** and the **European Union**.
- ✓ Its **headquarters** is in **Rome, Italy**.
- ✓ The FAO is governed by a **biennial conference** representing each member country and the European Union, which elects a **49-member executive council**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The "Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition 2023: Statistics and Trends" report has been published by which of the following?

- (a) World Bank
- (b) Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- (c) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- (d) International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)

Answer: c

## GOA LIBERATION DAY

**Why in News:** On December 19, 1961, India annexed Goa in a quick military operation, after years of diplomatic efforts to secure its independence from Portugal failed.

## GOA LIBERATION DAY

## 1510

The Portuguese colonised India conquering many parts of the western coast.

## BY THE 1940S

the Goan independence movement had gained momentum, inspired by the Indian independence movement.

## FROM OCTOBER TO NOVEMBER 1946

a series of satyagrahas (non-violent civil-disobedience actions) were held in Goa.

Following national Indian independence, a separate demand for independence was raised by Dr. Froilano de Mello, a prominent Goan microbiologist in the Portuguese National Assembly.



## 1950S

Azad Gomantak Dal, a revolutionary group, vowed to fight the Portuguese using direct action strategies. The Goa Liberation Army, founded by Shivajirao Desai, an Indian army officer.

## 18 AND 19 DECEMBER 1961

After failure of diplomacy with the Portuguese, Nehru ordered the Indian Armed Forces to take Goa by force. In a military operation conducted on 18 & 19 December 1961, Indian troops captured Goa with little resistance. The governor-general of Portuguese India signed an instrument of surrender.

## Goa under the Portuguese

- Goa became a Portuguese colony in 1510, when Admiral Afonso de Albuquerque defeated the Sultan of Bjiapur, Yusuf Adil Shah.
- In 1947, when the rest of India became independent from the British, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu continued as Estado da Índia, or the Portuguese states of India.

## Goan nationalism

- An independence movement had been gaining ground here, in step with the liberation movement in the rest of the country.
- Tristão de Bragança Cunha, known as the father of Goan nationalism, founded the Goa National Congress at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress in 1928.

- In 1946, socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia led a historic rally in Goa.
- Groups such as the Azad Gomantak Dal, who thought an armed resistance was the only way forward.

## Indian diplomacy failure

- Pt. Nehru preferred to secure Goa's independence through negotiations and diplomacy.
- The dictator of Portugal, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar went a step ahead to declare the India territories as not colonies, but overseas provinces, integral parts of 'metropolitan Portugal'.
- Portugal had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), and Salazar demanded that any military action by India be met with a NATO response.
- The government of India persisted with efforts at negotiations, through a diplomatic office it had established in Lisbon.

## Military action

- Reasons for resorting to military action
  - Because there had been no forward movement from Portugal's side despite years of consistent Indian efforts.
  - African nations also under Portuguese colonial rule wanted India to expedite the liberation of Goa.
  - In 1961, preparations for an armed attack on Goa began in full swing.
  - The final trigger for military action was the Portuguese firing on an Indian steamer from Anjadip.



- Operation chutney and Operation Vijay:
  - On 1 December, India began a **surveillance and reconnaissance exercise** called Operation Chutney.
  - **Two frigates** began to patrol the coast of Goa, and the **Indian Navy mobilised sixteen ships**, divided into four task groups.
  - The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** began **flights to lure any Portuguese fighter jets** to reveal their positions.
  - The Indian Army **stationed troops** around the borders of Goa, Daman and Diu.
  - The army would lead **Operation Vijay** to liberate **Goa**, and the navy and the air force would support it.

On the evening of **December 19**, **Governor-General Vassal de Silva** **surrendered** thus ending over **400 years of Portuguese rule in India**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

- Q. Goa got statehood through which of the following amendments to the Constitution of India?
- The Constitution (Twelfth Amendment) Act, 1962
  - The Constitution (Fifty-sixth Amendment) Act, 1987
  - The Constitution (Fifty-ninth Amendment) Act, 1988
  - The Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1963

Answer: b

## SINDHUDURG FORT AND THE MARATHA NAVY

**Why in News:** Prime Minister of India, on the occasion of Navy Day, paid tributes to **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, and unveiled a grand statue of the 17th century Maratha king at the coastal fort of **Sindhudurg**, Maharashtra.

#### Celebrations at Sindhudurg

- To mark Navy Day, the Indian Navy sailed for the west coast for celebrations — to Maharashtra's Sindhudurg Fort.
  - This comes as a part of **recent policy** by the government of India to **move army, navy and air force day celebrations out of New Delhi** for larger engagement.
  - Last year, the Navy Day was carried out in **Visakhapatnam**.
  - It is also because the year **2023** marks the **350th year of King Shivaji's coronation**.

## About Sindhudurg Fort



It is an **island fort** in the **Arabian Sea** off the western coast in Maharashtra.

It was built between **AD 1664 and 1667** by the **Maratha King Shivaji**.

The fort lies in the **Sindhudurg district** in the **Konkan region** of Maharashtra.

It is constructed on a **low island** called **Kurte**, about **1.6 km** offshore from **Malvan**.

A small **ruined fort** called **Padamgad**, opposite Sindhudurg, was built on a **smaller island** and served as a **shipyard** for the Maratha Navy.

The **main enemy** that the fort was built to guard against were the **Siddis of Janjira**.

According to various historical records, the fort stretches across **48 acres** and has an **underwater passage** built in the **16th Century**.

**Sindhudurg was among the forts that allowed the Marathas to establish a stronghold on the coast of Konkan against great powers of that time, such as the Portuguese, the English and the Dutch.**

#### Marathas and Indian Navy

- ✓ The **Indian Navy** has always **acknowledged** the **sea-faring prowess** of the **Marathas**, under **Shivaji** and later rulers.
- ✓ It has named its **training establishment** in Lonavla as **INS Shivaji**, and the **shore-based logistics and administrative hub** of the Western Naval Command, Mumbai, as **INS Angre** — after **Kanhoji Angre** (1669-1729), the celebrated Maratha naval commander.
- ✓ The use of the **octagonal design** of the **seal of Shivaji** on the new **Naval Ensign** furthered this connection.

#### Shivaji's navy

- Shivaji's empire reached the **west coast after 1656-57**, when his dominions touched **Kalyan**.
- In the same year, he decided to establish a navy in order to **protect his territory from the Siddis**, and secure ports and merchant ships.
- His vision for establishing a naval wing of his military was based on his **belief** in '**Jalamevayasya balamevatasya**' ('He who rules the seas is all powerful').
- Between **1661 and 1663**, the Maratha Navy came into existence, and at its peak included **400-odd ships** of various kinds and sizes.
- These included both **larger battleships**, and **other vessels** of varying shapes and purposes, such as the **gurab, tarande, galbat, shibad, and pal**.
- Between **1653 and 1680**, Shivaji ordered the construction of **multiple naval forts**, starting with the **Vijaydurg** in 1653, and followed by the likes of **Sindhudurg and Kolaba**.



### About Navy Day

- ✓ Navy Day in India is celebrated on **4 December** every year to recognize the achievements and role of the Indian Navy to the country.
- ✓ The annual celebration **commemorates** the Indian Navy's **attack** on the **Karachi harbour** during **Operation Trident** carried out in **1971** during the **Bangladesh Liberation War**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following forts:

1. Sindhudurg Fort
2. Murud-Janjira Fort
3. Padamgad Fort
4. Kolaba Fort

How many of the above are situated on islands in the Arabian Sea?

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

Answer: d

## GARBA DANCE

# GARBA FOLK DANCE

### Why in News?

Gujarat's traditional dance form 'Garba' was included in the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

### About Garba

The dance takes place around a **perforated earthenware pot lit with an oil lamp**, or an image of the mother goddess **Amba**.  
The dancers move around the center in a **counter-clockwise circle**, using simple movements while **singing and clapping their hands in unison**.  
Starting with slow circular movements, the tempo slowly builds up to a **frenzied whirling**.  
Garba fosters **social equality** by **diluting socio-economic, gender and religious structures**.

A dance form native to **Gujarat**.  
Performed in honour of **Goddess Durga**.  
Mainly an event for **Navaratri** celebrations.  
Also performed on almost every special occasion in Gujarat as a sacred tradition.  
Even though men participate, Garba performers are **typically women and young girls**.

### Origin of Garba

- "**Garba**" comes from the Sanskrit word meaning "**womb**" or "**deep**" and bears a deep symbolic interpretation.
- The dance **celebrates fertility** and is performed as a **tribute to womanhood**.

### Garba in Indian Mythology

- In Hindu mythology, when **Goddess Durga defeated Evil**, **Navaratri** was celebrated to commemorate her victory and Garba was an integral part of expressing the deity's power.
- **Dandiya sticks** used in Garba signify the **goddess' sword and invincibility**.

### Traditional Costumes of Garba

- The costume for **males** is **kediyu** which consists of a kafni pajama, a round kurta and a turban embellished with sequins for the head.
- **Women** wear **chaniya choli** which is a three-piece dress.

### Types of Garba Dance

- According to the Gujarati language, **taali Garba** and **trantaali Garba** are the two types of the dance forms meaning **2-clap Garba** and **3-clap Garba** respectively.
- It is mandatory to perform Garba **barefoot** and dancers do it on all kinds of surfaces.

### LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN INDIA

Ramlila (2008)	Chhau dance, Eastern India (2010)	Yoga (2016)
Vedic Chanting (2008)	Mudiyettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala (2010)	Traditions of Nawruz (Parsi New Year) (2016)
Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre, Kerala (2008)	Buddhist chanting of Ladakh (2012)	Kumbh Mela, North India (2017)
Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas (2009)	Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming and dancing of Manipur (2013)	Durga Puja, Kolkata (2021)
Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan (2010)	Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras, Punjab (2014)	<b>Garba (2023)</b>

### Iftar

Recently, Iftar was included in the UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.

- The **joint proposal** for this socio-cultural tradition was submitted by **Iran, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Uzbekistan**.
- **Iftar** refers to the **evening meal** that **Muslims** eat to **break their daily fast** during the holy month of **Ramadan**.

### EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQs

Q1. Consider the following:

1. Garba of Gujarat
2. Bihu Festival
3. Durga Puja in Kolkata
4. Kumbh Mela
5. Yoga

How many of the above included in the list of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' by the UNESCO?

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

Answer: c (1, 3, 4 and 5 only)

Q2. Consider the following statements with reference to the UNESCO's convention for the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage:

1. It enables states to request international assistance from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.
2. It mandates the States Parties to submit a report after every four years along with an assessment of the actual state of the element.
3. Specific languages cannot be as the intangible heritage of a given group or community.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c

## TWO SITES PROPOSED FOR WORLD HERITAGE LIST

**Why in News:** The monuments at Shravanabelagola in Hassan and Lakkundi in Gadag districts are set to be proposed for inclusion on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites by the State Department of Archaeology Museums and Heritage (DAMH).

### What is UNESCO tentative list?

- The UNESCO tentative list is an **inventory of those properties** which each State Party intends to **consider for nomination**.
- If a state party considers a monument or site has **cultural or natural heritage** of outstanding universal value then the state prepares a **list of such sites** and **sends it to UNESCO**.
- The UNESCO after accepting or rejecting inclusion of such monuments, **forms a tentative list**.
- A position on a country's tentative list **does not automatically tender that site with world heritage status**.
- It is **mandatory to put any monument/site on the Tentative List (TL)** for at least one year before it is considered for the **final nomination dossier**.
- After a site is listed as a tentative site, the state party has to **prepare a nomination document** that will be **considered** by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee **for a World Heritage Site**.
- The UNESCO Tentative List currently includes **50 Indian monuments**.



## SHRAVANABELAGOLA

**Shravanabelagola Temple** complex on **Chandragiri Hill**, South Karnataka is one of the most important places of **pilgrimage** for followers of **Jainism**.

It is home to the **18m high statue of Lord Gomateshwara**; considered to be **one of the world's tallest free-standing monolithic statues**.

