Current Affairs
MONTHLY

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By
CivilsTap Himachal

For HPAS & Other Competitive Exam in Himachal Pradesh

Prelims

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NATIONAL NEWS

1.1. 21 UNINHABITED ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS NAMED AFTER DECORATED SOLDIERS.

- The government has named 21 uninhabited islands in the union territory of Andaman & Nicobar after recipients of Param Vir Chakra, the country’s highest wartime gallantry award.
- Out of the 21 islands, 16 are located in North and Middle Andaman district, while five islands are in South Andaman.
- The first uninhabited island numbered ‘INAN370’ in North and Middle Andaman was named after Major Somnath Sharma. Now ‘INAN370’ will be known as ‘Somnath Dweep’. He was the first and the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra. Sharma lost his life in the line of duty on 3 November 1947 while handling Pakistani infiltrators near Srinagar Airport. He was posthumously awarded the highest military award for his gallantry and sacrifice during the Battle of Badgam.
- Subedar and Honorary Captain Karam Singh who fought in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947, and was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for saving a forward post at Richmar Gali, south of Tithwal (a small border-village in Jammu and Kashmir) was also honoured after the Andaman administration and the Defence Ministry named another uninhabited island numbered ‘INAN308’ after him as ‘Karam Singh Dweep’.
- Similarly, Major Rama Raghoba Rane, Naik Jadunath Singh, Company Havildar Major Piru Singh Shekhawat, Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria, Lieutenant Colonel Dhan Singh Thapa Magar, Subedar Joginder Singh Sahnan, Major Shaitan Singh Bhati, Company Quartermaster Havildar Abdul Hamid, Lieutenant Colonel Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore, Lance Naik Albert Ekka, Colonel Hoshiar Singh Dahiya, Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran, Captain Bana Singh, Captain Vikram Batra, Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey and Subedar Major Sanjay Kumar – all recipients of the Param Vir Chakra- were honoured after the islands were named after them.
- Some of the 21 islands fall under reserved forest while some have great potential for water sports, creek tourism and fishing.
- The Andamans in general and the Cellular Jail in particular played a prominent part in the history of our freedom struggle. People who took part in various anti-British movements such as the 1857 revolt, the Wahabi Movement, and the Burmese Rebellion were deported to the Andamans where they lived there under barbaric conditions. Great stalwarts of the freedom struggle were confined in the solitary cells of the Cellular Jail.

1.2. CARA ORGANISES 200 SPECIAL SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS, 10 STATE ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES, AND INTERACTIVE MEETS WITH MORE THAN 700 PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS AND ADOPTIVE PARENTS.

- As part of the ‘Adoption Awareness Month' , Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) organised 10 State orientation programmes, ran 200 special social media campaigns, held interactive meets with more than 700 Prospective Adoptive Parents and Adoptive Parents in November ,2022.
- The key features of the new Adoption Regulations, 2022 notified by the Central Government on September 23, 2022 were also shared with them. CARA engaged with the adoption community by offering in-depth knowledge and resources for families.
- Adoption Awareness Month was celebrated in the States of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Daman & Diu, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- Adoption Awareness Month is about spreading adoption awareness amongst the stakeholders and the waiting families desiring to adopt. Through the adoption process, CARA is dedicated to ensuring the long-term rehabilitation of children.
- Following the notification of the Adoption Regulations, 2022, CARA is reviewing all adoption cases, long pending in the courts and ensuring that they are quickly transferred to the office of the District Magistrate and concluded by issuance of Adoption Order by the District Magistrate within two months. New Regulations

also stipulate children to be placed in their own socio-cultural environment so that both the child and the family quickly adjust with each other. Children with mental and physical disabilities are now being identified and cared for by the CMO in every district. Revamped Child Adoption Resource Information & Guidance System (CARINGS) has introduced new online modules for online registration of inter-country adoption cases under Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA), modules for the District Magistrate to issue online Adoption Orders and for CMO to certify disabilities.

- Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body of the Ministry of Women and Child Development under the provisions of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, mandated to undertake the promotion of in-country adoptions and to facilitate inter-state adoptions in accordance with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of inter-country adoption.

1.3. ATAL INNOVATION MISSION LAUNCHES APPLICATIONS FOR COMMUNITY INNOVATOR FELLOWSHIP.

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), NITI Aayog has announced the launch of applications for Community Innovator Fellowship (CIF). The initiative aims at facilitating knowledge building and provide infrastructure support to aspiring community innovators essential for their entrepreneurship journey.
- Currently there are 22 Community Innovator fellows being incubated at the Atal Community Innovation Centre (ACIC) program of AIM.
- A Community Innovator Fellow is an individual with an entrepreneurial mind-set, with an idea to solve a community challenge through her or his enterprise. This is a one-year-long intensive fellowship program wherein an aspiring community innovator can apply irrespective of their socio-economic background.
- AIM has been setting up Atal Community Innovation Centres across the country. Currently there are 14 such centres, spread across 9 states and 36 more are coming up in the near future to take the collective number to 50 such Centres.

1.4. KIRIT PARIKH PANEL SUBMITS GAS REPORT, SUGGESTS PRICING FREEDOM BEGINNING JAN 2026.

- A government-appointed gas price review panel, led by Kirit Parikh submitted its report to the government, recommending a floor and ceiling price for legacy fields and complete pricing freedom starting January 1, 2026.
- A fixed band of pricing for gas from legacy fields, which makes up for two-thirds of all natural gas produced in the country, would ensure a predictable pricing regime for producers and at the same time moderate prices of CNG and piped cooking gas which has shot up by 70% since last year on the back of a surge in input cost.
- The panel has suggested linking the price of gas produced by state-owned firms from fields given to them on a nomination basis to imported crude oil prices rather than benchmarking them to gas rates in international markets, Parikh said, adding the rates thus arrived would be subject to a floor and ceiling.
- State producers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) will be paid a price linked to imported oil but it will have a minimum or floor price of $4 per million British thermal unit and a cap or ceiling price of $6.5.
- "We recognise that states have concerns and we are starting a process to build consensus for including gas in the goods and services tax (GST) regime," he said.
- To address state concern of loss of revenue, the panel was in favour of setting up a mechanism similar to the compensation cess regime that made good for any revenue loss that states incurred by way of giving their right to levy VAT and other taxes on goods and services in first five years of implementation of GST regime from July 1, 2017.
- Also, the panel was in favour of moderation in rates of excise duty.
- The committee was tasked with suggesting a "fair price to the end-consumer" while ensuring a "market-oriented, transparent and reliable pricing regime for India's long-term vision for ensuring a gas-based economy".

- "Our mandate was to suggest a regime that would help raise domestic production to help meet the goal of 15% of energy coming from gas by 2030. And at the same time, provide fair price to consumers," he said.
- The committee, he said, looked at the pricing of gas from two sources.
- The first set is the legacy or old fields which were given to ONGC and OIL on a nomination basis without any condition of sharing profits and therefore the government controls its price. The second set is for the ones that are in difficult geology.
- Gas from legacy fields is sold to city gas distributors who had to raise rates of CNG and piped cooking gas by over 70% after prices went up from $2.90 per million British thermal unit till March to $6.10 in April and further to $8.57 last month, reflecting a surge in global rates. This rise in rates, which narrowed the gap between CNG and polluting diesel, prompted the review.
- Parikh said the city gas will continue to get top priority in the allocation of APM gas. The sector will be in the 'no-cut' category, meaning supplies to other consumers will be cut first in case of a decline in production.

1.5. ODISHA BAGS 3 ISC-FICCI SANITATION NATIONAL AWARDS

- Odisha bagged three national awards in the prestigious Annual India Sanitation Coalition (ISC)-FICCI Sanitation Awards-2022, which were declared on Wednesday.
- Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) was awarded with the ‘Best Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) Model – Urban’ and Sasmita Barik, a Swachha Sathi from Bhadrak Municipality was awarded with the ‘Women Changemaker in Sanitation’ award.
- In addition, Jajpur district was awarded for ‘Best Skilling Initiative in Sanitation’ at the awards function held in New Delhi.
- The ISC-FICCI Awards Ceremony and Conclave is an annual national event celebrating leaders, rising stars and organizations, who are driving growth in the sanitation value chain for achieving a “cleaner, healthier, safer, happier and a gender-equal India.”
- The Housing & Urban Development Department (H & UDD), Government of Odisha, has been winning awards under various categories in the annual ISC-FICCI Awards Ceremony since 2019.
- The award for Bhubaneswar was received by Sulochana Das, Mayor, BMC in the event along with team members.
- The ‘Women Changemaker in Sanitation’ award was received by Sasmita Barik along with Additional Secretary and Additional Mission Director SBM (Urban), H & UDD, Durgesh Nandini Sahoo. Both the awards are the recognition for Odisha model of decentralized and community led sanitation.
- The BMC was awarded for its comprehensive implementation of FSSM across the value chain along with building an enabling environment by engaging multiple stakeholders and executing wide-ranging interventions in the capital city.
- The FSSM model has focused on community-led demand generation, strong enforcement of regulations against illegal sludge disposal, innovative ways of cesspool vehicle service delivery, optimum utilization of the Septage Treatment Plants (SeTPs) and city-wide communication campaign, etc.
- Twenty-six-year-old Sasmita Barik, a Swachha Sathi from Bhadrak, was awarded for her active leadership and proactiveness in keeping the city clean and hygienic by spreading awareness among households on both Faecal Sludge and Septage Management (FSSM) and Solid Waste Management (SWM) and motivating citizens to adopt appropriate sanitation practices.

1.6. INDIA’S NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAMME.

- According to the Union Government, India plans to build more nuclear power plants to increase the production of clean energy. The government has recently approved five new sites for nuclear power plants and given the financial go-ahead to build 10 700-MW pressurized heavy water reactors.

India has a 3-stage nuclear programme.

- The 3-stage nuclear programme is developed with the aim of utilizing the vast Thorium reserves in India (about 25% of the world)
- Besides India has limited availability of Uranium reserves (about 2% of the world’s uranium reserves)
- **1st Stage**

  - Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors are based on natural uranium that contains 99.3% U-238 and 0.7% U-235.
  - U-235 being fissile sets up the chain reaction and U-238 being non-fissile gets converted to Pu-239 as a byproduct (spent fuel) which is in turn used in the Fast Breeder Reactors in the 2nd
- **2nd Stage**
  - Fast Breeder Reactors are primarily based on Plutonium.
  - Further the breeder reactors use mix of Plutonium-239 produced in the 1st stage and U-238 that is abundantly found on earth to produce Plutonium inside the reactor.
      - Note that U-238 is not fissile material and thus cannot set up chain reaction.
  - Since the amount of Plutonium produced inside the reactor is more than that initially used, it is called Breeder reactor.
  - In order to increase the probability of neutron hitting U-238, these reactors do not use a moderator to slow down neutrons and thus they are called Fast Breeder Reactors.
  - Once the Plutonium-239 is completely used, Thorium is introduced in the reactor to convert it into U-233 that will be used in 3rd
- **3rd Stage**
  - Thermal Breeder Reactors uses U-233 that is produced in the 2nd stage using thorium-232.
  - Thorium is also not radioactive and thus not fissile.
  - Since these reactors also produce U-233 out of Thorium-232 they are called breeder reactors.
  - India has abundant thorium reserves in the form of monazite sand, and therefore the 3rd stage is critical for India's nuclear energy basket.

1.7. SMART CITY MISSION (SCM)

More than Rs 34 thousand crore released for 100 smart citiess

- The government has released more than 34 thousand crore rupees for 100 smart cities, out of which 30 thousand 400 crore rupees have been utilized. This was stated by the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Affairs Kaushal Kishore in a written reply in the Lok Sabha. The Minister said, the government has launched Smart Cities Mission in 2015 and 100 smart cities have been selected.

About the Mission Smart City Mission (SCM)

- Smart Cities Mission was launched by the Hon' Prime Minister on 25 June, 2015.
- The main objective of the Mission is to promote cities that provide core infrastructure, clean and sustainable environment and give a decent quality of life to their citizens through the application of 'smart solutions'.
- The Mission aims to drive economic growth and improve quality of life through comprehensive work on social, economic, physical and institutional pillars of the city.
- The focus is on sustainable and inclusive development by creation of replicable models which act as lighthouses to other aspiring cities.
- 100 cities have been selected to be developed as Smart Cities through a two-stage competition.
- Among its strategic components is 'area-based development', which includes city improvement (retrofitting), city renewal (redevelopment) and city extension (greenfield development), plus a pan-city initiative in which 'smart solutions' are applied covering larger parts of the city.
- Key focus areas of the scheme include construction of walkways, pedestrian crossings, cycling tracks, efficient waste-management systems, integrated traffic management and assessment.
- The scheme also assesses various indices to track urban development such as the Ease of Living Index, Municipal Performance Index, City GDP framework, Climate Smart Cities assessment framework, etc.
- **Some main characteristics of smart cities are:** –
- Artificial Intelligence
    - Introduction to ICTs
    - IT connectivity
    - Digitalization
- e-Governance
    - e- Panchayat

  - e- Chaupal
- Good Infrastructure
  - Good water supply
  - Electricity for all
  - Proper Sanitation
  - Solid waste management system
  - Urban Mobility
- Adequate public transportation
  - Affordable living conditions like Housing
  - Sustainable environment

1.8. MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (MSMES).

Registration of women-owned MSMEs increased more than 86 % during last financial year.

- The registration of women-owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has increased more than 86 per cent during the last financial year.
- The number of registration was four lakh 89 thousand 470 by the end of financial year in 2021 which increased to nine lakh 10 thousand 973 in the financial year 2022.
- This was stated by the Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane in a written reply in the Lok Sabha today. He said the government has taken a series of measures to support the MSMEs in the country.
- He said, Udyam Registration Portal was launched for MSMEs for promoting ease of doing business.
- He said, steps have been taken to provide five lakh crore rupees collateral free automatic loans under the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme for businesses including MSMEs.

What are MSMEs?