It was carved from a **single stone** and **consecrated in 981 CE**.

**Constructed in 981 A.D. by Chamundaraya**, a Ganga warrior, it is **carved out of a single block of granite** and looms on the top of **Vindhyagiri Hill**.

Shravanabelagola is also where the Mauryan emperor **Chandragupta Maurya** is said to have **spent his final days**.



## LAKKUNDI

**Lakkundi** is also known as '**Lokkigundi**' which is Lakkundi is located at a distance of 11 km **South-East of Gadag, Karnataka**.

Lakkundi is **paradise of temples**. There are over **50 ruins of ancient temples** scattered throughout the village, dating back to the periods of the **Chalukyas, Kalachuris, and Suena**.

Lakkundi is a place of antiquarian interest, with more than 50 ancient temples scattered throughout the village.

It is **101 stepped wells** which are also called as **Kalyani** and many **inscriptions** that are built during the rule of the **Chalukyas, Kalachuris, Seuna and Hoysalas**.

It was a **significant city a thousand years ago**.

It was one of the **capitals of the Hoysala Empire**.

### UNESCO World Heritage tag

✓ The **United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** identifies World Heritage Sites that have been nominated by nations that have signed the **UNESCO World Heritage Convention 1972**.

✓ The sites include:

➤ **Monuments** such as:

- ◆ architectural works
- ◆ monumental sculptures
- ◆ inscriptions
- ◆ groupings of structures
- ◆ places comprise cultural heritage including archaeological sites

### ➤ Natural heritage:

- ◆ physical and biological formations
  - ◆ geological and physiographical formations - including habitats of vulnerable species of animals and plants
  - ◆ natural locations that are valuable for science, conservation, or natural beauty
- ✓ India signed the treaty in 1977.
- ✓ In India, there are now **40 World Heritage Sites**:
- 32 are cultural
  - 7 are natural
  - 1 is mixed
- ✓ India has the **world's sixth-highest number** of sites.

World Heritage site	Tentative List
<p>✓ A <b>World Heritage Site</b> is a place that is listed by UNESCO for its <b>special cultural or physical significance</b>.</p> <p>➤ The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the international '<b>World Heritage Programme</b>', administered by the <b>UNESCO World Heritage Committee</b>.</p>	<p>✓ For getting its heritage site considered for inscription on the World Heritage List, the <b>country makes an inventory</b> of important natural and cultural heritage sites located within its boundaries.</p> <p>➤ This '<b>inventory</b>' is known as the <b>Tentative List</b>.</p> <p>➤ Making it to the tentative list thus is the <b>first step for any site</b> which seeks <b>final nomination for becoming a World Heritage site</b>.</p>

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Shravanabelagola Temple:

1. It is located on Chandragiri Hill as one of the pilgrimages for followers of Buddhism.
2. It is famous for the statue of Gomateshwaraa.

3. It is also where the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta Maurya is said to have spent his final days.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)



## UNESCO RECOGNITION FOR KUNNAMANGALAM TEMPLE'S 'KARNIKARA MANDAPAM'

**Why in News:** Six-hundred-year-old Kunnammangalam Bhagawati temple's 'karnikara mandapam' has been selected for UNESCO's Asia Pacific Award for cultural heritage conservation.

### Key details

- The Kunnammangalam Bhagawati Temple, situated in Naduvannur in Kerala, got **special recognition for sustainable development** for its transformative heritage practices for following a **sustainable method for restoring the 'karnikara mandapam'** in front of the temple.
- In March 2023, a group of young architects and volunteers under the **Archival and Research Project (ARPO)** started the **renovation works** at the temple.
- The 'karnikara mandapam,' in its original state, was made entirely with **16 wooden pillars** made of **teak**.
- As per UNESCO, the **award winners** were selected according to their **demonstration of success** among various **conservation criteria**, such as:
  - their articulation of the spirit of place,
  - their technical achievement,
  - their appropriate use or adaptation,
  - their engagement with the local community and
  - their contribution towards enhancing the sustainability of the surrounding environment and beyond.



### UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards

- ✓ UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards are given since 2000 with as the **strategic purpose** of UNESCO within the region **Asia Pacific**.
- ✓ The **objective** is to **motivate the protection** of **Cultural Heritage sites**, which are initiated by any **individual organization** under **private sector or institutional organization**.

### ✓ Award categories

- Award of Excellence.
- Award of Distinction.
- Award of Merit.
- Honourable Mention.
- Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The UNESCO's Asia Pacific Award for cultural heritage conservation 2023 was awarded to which of the following?

- (a) Great Stupa at Sanchi
- (b) Kalyana Mandapam of the 'Virupaksha Temple at Hampi'
- (c) Kunnammangalam Bhagawati temple's 'Karnikara Mandapam'
- (d) Gol Gumbaz, the largest dome in India

Answer: c

## AMRITSAR'S RAMBAGH GATE & RAMPARTS

**Why in News:** In another historic feat, Rambagh Gate & Ramparts, Amritsar, have received recognition for excellence by UNESCO.

### Key details

- The honour was bestowed by the **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation** this year.
  - Every year since 2000, the programme has been recognising the **efforts of private individuals and organisations** in **restoring, conserving and transforming** structures and buildings of heritage value in the region.
  - The awards are **bestowed annually** on projects and places on the basis of their understanding of place, technical achievements, sustainability and impact, as specified in the awards criteria.
- Project was lauded by the awards jury for **ensuring the continuity** of the site's **existing uses**.
- **Enhancing inclusivity** and **access** for the broader community.
- The project not only centred on **conservation** of the **200-year-old historic gate** that was built during the reign



of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but also the surrounding building that housed a school and a printing press.

### The other recipients

- ✓ **Karnikara Mandapam** at Kunnamangalam Bhagawati Temple, Kerala, garnered an award of distinction.
- ✓ **Church of Epiphany**, in Haryana, was recognised with an award of merit.
- ✓ **David Sassoon Library** and Reading Room in Mumbai.
- ✓ **Bikaner House** in New Delhi have also been mentioned.
- ✓ **Pipal Haveli**, in Punjab, got special recognition for sustainable development for their transformative heritage practices which contribute to larger principles of sustainable development.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which of the following has received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation?

- (a) Ajanta Caves
- (b) Konark Sun Temple
- (c) Buland Darwaza
- (d) Rambagh Gate & Ramparts

Answer: d

## SHAHI IDGAH & KRISHNA JANMABHOOMI CASE

**Why in News:** The Shahi Idgah, a three-domed mosque, in Mathura will be surveyed following the decision of the Allahabad High Court.

### What does Places of Worship Act say?

- Even as the modalities of the survey are being worked out, the mosque committee maintains that the **Places**

of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 prohibits changing the character of any place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947.

- In 2020, a petition was filed in the Supreme Court to declare **Section 4 of the 1991 Act ultra vires**, saying that the impugned Act has **barred the right and remedy against encroachment** made on religious property of Hindus exercising might of power by followers of another faith.
- The **Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind** countered, arguing that the **Act prohibits conversion** of any place of worship.
- In the the **Babri Masjid Ramjanmabhoomi verdict**, the apex court had held that the Places of Worship Act, imposed a **non-derogable obligation** towards enforcing our **commitment to secularism**, under the Constitution.

### History of the land

- The survey has been ordered as the Hindu representatives demand complete ownership of the premises where the **Keshava Deva temple** was **destroyed on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb** in 1670.
- The temple had been **built in 1618** during the reign of **Jahangir** by **Bir Singh Bundela**.
- The temple had been **patronised by Aurangzeb's brother** and rival for the Mughal throne, **Dara Shukoh**.
- Later, in 1815 **Raja Patni Mal** of Benaras **bought the 13.77 acre-land** from the East India Company.
- His descendants **sold the land to Jugal Kishore Birla**, who then set up the **Shri Krishna Janmabhoomi Trust**.
  - It **acquired ownership rights** over the temple and in 1951, the 13.77 acre-land was placed in the trust, with the **condition** that the **trust property will never be sold or pledged**.
- In 1968, an **agreement** was signed between the **Sri Krishna Janmasthan Seva Sangh** and the **Shahi Idgah Masjid Trust**.
  - As part of the settlement, the **temple authority** had **conceded a portion of the land** to the Idgah.
- Now, the **temple petitioners** want **possession** of the **entire parcel of the land**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991 has made it illegal to reclaim any place of worship in practice since independence of India.
2. The doctrine of reading down a law is generally used to save a statute from being struck down on account of its unconstitutionality.

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

Answer: c

## RESTORATION OF A 12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CHOLA TEMPLE

**Why in News:** A 12th century temple of the Chola dynasty, with striking architectural features, is in a dilapidated condition at Mundlapudi village on the outskirts of Tirupati.

### More about the news

- The temple was raised on an 'Adhishtana' (basement).
- The walls decorated with **Koshtas**, **Makara Thoranas**, miniature shrines and 'Kumbhapanjara' pillars.
- Sculpted idols of **Nataraja**, **Venugopala Krishna**, musicians and dwarfs engraved in the typical Chola style.
- The name of the **village Mundlapudi** was originally known as **Munaipundi** or **Muniyapundi**.
- It was also called as **Sivapadasekharanallur**, after the title of **King Raja Raja Narendra**, in an inscription of **Vikrama Chola** (1118-35 CE) engraved on the mouldings of the temple basement.
- The inscription also **records** that the **income of the village** was donated to light the lamps at **Parasareswara Swamy temple** in **Yogimallavaram**, located just less than a kilometre away.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Chola Kingdom?

- Temples in this kingdom functioned as banks by advancing loans and by purchasing and receiving endowments and donations.
- The prime seaport in this kingdom was Puhar.

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

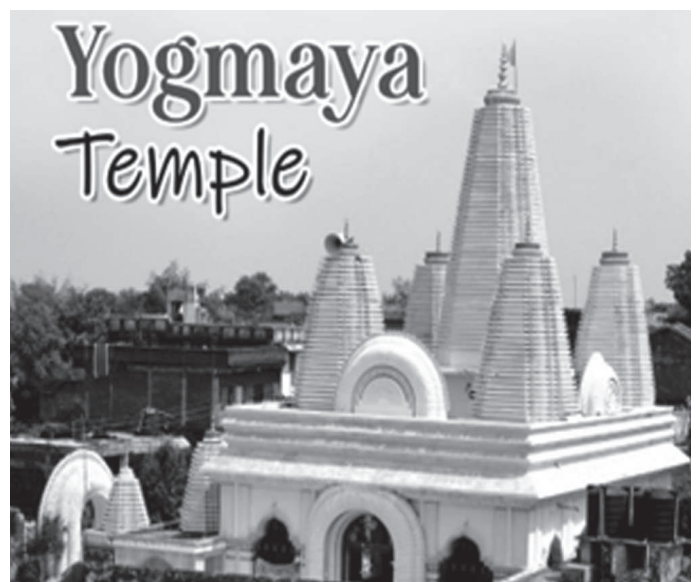
Answer: c

## YOGMAYA TEMPLE

**Why in News:** From a Mughal-sponsored structure to a concrete building, the Yogmaya Temple in Mehrauli, New Delhi, close to the Qutb complex is a historically important monument.

### Key details

- It is believed to be standing at the site of an **ancient temple**
  - That is said to have come up during the **period of the Mahabharata** but of which **no trace exists anymore**.
- A noble in the court of **Mughal Emperor Akbar II** by the name of **Lala Sidhu Mal** built the temple between **1806 and 1837**.
- The area was known as **Yoginipura** in ancient Jain texts
- Prithviraj Chauhan** himself was said to have **patronised a Yogini temple** here shortly before his city's destruction.
- Yogmaya Temple, also **Jogmaya temple**, is dedicated to the **goddess Yogmaya**, also considered to be a **sister of Krishna**.
- During **Aurangzeb's reign** a **rectangular Islamic style hall** was added to the temple.
- The **present temple** was **restored** in early **19th century**.
- The temple is also an integral part of an important **inter-faith festival** of Delhi, the annual **Phool Walon Ki Sair**.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following pairs:

Terms associated with architecture in the Medieval and Ancient India	Meaning / Used for
1. Amalaka	Crown of the top of the North Indian style shikhara
2. Jagmohan	Rectangular or square hall in front of a sanctuary or main temple
3. Chakra	Wheel, a symbol used for Buddha's first sermon at Sarnath

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Answer: c

- Due to topographical disadvantages, the Hattis lag behind in education and employment.
- The Hattis are governed by a **traditional council** called **Khumbli**, which like the khaps of Haryana, decide community matters.
  - The Khumbli's **power has remained unchallenged** despite the establishment of the panchayati raj system.



## HATTI COMMUNITY

**Why in News:** An organisation of the Hatti community in Himachal Pradesh organised a protest march to press their demand for the implementation of a law giving the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the community.

### Key details

- The **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Second Amendment) Act, 2023**, granting the **ST status** to the Hatti community, was **enacted** few months ago.
- **State government** is **not implementing** it.

### Who are the Hattis?

- The Hattis are a **close-knit community** who got their name from their **tradition of selling** homegrown vegetables, crops, meat and wool etc. at **small markets** called '**haat**' in towns.
- The Hatti community is **cut off from Sirmour** by **two rivers** called **Giri and Tons**.
  - **Tons** divides it from the **Jaunsar Bawar** area of **Uttarakhand**.
- They are largely **concentrated in the Trans-Giri area** of the Sirmour district.
- They were once part of the **royal estate of Sirmour** until **Jaunsar Bawar's separation in 1815**.
- There is a fairly **rigid caste system** among the Hattis
  - the **Bhat** and **Khash** are the **upper castes**,
  - the **Badhois** are **below** them.

**Since when have the Hattis been demanding tribal status?**

- The community has been making the demand **since 1967**.
- Their demand for tribal status gained strength because of **resolutions passed at various Maha Khumbli** over the years.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Hatti Community, consider the following statements:

1. This community is native to the Garo Hills in Meghalaya.
2. This is designated Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).
3. This community is governed by a traditional council called Khumbli.


How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: a (3 only)




## KANCHEEPURAM




# KANCHEEPURAM

*Also known as Kanjeevaram*


**Why In News?**  
An architect who helped get Santiniketan on UNESCO's World Heritage List says that Kancheepuram deserves world heritage status.




Located in **Tamil Nadu** on the banks of the **Vegavathy and Palar river**.




Famous for its **temple architectures, 1000-pillared halls, huge temple towers and silk saris**.




Known as the **City of Thousand Temples**.


 Kanchipuram is a Sanskrit word formed by combining two words "**Kanchi**" and "**-puram**" meaning "**Brahma worship**" and "**residential place**" respectively.

 Kanchipuram has been **ruled by the Pallavas, the Medieval Cholas, the Later Cholas, the Later Pandyas, the Vijayanagara Empire, the Carnatic kingdom, and the British**, who called the city "**Conjeeveram**".


**The city's historical monuments include**




**Kailasanathar Temple**




**Vaikunta Perumal Temple**




**Varadharaja Perumal Temple**




**Ekambareswarar Temple**





**Kamakshi Amman Temple**




**Kumarakottam Temple**

 The Pallava-era **Kailasanathar Temple** is among the **oldest-surviving monuments** in Kancheepuram.

 Historically, Kanchipuram was a **centre of education** and was known as the **ghatikasthanam**, or "**place of learning**".

 The city was also a **religious centre of advanced education for Jainism and Buddhism** between the 1st and 5th centuries.

 The city is most important to **Sri Vaishnavism, Shaktism and then Shaivism**.

- Kanchipuram has been chosen as one of the **heritage cities for HRIDAY - Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana Scheme of Government of India**.

- This festival holds special significance for the people of Ladakh as it **commemorates the birth and the enlightenment of Je Tsongkhapa**, the founder of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism.
  - The Gelug is the **newest** of the **four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism**
  - It was **founded by Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419)**.
  - The Gelugschool is alternatively known as **New Kadam**.
  - It is also called the **Gandenschool**, after the first monastery established by Tsongkhapa.
- The festival includes feasting on traditional dishes, cultural performances, and the illumination of spaces with lights.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The City of Thousand Temples located on the banks of the Vegavathy and Palar rivers in Tamil Nadu is well known for its temple architectures, 1000-pillared halls, huge temple towers and silk saris. The city in question refers to

- (a) Ajanta
- (b) Kancheepuram
- (c) Bhimbetka
- (d) Hampi

Answer: b

### GALDAN NAMCHOT

**Why in News:** Ladakh celebrated the annual Galdan Namchot Festival.

#### Key details

- This vibrant festival marks the **beginning of the New Year celebrations** in Ladakh.
- Galdan Namchot is also called the **festival of lights** in Ladakh as everywhere you will see light offerings.
- Ladakhis celebrate this day by **lighting butter lamps**, which signifies the **victory of light over darkness**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following pairs:

Festival	State
1. Galdan Namchot Festival	Ladakh



2. Hornbill Festival	Tripura
3. Pushkar Mela	Gujarat

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

(a) Only one (b) Only two

(c) All three (d) None

Answer: a (1 only)

## NATIONAL CULTURE FUND (NCF)

**Why in News:** National Culture Fund (NCF) received Rs. 3.70 crore from Non-Government Sources during last five years.

### About NCF

- National Culture Fund (NCF) was **set up** as a **Trust** in 1996 under the **Charitable Endowment Act, 1890**.
- Aim:** To **mobilize extra resources** through **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** towards promoting, protecting & preserving India's Cultural Heritage.
- Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Culture
- It is an **innovative pattern of cultural funding** which enables institutions and individuals to perform their rightful role in promoting and preserving India's rich cultural heritage.
- Under the NCF it is possible for a donor to **identify a project and a monument** along with any specific aspect of funding and also an **agency for the execution of the project**.

### Projects Sponsored Under NCF

- Improvements at Monuments and Heritage Sites:** Active generation and sponsorship of projects for visible enhancements at monuments, heritage complexes, and their surroundings.
- Organized cultural events such as concerts, theatre, shows, film/TV shoots, lectures, community festivals,** subject to ASI regulations.
- Initiatives focusing on **environmental development** in and around heritage sites.
- Installation of **visitor-friendly amenities**, historical literature displays, direction boards, signage, etc.
- Upgradation of existing museums and commissioning of new ones** near cultural properties.

### Benefits of NCF Participation

- ✓ Donors receive a **100% tax rebate under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act**. Contributions are acknowledged by ASI at the site and in its publications.
- ✓ **Corporate donors gain reputation** as they can showcase their contributions in advertisements and campaigns. A forum for public visibility and accountability is established.

- ✓ **Revenue generated** from events at sites and monuments is **credited to a joint ASI-NCF account**. Foreign donations are welcome, with necessary clearance obtained under the Foreign Contributions Regulations Act.
- ✓ **NCF aids in disseminating information globally**, promoting India's rich cultural heritage to a wider audience.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the National Culture Fund (NCF):

- It was set up as a Trust in 1996 under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890.
- It was managed and Administered by the council headed by the Union Minister of Tourism and Culture.

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

Answer: c

## KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM

**Why in News:** Prime Minister of India inaugurated the Kashi Tamil Sangamam at Namoo Ghat, Varanasi.

### Key details

- First held in 2022**, the Kashi Tamil Sangamam seeks to **celebrate North and South India's historical and civilisational connections**.

### Kashi Tamil Sangamam

- This year, around **1,400 dignitaries** from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will **visit Varanasi** for the event, participating in a number of **cultural exchanges and exhibitions**.
- It will showcase **art, music, handloom, handicrafts, cuisines** and other distinctive products from Tamil Nadu and Varanasi.
- The **broader objective** is to bring the **two knowledge and cultural traditions** (of the North and South) **closer, create an understanding** of our shared heritage and **deepen the people-to-people bond** between the regions.
- The connection between the **two centres of knowledge** (Kashi and Kanchi) is evident in the **similar themes in literature**.
- Besides the Kasi Viswanathar temple in Tenkasi, there are **hundreds of Shiva temples in Tamil Nadu** that bear the name of Kashi.

- People from **Rameswaram** would take a **dip in the Kotiteertha** (in the temple) before visiting Kashi for darshan and they would **bring back (Ganga) water** from Kashi for **abhiseka** at the temple in Rameswaram.



# KASHI TAMIL SANGAMAM



### King Parakrama Pandya

- ▶ Legend has it that **King Parakrama Pandya**, ruler of the region around **Madurai** in the **15th century**, wanted to build a **grand temple** dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
- ▶ He **travelled** all the way to **Kashi** to **bring back the lingam** for his temple. While returning, he **stopped to rest under a tree**.
- ▶ When he tried to continue his journey, the **cow carrying the lingam refused to budge** from its spot.
- ▶ Parakrama Pandya understood this to be the **Lord's wish**, and **installed the lingam there**, a place that today is known as **Sivakasi**.
- ▶ For devotees who could not visit Kashi, the **Pandyas also built the Kasi Viswanathar Temple** in what is today **Tenkasi** in southwestern Tamil Nadu.



### King Adhivir Ram Pandyan

- ▶ **Adhivir Ram Pandyan**, after returning from a pilgrimage to Kashi, **constructed another Shiva temple** in **Tenkasi** in the **19th century**.

### Sant Kumara Gurupara

- ▶ **Sant Kumara Gurupara** from Thoothukudi district had **negotiated** with the princely state of Kashi to get a place for the **consecration of Kedar ghat** and **Vishvesvaralingam** in Varanasi.
- ▶ He also composed **Kashi Kalambagam**, a **collection of grammar poems** on Kashi.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Which one of the following statements about Sangam literature in ancient South India is correct? [UPSC CSE 2022]

- Sangam poems are devoid of any reference to material culture.
- The social classification of Varna was known to Sangam poets.
- Sangam poems have no reference to warrior ethic.
- Sangam literature refers to magical forces as irrational.

Answer: b

## PREMCHAND FELLOWSHIP

**Why in News:** Bhutanese author Tshering Tashi was conferred the Premchand Fellowship of the Sahitya Akademi.

### About Premchand Fellowship

- The "Premchand Fellowship" is **instituted in 2005**

- It is named after **Hindi writer Premchand**, who is popularly known as "**Munshi Premchand**", during his **125th Birth Anniversary**.
- It is given to a **person of eminence** in the field of **culture and literature** doing research on Indian literature or to creative writers from the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** countries other than India.
- The **first and sole recipient** of the fellowship is a **Pakistani national** and Urdu writer **Intizar Hussain**.

### About Sahitya Akademi

- ▶ The Sahitya Akademi, **India's National Academy of Letters**, is the country's premier institution for **literary discourse, publication, and promotion**, and the **only institution** that engages in **literary activity in 24 Indian languages**, including **English**.
- ▶ It was formally inaugurated on **March 12, 1954** by the **Government of India**.
- ▶ Despite being established by the government, the Akademi **operates independently**.
- ▶ In January 1956, it was **incorporated as a society** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.

- The Sahitya Akademi award is the Government of India's **second highest literary honour**, following the Jnanpith prize.
- The Sahitya Akademi Fellowship is a **literary honour** in India bestowed by the Sahitya Akademi, **India's National Academy of Letters**.
- It is the **highest honour** conferred by the Akademi on a living writer.

## INDIRA GANDHI PEACE PRIZE

**Why in News:** Classical pianist Daniel Barenboim and peace activist Ali Abu Awwad have been named the winners of the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2023.

### Key details

- They have been awarded for their efforts in **bringing together the youth and people of Israel and the Arab world** for a **non-violent resolution** of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

## About the Award

- » The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, is a prestigious award **accorded annually by Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust**.
- » It is given to individuals or organisations in recognition of creative efforts toward **promoting international peace, development and a new international economic order**.
- » The prize carries a **cash award of 2.5 million Indian rupees** and a **citation**.