- The Government of India enacted the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006** in terms of which the definition of micro, small and medium enterprises is as under
  - Enterprises engaged in the manufacture or production, processing or preservation of goods as specified below:
    - A **micro-enterprise**, where the investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment does not exceed one crore rupees and turnover does not exceed five crore rupees.
    - A **small enterprise**, where the investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment does not exceed ten crore rupees and turnover does not exceed fifty crore rupees.
    - A **medium enterprise**, where the investment in Plant and Machinery or Equipment does not exceed fifty crore rupees and turnover does not exceed two hundred and fifty crore rupees.

Significance of MSME Sector

- Employment Generation: MSMEs are the second largest employer after the agriculture sector, giving employment to about 11 crore people with low capital and technology requirements.
- Boost to GDP and Exports: They account for almost 30% of the country's GDP and half of the country's exports come from products and services within this sector.
- The Ministry of MSME has set a target to increase its contribution to GDP to 50% by 2025 as India becomes a USD 5 trillion economy.
- Promotion of Industries and Innovation: They help in the promotion of industrial development in rural areas, capacity building, local resource mobilization and also an opportunity for budding entrepreneurs to build creative products.
- Inclusive Society: They create an inclusive and sustainable society through the creation of non-farm livelihood. They promote balanced regional development, gender equity and create opportunities for people to use banking services and products.
- **Considering the above points, they are called 'Growth Engine of the Nation'.**

1.9. STARTUPS IN INDIA

More than 8,40,000 jobs created by Startups in country.

- More than eight lakh 40 thousand jobs have been created by the Startups in the country. These jobs have been generated by 84 thousand government recognized start-ups. This was stated by Union MSME Minister Narayan Rane in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.
- He said, these start-ups are spread in 640 districts with 45 percent of them being from tier-2 and tier-3 cities. He said, more than 100 Indian start-ups have achieved the status of Unicorn.
- The Minister added that the government has taken a comprehensive approach under the Startups initiative which has helped the country to become the third largest start-ups ecosystem in the world.

Startups in India

- **Startup India Initiative:** Since the launch of the initiative in January 2016, more than 69,000 startups have been recognized in the country till May2022.
- **Sectors:** They were launched across 56 diverse sectors, including:
    - 13% from IT services,
    - 9% from health and life sciences,
    - 7% from education,
    - 5% from professional and commercial services,
    - 5% from agriculture, and
    - 5% food and beverage.
- **Government Data:** As per data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the number of people employed in start-ups covered under the Start-up India initiative stood at about 1.74 lakh in 2021.
  Initiatives for Promoting Startups
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat:** Digital India Atmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge.
- **Make in India:** Promotion to indigenously made goods and services under the initiative.
- **Start-Up India Programme:** A flagship initiative, intended to build a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation and start-ups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.
- **Start-up India Digital Platform:** It is the world's largest virtual incubator with over 300,000 registered start-ups and aspiring entrepreneurs.
- **Start-up Grand Challenge:** It channelizes the entrepreneurial capacity between Indian and Korean start-ups to work together and build solutions for the challenges facing the world.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Launched by NITI Aayog as a flagship programme, it aims to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in India.
- Some initiatives of AIM are AIM iCREST and Mentors of Change.
- **Project Chunauti:** It is a start-up challenge under the Next Generation Incubation Scheme (NGIS) initiative. Selected startups are provided human resources, legal, intellectual property rights (IPR) and Patent matters guidance as well as other incubation and mentorship facilities.
- **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI):** It is an umbrella programme for nurturing ideas and innovations (knowledge-based and technology-driven) into successful startups.
- **Other Reforms:** Reforms such as opening up sectors like space-tech for private participation, tax holidays for startups fulfilling certain eligibility criteria such as annual turnover and year of incorporation to tide over working capital requirements, and creation of state-run incubators, among many, are lowering the odds of establishing successful startups and helping them grow.

1.10. THE "FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) ACT" (FCRA) AND NGO'S.

Govt cancelled over 6600 FCRA License of various NGOs across country.PIC

- The Government has cancelled over six thousand six hundred Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) License of various NGOs across the country during the 2017 to 2021. The highest FCRA licenses were cancelled in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra as over seven hundred. While, over six hundred licences had been cancelled in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and west Bengal. The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust are also included in the list.
- In a written reply in the Rajya Sabha, Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai informed this yesterday.

- The government said, These NGOs were violating the various provisions of the FCRA Act. It said, the NGOs whose FCRA registration has been cancelled under the FCRA, will not be eligible for registration or grant of prior permission for a period of three years from the date of cancellation of registration.

What is the FCRA?

- The "Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act" (FCRA) regulates foreign donations and ensures that such contributions do not adversely affect internal security.
- First enacted in **1976**, it was amended in **2010** in which a slew of new measures was adopted to regulate foreign donations.
- The FCRA act is implemented by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- Under the new rules notified by MHA in 2015, NGOs are required to give an undertaking that the **acceptance of foreign funds is not likely to prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India** or impact friendly relations with any foreign state and does not disrupt communal harmony.

Applicability:

- The FCRA is applicable to all associations, groups and NGOs which intend to receive foreign donations. It is mandatory for all such NGOs to register themselves under the FCRA.

Provisions of the Act:

- The FCRA requires every person or NGO wishing to receive foreign donations to be registered under the Act.
- To open a bank account for the receipt of foreign funds in State Bank of India, Delhi is mandatory.
- These funds can be utilised only for the purpose for which they have been received, and as stipulated in the Act.
- The receivers of foreign funds are also required to file annual returns, and they must not transfer the funds to another NGO.

1.11. IRCON INTERNATIONAL LIMITED BAGS ORDER WORTH 14.89 MILLION DOLLARS IN SRI LANKA.

- Ircon International Limited has bagged an order in Sri Lanka worth 14.89 million dollars on competitive bidding basis.
- The Miniratna Public sector enterprise was awarded the work for procurement of Design, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Certifying of Signalling and Telecommunication system by Sri Lanka Railways.
- The project will be carried out under Indian Line of Credit equivalent to approximately122 Crore Rupees or 14.89 million dollars.
- The contract period will be of 24 months from the date of signing of the Agreement.
- IRCON had previously completed 2 other major railway development projects in the island nation.

About Indian Railway Construction Limited (IRCON):

- It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Indian Railways , Ministry of Railways , Government of India. It is an engineering & construction corporation, specialized in transport infrastructure.
- The subsidiary was established in 1976, by the Indian Railways under the Indian Companies Act 1956. IRCON was registered as the Indian Railway Construction International Limited, a wholly owned entity of the Indian Railways.
- Its primary charter was the construction of railway projects in India and abroad. Ircon has since diversified into other transport and infrastructure segments and with its expanded scope of operations around the world, the name was changed to Indian Railway International Ltd. in October 1995.
- The Ircon is well known for undertaking challenging infrastructure projects, especially in difficult terrains in India and abroad. Ircon has completed over 1650 major infrastructure projects in India and over 900 major projects across the globe in more than 31 countries.

What are Miniratnas?

- Miniratna CPSEs are those which have made profits in the last continuous three years and have positive net worth, which can be considered to be eligible criteria for granting Miniratna status.
- At present, there are 74 Miniratnas in total. The Miniratnas are divided into two categories – I and II.

Types of Miniratnas

- The Miniratnas can be divided into two categories I and II.

- **Category - I:** It includes the PSUs that have made profits in the previous three years or have generated a profit of Rs 30 crore or more in one of the preceding three years.
- **Category - II:** It includes the PSUs that have made profits in the preceding three years and have a positive net worth in all three preceding years.

Significance of Granting a Company Miniratna Status

- For a miniratna belonging to category I a financial autonomy of up to Rs. 500 crore or equal to their net worth, whichever is lower is granted.
- A category II miniratna financial autonomy of up to Rs. 300 crore or up to 50% of their net worth, whichever is lower is granted.

1.12. UGC TO BRING UNDERGRADUATE TEXTBOOKS IN ENGLISH IN OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES.

- UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar is in talks with international book publishers to discuss the possibilities of bringing out undergraduate textbooks in English in Indian languages in higher education institutions across the country
- The UGC intends to translate a large number of textbooks in Indian languages in the coming six to 12 months and will also encourage Indian authors/academicians to write textbooks in various Indian languages and will involve publishers in bringing those out, Kumar said.
- The UGC has also formed an apex committee to prepare a roadmap and work towards bringing out textbooks in Indian languages used in undergraduate programmes such as BA, BCom and BSc, he added.
- The discussion with foreign publishers laid stress upon bringing out translation of textbooks in Indian languages such as Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Odiya, Bengali, Assamese, Punjabi, Hindi, and Urdu.
- Representatives from Wiley India, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Cambridge University Press India, Cengage India and McGraw-Hill India participated in the interaction and expressed their willingness to be partners in this national mission.

University Grants Commission – UGC

- The UGC was established in 1953 and made into a statutory organisation with the UGC Act in 1956.
- UGC is responsible for coordinating, determining and maintaining standards of higher education.
- The University Grants Commission provides recognition to universities in India and disburses funds to such recognised universities and colleges.
- The UGC has its Head Office in New Delhi and six regional offices:
    - Bengaluru
    - Bhopal
    - Guwahati
    - Hyderabad
    - Kolkata
    - Pune

Languages in Indian Constitution in Eighth Schedule:

- It lists the **official languages of the republic of India. Part XVII of the Indian constitution** deals with the official languages in **Articles 343 to 351.**
- The Constitutional provisions related to the **Eighth Schedule** are:
- **Article 344:** Article 344(1) provides for the **constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years** from the commencement of the Constitution.
- **Article 351:** It provides for the **spread of the Hindi language** to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.
- However, It can be noted that there is **no fixed criteria** for any language to be considered for inclusion in the Eighth Schedule.

Official Languages:

- The Eighth Schedule to the Constitution consists of the **following 22 languages:**

- Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi,Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.
- Of these languages, **14 were initially included in the Constitution.**
- Sindhi language was added by the **21st Amendment Act of 1967.**
- Konkani, Manipuri, and Nepali were included by the **71st Amendment Act of 1992.**
- Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali were added by the **92nd Amendment Act of 2003** which came into force in **2004.**

Classical Languages:

- Currently there are **six languages** that enjoy the **'Classical' status in India:**
- Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014).
- All the **Classical Languages** are listed in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.**

1.13. AFTER GUJARAT RESULTS, AAP TO BECOME A 'NATIONAL PARTY' IN INDIA.

What is a national party?

- The ECI has laid down the technical criterion for a party to be recognized as a national party. A party may gain or lose national party status from time to time, depending on the fulfilment of these laid-down conditions.

As per the ECI's Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019 handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if:

1. it is 'recognised' in four or more states; or
2. if its candidates polled at least 6% of total valid votes in any four or more states in the last Lok Sabha or Assembly elections and has at least four MPs in the last Lok Sabha polls; or **iii.** if it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the Lok Sabha from not less than three states.

To be recognised as a state party, a party needs:

1. At least 6% vote-share in the last Assembly election and have at least 2 mlas; or have 6% vote-share in the last Lok Sabha elections from that state and at least one MP from that state; or
2. At least 3% of the total number of seats or three seats, whichever is more, in the last Assembly elections; or
3. At least one MP for every 25 members or any fraction allotted to the state in the Lok Sabha; or
4. Have at least 8% of the total valid votes in the last Assembly election or Lok Sabha election from the state.

Where does the AAP fit into this scheme?

- The AAP is in power with big majorities — and very large vote shares — in **Delhi** and **Punjab**. And in the **Goa** Assembly elections held in March, it received 6.77% of the vote.
- This meant that going into the Gujarat-Himachal elections, the party already fulfilled the criteria for recognition as a state party in three states.
- It now required 6% of the vote in the Assembly elections in either Himachal or Gujarat to be recognised in a fourth state — which would qualify it for recognition as a national party.
- While the AAP got only 1% of the vote in Himachal — where it virtually pulled out of the race midway through the campaign — its almost 13% vote in Gujarat is more than double what it required to be recognised as a state party there. That made it four states.

What are the other national parties?

- As of now, the ECI has recognised eight parties as national parties — the BJP, Congress, Trinamool Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and Conrad Sangma's National People's Party (NPP), which was recognised in 2019.
- Once the official results of the Gujarat elections are announced, AAP will become the ninth party to be recognised as a national party.

1.14. AAP ON TRACK TO LOSE DEPOSIT IN ALL 67 SEATS IT CONTESTED IN HIMACHAL PRADESH.

- The state Assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat have recently concluded. As with all elections, while there will be candidates who will rake in huge victory margins, there will also be contestants who will lose their security deposit – an indicator of clear rejection at the hands of the voters.

About:

- An **election security deposit** is an amount that is to be deposited with the **Returning Officer when a candidate files their nomination.**
- This is to be submitted either in cash, or a receipt must be enclosed with the nomination paper, showing that the said sum has been deposited on the **candidate's behalf in the Reserve Bank of India or in a Government Treasury.**
- The main purpose of this practice is to ensure that only genuinely intending candidates end up filing the nomination to be a part of the electoral process.
- The amount depends on the particular election being conducted, and the **Representation of the People Act of 1951** mentions different amounts depending on the level of election:
    - in the case of an election from a Parliamentary constituency, meaning a Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha seat, the amount is Rs 25,000 and Rs 12,500 for a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidate.
    - in the case of an election from an Assembly or Council constituency, meaning at the level of legislative bodies in the states, it is Rs 10,000 and Rs 5,000 for an SC/ST candidate.
    - even in the case of Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections, a deposit of Rs 15,000 is to be made.

When is a candidate said to 'lose' their security deposit?

- As per the same Act, the deposit has to be forfeited at an election if the number of valid votes polled by the candidate is less than 1/6th of the total number of valid votes polled.
- Or, in the case of the election of more than one member, it would be **1/6th of the total number of valid votes so polled divided by the number of members to be elected.**
- This refers to elections by proportional representation method, as is the case in Rajya Sabha.
- If the candidate does meet the threshold, "the deposit shall be returned as soon as practicable after the result of the election is declared".
- If a candidate withdraws their nomination or passes away before the polls, the amount is returned.