### Aim

Ensuring that scientific discoveries are used for the larger good of humanity, and enlarging the scope of freedom.



### Eligibility

A written work, in order to be eligible for consideration, should have been published.



- **Mr. Barenboim** is an **Argentine-born classical pianist and conductor**, renowned for performing with and **directing** some of the **leading orchestras in the world**.
  - He is also known for his relentless endeavour in **using music to foster harmony in West Asia**.
- **Mr. Awwad** is a **Palestinian peace activist** who has been working tirelessly with the people of Palestine and Israel for a **peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflict**.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, was recently awarded for

- fight against the oppression of women in Iran and to promote human rights and freedom for all.
- outstanding effort to document war crimes, human right abuses and the abuse of power.
- to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons.
- bringing together the youth and people of Israel and the Arab world for a non-violent resolution of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Answer: d



## GOVERNMENT SCHEMES

**PRADHAN MANTRI-JANJATI ADIVASI NYAYA MAHA ABHIYAN (PM-JANMAN)**

**Why in News:** Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM JANMAN).

- This initiative is part of the Pradhan Mantri-PVTG Development Mission announced in India's 2022-23 Union Budget.

# PM-JANMAN



## PRADHAN MANTRI-JANJATI ADIVASI NYAYA MAHA ABHIYAN

### Aim



To bring tribal communities into the mainstream

### Implemented by



Ministry of Tribal Affairs in collaboration with the State governments and the PVTG communities.

### Focus



The scheme will concentrate on 11 critical interventions overseen by Nine Ministries, ensuring the implementation of existing schemes in villages inhabited by PVTGs.

### Sectors in focus



It encompasses various sectors, including safe housing under the PM -AWAS Scheme, lay 8,000 km of connecting roads, access to clean drinking water, set up 1,000 mobile medical units, construct 2,500 anganwadi centres, 1,000 multipurpose centres and 500 hostels, install mobile towers in 3,000 villages as well as opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

### Trade in forest produce



The plan also intends to set up vocational and skill training centres in 60 aspirational PVTG blocks and build 500 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras to help people trade in forest produce.

### Solar Power



It will be in addition to connecting 1 lakh of these households to an off-grid solar power system and bringing in solar street lights.



### Who are the PVTGs?

PVTGs were initially known as Particular Tribal Groups or PTGs. The **Dhebar Commission** in 1973 identified the PTGs and gave the criteria for their identification which is followed to this date. This criterion was based on:

1. **Pre-Agricultural Technological Level:** Demonstrating a lack of advanced agricultural practices.
2. **Low Literacy Levels:** Signifying limited access to education.
3. **Economic Backwardness:** Reflecting financial disparities.
4. **Population Decline or Stagnation:** Experiencing either a decrease or no growth in population.

However, this categorization was derogatory and in 2006, the Government of India changed the nomenclature to PVTGs. They are found to be living in some of the remotest and most inaccessible areas in the country. There are 75 such communities which are spread over 18 States and Union Territories, according to government figures.

### Features of PM-JANMAN

- **Geographical Coverage:** Initiated in 100 districts across 18 states and the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, covering 500 blocks and 15,000 PVTG habitations.
- **Focus Areas:** Prioritizing individual entitlements and basic facilities provision to PVTG families, including essential documents like Aadhar cards, community certificates, and Jan Dhan accounts.
- **Accessibility Approach:** Overcoming barriers like distance, lack of connectivity, and roads by organizing events at accessible community points like Haat Bazar, Gram Panchayats, and Anganwadi centers.

### Campaign Activities and Execution

- **Operational Plan:** The nationwide IEC campaign, starting December 25, 2023, includes Beneficiary Saturation Camps and Health Camps for immediate scheme benefits and health-related issues.
- **Awareness Tools:** Utilizing various mediums like pamphlets, videos, wall paintings, and cultural programs in local and tribal languages.
- **Supervision and Coordination:** District-level officers assigned for supervision, with state-level officers ensuring coordination with respective line departments for campaign success.
- **Tribal Research Institutes' Role:** Planning and executing activities at different levels (District, Block, Tribal Habitations).

INTERVENTION	OBJECTIVE	MINISTRIES
<b>Individual Based Interventions</b>		
1	Provision of Pucca Houses	Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)
2 and 3	Energy	Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Non-Renewable Energy (MoN&RE)
4	Piped and Community water supply	Ministry of Jal Shakti
<b>Community based interventions</b>		
5	Connecting Roads	Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)
6	Mobile Medical Units with medicine cost	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW)
7	Construction of hostels	Department of School Education (DoSE&L)
8	Construction of Anganwadi Centres (AWCs)	Ministry of Women & Child Development (MoW&CD)
9	Construction of Multipurpose Centres (MPCs)	Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)
10	Setting up of VDVks	Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)
11	Installation of mobile towers	Department of Telecommunication (DoT)

## Convergence of Schemes under different ministries

Name of Scheme	Ministry/Department/Organization
Aadhar Card	UIDAI
PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana	Department of Food & Public Distribution
PM Ujjwala Yojana	Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
Ayushman Bharat card	National Health Authority
PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna	Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
Kisan Credit Card (KCC)	Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PM Jan Dhan Yojana</li> <li>PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana</li> <li>PM Suraksha Bima Yojana</li> <li>Atal Pension Yojana</li> </ul>	Department of Financial Services
PM Vishwakarma	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
Sukanya Smridhi Yojna	Ministry of Women and Child Development
PM Matru Vandana Yojna	
PM Surakshit Matriya Abhiyan	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
PM National Dialysis Program	
Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission	
National Tuberculosis Eradication Program	

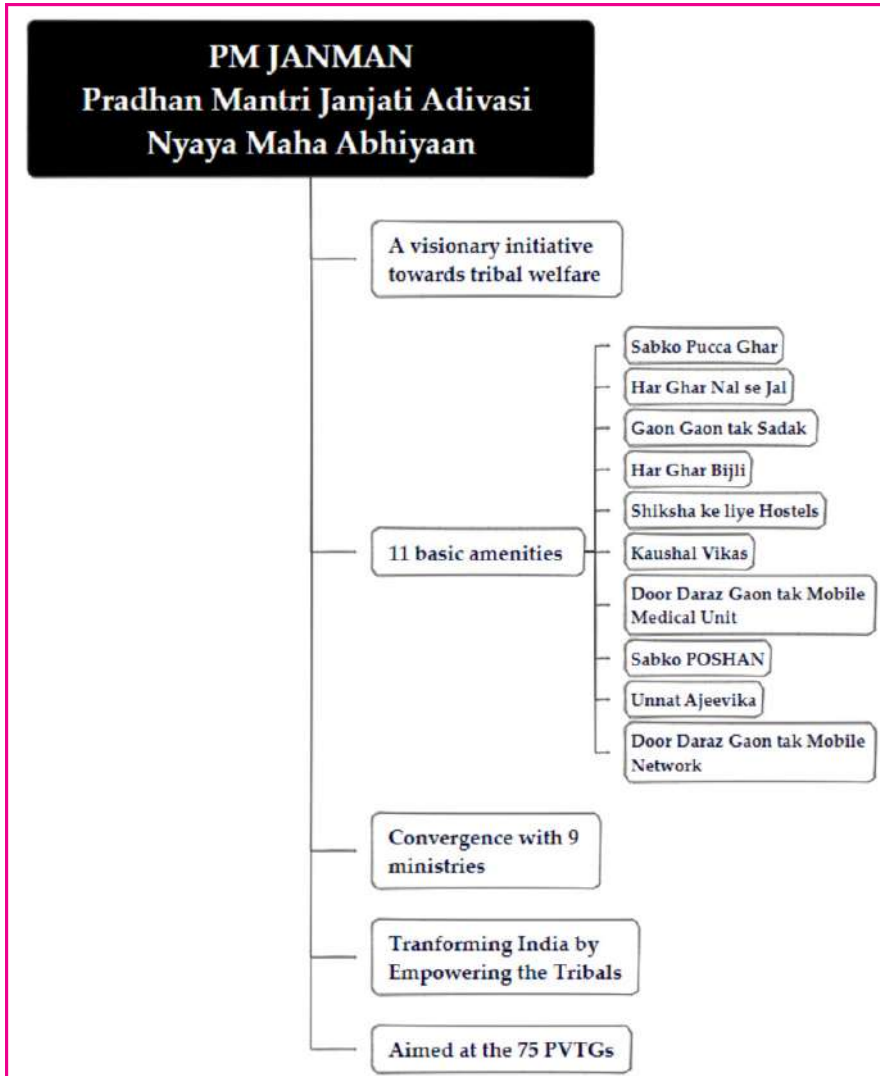
## Challenges

### 1. Lack of Data

- a. **Data Deficiency**- absence of up-to-date figures on PVTGs
- b. **Incomplete Data**- discrepancies in population figures
- c. **Baseline Surveys** have not been made public which contributes to increase the data gap
2. **Unmet Recommendations**- The National Advisory Council (NAC) in 2013 proposed conducting a dedicated Census for PVTG communities, emphasizing the need for specific data on education, health, and housing statuses.
3. **Criteria for identifying PVTGs** has been criticized for being outdated and obsolete. There are concerns about inclusion and exclusion from the PVTGs status in the current methodology.

## Way Forward

Bottoms up approach taken by the PM JANMAN scheme with the involvement of the PVTGs where necessary, makes the scheme holistic in nature. This community-based strategy embraces their cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions, ensuring their participation in planning, implementing, and monitoring development projects.



## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the PM-JANMAN scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It comprises both central sector scheme as well as the centrally sponsored scheme.
2. It facilitates the extension of the ayush facilities to Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) habitation.
3. This scheme does not extend to the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
4. It facilitates the establishment of the mobile towers in tribal villages.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: c (1, 2 and 4 only)

## AMRIT DHAROHAR CAPACITY BUILDING SCHEME

**Why in News:** Ministry of Tourism kicks off Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme 2023 in collaboration with Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

### Key details

- The two ministries launched an **Alternative Livelihood Programme** under the Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme-2023.
- Under this initiative, *Indian Institute of Tourism and Travel Management (IITTM)*, an **autonomous body** under MoT, in collaboration with MoEFCC will **build the capacity of local community members** around different **Ramsar sites**
  - In order to **strengthen nature tourism** at these sites and provide **alternative livelihood to the local community**.
- Priority Ramsar sites under the initiative
  - Sultanpur National Park in Uttar Pradesh

- Bhitarkanika and Chilika in Odisha and
- Yashwant Sagar and Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh

### What is Amrit Dharohar?

- Amrit Dharohar initiative, part of the **2023-24 budget** announcement, was launched by MoEF&CC to **promote unique conservation values** of the **Ramsar Sites** in the country while **generating employment opportunities** and **supporting local livelihoods**.
- This initiative is to be implemented in **convergence** with:
  - various Central Government ministries and agencies,
  - State Wetland Authorities, and
  - a network of formal and informal institutions and individuals.

### RAMSAR CONVENTION

- ✓ The Ramsar Convention is formally known as the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat**.
- ✓ **Global treaty** aimed at the **preservation and sustainable use** of Ramsar-designated sites.

- ✓ It is often referred to as the **Convention on Wetlands** and takes its name from the city of **Ramsar in Iran**, where the agreement was **signed in 1971**.
- ✓ Presently, there are **42 wetland cities** situated across **17 nations** around the world.
- ✓ The Government of India **ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1982**.
- ✓ Recently, **10 new wetlands** were declared as Ramsar Sites.
- ✓ The **designation** of the Ramsar site **recognised** these areas as being of **significant value** and embodies the **government's commitment** to take the steps necessary to ensure that its **ecological character is maintained**.
- ✓ Currently there are **75 Ramsar sites** in India.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the 'Amrit Dharohar Capacity Building Scheme 2023,' consider the following statements:

1. It was jointly launched by the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.
2. An 'Alternative Livelihood Programme' was launched under this scheme to support skill development of local community members in various Ramsar sites to promote nature tourism.
3. The Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh is one of the priority Ramsar Sites under this scheme.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

**Answer: b** (1 and 2 only)

## PM E-BUS SEWA SCHEME

**Why in News:** The Minister of State in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs informed the Rajya Sabha about implementation of PM e-Bus Seva scheme.

## About the scheme

- Government of India has launched PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme with the aim to **augment bus operations** by deployment of **10,000 electric buses** on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.
- The Scheme will **support bus operations** for **10 years**.

## Key features of the scheme

- **Reaching the Unreached:**
  - The scheme will cover cities of **Three lakh and above population** as per **census 2011** including all the **Capital cities** of Union Territories, North Eastern Region and Hill States.
  - **Priority** will be given to cities having **no organized bus service**.
- **Direct Employment Generation:**
  - The scheme will generate **45,000 to 55,000 direct jobs** through deployment of around 10,000 buses in city bus operation.
- **The Scheme has two segments:**
  - **Segment A –Augmenting the City bus services:** (169 cities)
    - ◆ The approved bus scheme will augment city bus operations with 10,000 e-buses on **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** model.
    - ◆ **Associated Infrastructure** will provide support for **Development/ up-gradation of depot infrastructure** and **Creation of behind-the-meter power infrastructure** (substation, etc.) for e-buses.
  - **Segment B– Green Urban Mobility Initiatives (GUMI):** (181 cities)
    - ◆ The scheme envisages green initiatives like **bus priority, infrastructure, multimodal interchange facilities, NCMC-based Automated Fare Collection Systems, Charging infrastructure, etc.**
- **Support for Operation:**
  - Under the scheme, **States/Cities** shall be **responsible for running the bus services** and **making payments** to the bus operators.
  - The **Central Government** will support these bus operations by **providing subsidy** to the extent specified in the proposed scheme.
- **Boost to E-Mobility:**
  - The scheme will **promote e-mobility** and provide full support for behind-the-meter power infrastructure.
  - Cities will also be supported for **development of charging infrastructure** under Green Urban Mobility Initiatives.
  - Adoption to Electric mobility will **reduce noise and air pollution** and **curb carbon emission**.

## Conclusion

The “**PM-eBus Sewa**” scheme stands as a **pivotal initiative** in promoting sustainable urban mobility and electric vehicle adoption.

The **multi-faceted approach** spanning direct employment generation, infrastructure development, and environmental



conservation, the scheme exemplifies India's commitment to creating resilient and eco-friendly urban transportation systems.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. With reference to the Prime Minister e-Bus Seva Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. It aims to augment bus operations by deployment of 10,000 electric buses on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model.
2. This scheme will support bus operations for 50 years.
3. The scheme will cover cities of thirty lakh and above population as per census 2011.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: a (1 only)

## OPERATION GREENS

**Why in News:** The government has been implementing a Central Sector Scheme Operation Greens (OG) under Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana since 2018-19.

### About Operation Greens

- It is a **price fixation scheme** that **aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce**.
- It **focuses on organized marketing of Tomatoes, Onions and Potatoes (TOP vegetables)** by connecting farmers with consumers.
- **Nodal ministry:** Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI)
- **Aim:**
  - To **enhance the value realisation** of farmers and **minimizing post-harvest losses**.
  - To **promote Farmer Producers Organizations (FPOs), agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management**.
- The scheme has **two components**:
  - **Long Term Intervention-Integrated Value Chain Development Projects:**
    - ◆ **Enhancing value realisation** of farmers by targeted interventions to strengthen production clusters and FPOs, and linking/ connecting the farmers with the market.
    - ◆ **Reduction in post-harvest losses** by creation of farm gate infrastructure, development of

suitable agri-logistics, creation of appropriate storage capacity linking consumption centres.

- ◆ **Increase in food processing capacities** and value addition in value chain by creating firm linkages with identified production clusters.

#### ➤ Short-Term Interventions:

- ◆ The objective of the Scheme is to **protect the growers of Eligible Crops** from **making distress sale** and to **reduce post-harvest losses**.

### Challenges in Implementation

- There are so many varieties of TOP vegetables, grown in different climatic conditions and in different seasons, making marketing intervention (processing and storage) all the more complex.
- Viable technology options for long-term storage, transport, and processing are under development.
- Energy intensity of available technologies, especially with rising fuel prices, poses additional challenges.
- Organised market at present is very small in relation to total production.
  - The market has to be developed through a viable business model which is both time and cost-consuming.
- The scheme has **no provision for institutional setup** in implementing the scheme like the NDDDB in Operation Flood.

### Conclusion

**Developing forward and backward linkages**, the government can ease large price fluctuations, raise farmers' share in the price paid by the consumer and at the same time, ensure lower prices for the consumers — a win-win situation for all.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Operation Greens (OG):

1. It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
2. It is launched under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan SAMPADA Yojana.
3. It aims to ensure farmers are given the right price for their produce.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (2 and 3 only)

## NEW SWARNIMA LOAN SCHEME

**Why in News:** Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment informed the Lok Sabha about the scheme.

### Key details

- This is a scheme of National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) for women.
- Objectives**
  - Inculcating the spirit of **self-dependence among the women of Backward Classes under Term Loan.**
- Eligibility**
  - The women belonging to Backward Classes as **notified by the Central/ State Governments** from time to time shall be **eligible for loan under this scheme.**
  - Applicant's **annual family income** should be **less than Rs.3.00 Lakh.**
- Salient Features**
  - The beneficiary women is **not required to invest** any amount of her own on the projects **up to cost of Rs.2,00,000/-.**

- The **rate of interest** on the amount of loan is **less** as compared to the general loan scheme of the Corporation.

### Repayment

- Loan is to be **repaid in quarterly instalments** with **maximum 8 years** (including the moratorium period of six months on the recovery of principal).

### NBCFDC

- NBCFDC is a Government of India undertaking under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.**
- It was established on January 13, 1992, under Section 25 of the **Companies Act 1956** (now section 8 of Company Act, 2013).
- Aim-** To foster economic and developmental initiatives for the benefit of Backward Classes and support skill development and self-employment ventures for the economically disadvantaged within these groups.

## MAHALAKSHMI SCHEME

**Why in News:** The Mahalakshmi scheme of Telangana government has grown a disquiet among the State's autorickshaw drivers.

# MAHALAKSHMI SCHEME

### Financial Assistance



Eligible women will receive a **monthly financial assistance** of Rs. 2500.

### Skill Development



Women will be provided with **skill development training** to enhance their employability.

### Free Gas Cylinders



Women will receive **free LPG gas cylinders** for cooking purposes.

### Self-Employment Opportunities



Women will be encouraged and supported to **start their own businesses.**

### Free Travel



Women will be able to **travel for free in TSRTC buses** across the state.

### Health Insurance



Women will be provided with **free health insurance coverage.**

### Conditional Cash Transfer



Women will receive **conditional cash transfers** for education & vocational training.

### Interest-Free Loans



Women will be able to take out **interest-free loans** to **start or expand their businesses.**

### Marketing Support



Women will be provided with **marketing support** to help them sell their products and services.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements with reference to the Swarnima Loan Scheme:

- It is the scheme of National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (NBCFDC) for women.
- Only the women belonging to Backward Classes are eligible for loan under this scheme.
- To avail the benefit of this scheme applicant's annual family income should be less than Rs.5.00 Lakh.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)

## BOOKER PRIZE

## BOOKER PRIZE

## Why in News?

Irish author Paul Lynch has won the 2023 **Booker Prize** for his novel '**Prophet Song**'.

## Key Details

Lynch is the **fifth Irish writer** to have won the Prize.

The Novel **explores a dystopian Ireland** where **democratic rights are under threat** from a totalitarian regime.



## About the Booker Prize

1

**Founded** in the **UK** in **1969**, it was initially awarded to Commonwealth writers and now spans the globe, and it is open to anyone regardless of origin.

2

The Booker Prize (formerly the **Booker Prize for Fiction** (1969–2001) and the **Man Booker Prize** (2002–2019), is a literary award **conferred each year**.

3

In **2014**, eligibility was **widened to any English-language novel**.

4

A **sister prize**, the **International Booker Prize**, is awarded for a **book translated into English** and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland.

5

The winning book is a work that not only speaks to our current times, but also one that will endure and join the pantheon of great literature.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following pairs:

International Award	Given for
1. Booker Prize	Given for the best novel written in the English language
2. Champions of the Earth	for an outstanding international career in the sport of biped robotic racing.
3. Global Goalkeeper Award	For remarkable work in achieving the Global Goals by 2030

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

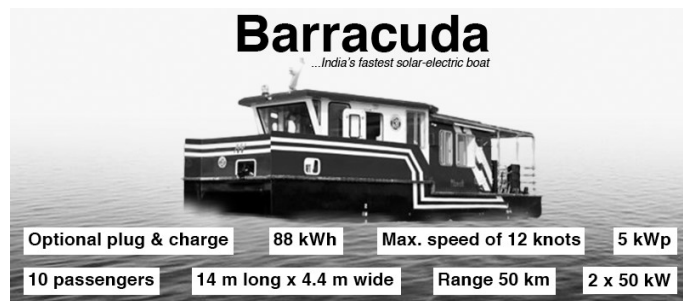
Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

## BARRACUDA

**Why in News:** Barracuda, India's fastest solar-electric boat, was launched recently.

### Key details

- It is **named** after the swift, long fish, Barracuda.
- It was **designed by Navalt Solar and Electric Boats** and can be deployed even in the **rough seas** as a workboat to ferry up to 12 passengers and cargo.
  - It won the world's **best start-up award** in the mobility and transportation category at the **Berlin Start-up Energy Transition Awards 2023**.
- It is engineered to navigate through waves as tall as four metres and operates **without noise, vibration and air pollution**.



### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

Q. The term, 'Barracuda, recently mentioned in the news, refers to

- (a) Vaccine (b) Solar-electric boat  
(c) Non-communicable disease (d) Plant species

Answer: b

## THE SYRIAN GOLAN

**Why in News:** India has voted in favour of a draft resolution in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) that expressed deep concern over Israel not withdrawing from the Syrian Golan.

### Key details

- The 193-member UNGA voted on the **draft resolution 'The Syrian Golan'** under agenda item 'The situation in the Middle East'.

- The resolution, **introduced by Egypt**, was adopted by 91 votes in favour, eight against and 62 abstentions.
  - Australia, Canada, Israel, the U.K. and the U.S. voted against it.**
- The resolution also **stressed the illegality** of the **Israeli settlement and construction** in the Golan.

### About the Golan Heights

- The Syrian Golan is a region in **southwest Syria** which was **occupied on June 5, 1967 by Israeli forces**.
- This region includes the **western two-thirds** of the **geological Golan Heights** and the **Israeli-occupied part of Mount Hermon**.
  - Since the Six-Day War of 1967, the **western two-thirds** of the Golan Heights has been **occupied and administered by Israel**, whereas the **eastern third** remains under the **control of Syria**.
- The Golan, **overall land mass** is **1,860 square kilometers**, which is approximately **1 percent of Syria's total area**, about **1,500 square kilometers** remains **under Israeli occupation**.
- Before** this Israeli occupation, the Golan was home to over **140,000 Syrians**, most of whom were **driven out** of their homeland and into **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) status**.
- Some Syrians remained in the **Occupied Syrian Golan** and continue to live in small villages amounting to approximately 20,000 Syrians.
- The **resolution emphasized the illegitimacy** of Israeli settlement construction and other activities in the Syrian Golan Heights occupied since 1967.
  - It **called for Israel's withdrawal** from the entire occupied Syrian Golan in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

### About UNGA

- The UNGA is the **only universally representative** body of the United Nations.
- The six main Committees of UNGA:
  - the Disarmament and International Security Committee
  - the Economic and Financial Committee
  - the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee
  - the Special Political and Decolonization Committee
  - the Administrative and Budgetary Committee
  - the Legal Committee



✓ **Functions of the UNGA**

- UNGA appoints a Security General on the recommendation of the Security Council.
- Election of the non-permanent members to the Security Council.
- Approval of the UN budget.
- It discusses, debates, and makes recommendations on subjects pertaining to international peace and security.