1.15. KRISHI UDE DESH KA AAM NAAGRIK (KRISHI UDAN 2.0) SCHEME

- **58 airports will be covered under Krishi Udan Scheme 2.0**

About:

- **Krishi Udan Scheme 2.0** was announced on 27 October 2021.

What is the objective?

- The main objective of the Krishi Udan Scheme 2.0 is to increase share of air carriage in the modal mix for transportation of Agri-produce, which includes horticulture, fishery, livestock and processed products.
- The scheme assists farmers in transporting agriculture products so that it improves their value realisation.
- The Scheme aims to ensure seamless, cost-effective, time bound, air transportation and associated logistics for all Agri-produce originating especially from North-East, hilly and tribal regions of the country.
    - **Few successful examples** are air transportation of 'King Chillies, Burmese Grapes & Assamese Lemon' from Guwahati, 'Jackfruit' from Tripura and 'Litchi' from Darbhanga.

Waiver:

- For facilitating and incentivising movement of agri-produce by air transportation, Airports Authority of India (AAI) provides full waiver of Landing, Parking, Terminal Navigational Landing Charges (TNLC) and Route Navigation Facility Charges (RNFC) for Indian freighters and P2C (Passenger-to-Cargo) Aircraft.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has also asked States to reduce sales tax on aviation turbine fuel to one percent for airlines under the Krishi UDAN 2.0 scheme.

Budget:

- There is no specific budget allocation under Krishi Udan Scheme.

Ministries/Departments:

- It is a convergence scheme where **eight Ministries/Departments** namely Ministry of Civil Aviation, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Department of Commerce, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region would leverage their existing schemes to strengthen the logistics for transportation of Agri-produce.

E-Kushal:

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) is also developing an online platform named **E-Kushal (Krishi Udaan for Sustainable Holistic Agri-Logistics).**
- It will facilitate information dissemination to all stakeholders regarding the transportation of agricultural produce.
- E-Kushal will also assist in coordinating, monitoring and evaluating the Krishi UDAN 2.0 scheme.
- The MoCA has also proposed a convergence of E-Kushal with the National Agriculture Market (e-NAM) platform.

Krishi UDAN scheme:

- The Krishi UDAN scheme was **launched in August 2020.**
- It aims to assist farmers in transporting agricultural products on international and national routes so that it improves their value realisation.

1.16. PM MODI TO PARTICIPATE IN PROGRAMME COMMEMORATING 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI AUROBINDO.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will participate in a programme commemorating Sri Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary today through video conferencing.
- The programme will be held in Kamban Kalai Sangam, Puducherry, under the aegis of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.
- During the Programme, Mr Modi will release a commemorative coin and postal stamp in honour of Sri Aurobindo. He will also address the gathering on the occasion.
- Sri Aurobindo, born on 15th August 1872, was a visionary who made lasting contributions to India's freedom struggle. Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - an endeavour to celebrate the glorious history of India's people, culture and achievements on the occasion of 75 years of independence - is **commemorating Sri Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary by organising year-long activities and programmes across the country.**

About:

- Aurobindo Ghose was **born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872**. He was a yogi, seer, philosopher, poet, and Indian nationalist who propounded a philosophy of divine life on earth through spiritual evolution.
- He died on 5th December 1950 in Pondicherry.
- Aurobindo's pragmatic strategies to get rid of British rule marked him as **"the Prophet of Indian Nationalism".**

Education:

- His education **began in a Christian convent school** in Darjeeling.
- He entered the University of Cambridge, where he became proficient in two classical and several modern European languages.
- In 1892, he held various administrative posts in Baroda (Vadodara) and Calcutta (Kolkata).
- He began the study of Yoga and Indian languages, including classical Sanskrit.

Indian Revolutionary Movement:

- From 1902 to 1910 he **partook in the struggle to free India from the British.**
- The partition of Bengal in 1905 provoked Aurobindo to leave his job in Baroda and plunge into the nationalist movement. He **started the patriotic journal Bande Mataram to propagate radical methods** and revolutionary tactics instead of supplication.
- He was **arrested thrice by the British — twice for sedition** and once for conspiring to "wage war".

- He was imprisoned in **1908 (Alipore Bomb case).**
- Two years later he **fled British India and found refuge in the French colony** of Pondichéry (Puducherry), gave up overt political activities and embraced spiritual pursuits, soon to emerge as one of the most original thinkers, philosophers and spiritual masters.
- He **met Mirra Alfassa in Pondicherry, and their spiritual collaboration led to "Integral Yoga".**
- Integral Yoga, is a yoga of Earth transformation. The aim of this yoga is not an escape from life or a shunning of worldly existence, but a radical change in our life even while living amidst it.
- **Aurobindo's Ideas on Second World War**
- Several Indians saw the Second World War as an opportune moment to get rid of colonial occupation; Aurobindo, **asked his compatriots to support the Allies and ensure Hitler's defeat.**

Spirituality:

- In Pondichéry he **founded a community of spiritual seekers,** which took shape as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926.
- He believed that the **basic principles of matter, life, and mind would be succeeded** through terrestrial evolution by the principle of supermind as an intermediate power between the two spheres of the infinite and the finite.

Literary Works:

- An English newspaper called Bande Mataram (in 1905)
- Bases of Yoga
- Bhagavad Gita and Its Message
- The Future Evolution of Man
- Rebirth and Karma
- Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol
- Hour of God

1.17. 8TH EDITION OF INDIA INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD IN BHOPAL.

About India International Science Festival:

- It was first held in Delhi in **2015**.
- Over all six editions of IISF have been organized since then in northern, southern and the eastern regions of the country.
- It is an initiative of **Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Earth Science** of Government of India in association with **Vijnana Bharati**
- **Aim:** To show the ways how **science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM**) provide us with the solutions to improve our lives.
- It is a science movement with Swadeshi spirit lead by eminent scientists of the country.

1.18. BHARAT SERIES NUMBER PLATE.

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has allowed the conversion of regular vehicle registrations into Bharat Series (BH) numbers as part of measures to widen the scope of the BH series ecosystem.

About Bharat (BH) Series:

- The BH series registration mark vide General Statutory Rule (GSR) 594(E) was introduced on August 26, 2021.
- This has come into force with effect from 15th September, 2021.
- It has been incorporated in the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.
- The implementation of Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 is under the **purview of the State Governments/UT administration.**

Eligibility:

- **It has been introduced for citizens working in Government offices or in private organizations with offices in four or more States/UTs, on voluntary basis.**
- Applicants, working in Government offices, can avail BH Series facility on the basis of their official ID Card.
- Private Sector employees are required to submit a working certificate, certifying that their organization has offices in 4 or more States/UTs.
- Currently, only new vehicles are being registered under the BH Series.

Implementation:

- So far, 24 states and UTs have rolled out the new Bharat Series (BH-series) for vehicle registration and so far over 20,000 vehicles have been registered across the states.

1.19. E-LOK ADALATS

Why in News?

- E-Lok Adalats has taken up more than 259 lakh cases between June, 2020 and September this year.
- Of them over 53 lakh cases were disposed off. Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju said this in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.
- To reduce the pendency of cases in courts and also to settle the disputes at pre-litigation stage, Lok Adalats are organized by Legal Services Institutions.
- **During the COVID pandemic, the Legal Services Authorities innovatively leveraged technology and introduced E-Lok Adalat**, wherein affected parties could get their matter resolved without physically visiting the venue of the Adalat.
- Lok Adalat is one of the important **Alternative Disputes Resolution Mechanism** available to common people.
- **Chhattisgarh was the first state to start e-Lok Adalats.**

About 'Lok Adalat':

- The term '**Lok Adalat' means 'People's Court'** and is based on **Gandhian principles.**
- As per the Supreme Court, it is an old form of adjudicating system prevalent in ancient India and its validity has not been taken away even in the modern days too.
- It is one of the components of the **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** system and delivers informal, cheap and expeditious justice to the common people.
- The **first Lok Adalat camp was organized in Gujarat in 1982** as a voluntary and conciliatory agency without any statutory backing for its decisions.
- In view of its growing popularity over time, it was given statutory status under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- The Act makes the provisions relating to the organization and functioning of the Lok Adalats.

1.20. THE TAMIL NADU DGP PREVENTS AUCTION OF STOLEN 500-YR-OLD NATARAJA IDOL IN FRANCE.

- The Tamil Nadu Idol Wing DGP, Jayanth Murali's swift move against the auction of a 500-year-old stolen idol from the state has prevented the selling by the French auction house, Christies.
- The elite idol wing DGP on finding that the auction house had put the idol on auction in a price band of Euros 2,00,000 to Euros 3,00,000 (around Rs 1.76 crore to Rs 2.64 crore), he tweeted, "STOP AUCTION, Return it to us This is stolen from India, TN".
- Jayanth Murali also tagged "Antiquities Coalition" that runs an international campaign against cultural racketeering and the Archeological Survey of India (ASI).
- Immediately after the police informed the state government, the message was passed to the Union Home ministry which took up the issue with the French authorities through the Indian embassy in Paris.
- The Director General of Police of States (DGP) told that the Idol wing established communication using diplomatic channels to prevent the auction.
- The **500-year-old Nataraja idol** belongs to **Sri Kothanda Rameswara Temple** at Kayathar in Thoothukudi district and was stolen in 1972.
- The **bronze idol, according to the Archeological Survey of India authorities belongs to the Vijayanagara period (15th to 16th century)**

- The idol wing officers after identifying that the idol was being auctioned cross-checked the images of idols at the Indo-French Institute, Puducherry, and found that the images of the stolen idol and on the records of the institute were similar.

1.21. UNION MINISTER FOR PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES, AND PENSIONS WILL INAUGURATE THE PRASHASAN GAON KI ORE (GOVERNANCE TOWARDS VILLAGE) ON DECEMBER 19, 2022.

About:

- It is a nationwide campaign under the Good Governance Week 2022.
- The Nationwide campaign for Redressal of Public Grievances and Improving Service Delivery will be held in all Districts, States and Union Territories of the country.
- Over 700 District Collectors will participate in the Campaign and officials will be visiting Tehsils and Panchayat Samiti Headquarters.
- Over 3,100 new government services will be added for online delivery during the five-day good governance week.
- The good governance week, or Sushasan Saptah, will witness the nation’s grievance redressal platforms functioning in unison — grievances received on Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) will be redressed along with grievances received on State portals.

Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):

- Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) is an online platform available to the citizens 24x7 to lodge their grievances to the public authorities on any subject related to service delivery.
- It is a single portal connected to all the Ministries/Departments of Government of India and States.
- Every Ministry and States have role-based access to this system.
- CPGRAMS is also accessible to the citizens through standalone mobile application downloadable through Google Play store and mobile application integrated with UMANG.
- The status of the grievance filed in CPGRAMS can be tracked with the unique registration ID provided at the time of registration of the complainant.
- CPGRAMS also provides appeal facility to the citizens if they are not satisfied with the resolution by the Grievance Officer.

About Good Governance Day

- **25th December** is celebrated as **‘Good Governance Day’** to mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister **Atal Bihari Vajpayee.**

Indian Initiatives to improve Good Governance:

Good Governance Index:

- GGI has been launched by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions to determine the status of governance in the country.
- It assesses the impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and UTs.

National e-Governance Plan:

- It has the vision to “make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man.”

Right to Information Act, 2005:

- It plays an effective role in ensuring transparency in governance.

Other Initiatives:

- Setting up of NITI Aayog, Make in India programme, Lokpal, etc.

1.22. INDIA, CHINA 17TH ROUND OF CORPS COMMANDER TALKS.

Why in News

- Recently, the 17th round of Corps Commander-level talks was held between India and China.

More about the news

- **Location of the talks:**
    - The talks were held at the **Chushul-Moldo border meeting point** on the Chinese side.

- **Key highlights:**
  - During the talks both sides agreed to continue dialogue through military and diplomatic channels and work out a "mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest".
  - The two sides exchanged views on the resolution of the relevant issues along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the western sector in an "open and constructive manner.
- **Significance of the talks:**
  - The talks came 10 days after soldiers of the two armies clashed at the **Yangtse area in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh**, resulting in injuries on both sides.
  - Since the standoff began in May 2020, the two sides have so far held 16 rounds of talks.
  - Both sides disengaged from Pangong Tso in February 2021, from patrolling in the **Gogra-Hot Springs area**. This is in addition to the disengagement from Galwan in 2020 after the violent clash there.

Areas of dispute between India & China

- There are infirmities in India's boundary with China, both in the east and the west.
  - **In the Western sector:**
    - Here India shares a 2152 km long border with China, and territorial disputes over Aksai Chin region of Jammu and Kashmir, with both countries claiming the region as their own.
    - The recent dispute is around the region of the northern bank of Pangong Tso lake, Demchok and the Galwan Valley.
  - **In the middle sector:**
    - Here India roughly shares about a 625 km long boundary with China with a few minor disputes regarding Tibet.
  - **In the Eastern Sector:**
    - Here India shares a 1,140 km long boundary with China and this boundary line is called McMahon Line.
    - The major dispute here is around the region of Tawang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, Chumbi Valley (Dokalam Tri-Junction) which India shares with Bhutan.
- **China's interest in Ladakh region:**
  - China had never accepted the British-negotiated boundary agreements in northeastern Kashmir.
  - China has traditionally been active in areas close to Ladakh given the significance of the Xinjiang-Tibet region in its domestic narrative.
  - However, with its sights on an ageing Dalai Lama, and the issue of his succession, China may want to bring into focus its claims on Tawang, and the rest of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Issues:**
  - Over 50,000 troops and heavy equipment continue to be deployed on both sides, close to the LAC.
  - In the last two years, China has also undertaken massive construction of infrastructure, habitat and support structures to maintain its troops close to the LAC, altering the ground status.
    - There are roads, helipads and airfields being built right upto the passes.