- It considers reports from the other four organs of the United Nations and assesses the financial situations of member states.

✓ **United Nations Security Council Resolution 497 (1981)**

- It denounced the Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights, an area which it had taken over from Syria during the 1967 Six Day War, and demanded that the annexation law be repealed.



**EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE**

**Prelims MCQ**

Q. Consider the following pairs:

**Region/Place/City : Reason for being in news**

1. Golan Heights : Conflict between Israel & Syria
2. Clarion-Clipperton Fracture Zone : Russian invasion of Ukraine
3. Darfur : Conflicts in Sudan

How many of the pairs given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 3 only)

## INTERPOL

**Why in News:** A high-ranking Indian delegation to the 91st Interpol General Assembly has urged other member countries to deny safe haven to crime, criminals and the proceeds of crime.

### What is Interpol?

- The Interpol, or **International Criminal Police Organization**, is an **inter-governmental** organisation comprising **195 member countries**, which helps police forces in all these countries to better coordinate their actions.
- It is the **world's largest international police organization**.
- **Headquarters:** Lyon, France.
- The organisation enables member countries to **share and access data on crimes and criminals**, and offers a range of **technical and operational support**.
- Interpol manages **19 police databases** with information on crimes and criminals (from names and fingerprints to stolen passports), **accessible in real-time** to countries.
- It also offers **investigative support** such as **forensics, analysis**, and assistance in **locating fugitives** around the world, according to the Interpol website.
- Interpol provides investigative support, expertise and training to law enforcement worldwide, focusing on **three major areas of transnational crime**:
  - terrorism,
  - cybercrime and
  - organized crime.

### Composition of INTERPOL

- **General Secretariat** coordinates the day-to-day activities to fight a range of crimes.

### Types of Notices



- **Red Notice:**
  - To seek the **location and arrest** of persons wanted for prosecution or to serve a sentence.

- It is run by the **Secretary General** and is staffed by both **police and civilians**.
- In **each country**, an **INTERPOL National Central Bureau (NCB)** provides the **central point of contact** for the General Secretariat and other NCBs.
  - An NCB is run by **national police officials** and usually sits in the government ministry responsible for policing.

### INTERPOL Notices

- INTERPOL Notices are **international requests for cooperation or alerts** allowing police in member countries to **share critical crime-related information**.
- **How they are issued**
  - Notices are **issued by the General Secretariat** at the request of a member country's INTERPOL National Central Bureau and are **made available for all member countries**.
  - Notices can also be **issued at the request of International Criminal Tribunals** and the **International Criminal Court** to seek persons wanted for committing crimes within their jurisdiction, notably genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
  - They can also be issued at the **request of the United Nations** in relation to the implementation of sanctions imposed by the Security Council.
- Most Notices are for **police use only** and are not available to the public.
  - However, all **United Nations Special Notices** are **public**.

- **Yellow Notice:**
  - To help **locate missing persons**, often minors, or to help identify persons who are unable to identify themselves.
- **Blue Notice:**
  - To collect **additional information** about a person's identity, location or activities in relation to a criminal investigation.
- **Black Notice:**
  - To seek information on **unidentified bodies**.
- **Green Notice:**
  - To provide **warning** about a **person's criminal activities**, where the person is considered to be a possible threat to public safety.
- **Orange Notice:**
  - To **warn** of an **event**, a **person**, an **object** or a **process** representing a serious and imminent threat to public safety.
- **Purple Notice:**
  - To seek or provide information on **modus operandi**, **objects**, **devices** and **concealment methods** used by criminals.
- **INTERPOL–United Nations Security Council Special Notice:**
  - Issued for entities and individuals who are the **targets** of UN Security Council Sanctions Committees.

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQs

Q1. Consider the following statements with reference to the Interpol:

1. India has hosted the Interpol Young Global Police Leaders programme in 2023.
2. India has hosted the 90<sup>th</sup> Interpol General Assembly in Delhi in 2022.
3. India is one of the founding members of the Interpol.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)

Q2. Consider the following pairs:

Interpol Notice	Meaning
1. Yellow Notice	To help locate missing persons
2. Blue Notice	To seek information on unidentified bodies
3. Black Notice	To collect additional information about a person's identity
4. Purple Notice	To provide warning about a person's criminal activities

How many of the above pairs are correctly matched?

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

Answer: a (1 only)

## 14<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT OF THE US CONSTITUTION

# AMENDMENT 14<sup>th</sup> OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

Ratified on	Objective
July 9, 1868	To address civil rights issues following the Civil War, particularly regarding former slaves.
Major Significance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>'Section 3'</b> disqualifies anyone who, having taken an oath to support the Constitution, <b>engages in insurrection or rebellion against the same</b>, or aids its enemies, from holding any office, civil or military, in the United States.</li> <li>▪ Recently, <b>Section 3 of the 14th Amendment</b> has been <b>used to disqualify Donald Trump</b> from the 2024 US Presidential Elections.</li> </ul>	

KRISHNAVENI SANGEETHA NEERAJANAM

**Why in News:** Ministry of Tourism organizes prequel event of Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam.

## Key details

# KRISHNAVENI SANGEETHA NEERAJANAM

- ▶ It is a first of its kind **festival to celebrate** the **rich heritage of classical music** promote lesser-known tourist attractions.
- ▶ **Objective:** To help revive the focus on the **Harikatha** and **Namasankeerthana** traditions.
- ▶ The event will also **feature spectacular display** and **sale** of:
  - ▶ Regional cuisine ..... 
  - ▶ Local handicrafts ..... 
  - ▶ Handlooms ..... 
- ▶ The festival also **aims to promote** the **hidden gems** of the region including:
  - ▶ Spiritual ..... 
  - ▶ Heritage ..... 
  - ▶ Eco-tourism destinations.. 



## Nodal Ministries



पर्यटन मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
TOURISM



संस्कृति मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
CULTURE

- **Harikatha:**
- ◆ Harikathais also known as **Harikatha Kaalaksheepam** and is a form of **Hindu traditional discourse** in which the **storyteller** explores a **traditional theme**, usually the life of a saint or a story from an Indian epic.
  - ◆ The person telling the story through songs, music and narration is called a **Haridasa**.
  - ◆ Harikatha is a **composite art form** composed of **storytelling, poetry, music, drama, dance,** and **philosophy** most prevalent in **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Karnataka** and **Tamil Nadu**.
- **Namasankeerthana:**
- ◆ The namasankirtana is also called **namajapa**.
  - ◆ It is the Hindu practice of **congregational chanting** of the **names** and other **sacred expressions** associated with a **deity**.
  - ◆ More commonly practised by members of the **Vaishnava tradition**, the namasankirtana is characterised by devotees **chanting the names** of God in a **religious gathering**, in an expression of **bhakti** (devotion) and in a bid to achieve devotional ecstasy.
- ◆ This practice is regarded to have become popularised by the traditions that centred around **Chaitanya, Vallabha, and Vithoba**.
- ◆ The practice is regarded to be a **common form of bhajana**.
- EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE**

**Prelims MCQ**

Q1. Consider the following statements: [UPSC CSE 2019]

  1. Saint Nimbarka was a contemporary of Akbar.
  2. Saint Kabir was greatly influenced by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

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

**Answer: a**

## EXPECTED QUESTIONS FOR UPSC CSE

## Prelims MCQ

Q1. Consider the following statements: [UPSC CSE 2019]

1. Saint Nimbarka was a contemporary of Akbar.
2. Saint Kabir was greatly influenced by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi.

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

**Answer: a**



Q2. Consider the following Bhakti Saints: [UPSC CSE 2013]

1. Dadu Dayal      2. Guru Nanak

3. Tyagaraja

Who among the above was/were preaching when the Lodi dynasty fell and Babur took over?

(a) 1 and 3      (b) 2 only

(c) 2 and 3      (d) 1 and 2

Answer: b

## MAHASAGAR INITIATIVE

**Why in News:** In a significant move towards fostering collaborative efforts among Maritime Heads, the Indian Navy introduced 'MAHASAGAR,' initiative.

### Key details

- **MAHASAGAR** also **another word for vast ocean**, is an initiative for a **high level virtual interaction** between **Maritime Heads for Active Security And Growth for All in the Region**.
- This was the **maiden edition** of the high level virtual interaction MAHASAGAR and was **hosted by the Indian Navy**.
- **Participating nations** included several members of IORA such as Bangladesh, Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.
- They **emphasized the importance of harmonizing capacities in the IOR**, aligning with India's vision of SAGAR.
  - India's **SAGAR** which stands for 'Security and Growth for All in the Region,' is a vision and policy framework designed to enhance maritime cooperation and security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The initiative emphasizes the **importance of promoting collective security and sustainable development** for the benefit of all nations in the region.

### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

#### Prelims MCQ

- Q. Which of the following statements well describes the term 'MAHASAGAR,' recently mentioned in the news:
- A simple, cheap and environment-friendly system that can effectively remove crude oil from sea.
  - First edition of a high-level virtual interaction between the navies of countries in the Indian Ocean region.

- A bioremediation technique to fight oil spillage in ocean waters.
- An initiative of the Ministry of Mines to identify and demarcate the ocean floor containing the Polymetallic nodules in the vicinity of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Answer: b

## ELEPHANT TRUNK ROCK

**Why in News:** A famous natural attraction in northern Taiwan, the Elephant Trunk Rock collapsed into the sea recently.

### Key details

- **Causes of collapse:**
  - Long periods of **seawater erosion** and **natural weathering**.
- Elephant Trunk Rock is located on a **narrow strip of land** called **Shen'ao**.
- It has been a popular **tourist attraction** for many years.
- The area was once a **military-protected zone** and it was **opened to the public in year 2000**.



## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF PEACE AND HAPPINESS

**Why in News:** A first-of-its-kind school for imparting lessons on humanity and societal happiness will take root in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of Assam.

### Key details

- The **foundation** of the International School of Peace and Happiness is scheduled to be laid at **Bijni in Chirang district of Assam**.
- The project was planned by the **Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)**, which administers the BTR.

### Need and significance

- The BTR areas have had a **history of extremism** resulting

in **ethnic conflicts**, especially **between** the **Bodos**, the largest plains tribe in the northeast, and migrant **Muslims**, and **between the Bodos and Adivasis**.

- The idea of a school specialising in peace-building and spreading happiness will be **beneficial** for such a **conflict-ridden area**.

#### EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

##### Prelims MCQ

Q. Recently, the “International School of Peace and Happiness” is in which of the following States?

- |                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| (a) Kerala      | (b) Assam |
| (c) Maharashtra | (d) Goa   |

Answer: b

## KEMPEGOWDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

*Why in News:* Kempegowda International Airport Bengaluru was recognized as one of the ‘World’s most beautiful airports’ and received the coveted ‘World special prize for an interior 2023.’

#### Key details

- Earlier, Terminal 2 of the Bengaluru International Airport received the **prestigious IGBC platinum certification** from the **Indian Green Building Council** under the IGBC Green New Building Rating system.
  - The **Indian Green Building Council (IGBC)** has launched **IGBC Green New Buildings rating system** to address the National priorities.
  - This rating programme is a tool which enables the designer to **apply green concepts** and **reduce environmental impacts** that are measurable.
  - The rating programme covers methodologies to cover **diverse climatic zones and changing lifestyles**.
- T2 aims to **blend functionality with aesthetic appeal**, offering passengers an unforgettable experience through its insightfully curated art and decor elements.
- The **sustainable design** of T2, the **world’s largest terminal pre-certified** with a **platinum LEED rating** by the US Green Building Council before operational commencement, reflects the airport’s **commitment to environmental responsibility**.
  - **LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)** is the world’s most widely used **green building rating system**.

- LEED certification provides a framework for **healthy, highly efficient, and cost-saving green buildings**, which offer environmental, social and governance benefits.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC)

*Why in News:* Angola’s decision to withdraw from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a significant development in the global oil landscape.

#### What is OPEC?

- OPEC, formed in **1960** during the **Baghdad Conference** by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela
  - It is an **intergovernmental organization**.
- It includes other members such as Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, and the United Arab Emirates.

#### Objective of OPEC

- OPEC’s primary goal is to coordinate and unify petroleum policies among its member countries.
- This coordination aims to ensure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers and maintain an efficient, economic, and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations.

#### Significance of OPEC

- OPEC holds a significant position in the global oil market, possessing over 80% of the world’s total crude oil reserves.
- Additionally, OPEC+, a coalition comprising OPEC and 10 other major oil-exporting nations, including Russia, represents about 40% of worldwide oil production.

#### How does OPEC Regulate Crude Oil Prices?

- Oil prices are determined by demand and supply.
- OPEC influences crude oil prices through mechanisms such as spot or future sale mechanisms.
- Spot prices reflect immediate oil buying or selling costs
- Oil futures involve contracts where parties agree to exchange oil at a predetermined price on a specific date.
- Brent Crude serves as OPEC’s benchmark for assessing oil quality.
- Leveraging these benchmarks and mechanisms, OPEC plays a pivotal role in regulating and impacting crude oil prices in the global market.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. Venezuela is one of the founding countries of OPEC.
2. The OPEC Statute distinguishes between the Founder Members and Full Members.
3. The OPEC member countries possess over 95% of the world's total crude oil reserves.

How many of the above statements are correct?

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

Answer: b (1 and 2 only)

and fractured, and here molten rock, or magma, rises up, and some reaches the surface and erupts as lava and/or ash.

- The island sits over a **hot zone** (or hotspot, as mentioned before), which leads to **enhanced volcanic activity** in the region.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. The 'Fagradalsfjall' volcano recently erupted in which of the following countries?

- (a) Japan (b) Russia  
(c) Indonesia (d) Iceland

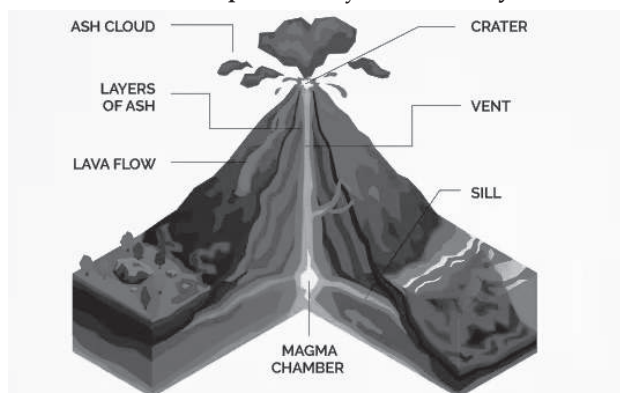
Answer: d

## ICELAND VOLCANO ERUPTION

**Why in News:** A volcano known as Fagradalsfjall and located on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwest Iceland, erupted recently after weeks of intense earthquakes and tremors.

### Key details

- This is the **third time** that the Fagradalsfjall volcano has **erupted** in the **past two years**.
- It had been **dormant** for **over 6,000 years** but became **active** in **March 2021**.
- **Iceland** is one of the most **volcanically active regions** on the planet.
- It witnesses an **eruption every four to five years**.



## WHAT IS A VOLCANO

An opening in the earth's crust through which **lava, volcanic ash, and gases escape**. In other words, it is a mountain that opens downward to a pool of molten rock below the surface of the earth

### Why is Iceland so volcanically active?

- There are **two reasons** for this.
  - Iceland sits on the **Mid-Atlantic Ridge** (part of the longest mountain range in the world) in the North Atlantic Ocean, where the **Eurasian and North American plates are moving apart** a few centimetres every year.
  - ◆ This produces **volcanic rift zones**, regions where the Earth's crust is being pulled apart

## NATIONAL GEOSCIENCE DATA REPOSITORY PORTAL

**Why in News:** Recently, the Ministry of Mines launched the National Geoscience Data Repository Portal (NGDR).

### About NGDR

- The National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR) has been created, as a part of the **National Mineral Exploration Policy, 2016**, hosting all **baseline and exploration-related geoscientific data** in a **single GIS platform**.
- **Aim:** To expedite, enhance and facilitate the **exploration coverage** of the country.
- The NGDR initiative is spearheaded by **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** and **Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N)**.
- The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** was given the responsibility to establish NGDR.
- The **NGDR** will **make available** all **geological, geochemical, geophysical and mineral exploration data** in public domain on a digital geospatial platform.
- This will include **baseline geoscience data** and all **mineral exploration information** generated by various central and state government agencies and mineral concession holders.

## EXPECTED QUESTION FOR UPSC CSE

### Prelims MCQ

Q. Consider the following statement with reference to the National Geoscience Data Repository (NGDR):

1. It has been created as a part of the National Mineral Exploration Policy, 2016.
2. Mineral Exploration Reporting Template facilitates all the geoscientific stakeholders to submit their data in the NGDR portal.

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

Answer: c

## ARTICLE FROM YOJANA (DECEMBER 2023)

## India's Growing Stature - A rising Power

## Introduction

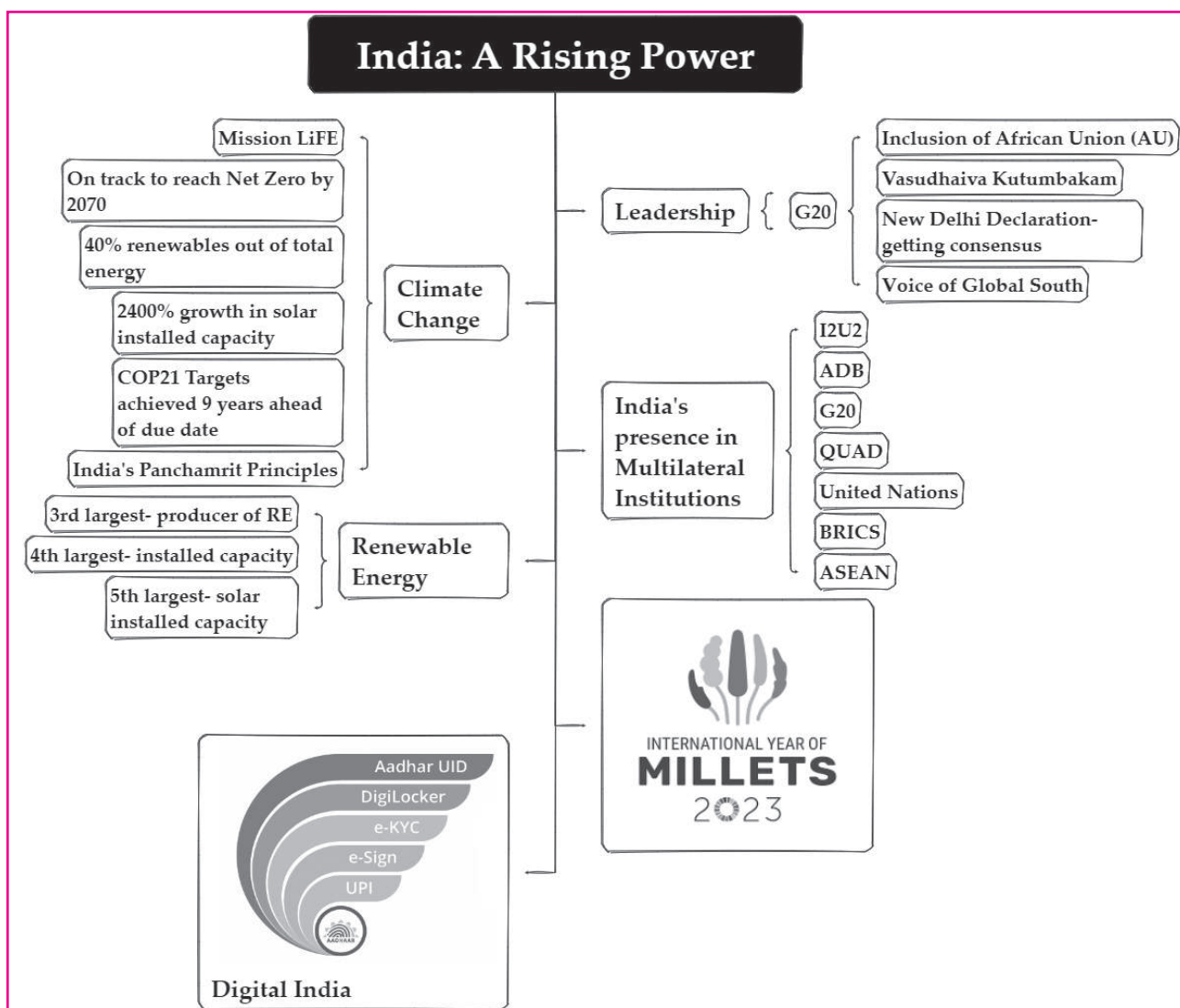
The post pandemic world order has been riddled with conflicts and mired in deep political, ideological, territorial and societal differences that seem difficult to reconcile. The **multilateral system**, such as the **UN Security Council** in the wake of conflicts such as Israel-Gaza or the Russia-Ukraine, seem **dysfunctional**. The **Global South** has faced multipronged challenge of disruptions in food security, fuel availability, fertilizer supply and development finance.

India has shown that a **value-based approach** complemented by global cooperation and **human-centric vision** of peace is needed at times like these. It is these principles and the

ability to build consensus at such tumultuous times that have propelled India on its way to become a global leader.

## India's Leadership

- **Inclusion of the African Union (AU)** into the **G20** under the principle of 'leaving no one behind' showcases India's leadership. This would make the G20 a more representative and democratic organisation and highlights that India is a true friend of the 'Global South'
- In the backdrop of extreme raging conflicts, the New Delhi Declaration signed during the G20 meeting reflects India's ability in building consensus.





- Thus, we see how India is emerging as a '*Vishwa Mitra*' or **Global Friend**.

### Mission LiFE and Climate Crisis

- India's **Mission LiFE** focuses on individual behaviour for environmental conservation, contributing to the **G20 High Level Principles on Sustainable Development**.
- This has set an unprecedented moral compass at the heart of climate change talks and would inevitably lead to concepts such as climate equity and justice.
- This also aligns with India entering *Kartavya Kaal* or the period of duties.
- India's achievements in surpassing Paris Agreement Goals and ambitious targets for renewable energy emphasize its global leadership in climate action.
- The fact that India is so far the only G20 country to have surpassed its Paris Agreement targets makes India an indisputable world leader in dealing with Climate Change.
- These achievements contribute in making India a '*Viswa Guru*' or **Global Teacher**.

### Clean Energy

- India's strides in clean energy, showcased through achievements like **fully solar-operated airports** and **net-zero railway systems**, align with its commitment to **clean energy partnerships** with the EU, Japan, and the US.
- Bilateral partnerships like the **US-India Strategic Clean Energy Partnership** and **EU-India Clean Energy and Climate Partnership** exhibit India's multifaceted approach to sustainable energy.
- Rapid developments in activities such as offshore wind energy, roof top solar panels, solar parks, integration of renewable energy and storage options, smart grids, biofuels, energy efficiency, etc. position India as a key player in Clean Energy Technology.

### Resilient Supply Chains

- India's initiatives, including a **\$10 billion Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** for chip manufacturing and the **Semicon India Programme**, aim to establish the nation as a key partner in global semiconductor supply chains.
- The **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** with **Australia** and **Japan** aims to **diversify supply chains** away from China and addresses wider implications for critical resources.

### Digital Infrastructure

- India has emerged as one of the fastest growing digital economies in the world.
- The **Digital India initiative** aims to empower its digital economy and enhance accessibility to the internet, reflecting its commitment to transparency in governance.