1.23. STATES' APATHY HAS MADE GRAM NYAYALAYAS 'ALMOST DEFUNCT', SAYS PARLIAMENTARY PANEL.

- "The Gram Nyayalayas were envisaged to make justice delivery more accessible and affordable for the people at the grassroots.
- However, even **after more than 12 years of coming into force** the Gram Nyayalayas are yet to take off in the country. **Only 15 states have notified them and about half of those are yet to be operationalised.** This is in spite of the fact that financial assistance is being given to States, by the Centre, to operationalize them," the department-related standing committee on Law and Personnel said in a report tabled in Parliament earlier this month.
- "The apathy of States and challenges enumerated above by the Department has made this institution almost defunct," the Committee said, recommending to the Department of Justice to ponder seriously over further continuation of this scheme and divert the funds to some other new scheme/s or any existing scheme, which was working well.
- However, the Department of Justice informed the panel that the **Gram Nyayalaya Scheme has been extended for five more years up to March 31, 2026,** without any change in the funding pattern, with

budgetary outlay of Rs 50.00 crore, subject to the condition that the funds will henceforth be released only after they have been notified and made operational along with the appointment of Nyayadhikaris and reported on the Gram Nyayalayas Portal.

- "**A review of the performance of Gram Nyayalayas will be done after one year** to assess its efficacy as an institution in providing speedy and affordable justice to the rural marginalized and decide on its future," the Department told the panel.

About the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008

- The Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008 provided for 'Gram Nyayalayas' at the grassroots level for providing access to speedy and affordable justice to citizens at the doorstep.
- It also aimed to ensure that opportunities for securing justice were not denied to anyone by reason of social, economic or other disabilities.
- The setting up of Gram Nyayalaya is the primary responsibility of state governments in consultation with the respective high courts.
- However, setting up of the Gram Nyayalayas is not mandatory on their part as per the Gram Nyayalayas Act.

1.24. 80% OF NEW SMARTPHONES WILL BE 5G-ENABLED IN INDIA BY 2023: ICEA

- As India rides on 5G with more than 50 cities and towns now enjoying the new technology, the India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said that by the end of 2023, 75-80 per cent of the new smartphone launches will be 5G-enabled.
- The 5G services were launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 1.
- Telecom service providers have launched the service in select cities and plan to cover the entire nation by the end of 2023 or early 2024.
- India as a nation is an early adopter of 5G technology. This 5G technology has opened a vast opportunity for a new generation of telecom equipment manufacturers, application providers, and internet of things (IoT), machine-2-machine (M2M) and healthcare services, among others,"
- The mobile device ecosystem was an early starter for manufacturing 5G phones.
- Even before the launch of 5G services, approximately 80-100 million 5G-compatible phones were already in the market.
- 5G will represent around 53 per cent of mobile subscriptions in India by 2028, with 690 million users, according to 'Ericsson Mobility Report'.
- 5G subscriptions in India were expected to reach around 31 million by the end of 2022.
- On semiconductor industry, Mohindroo said that the Indian semiconductor market was $15 billion in 2020 and expected to reach $63 billion by 2023 at 30 per cent CAGR.
- The India Semiconductor Mission offers an incentive outlay of Rs 76,000 crore for the development of semiconductor ecosystem in India, offering fiscal support of 50 per cent of the project cost.

1.25. DELIMITATION EXERCISE OF ASSAM.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Election Commission of India has begun the process of delimitation of Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Assam.

More about the news

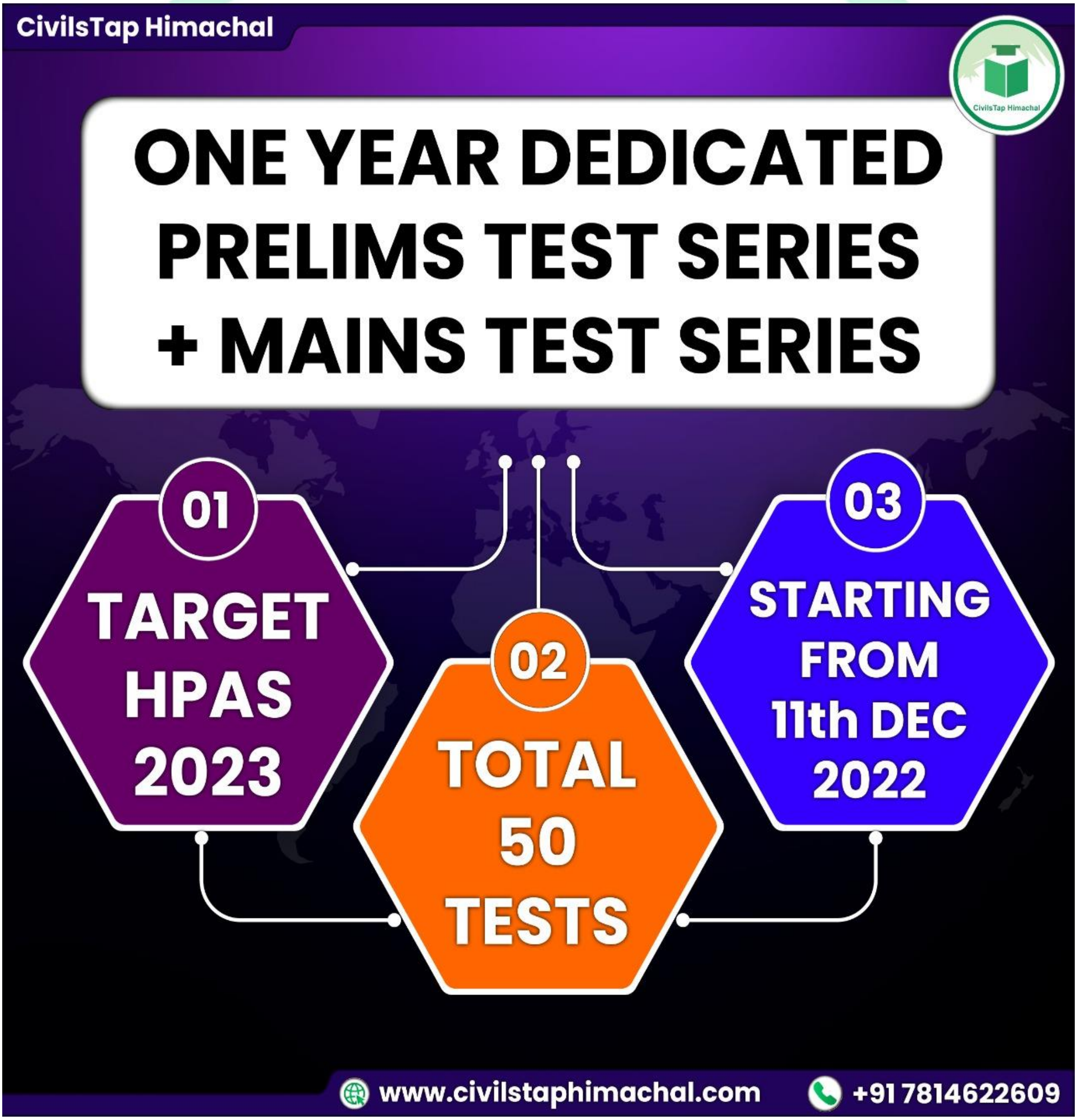
- **About delimitation exercise in Assam:**
  - **About:**
    - The last delimitation of constituencies in Assam was done on the basis of census figures of 1971 by the then Delimitation Commission in 1976.
    - In March 2020, the Centre notified a Delimitation Commission for **Jammu and Kashmir, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland**.
  - **Mandate:**

    - **Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act,1950** allows for the delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly constituencies in **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur or Nagaland**.
  - **Status of Population:**
    - In 1971, Assam's population was 1.46 crore.
    - In 2001, it increased to 2.66 crore and to 3.12 crore in 2011.
  - **Status of current representation:**
    - The State has 14 Lok Sabha, 126 Assembly and seven Rajya Sabha seats.
    - The term of the current Assam Legislative Assembly will end on May 20, 2026.
- **EC's process & directives:**
  - The process will be based on Census data from 2001.
  - During the delimitation exercise, the Commission will consider the following things:
    - The physical features,
    - Existing boundaries of administrative units,
    - Facility of communication,
    - Public convenience and
    - As far as practicable, the constituencies will be kept as geographically compact areas.
  - The EC also issued a directive banning the creation of new administrative units in the state with effect from January 1 next year until completion of the delimitation exercise in the state.
- **Issues & criticisms:**
  - The state Opposition is questioning why the delimitation exercise is being done on the basis of the 2001 Census, and not the 2011 Census.
    - According to critics, the 2011 Census figures are available and the 2021 Census process must also be accounted for to conduct the delimitation process.
  - Concerned Pressure Groups opined to stop the delimitation till the NRC is final.
- **EC's response:**
  - As mandated under Article 170 of the Constitution, census figures (2001) shall be used for the purpose of readjustment of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies in the State.
  - Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be provided as per Articles 330 & 332 of the Constitution of India.

More about the Delimitation Commission:

- **About:**
  - The Delimitation Commission in India is a high-power body whose orders have the force of law.
  - Its orders cannot be called in question before any court.
  - These orders come into force on a date to be specified by the President of India on this behalf.
  - The copies of its orders are laid before the House of the People and the State Legislative Assembly concerned, but no modifications are permissible therein by them.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 82:** This provides the Parliament with the authority to enact a Delimitation Act after every Census.
  - **Article 170:** This provides for the States to get divided into territorial constituencies as per the Delimitation Act after every Census.
- **Functions:**
  - To determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats, so far as practicable, is the same.
  - Identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes wherever their population is relatively large.
  - In case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the will of majority prevails.
- **Composition:**
  - The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India includes following members:
  - Retired Supreme Court judge
  - Chief Election Commissioner

  - Respective State Election Commissioners.
- **Frequency:**
  - In India, such Delimitation Commissions have been constituted 4 times:
  - In 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952
  - In 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962
  - In 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972
  - In 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.



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ONE YEAR DEDICATED PRELIMS TEST SERIES + MAINS TEST SERIES

01 TARGET HPAS 2023

02 TOTAL 50 TESTS

03 STARTING FROM 11th DEC 2022

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1.26. INDIA'S UNSC PRESIDENCY TO MARK ARRIVAL OF MAHATMA GANDHI'S BUST AT UN HEADQUARTERS.

- External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will inaugurate a bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the United Nations on December 14, marking the arrival of the Mahatma at UN's headquarters during India's Presidency of the powerful 15-nation Security Council for the month of December.
- India on 1st December 2022 assumed the monthly rotating Presidency of the Security Council, the second after August 2021 that India is presiding over the Council during its two-year tenure as an elected UNSC member.
- The bust of Mahatma Gandhi will be placed in the "prestigious" North Lawn of the UN building, which is the first time that a sculpture of the Mahatma will be installed in the UNHQ .
- The simple ceremony will take place in the presence of UNSC members, including the five incoming new Council members - Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland.
- The bust, made by renowned Indian sculptor Padma Shri awardee Ram Sutar, who has also designed the 'Statue of Unity', will be a gift from India and will be installed in the UN headquarters, which proudly displays gifts and artefacts from around the world.
- India's 2021-2022 term on the Council ends on December 31, with Ruchira Kamboj, India's first woman Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, sitting in the President's seat at the powerful horseshoe table for the month.
- Addressing reporters here on the Indian presidency and the monthly programme of work, Kamboj said that apart from two signature events chaired by Jaishankar in the Council on December 14 and 15 on reformed multilateralism and counter-terrorism, there will also be two side events coinciding with India's presidency.
- The first will mark the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi at the United Nations," Kamboj said.

1.27. INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION RELEASES VOLUME II OF JATAKA TALES AUDIO BOOK IN COLOMBO.

- The second volume of Jataka Tales audio book in Sinhala was released at Swami Vivekananda Cultural centre in Colombo.
- Speaking at the release event, High Commissioner of India Gopal Baglay described the audio book as a ‘dhamma daana’ from the people of India to the people of Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Pirivena education minister Vijitha Berugoda expressed gratitude towards Indian support for ‘Pirivenas’ and ‘Dhamma education’.
- The release function was to commemorate the arrival of Sanghamitra Theri to Sri Lanka. The audio book which contains 50 Jataka tales selected under the theme of ‘good advice’ represents more than two millennia old cultural ties between the two countries.
- The project is a joint collaboration between Swami Vivekananda Cultural centre and the Centre of Contemporary Indian studies of the University of Colombo.
- The first volume of the audio book was released in June this year on the occasion of 75th anniversary of India-Sri Lanka diplomatic relations.
- As part of strengthening of the bilateral relations, India has committed to a 15 million dollar grant for promotion of Buddhist ties between the two countries.

1.28. PARIS CLUB PROPOSES 10-YEAR MORATORIUM ON SRI LANKAN DEBT.

- Paris Club creditor nations are proposing a 10-year moratorium on Sri Lankan debt and another 15 years of debt restructuring as a formula to resolve the Sri Lankan debt crisis. The Paris club is a group of officials from 22 countries who find sustainable solutions for challenges faced by debtor countries.
- The Paris club has also called upon the Global north and south to take a similar haircut in restructuring of Sri Lankan debt. So far no official proposal has been made by Paris club to China or India.

- Meanwhile, the island nation is yet to initiate any formal dialogue with China. The delay has reduced chances of making the December deadline for getting extended fund facility from IMF executive board. The next likely IMF meeting is possible only in March 2023. Given the delays, Sri Lanka will require bridge funding for the period upto the finalisation of IMF package.
- Earlier this year, Sri Lanka had defaulted on its 51 billion dollar external debt in the midst of spiralling political and economic crisis. India has provided emergency aid to the tune of four billion dollars to the Island nation to tide over its economic crisis this year.

1.29. 117 INTERNATIONAL BODIES TAKEN OFF FCRA AMBIT.

- The Centre has released a list of 117 United Nations bodies and other international organisations whose contribution to Indian entities will not be covered under the stringent Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010, officials said.
- Indian organisations receiving foreign funds are mandatorily registered under the FCRA and they must have a special account at a designated branch of the State Bank of India in New Delhi.
- According to a Home Ministry document, the UN agencies and other international bodies and organisations “to be not covered” by the definition of “foreign source” under the FCRA include the UN System's Secretariat, Office of Internal Oversight Services, Department of Political Affairs, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.
- The United Nations office at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Geneva, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Geneva, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Geneva, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), New York, and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNClAD), Geneva, were also not covered under the FCRA.
- The Unicef, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, United Nations Population Fund, World Food Programme, Rome, Economic Commission for Europe and Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean have also been excluded from the FCRA ambit.

1.30. CHINESE TEA MAKING JOINS UNESCO LIST

- The tea that has delighted and fascinated the world for millennia has finally received top-level global recognition as a shared cultural treasure of mankind.
- Traditional tea processing techniques and their associated social practices in China were added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on Tuesday.
- The status was conferred by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, hosted in Rabat, Morocco. It consists of knowledge, skills and practices concerning management of tea plantations, picking of tea leaves, and the processing, drinking and sharing of tea.
- According to UNESCO, in China traditional tea processing techniques are closely associated with geographical location and natural environment, resulting in a distribution range between 18°-37° N and 94°-122° E.
- The techniques are mainly found in the provinces and autonomous regions of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Hunan, Anhui, Hubei, Henan, Shaanxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan, Fujian, Guangdong and Guangxi. Associated social practices, however, are spread throughout the country and shared by multiple ethnic groups.

1.31. BANGLADESH PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA INAUGURATES 19TH ASIAN ART BIENNALE IN DHAKA.

- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the 19th Asian Art Biennale in Dhaka. The month-long art show being held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) premises in Dhaka will showcase 712 pieces of artwork created by 493 artists from 114 countries including 149 Bangladeshi artists.
- The art event will exhibit a variety of art forms including paintings, prints, photographs, installation, performance art, sculpture and new media art created by the participating artists from across the globe.

- A two-day seminar is also being held as part of the Biennale on the theme of ‘Home and Displacement’. A number of art critics, jury and observers from Bangladesh and abroad will take part in the deliberations of the seminar.
- In addition to the exhibition at the BSA, paintings from 42 master artists of Bangladesh will also be exhibited as part of the event.
- The Biennale is dedicated to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who conceptualised BSA which has been holding the event for several years.

1.32. THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA).

Why in News?

- The International Energy Agency (IEA) said that global capacity for producing renewable energy will soar by some 75 percent in the next five years.
- According to Agency's forecast, renewables will account for over 90 percent of global electricity expansion over the next five years, overtaking coal to become the largest source of global electricity by early 2025.
- The IEA expects worldwide capacity to grow by some 2,400 gigawatts the equivalent.
- That increase is 30 percent higher than the growth predicted a year ago, as higher fuel and electricity prices make renewables increasingly attractive to investors and consumers.
- IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said that the world is set to add as much renewable power in the next five years as it did in the previous 20 years.
- The report also envisaged a scenario where the increase in renewables could exceed its main prediction by 25 percent, making it more likely that the world could reach that target.

Creation

- The IEA was born with the 1973-1974 oil crisis, when industrialised countries found they were not adequately equipped to deal with the oil embargo imposed by major producers that pushed prices to historically high levels.
- This first oil shock led to the creation of the IEA in November 1974 with a broad mandate on energy security and energy policy co-operation.
- This included setting up a collective action mechanism to respond effectively to potential disruptions in oil supply.
- The framework was anchored in the IEA treaty called the “Agreement on an International Energy Program,” with newly created autonomous Agency hosted at the OECD in Paris.
- The IEA was established as the main international forum for energy co-operation on a variety of issues such as security of supply, long-term policy, information transparency, energy efficiency, sustainability, research and development, technology collaboration, and international energy relations.

The IEA’s founding members:

- The IEA’s founding members were Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway (under a special Agreement), Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States. They were followed by Greece (1976), New Zealand (1977), Australia (1979), Portugal (1981), Finland (1992), France (1992), Hungary (1997), Czech Republic (2001), Republic of Korea (2002), Slovak Republic (2007), Poland (2008), Estonia (2014), and Mexico (2018) and Lithuania (2022). Chile, Colombia and Israel are seeking full membership.
- The IEA’s collective emergency response system mechanism ensures a stabilizing influence on markets and the global economy. It was activated five times since the Agency’s creation. The first was in January 1991, during the First Gulf War.
- The second was in 2005, after the hurricanes Katrina and Rita damaged oil infrastructure in the Gulf of Mexico. The third was in 2011, during the Libyan crisis. The fourth and the fifth were in 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Modernization strategy

- While energy security remains a core mission, the IEA has evolved over the years, adapting to the transformation of the global energy system. Today, the IEA is at the heart of global dialogue on energy, providing authoritative statistics and analysis and examining the full spectrum of energy issues, advocating policies that will enhance the reliability, affordability and sustainability of energy in its 31 members countries and beyond.
- In 2015, the IEA's Ministerial Meeting approved a new modernization strategy presented by the Agency's newly appointed Executive Director, Dr Fatih Birol, to strengthen the Agency's role as an authoritative voice on global energy policy. Ministers endorsed the focus on creating a more inclusive and truly global agency through closer engagement with emerging energy economies.
- **The modernization of the IEA was structured under three pillars:**
  - Strengthening and broadening the IEA's commitment to energy security beyond oil, to natural gas and electricity;
  - Deepening the IEA's engagement with major emerging economies;
  - and providing a greater focus on clean energy technology, including energy efficiency.

1.33. BRITAIN, ITALY AND JAPAN TO JOINTLY DEVELOP FUTURE FIGHTER JET.

- Britain, Italy, and Japan will jointly develop a future fighter jet that uses artificial intelligence.
- UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said, the joint venture aims to create thousands of jobs and strengthen security ties.
- The three nations held out the prospect of cooperation with European and US allies, which are developing their own sixth-generation planes, vowing to maintain interoperability among all the allies against threats from the likes of China.
- The new "Global Combat Air Programme" is slated to produce its first jets by 2035, merging the three countries' costly existing research into new aerial war technology, from stealth capacity to high-tech sensors.
- Work on developing it is already underway - with the aim to create a combat aircraft that will provide speed stealth, use advanced sensors, and even artificial intelligence to assist the human pilot when they are overwhelmed, or under extreme stress.
- It could also be flown without a pilot's input if required and could be able to fire hypersonic missiles.

Top Fighter Jets in India

1. **Dassault Rafale:** Dassault Rafale is a twin-jet combat aircraft which is considered to be the world's most advanced fighter jet made by the French aviation company, Dassault Aviation.
2. **HAL Tejas LCA: It is manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited.**
3. **Sukhoi Su-30MKI:** This multi-role combat fighter aircraft is made by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under a license agreement with Russia's Sukhoi Design Bureau where they called it as Flanker.
4. **Mikoyan MiG-21:** The infamous MiG-21, the first supersonic jet aircraft is the most commonly produced supersonic jet fighter and also the most sold fighter jet in the world is an incredibly effective aircraft. It's infamous because it has led to many crashes and the death of pilots and that's why it is also known as 'Flying Coffin'.
5. **Mirage-2000:** Dassault Aviation manufactured Mirage is better known today as the It is known for its role during Balakot Strikes in 2019 when Indian Air Force entered the POK and destroyed terrorist outfits and also played a decisive role in the 1999 war of Kargil. Mirage-2000, called Vajra (meaning lightning thunderbolt in Sanskrit) by IAF took its maiden flight in March 1978.

1.34. INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER RECENTLY SAID INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES SHOULD "RESPECT" AND FOLLOW THE ASEAN'S POLICY ON MYANMAR RATHER THAN TAKING A "DIFFERENT PATH.

About:

ASEAN's five points Consensus are

- It states that there shall be an immediate cessation of violence in Myanmar.
- All parties shall exercise utmost restraint; constructive dialogue among all parties concerned shall commence to seek a peaceful solution in the interests of the people.

- A special envoy of the ASEAN Chair shall facilitate mediation of the dialogue process, with the assistance of the secretary-general of ASEAN.
- ASEAN shall provide humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre (ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management).
- The special envoy and delegation shall visit Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned.

ASEAN

- It is a group of Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which was established in 1967 with the signing of the **Bangkok declaration.**
- **Founding members**: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.
- Presently ASEAN comprises **10 member states namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam.**
- It promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration between its members and other countries in Asia.

1.35. INDIAN EMBASSY, NEPAL GOVT SIGN MOUS FOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE AND DRINKING WATER.

- The **Embassy of India and Nepal Government's Ministry** of Federal Affairs and General Administration on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understandings **(MoUs)** for undertaking **three projects** in Nepal under the grant assistance of the Indian Government, one each in **education, healthcare and drinking water sectors**.
- The three projects include the construction of the Shree Janata Belaka Secondary School building in the Udayapur district, the construction of Ngonga Thenchowk Chholing meditation centre in the Soulukhumbu district and the construction of Lisnekhola Tikasung Dangchet Jharlang water supply project in Dhading district shall be implemented at a cost of NRs. 101.79 million.
- The Indian Embassy in Nepal noted that India has taken up more than **532 High Impact Development Projects (HICDPs)** in Nepal and completed **476 projects** in **various sectors**, including health, education, drinking water, connectivity, sanitation and development of other public utilities in seven provinces of Nepal.

The India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950 forms the bedrock of the special relations that exist between India and Nepal.

The Recent Developments:

- In 2019, the cabinet also approved ₹1236 crore investments for **Arun-3 hydro project.**
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Government of Nepal and **Sutlej Jal Vikas Nigam (SJVN)** Limited for the project in 2008 for execution on a **Build Own Operate and Transfer (BOOT)** basis for a period of 30 years including five years of the construction period.
- **International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage:**
- The two leaders signed five agreements, including one between the **Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam (SJVN)** Ltd and the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) for the development and implementation of the 490.2 megawatts Arun-4 hydropower project.
- India has offered to set up a satellite campus of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Rupandehi.
- **Pancheshwar Multipurpose Project (PMP) is a bi-national hydropower project developed in Mahakali** River **bordering Nepal and India.**
- **Cross-border Rail Link:** The operationalisation of the 35 kilometre cross-border rail link from Jayanagar (Bihar) to Kurtha (Nepal) will be **further extended to Bijalpura and Bardibas.**
- Nepal's induction into the **International Solar Alliance.**

1.36. INDIA'S PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP ISSUE AT UNSC.

Why in News?

- The UK, France, and UAE have extended their support for India's permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- India is holding the presidency of United Nations Security Council for the month of December 2022.

- Speaking at UNSC Open Debate on 'Maintenance of International Peace & Security: New Orientation for Reformed Multilateralism, UAE Minister Noura Bint Mohammed Al Kaabi ' said, India's voice at this chamber is necessary and UAE reiterates its endorsement of country's bid for permanent membership of the reformed UNSC.

About UNSC

- The UN Security Council is the premier global body for maintaining international peace and security. The Security Council, the United Nations' principal crisis-management body, is empowered to impose binding obligations on the 193 UN member states to maintain peace.
- The Security Council, the United Nations' principal crisis-management body, is empowered to impose binding obligations on the member states to maintain peace.
- The council's five permanent and ten elected members meet regularly to assess threats to international security, including civil wars, natural disasters, arms proliferation, and terrorism.
- Structurally, the council remains largely unchanged since its founding in 1946, stirring debate among members about the need for reforms.
- The UN Security Council is composed of **15 members**, including **five permanent** member states - China, France, Russian Federation, the United States, and the United Kingdom - and **10 non-permanent member states,** which are elected by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)
- Ten non-permanent members are elected to the UNSC every year for a two-year term
- The 10 non-permanent seats are distributed among the regions of the world: five seats for African and Asian countries (three are for Africa and two for Asia), one for Eastern European countries, two for Latin American and Caribbean countries, and the remaining two for Western European and other countries.
- The Africa and Asia Pacific group takes turns every two years to put up an Arab candidate.

Need for the Reforms:

- There is a need of reform in UNSC, due to the undemocratic nature of UNSC, barring two regions (North America and Europe), other regions are either underrepresented (like Asia) or not represented at all (Africa, Latin America and the Small Island developing states).
- Moreover, there is a misuse of veto power. The veto power is used by P-5 countries to serve the strategic interest of themselves and their allies.

Reasons why India should become a permanent member at UNSC:

- India is a founding member of the UN.
- India, till now has been elected for eight terms for a two-year non-permanent member seat.
- Most significantly, India has almost twice the number of peacekeepers deployed on the ground than by P5 countries.
- India being the largest democracy and second-most populous country (soon to become most populous) in the world, are the primary reasons for it to be granted permanent membership in UNSC.
- Also, India is one of the largest economies and fastest-growing economies of the world.

1.37. ECOSOC VOTES TO OUST IRAN FROM COMMISSION ON STATUS OF WOMEN; US HAILS IT AS “HISTORIC” DECISION.

- The UN Economic and Social Council have voted to immediately oust Iran from the U.N.’s premiere global body fighting for gender equality because of its systematic violation of the rights of women and girls.
- The United States has hailed it as a “historic” decision. The US-sponsored resolution was sparked by Iran’s ongoing brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters. The protest began in September after the death of a 22-year-old woman taken into custody by the morality police.
- The vote in the 54-member UN council known as ECOSOC to remove Iran from the Commission on the Status of Women for the remainder of its 2022-2026 term. Twenty-nine members supported the resolution and eight opposed it, and 16 abstained from voting.

About ECOSOC

- The Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

- ECOSOC was established by the UN Charter (1945), which was amended in 1965 and 1974 to increase the number of members from 18 to 54. ECOSOC membership is based on geographic representation: 14 seats are allocated to Africa, 11 to Asia, 6 to eastern Europe, 10 to Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13 to western Europe and other areas. Members are elected for three-year terms by the General Assembly. Four of the five permanent members of the Security Council have been continuously reelected because they provide funding for most of ECOSOC's budget, which is the largest of any UN subsidiary body. Decisions are taken by simple majority vote. The presidency of ECOSOC changes annually.