- Even though it has only been 8 years since the launch of the initiative, India reported a whopping 48 billion real-time digital transactions in 2021. This is **40%** of the global total, **3 times** that of **China** and **7 times** greater than **combined volume** of **US, Canada, UK, France and Germany**.
- Supported by such numbers, India's digital ecosystems such as the Aadhaar and UPI which link such a huge population seamlessly, are looked at with wonder and interest from the world.

### Yoga and Ayurveda

- India's contributions during the pandemic, such as free vaccine distribution (**Vaccine Maitreyi**) and promoting healthy living through practices like **Yoga** and **Ayurveda**, showcase its focus on **holistic health**.
- Initiatives like the **International Day of Yoga** and sharing traditional practices globally highlight India's efforts to promote **wellness beyond borders**.
- Today, countries around the world are not only recognising the merit in the holistic health approach of India's ancient civilisation, but are also aping India's methods.
- In addition to this, India being a world leader in pharmaceutical manufacture at cheap costs makes India the **Pharmacy of the World**. This in addition to the aforementioned translates to India being the '*Vishwa Vaid*' or **Global Physician**.

### International Year of Millets

- The declaration of **2023** as the **International Year of Millets** by the UN underscores **India's push for nutritional security** and resilience in food crops.
- Millets' **superior nutritional content** and **resilience** to adverse conditions position them as a promising **alternative** to conventional staples.

### Conclusion

India's trajectory has witnessed monumental shifts and has propelled it into a phase of immense potential, the *Kartavya Kaal*. As India eyes its **centenary of Independence in 2047**, it strides towards becoming a global powerhouse, driven by a commitment to progress in science, technology, economy, and society. Embracing diverse leadership roles, India transcends the barriers of trade, military conflicts, or ideological disputes, embodying the **ethos** of a global friend, teacher, and healer - a *Vishwa Mitra*, *Vishwa Guru*, and *Vishwa Vaid*.

## PRELIMS 2024 SPECIAL

## Constitutional Developments During British Rule

## Regulating Act of 1773

Recognised for the first time political and administrative functions of the Company as distinct entities

Governor of Bengal was made Governor General of Bengal. First such Governor General of Bengal was Warren Hastings

Supreme Court at Calcutta in 1774

Strengthened the control of the British government over the Company by requiring the Court of Directors to report on revenue, civil and military affairs of the company in India

First Step Taken by the British to regulate the affairs of the company in India

Laid the foundations of a Central Administration in India

Created an Executive Council

Prohibited the servants of the company from any private trade or accepting bribes/presents from the natives

## Amending Act of 1781

Also known as the Act of Settlement

Declared that the Supreme Court would have jurisdiction over all inhabitants of Calcutta  
Personal laws to be applicable for different faiths

To rectify the defects of Regulating Act of 1773

Exempted the Governor General, Executive Council, the servants of the Company and the revenue matters from the jurisdiction of Supreme Court for their official actions

Appeals from the provincial courts could be taken to the Governor General in Council and not to the Supreme Court

## Pitts India Act of 1784

Distinguished between commercial and political functions of the Company

Allowed the Court of Directors to manage the commercial affairs but created a new body called Board of Control to manage the political affairs. Thus, this act created a system of 'Double Government'

Company's territories in India were called as 'British possessions' for the first time

British government was given supreme control over the company's affairs and its administration in India

## Act of 1786

In 1786, Cornwallis was appointed as the Governor General of Bengal. He placed two demands which were accepted by the British Parliament

Power to override the decisions of his council in special cases

He himself would be the commander in chief

### Charter Act of 1793

Gave the Governor General more power and control over the subordinate presidencies of Bombay and Madras

Commander in Chief was not to be a member of the Council

Extended the overriding power given to Cornwallis over his council to all future Gov. Generals

Extended the trade monopoly of the Company for another 20 years

Members of the Board of Control to be paid out of Indian revenues

### Charter Act of 1813

Abolished the trade monopoly of the company in India → Thus, trade thrown open to all British merchants. However, it continued the monopoly of the Company over trade in tea and trade with China

Provided for the spread of western education in British India

Asserted the sovereignty of the British crown over the Company's territories

Allowed Christian missionaries to come to India for enlightenment of the people of India

Authorised the Local Governments in India to impose taxes on people

### Charter Act of 1833

William Bentick was the First Governor General of India

Deprived the Governor of Bombay and Madras of their legislative powers.

Governor-General of India was given exclusive legislative powers for the entire British India.

It provided that the Company's territories in India were held by it 'in trust for His Majesty, His heirs and successors'

Governor-General of Bengal became the Governor-General of India and all civil and military powers were vested in him.

Created, for the first time, the Government of India having authority over the entire territorial area possessed by the British in India.

The laws made under the previous acts were called Regulations, while laws made under this act were called Acts.

Ended the activities of the East India Company as a commercial body, which became a purely administrative body.

The Charter Act of 1833 attempted to introduce a system of open competition for selection of civil servants and stated that the Indians should not be debarred from holding any place, office and employment under the Company. But, this provision was negated after opposition from the Court of Directors



### Charter Act of 1853

It established a separate Governor-General's legislative council which came to be known as the Indian (Central) Legislative Council.

Thus, legislation, for the first time, was treated as a special function of the government, requiring special machinery and special process.

The covenant civil service was, thus, thrown open to the Indians also. Accordingly, the Macaulay Committee (the Committee on the Indian Civil Service) was appointed in 1854.

But, it did not specify any particular period, unlike the previous Charters. This was a clear indication that the Company's rule could be terminated at any time the Parliament liked.

4 members were to be appointed by local(provincial) govts. of Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Agra

It separated, for the first time, the legislative and executive functions of the Governor-General's council.

This legislative wing of the council functioned as a mini-Parliament, adopting the same procedures as the British Parliament.

Introduced an open competition system of selection and recruitment of civil servants.

Extended the Company's rule and allowed it to retain the possession of Indian territories on trust for the British Crown.

Introduced, for the 1st time, local representation in the Indian (Central) Legislative Council

### Government of India Act of 1858

Abolished the East India Company and transferred the powers to the British Crown

The post of Governor General of India was replaced by the Viceroy of India who was direct representative of British Crown in India. Lord Canning I was the first Viceroy of India.

Created a new office → Secretary of State for India who was to be a member of the British Cabinet and was responsible to the British Parliament

Did not alter in any substantial way, the system of government in India

This act was passed in the wake of Revolt of 1857 (the First War of Independence) and was also known as 'The Act for Good Government of India'

Stated that India is governed by and in the name of Her Majesty

Ended the system of Double Government → abolished the Court of Directors and Board of Control

15 member Council to assist the Secretary of State to be an advisory body

### Indian Councils Act of 1861

It marked the beginning of representative institutions → associating Indians with legislation

Lord Canning nominated three Indians to his legislative council in 1862

This reversed the Centralising tendency that started from the Regulating Act of 1773 and reached its climax under the Charter Act of 1833. This policy of legislative devolution continued till the grant of provincial autonomy in 1937.

The Viceroy could now make rules for convenient transaction of business in the council

The Viceroy could issue ordinances having a duration of 6 months

This act was promulgated after the realisation that there was a necessity of seeking Indian cooperation in the administration

The Viceroy was to nominate some Indians as non-official members of the council

Initiated the process of decentralisation → Restored legislative powers to Bombay, Madras presidencies

Established new legislative councils for Bengal, NWFP and Punjab

Gave recognition to portfolio system

SPACE FOR NOTES



## Indian Councils Act of 1892

Increased the number of non-official members in legislative councils while maintaining the official majority in them

Increased the functions of the councils → gave them power to discuss the budget and addressing questions to the Executive

Provided for nomination of some non-official members

To the Central legislative council by the viceroy on the recommendations of the provincial councils and Bengal Chamber of Commerce

To provincial legislative councils by the governors on the recommendations of district boards, municipalities, universities, trade associations, zamindars and chambers

Limited and indirect use of 'elections' in filling up some non-official seats in all councils. The word *election* was not used in the act but instead 'nomination on the basis of recommendation of certain bodies'

## Indian Councils Act of 1909 (Morley-Minto Reforms)

Retained official majority in Central but allowed provincial councils to have non-official majority

Provided for the 1st time association of Indians with Viceroy's executive Council. Satyendra Prasad Sinha was the first Indian to join the Viceroy's Executive Council.

Considerably increased the sizes of the Councils

Enlarged the deliberative functions under the Councils → supplementary questions, resolutions, etc.

Introduced a system of communal representation for muslims by accepting the concept of 'Separate Electorates' also referred to as legalised communalism  
Lord Minto is known as the father of communal electorate

## Government of India Act of 1919 (Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms)

Central and Provincial subjects → make laws on their respective list of subjects

Transferred subjects governed by the Governor on the advice of Ministers responsible to the Council

Introduced, for the first time, Bicameralism and direct elections in India

Members to be chosen by direct elections

Extended separate electorates to Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans

Created a new office of the High Commissioner for India

Separated provincial budgets from the Central budget and authorised provincial legislatures to enact their budgets

Objective- gradual introduction of responsible government in India

Provincial subjects were divided into reserved and transferred. This was known as Dyarchy → 'rule of two'-- double rule

Reserved Subjects governed by the Governor and his executive council without being responsible to the Council

ILC was thus, replaced by Upper House and a lower house

However the 'elections' had a very Low franchise → on the basis of property, tax or education

Mandated that 3 of 6 members of Viceroy's Executive Council to be Indian

Mandated the Establishment of a Federal Public Service Commission → Accordingly, a Central Public Service Commission was established in 1926

Provided for the appointment of a statutory commission to enquire into the working of the Act after 10 years

## Simon Commission

As mandated by the GoI Act 1919, 2 years before scheduled, Simon Commission was appointed to review the working of the GoI Act of 1919

It was a Seven member, statutory, all British members Commission led by Sir John Simon

Since there were no Indian members hence parties boycotted the Commission

Recommendations

Abolition of dyarchy

Extension of responsible government

Establishment of a federation of British India and princely states

Continuation of Separate electorates

On the basis of these recommendations, 3 Round Table Conferences were conducted.

On the outcomes of the RTCs, a White Paper on Constitutional Reforms was released → these with some changes became the Govt. of India Act 1935



## Government of India Act of 1935

Divided the powers in terms of three lists→ Federal List, Provincial List and Concurrent List→ Residuary powers went to the Viceroy

Abolished dyarchy in the provinces and introduced provincial autonomy in its place→ allowed provinces to act as autonomous units of administration

Adoption of dyarchy at the Centre→ did not come into operation

Further extended separate electorates→ women, depressed classes- Scheduled Castes and labours

Extended franchise→ 10% got voting rights

Establishment of Federal, Joint and Provincial Public Service Commissions

Provided for the establishment of an All India Federation of provinces and princely states

The Federation never came into being as the princely states did not join

Introduced responsible government in the provinces→ governor was to act on the aid and advice of the ministers responsible to the provincial legislature→ 1937 to 1939

Bicameralism at the provincial level as well

Abolished the Council of India established by the GoI Act of 1858. The secretary of state for India was provided with a team of advisors

Establishment of Reserve Bank of India to control the credit and currency

Federal Court in 1937

## Indian Independence Act of 1947

Provided for partition of India→ created two dominions of India and Pakistan with the right to secede from the Commonwealth

Empowered the Constituent Assemblies to frame and adopt any constitution for their respective nations and repeal any act of British Parliament

Abolished the office of secretary of state for India

Granted freedom to the Indian Princely states either to join the dominion of India or Pakistan

Deprived the British Monarch of its right to veto bills, no more titles→ emperor of India

Ended the British rule in India declared India as an independent, sovereign state

Abolished the Office of Viceroy→ provided for a Governor General for each dominion appointed by the Crown on the advice of dominion cabinet

Empowered the Constituent Assemblies of each dominion to legislate for their respective nations till new constitutions came into being

Proclaimed the lapse of British Paramountcy over Princely states and treaty relations with tribal areas

Governance of each of the dominions to be according to the Government of India Act 1935

Discontinued the appointment to civil services

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