1.38. EU LEADERS APPROVE BOSNIA'S FORMAL CANDIDATE TO JOIN BLOC OF 27 NATIONS.

- European Union leaders have agreed to make **Bosnia a formal candidate** to **join** the **bloc of 27 nations**.
- The **Approval** in this regard was given **at** a **summit** in **Brussels**.
- **Bosnia** has become the **third country, after conflict-ravaged Ukraine and Moldova**, to be **granted candidate status** in the past six months.
- The European Council's approval effectively ratified a decision negotiated, agreed upon, and announced by lower-level EU negotiators earlier in the week.
- **Kosovo** has also **formally submitted** its **application** to become a **candidate member.**

1.39. INDIA HAS RECENTLY LAUNCHED A 'GROUP OF FRIENDS' TO PROMOTE ACCOUNTABILITY FOR CRIMES AGAINST PEACEKEEPERS.

About:

- This Group of Friends will act as a **platform to promote accountability for all acts of violence against the United Nations peacekeepers** by facilitating support to the host state, creating awareness, exchanging information, sharing best practices, supporting initiatives, and mobilizing resources.
- **Bangladesh, Egypt, France, India, Morocco and Nepal have joined the group as co-chairs** to promote accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.
- Group of Friends represents the "political will" of member states, particularly of the troop and police contributing countries, to champion the implementation of the provisions of U.**N. Security Council resolution 2589**, which was adopted in August last year under India's Presidency of the Council.
    - **Resolution 2589** had called upon member states, hosting or having hosted United Nations peacekeeping operations, to take all appropriate measures to bring to justice perpetrators of the killing of, and all acts of violence against United Nations personnel, including, but not limited to, their detention and abduction.

1.40. PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI GREETED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL ON THE FESTIVAL OF CHAG HANUKKAH SAMEACH.

About Hanukkah:

- Hanukkah is also known as Chanukah.
- It is a **Jewish Festival of Lights that lasts for eight days and nights in honor of a 2,000-year-old miracle in which light won out over darkness.**
- It marks the rededication during the second century BC of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, where according to legend, Jews had risen up against their Greek-Syrian oppressors in the Maccabean Revolt.
- According to the Jewish religious calendar, Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev and continues until the second day of the month of Teslev — a date known as Zos Chanukah that is particularly holy.

1.41. INDIA VOTES IN FAVOUR OF UNSC RESOLUTION ON MENTAL HEALTH OF UN PEACEKEEPERS.

- **India has voted in favour of a UNSC resolution on the mental health of UN peacekeepers.**

- Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously passed a resolution on mental health and psychosocial support for personnel of UN peace operations.
- **Mexico initiated the draft resolution** on mental health and psychosocial support. The draft resolution will be the first stand-alone Security Council resolution on mental health.
- The draft text is **open for co-sponsorship** by the wider UN membership.
- The draft resolution recognises the need to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and psychosocial support for UN peace operations personnel.

What are UN Peacekeeping Forces?

- **About:**
    - When the **UN Security Council** approved the deployment of UN military observers to the **Middle East in 1948**, the **UN Peacekeeping Forces** were established.
    - UN peacekeeping forces aid nations in negotiating the perilous transition from **war to peace.**
    - To carry out several missions approved by the **UN Security Council (UNSC)** and the **UN General Assembly,** it deploys soldiers and police from all over the world and combines them with civilian peacekeepers.
    - **International Day of UN Peacekeepers** is celebrated on date **29th May** every year.
        - **2022 Theme:** People. Peace. Progress. The Power of Partnerships.
- **India and UNPKF:**
    - India is among the nations that send the most troops to the **United Nations Peacekeeping Forces.**
        - Example: India is the **second-highest military** and **fifth-highest police** contributing country to the **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).**
    - Over **2,60,000 Indians** have served in **49 U.N. Peacekeeping missions since 1948.**
    - In 2007, India became the first country to deploy an **all-women contingent** to a UN Peacekeeping mission.
    - In the last six decades, **179 Indian soldiers** have died in **UN Peacekeeping operations.**
    - Among **"blue helmets"** it has the greatest death toll of any nation.
        - **Blue Helmets** are the **military personnel of the UN** that work alongside the UN Police and civilian colleagues to promote **“stability, security, and peace processes”.**

1.42. INDIA, CHINA ABSTAIN ON FIRST UNSC RESOLUTION ON MYANMAR.

- **India, China and Russia abstained** in the **United Nations Security Council** on a draft **resolution** that demanded an immediate end to violence and the release of all arbitrarily detained prisoners, including **Aung San Suu Kyi** and ex-president Win Myint.
- The 15-member Council has been split on Myanmar for decades and was previously only able to agree on formal statements about the country, which has been under military rule since February 2021. Notably, **this is the first-ever resolution on the turmoil-ridden Southeast Asian country.**
- India’s Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj, presiding over the meeting, explained that the complex situation in Myanmar calls for an **approach of quiet and patient diplomacy.**

1.43. U.S.A RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD SEND ITS MOST ADVANCED GROUND-BASED DEFENCE BATTERY (PATRIOT SYSTEM) TO KYIV.

About Patriot system:

- The Patriot is one of the most sought-after defence systems and has been deployed in **18 countries, including the U.S.**
    - **History:**
        - Initially developed as a system to intercept high-flying aircraft by **Raytheon Technologies, the Patriot was modified in the 1980s** to focus on other threats such as ballistic missiles.
        - The programme’s roots can be traced back to the 1960s when the Pentagon was looking to replace the **HAWK and Nike-Hercules air defence systems.**

- Currently, Patriot batteries can defend against ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, drones, jets and "other threats", but it doesn't offer protection against low-flying small drones.
- A mobile Patriot system includes a control centre, a radar station to detect threats, missile launchers to take out those threats and other support vehicles.
- **It can launch different types of interceptor missiles:** The older PAC-1 and PAC-2 interceptors used a blast-fragmentation warhead, while the newer PAC-3 missile has a more advanced hit-to-kill technology.
- The Patriot system's radar has a range of over **150 km and it can track over 50 potential targets at the same time.**

1.44. WITH THE INDIA-AUSTRALIA INTERIM TRADE DEAL SET TO KICK OFF, THE CENTRAL BOARD OF INDIRECT TAXES AND CUSTOMS HAS RECENTLY NOTIFIED THE RULES OF ORIGIN.

About:

- The notification, which relates to the eligibility requirement to claim the preferential customs duty on trade in goods, under the **economic cooperation and trade agreement (ECTA),** will come into effect from December 29. This is when the ECTA will also come into effect.
- India and Australia had in April this year signed the ECTA, which is expected to cover 90% of the bilateral trade between the two.

What is Rules of Origin?

- Rules of origin are the **criteria needed to determine the national source of a product**. Their importance is derived from the fact that duties and restrictions in several cases depend upon the source of imports.

Where are rules of origin used?

- Rules of origin are used:
- To implement measures and instruments of commercial policy such as anti-dumping duties and safeguard measures;
- To determine whether imported products shall receive most-favoured-nation (mfn) treatment or preferential treatment;
- For the purpose of trade statistics;
- For the application of labelling and marking requirements; and
- For government procurement.

No specific provision in GATT

- GATT has no specific rules governing the determination of the country of origin of goods in international commerce.
- Each contracting party was free to determine its own origin rules, and could even maintain several different rules of origin depending on the purpose of the particular regulation.

DAY REMEMBER

1.45. WORLD SOIL DAY (WSD) IS HELD ANNUALLY ON 5 DECEMBER.

About World Soil Day

- World Soil Day (WSD) is held annually on 5 December as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and advocating for the sustainable management of soil resources.
- An international day to celebrate Soil was recommended by the International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) in 2002. Under the leadership of the Kingdom of Thailand and within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, FAO has supported the formal establishment of WSD as a global awareness raising platform.
- The FAO Conference unanimously endorsed World Soil Day in June 2013 and requested its official adoption at the 68th UN General Assembly. In December 2013 the UN General Assembly responded by designating 5 December 2014 as the first official World Soil Day.
- FAO, within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership (GSP), has received the official mandate to facilitate the implementation of the World Soil Day.
- The date of 5 December for WSD was chosen because it corresponds with the official birthday of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, who officially sanctioned the event.
- In 2016 this day was officially recognized in memory and with respect for this beloved monarch who passed away in October 2016 after seven decades as head of state.
- 2012 to 2016 with links to the related communication toolkits.

Theme of the year: World Soil Day 2022: Soils, where food begins.

- World Soil Day 2022 (#WorldSoilDay) and its campaign "Soils, where food begins" aims to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining healthy ecosystems and human well-being by addressing the growing challenges in soil management, increasing soil awareness and encouraging societies to improve soil health.

1.46. THE NATIONAL ZOOLOGICAL PARK, NEW DELHI (DELHI ZOO) RECENTLY CELEBRATED THE INTERNATIONAL JAGUAR DAY.

About:

- International Jaguar Day is observed annually on **November 29.**
- International Jaguar Day was created to raise awareness about the increasing threats facing the jaguar and the critical conservation efforts ensuring its survival.
- It celebrates the Americas’ largest wild cat as an umbrella species for biodiversity conservation and an icon for sustainable development and the centuries-old cultural heritage of Central and South America.
- This is the third largest Cat Predator of the World and an important species of Amazon Rainforest.
- International Jaguar Day also represent the collective voice of jaguar range countries, in collaboration with national and international partners, to draw attention to the need to conserve jaguar corridors and their habitats as part of broader efforts to achieve the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals.

Jaguars (Panthera onca):

- Jaguars (Panthera onca) are often mistaken for leopards, but can be differentiated due to the spots within the rosettes on their coats.
- While many cats avoid water, jaguars are great swimmers, and have even been known to swim the Panama Canal.

Range and habitat:

- Jaguars once roamed broadly from central Argentina all the way up to the southwestern United States.
- Since the 1880s, they have lost more than half their territory.
- Their main stronghold today is the **Amazon Basin**, though they still exist in smaller numbers through Central America as well.
- They are typically found in **tropical rainforests but also live in savannas and grasslands.**

Conservation:

- Jaguars are classified as **Near-threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.**
- The species has national protections in almost every country it's found, and trade in its parts is banned by **CITES**.

1.47. INTERNATIONAL DAY OF NEUTRALITY OBSERVED ON 12 DECEMBER.

- **International Day of Neutrality** is commemorated on **December 12.** It is a day when people look at the possibility of a world free of armed and other types of conflicts. Its focus was on advocating and campaigning for intra-state peaceful relations. Switzerland serves as the perfect example of neutrality.

International Day of Neutrality 2022: Significance

- The International Day of Neutrality is a reminder of how important neutrality truly is, especially for humanitarian reasons. During armed conflicts, it is neutrality that NGOs and other humanitarian agencies are able to care for casualties in a proper way. The day is also a reminder to strive towards peace. It asks people to aim for a world where there is no conflict and how the world by putting their efforts together can achieve this.

International Day of Neutrality: History

- **On 2 February 2017,** the UN General Assembly adopted without a vote resolution 71/275, introduced by Turkmenistan, recognized by the UN as a permanently neutral state since 12 December 1995, which noted the link between the preservation of peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and declared 12 December as the International Day of Neutrality.

1.48. POWER MINISTRY TO CELEBRATE NATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION DAY IN DELHI.

- The Ministry of Power will celebrate the **National Energy Conservation Day** in New Delhi to showcase the achievements of the nation in energy efficiency and conservation.
- National Energy Conservation Day is celebrated on **14th December** every year.
- President Droupadi Murmu will be the Chief Guest of the event and will felicitate the winners of the National Energy Conservation and National Energy Efficiency Innovation Awards. During the event, the President will also launch **EV Yatra Portal** and Mobile application.
- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency has developed a Mobile Application to facilitate in-vehicle navigation to the nearest public EV charger, a website to disseminate information on various central and state-level initiatives to promote e-mobility in the country.
- The web portal to enable **Charge Point Operators (CPOs**) to register their charging details securely into the National Online Database.

1.49. INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS' DAY 2022:

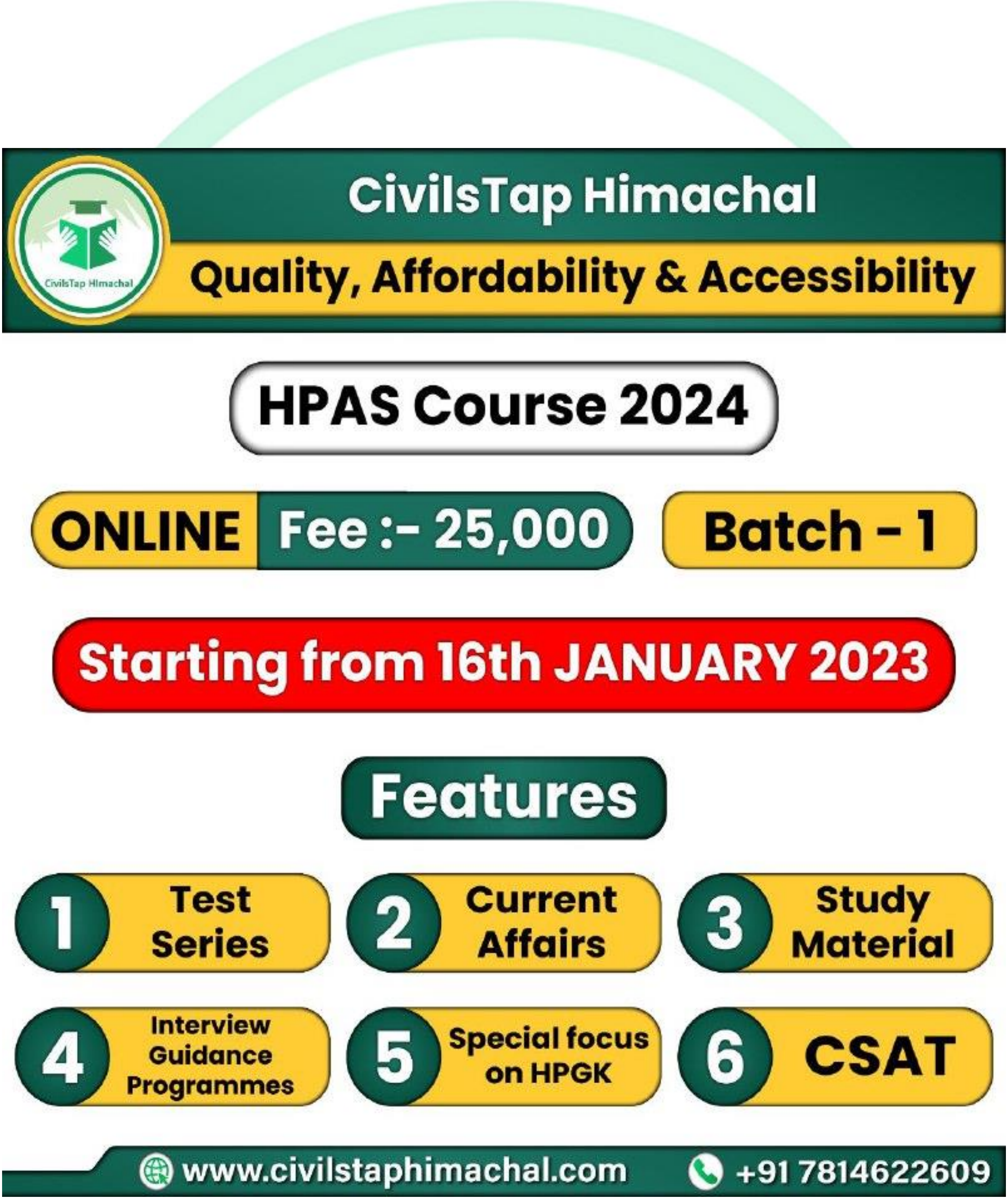
- **International Migrants Day** is observed annually on **December 18** to bring attention to the social and economic realities of migrants around the world.
- This day is observed to guarantee that the rights of migrants are equally respected and not violated. The mobility of people is still influenced by a range of factors despite the world's rapid growth and change.
- Currently, **281 million** individuals are international migrants who reside in nations other than their own.
- International Migrants Day serves as a reminder that the challenges faced by migrants in every country remain unresolved, and policymakers must continue to develop constructive and comprehensive policies to address the issue.

International Migrants Day 2022: Significance

- The day is set aside to honour the health, security, and welfare of all migrants. During the Intergovernmental Conference in December 2018, it was decided to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.
- The concepts of shared accountability, non-discrimination, and immigrant human rights are highlighted on this day. The purpose of the day is to recognise how to manage the risks associated with migration while maximising its overall benefits for individuals and communities in the countries of origin, transit, and destination.

International Migrants Day: History

- The **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** proclaimed December 18 as International Migrants Day on **December 4, 2000.**
- This special day came into existence after considering the enormous and rising number of migrants around the world. On this day in 1990, the UNGA adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.



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ART & CULTURE

ART & CULTURE

1.50. NEWSPAPERS IN MANIPUR ARE WORKING TOWARDS REPLACING THE BENGALI SCRIPT THAT'S CURRENTLY IN USE WITH MEITEI OR THE MANIPURI SCRIPT.

About:

- The Meitei script was once patronised by Meitei rulers but which fell into disuse with the advent of Hinduism and eventually disappeared.
- The earliest epigraphic record of the script is a stone inscription from Khoibu village which was erected on the orders of Meidingu Kiyamba (1467-1508).
- The Meitei Mayek or Meitei script evolved with time and this led to conflict between various proponents. The inscriptions on the coins of the 7th and 8th Century were perhaps in the 18-letter script, which, with the advent of Hinduism in the 17th century during the reign of Meidingu Pamheiba (1709-1748), was perhaps expanded to the 36-letter script.
- With the advent of Hinduism, Bengali scripts became so popular that stone inscriptions in the 18th and 19th century were in Bengali script.

Recent developments

- The Manipur Official Language Act, 1979, was enacted with the definition of Manipuri language as "Meiteilon written in Bengali script and spoken by the majority of Manipuri population"
- By an Amendment Act of 2021, the definition of "Manipuri language" was modified as "Meiteilon in Meetei Mayek and spoken by the majority of Manipur population" with a proviso that for 10 years, both the Bengali and Meitei Mayek scripts shall be allowed.

1.51. SIGNING OF MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) BETWEEN THE INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS (IGNCA), NEW DELHI AND THE CSIR-TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE DIGITAL LIBRARY (CSIR-TKDL) UNIT.

What is traditional knowledge?

- Traditional knowledge (TK) is knowledge, know-how, skills and practices that are developed, sustained and passed on from generation to generation within a community, often forming part of its cultural or spiritual identity.

About the MoU:

- The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) and the CSIR-Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (CSIR-TKDL) Unit signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi for cooperation related to digitization and inclusion of information on traditional knowledge of India from manuscripts and traditional cultural expressions.
- India is home to over two crore manuscripts containing valuable information on Indian heritage and traditional knowledge (TK). Our traditional cultural expressions (TCE) are still passed on from one generation to the next through word of mouth.
- With fewer and fewer people understanding scripts and languages of these manuscripts and our cultural expressions, the MoU between IGNCA and CSIR-TKDL Unit will facilitate efforts towards protection and preservation of the manuscript knowledge for current and future times, through inclusion of the information into the TKDL database.
- This cooperation between the Parties is also expected to enable digitization and inclusion of non-written, oral and audio-visual materials related to traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions into the TKDL.

About CSIR-TKDL:

- The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) is a pioneering Indian initiative, jointly by the CSIR and Min of AYUSH, to prevent exploitation and to protect Indian traditional knowledge from misappropriation by way of wrongful Intellectual Property Rights.

- India's rich traditional knowledge which exists in diverse languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Tamil etc. is neither accessible nor comprehensible for patent examiners at the international patent offices.
- The TKDL contains Indian traditional medicine knowledge from classical/ traditional texts related to Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Sowa Rigpa, and Yoga techniques in a digitized format and is available in five international languages (English, French, German, Spanish and Japanese) to patent examiners.
- The TKDL is accessed by 15 patent offices worldwide for search and examination of evidences related to TK in patent applications filed at their offices.
- Recently, the Cabinet, GoI approved widening of the access of the TKDL to users, beyond patent offices to stimulate R&D and innovation based on Indian TK.

About IGNCA:

- Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) is an autonomous institution under the Union Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- The organization serves as a major resource centre for the arts, especially written, oral and visual source materials.
- It also undertakes research and publication programmes of reference works, glossaries, dictionaries and encyclopaedia concerning the arts and the humanities.
- The IGNCA initiative on "mera gaon meri dharohar" is related to mapping of information at village levels related to modern and traditional practices.

1.52. MINISTRY OF CULTURE ORGANIZED DELHI INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

- **Ministry of Culture** in collaboration with Prasiddha Foundation inaugurated **Delhi International Arts Festival** at Kartavya Path with the tag-line – '**Where Bharat Meets India.**

Aim of This Festival:

- The festival aims to celebrate the great Epics, the Warriors Who Fought for Our Freedom, and the many policy decisions and schemes instituted by our Government towards **'Women Empowerment'**, towards **'Cleaning Our Holy Rivers**', towards keeping our Country '**Clean and Free from Dirt and Disease'.**

More About This:

- In the festival dance performances such as **Kathak, Odissi** along with theatre, classical musical performances and other cultural performances will be organised. A series of events and performances will be organised at various venues like **Kartavya Path India Gate Lawns, Central Vista,** Samvet Auditorium Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts Janpath, Amphitheatre Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts Janpath, etc in Delhi.

1.53. RECENTLY, SIX SITES HAVE BEEN ADDED TO INDIA'S TENTATIVE LIST OF UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES.

About:

- Three heritage sites were added to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage sites namely**; the Sun Temple at Modhera and Vadnagar town from Gujarat and rock-cut relief sculptures of Unakoti of Tripura.**
- According to UNESCO, A Tentative List is an **inventory of those properties which each nation intends to consider for nomination.**

Sun Temple of Modhera

- The Sun Temple, Modhera dedicated to Surya dev (The Sun God), is one of the remarkable gems of temple architecture in India.
- It is an exemplary model of the **Maru-gurjara architecture style** of the 11th century of western India under the **patronage of the Solanki dynasty**. The age of the temple may be inferred from its style belonging to the **reign of Bhimadeva I (1022-1063 CE).**
- It consists of the main temple shrine (garbhagriha), a hall (gadhamandapa), an assembly hall (Sabhamandapa or rangamandapa) and a sacred pool (Kunda) which is now called Ramakunda.
- This east-facing temple is **built of bright yellow sandstone**.

- Other sun temples in India are 8th century CE **Martand Sun Temple in Kashmir** and the 13th century CE **Sun temple at Konark**.

Rock-cut relief sculptures of Unakoti

- The site of Unakoti Rock-cut relief sculptures is located in the north-eastern part of Tripura, which **was built during 8th to 12th CE**.
- The vertical surface of the Unakoti hills was used by the ancient people to carve various **mythological scenes** such as the different iconographic forms of Siva, Ganesha, Uma-Maheshwara.
- The images found at Unakoti can be **classified into two categories:**
- **Majestic rock-cut images** on the vertical surface of the hill and fallen boulders.
- **Loose sculptures** of smaller and medium sizes scattered on the hill.
- **The influence of Buddhism** is also seen in the sculptures of the region. There are **various depictions of Boddhisattavas, Buddha and Buddhist motifs** also found here.
- Many images found in this area also suggest the presence of religious sects such as **Sakta, Tantric, Bajrayanis and Nathayogis.**

Vadnagar

- Vadnagar was situated at a strategic location where two major ancient trade routes crossed each other. One of them joined central India with the Sindh and further northwest regions while another connected the port towns on the Gujarat coast to northern India.
- Vadnagar town is a **multi-layered and multi-cultural mercantile settlement** with its history stretching back to nearly 8thCentury BCE.

1.54. DOKRA METAL CRAFTS

Why in News?

- Lalbazar, on the boundary with Jharkhand, is becoming a hub for dokra metalcraft.

About Dokra Metal Crafts:

- Dhokra is a form of ancient bell metal craft practiced by the Ojha metal smiths living in states like **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, West Bengal and Telangana.**
- However, the style and also the workmanship of this artisan community varies in different states.
- Dhokra or Dokra, is also known as **bell metal craft.**
- Its documented history is about **5,000 years old.**
- Making dokra art is a difficult process. Each figurine takes about a month to make.
- Dokra artifacts are mainly made in brass and are highly unique wherein the pieces do not have any form of joints. The whole object is fully handcrafted.
- The traditional designs are considered highly aesthetic in nature and a collector's delight.

What is the process?

- There are many processes involved, for which seven to eight varieties of clay is required, apart from other raw material.
- **The method of making Dokra is done by combining the metallurgical skills with that of the lost wax technique.**
- The handicrafts are known for combining the metallurgical skills with wax technique for making artefacts of distinctive look and beauty.
- The lost wax technique is a distinct form where the mould is used only once and broken, which makes the figure one of its kind in the handicraft market.
- **There are two process of lost wax casting.**
- The first one is **Solid casting which is the method followed in the South and hollow casting, practiced in other states.**

1.55. PRIVATE OPERATORS SET TO RUN FOUR ICONIC LUXURY TOURIST TRAINS.

- **Private operators are set to run four famous luxury trains of the country.**
- The four trains are **Palace on Wheels, Maharaja's Express, Golden Chariot, Deccan Odyssey.**

- Minister of Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw recently informed Parliament that **all luxury tourist trains had been brought under the ambit of the Bharat Gaurav Trains Policy.**
- **Under this policy, service providers** have **full liberty** to **decide** the **themes, itineraries** and **tariff** for the train managed by them.
- The **cumulative earnings from these four elite trains stood at Rs 19.89 crore till November of this fiscal** as against Rs 39 lakh and Rs 3.48 crore in the Covid-hit 2020-21 and 2021-22, respectively.
- In the current year (till November 30), the **Maharaja's Express**, which primarily covers Rajasthan, has made the maximum number of trips followed by the **Palace on Wheels**. While Rs 14.34 crore was earned from seven trips made by Maharajas' Express, revenue worth Rs 4.84 crore was generated from five trips made by the Palace on Wheels, yet another Rajasthan-centric luxury tourist train.
- **Golden Chariot**, which offers sightseeing in **Karnataka and Goa**, made just one trip so far this year producing revenue of Rs 70 lakh.
- **Deccan Odyssey,** which **starts from Mumbai** and has the **Ajanta** and the **Ellora Caves** among its offerings before returning to Mumbai, has not made any journey so far in this year.
- **Deccan Odyssey** remained completely idle in 2021-22 and 2020-21.

About Bharat Gaurav Trains Policy:

Objective:

- To showcase India's rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places to the people of India and the world, through Bharat Gaurav Trains (Theme- based Tourist Circuit trains).

Brief Scope of Policy:

- Indian Railways aims to leverage the core strengths of the professionals of the tourism sector to run theme based trains to tap the vast tourist potential of India.
- Under this policy, registered Service Providers shall be offered rakes consisting of ICF coaches under "Right to Use" model by Indian Railways (IR) for operations of Bharat Gaurav Trains. Service Providers shall also have the option of procurement of new coaches directly from production units through the NRC (Non Railway Customer) plan.
- The Service Provider shall have the flexibility to decide the business model including themes, routes, itinerary, tariff and other attributes connected with this model.

1.56. DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF INDIA (NAI) RECENTLY SAID THAT IT DOES NOT HAVE RECORDS OF THE 1962, 1965, AND 1971 WARS AS WELL AS THOSE RELATED TO THE GREEN REVOLUTION.

About National Archives of India (NAI):

- The National Archives of India is the **custodian of the records of enduring value of the Government of India.**
- Established on 11 March, 1891 at Calcutta (Kolkata) as the **Imperial Record Department**, it is the biggest archival repository in South Asia.
- It has a vast corpus of records viz., public records, private papers, oriental records, cartographic records and microfilms, which constitute an invaluable source of information for scholars-administrators and users of archives.
- **The Director General of Archives**, heading the Department has been given the mandate for the implementation of the **Public Records Act, 1993** and the rules made there under, the Public Records Rules, 1997 for the management, administration and preservation of public records in the **Ministries, Departments, Public Sector undertakings etc. of the Central Government.**
- Located at the heart of New Delhi, the Department functions as an **Attached Office of the Ministry of Culture**.
- The NAI keeps and conserves records of the government of India and its organisations. **It does not receive classified documents.**

1.57. THE PRIME MINISTER RECENTLY PAID TRIBUTE TO PANDIT MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA ON HIS JAYANTI AT A FUNCTION AT PARLIAMENT.

About Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya:

- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was born on December 25, 1861, in Allahabad**, Uttar Pradesh.** He is known for his contribution to **India's education system and his role in the Indian Independence movement.**
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was **given the title of 'Mahamana' or great soul by Mahatma Gandhi,** who considered him as an elder brother.
- In 2014, Pandit Malviya was posthumously conferred with **Bharat Ratna**, the country's highest civilian award.
- In 2016, the Indian Railways started the Varanasi-New Delhi Mahamana Express in the leader's honour.

Major contributions:

- **Banaras Hindu University**: He played a key role in the **Indian independence struggle** against British rule and founded **the Banaras Hindu University** (BHU) in 1916. At the BHU, he served as **Vice-Chancellor from 1919 to 1938.**
- **Hindu Mahasabha**: Malaviya was one of the early leaders of the **Hindu Mahasabha, and helped found it in 1906.** He was a social reformer and a successful legislator, serving as a member of the **Imperial Legislative Council for 11 years** (1909–20).
- **Scout and Guide:** He was also one of the **founders of Scout and Guide in India.**
- **'Satyamev Jayate':** One of the most famous slogans, **'Satyamev Jayate' was said by Pandit Malviya in the session of 1918** when he was the President of the Indian National Congress.
- **President of INC:** Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya was the President of Indian National Congress for four sessions (1909, 1913, 1919 and 1932). Pandit Malviya played a big role in the Civil Disobedience and Non-cooperation movement which were led by Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Role in media:** He was the **chairman of Hindustan Times** from 1924 to 1946 and he also founded many Hindi and English newspapers, namely: **The Leader, Hindustan Dainik, Maryada etc.**
- Malaviya espoused free and compulsory primary education, opposed the system of indentured labour in the British Empire, and supported the nationalisation of railways.

1.58. PROJECT VAANI.

- Project Vaani will be implemented jointly by the Indian Institute of Sciences (IISc), ARTPARK (AI and Robotics Technology Park), and Google to gather speech data from across India for the creation of an AI-based language model that can understand diverse Indian languages and dialects.

What is Project Vaani?

- Under Project Vaani, diverse languages used across India will be mapped by collecting speech sets of around 1 million people from 773 districts over 3 years.
- The estimated cost of this project is around 30 to 40 million USD.
- It is part of the Bengaluru-based IISc and Artpark's Bhasha AI project that includes RESPIN (Recognizing Speech in Indian languages) and SYSPIN (Synthesizing Speech in Indian languages).
- The project would involve IISc and Google recording around 1.5 lakh hours of speech, part of which will be transcribed in local scripts.
- This project uses a district-anchored approach, which involves recording local speeches by randomly selecting over 1,000 people from each district.

What are the objectives of the initiative?

- One of the main objectives of this project is the development of technologies like automatic speech recognition, speech-to-speech translation and natural language understanding.
- Its ultimate goal is to deliver a technological solution that can eliminate the linguistic barriers that are currently present in technology and increase accessibility of the technology for a wider range of people.
- Once this project is fully completed, efforts will be taken to create an artificial intelligence-based language model that can understand diverse languages and dialects used in India.
- The new model proposed under the Vaani project supports both speech and text translation. This would be a leap from the Multilingual Representations for Indian Languages (MuRIL), which only supports text-based

translation. The new model would be trained on speech and text from over 100 Indian languages, which are spoken by over 1 lakh people across India.

What is the current status of the project?

- Over the past few months, linguistic data from nearly 69 districts have been collected from across India.
- So far, over 150 hours of data have been collected, covering more than 30 languages from 841 different pin codes in a gender and age-balanced manner.

1.59. PRASAD PROJECT

Why in News

- Recently, the President inaugurated PRASAD project at the tourism facilitation centre in the pilgrim town of **Srisailam in Andhra Pradesh**.

About PRASAD scheme

- The full form of the PRASAD scheme is '**Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive'.**
- The scheme was launched in the year **2014-2015.**
- It comes under the **Ministry of Tourism.**

Aim:

  - This scheme focuses on **developing and identifying pilgrimage sites** across India for enriching the religious tourism experience.
  - It aims to **integrate pilgrimage destinations in a prioritised, planned and sustainable manner** to provide a complete religious tourism experience.
- **Funding:**
  - The Ministry of Tourism provides **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)** to state governments under the Prasad scheme to promote tourism at pilgrim sites.
  - The Central Government **will cover 100% of the costs** under this program.
  - For improved sustainability, it also includes a **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**.
- **Cities Identified Under PRASAD Scheme:**
  - Amritsar (Punjab).
  - Kedarnath (Uttarakhand).
  - Mathura (Uttar Pradesh).
  - Ajmer (Rajasthan).
  - Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh).
  - Gaya (Bihar).
  - Kamakhya (Assam).
  - Dwaraka (Gujarat).
  - Puri (Odisha).
  - Amaravati (Andhra Pradesh).
  - Kanchipuram(Tamil Nadu).
  - Velankanni (Tamil Nadu).

1.60. PRESIDENT OF INDIA LAYS THE FOUNDATION STONE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PILGRIMAGE INFRASTRUCTURE AT RAMAPPA TEMPLE.

About:

- Ramappa Temple, also known as the Rudreshwara temple, is a **Kakatiya style Hindu temple dedicated to the god Shiva**, located in Telangana.
- The medieval Deccan Ramappa Temple which dates back to 1213 AD, was built by the patronage of the **Kakatiya ruler Kakati Ganapathi Deva under the authority of his Chief Commander Rudra Samani.**
- The temple got its name Ramappa because of its chief sculptor Ramappa. Ramappa Temple is probably the only temple in India that is named after the architect.
- In 2021, the temple was inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** as "Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple, Telangana".

- **Architectural features:**
    - **Earthquake-proof**: Made out of clay mixed with acacia wood, chaff and myrobalan fruit (a family of amla), the **bricks used in building the gopuram of the temple are light enough to float on water**. Using this technique has made the temple light, meaning, in case of a natural event like an earthquake, the probability of it collapsing would be very low.
    - **Sandbox technique**: The temple construction was done using the sandbox technique. This is a technique where the foundation pit is filled with a mixture of sand-lime, jaggery and black myrobalan fruit. This mix acts as a cushion in case of earthquakes.
    - The temple's many carved pillars are positioned in such a way that when the sunlight hits these pillars. One of the pillars has a Lord Krishna carved into it. When gently hit, the **pillar produces musical notes.**

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

1.61. DIGIYATRA FACE RECOGNITION SYSTEM LAUNCHED AT 3 AIRPORTS; SCINDIA SAYS DATA STORED IN ENCRYPTED FORMAT.

- The government has launched DigiYatra which will provide a seamless entry and embarkation process for air passengers at the airports in the National Capital, Bangalore and Varanasi.
- After launching DigiYatra, which is based on facial recognition technology, at the airport in Delhi, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said data shared by the passengers will be stored in an encrypted format and in a decentralised manner.
- DigiYatra will be launched at four more airports—Hyderabad, Pune, Vijayawada and Kolkata—by March next year.
- The airlines that operate in these three airports—Delhi, Bangalore and Varanasi—are fundamentally on board, he said with respect to DigiYatra.
- It will be available for passengers taking domestic flights.
- DigiYatra app is available on Android and ioS platforms. Currently at the Delhi airport, DigiYatra will be available for passengers taking domestic flights from Terminal 3 (T3).
- Amid concerns in certain quarters about data theft and privacy issues, Scindia said the data shared for DigiYatra will be stored in an encrypted format in a decentralised manner.
- “First, we thought of a centralised system that would house all the data but then issues of privacy, data theft, rightfully came up. So, we moved to a decentralised system which would house the passenger information. on the mobile phones of every single passenger,” the minister said.
- The secured, encrypted information on a passenger’s phone can be provided to the airport from which he or she is flying out, 24 hours before the journey.
- “We have moved to a decentralised system and your data is going to be in an encrypted format and it is going to be residing only in your (passenger) mobile phone... 24 hours after your travel, that data is mandatorily going to be purged from the servers at that airport. The data you upload gets completely wiped out in 24 hours even though it is protected by blockchain technology,” the minister said.
- For availing the service, a passenger has to register their details on DigiYatra app using Aadhaar-based validation and a self-image capture. In the next step, the boarding pass has to be scanned and the credentials are shared with the airport.
- At the airport e-gate, the passenger has to first scan the bar coded boarding pass and the facial recognition system installed at the e-gate will validate the passenger’s identity and travel document. Once this process is done, the passenger can enter the airport through the e-gate.

1.62. GOOGLE LAUNCHES ANTI-MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN IN INDIA; WILL USE ‘PREBUNKING’ VIDEOS.

- Google's Jigsaw subsidiary is launching a new anti-misinformation project in India, aimed at preventing misleading information that has been blamed for inciting violence, a top executive said.
- The initiative will use “prebunking” videos – designed to counter false claims before they become widespread – circulated on the company's YouTube platform and other social media sites.
- Google's efforts to challenge the spread of misinformation mark a contrast with rival Twitter which is cutting its trust and safety teams, despite new owner Elon Musk saying it will not become a "free-for-all hellscape".
- Google recently conducted an experiment in Europe where it sought to counter anti-refugee narratives online in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- The experiment in India will be bigger in scope as it will deal with multiple local languages -- Bengali, Hindi and Marathi -- and cover diverse sections of a country populated by over a billion people.
- "This presented an opportunity to research prebunking in a non-western, global south market," said Beth Goldman, Jigsaw's head of research and development.
- Like other countries, misinformation spreads rapidly across India, mostly through social media, creating political and religious tensions.
- Indian government officials have called on tech companies such as Google, Meta, and Twitter to take stronger action against the spread of fake news.

- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) has repeatedly invoked "extraordinary powers" to block YouTube channels, and some Twitter and Facebook accounts, allegedly used to spread harmful misinformation.
- Inflammatory messages have also spread via Meta's messaging service Whatsapp, which has more than 200 million users in India. In 2018, the company curbed the number of times a message could be forwarded, after false claims about child abductors led to mass beatings of more than a dozen people, some of whom died.
- Working in collaboration with the Alfred Landecker Foundation, a pro-democracy organization based in Germany, the philanthropic investment firm Omidya Network India, and a number of smaller regional partners, Jigsaw has produced five videos in three different languages.
- After watching the videos, viewers will be asked to fill in a short multiple-choice questionnaire, designed to gauge what they have learned about misinformation. The company's recent research on the subject suggested viewers were 5% more likely to identify misinformation after watching such videos.
- The Indian initiative will focus on issues that resonate in the country, Goldman added.
- "By forewarning individuals and equipping them to spot and refute misleading arguments, they gain resilience to being misled in the future."
- Results are expected to be published in summer 2023.

1.63. TRAI DECIDES NO CHARGES TO BE LEVIED FOR SMS AND CELL BROADCAST ALERTS.

- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has decided that no charges will be levied for SMS and Cell Broadcast - Alerts or messages sent either during disaster or prior to notification of disaster or after expiry of disaster.
- TRAI took the decision considering the significance of alerts and messages sent as per direction issued under the Disaster Management Act.
- The Authority said this while issuing the Telecom Tariff order 2022 on Tariff for SMS and Cell Broadcast alerts disseminated through Common Alerting Protocol platform during disaster or non-disaster situations.
- It said, Telecom Service Providers shall broadcast messages to all the subscribers through Cell broadcast free of cost during disaster and non-disaster period.
- The Authority has also decided to prescribe Tariff of two paisa for SMS Alerts and messages sent during disaster and non-disaster situations, other than those sent as per directions issued under the Disaster Management Act.
- Earlier, the Department of Telecom has requested TRAI to provide tariff for SMS and Cell Broadcast alerts to be disseminated during disasters and non-disasters.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established with effect from 20th February 1997 by an Act of Parliament, called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997, to regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.

1.64. IIT MADRAS RESEARCHERS DEVELOP 'SINDHUJA' WHICH GENERATES ELECTRICITY FROM SEA WAVES.

- Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) Researchers have developed an 'Ocean Wave Energy Converter' that can generate electricity from sea waves. The trials of this device were successfully completed during the second week of November 2022.
- The Device was deployed at a location about 6 KM off the coast of Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, at a location with a depth of 20 metres. This device targets generating 1MW of power from ocean waves in the next three years.
- The success of this project will help fulfill several objectives such as the UN Ocean decade and sustainable development goals. India's goals include deep water missions, clean energy and achieving a blue economy. It could help India meet its climate change-related goals of generating 500 GW of electricity by 2030 through renewable energy.

- The Device is targeted towards remote offshore locations that require reliable electricity and communication either by supplying electric power to payloads that are integrated directly in or on the device or located in its vicinity as on the seabed and in the water column. The targeted stakeholders are the oil and gas, defence and security installations and communication sectors.
- IIT Madras faculty Prof. Abdus Samad, who has been working for over a decade on wave energy, leads the mission. He established a state-of-the-art 'Wave Energy and Fluids Engineering Laboratory' (WEFEL) at IIT Madras.
- His team designed and tested a scaled-down model. The lab is also researching other applications for this technology such as producing power for smaller devices for the ocean like navigational buoys and data buoys, among others.
- Highlighting the impact of this project, Prof. Abdus Samad, Department of Ocean Engineering, IIT Madras, said, "India has a 7,500 km long coastline capable of producing 54 GW of power, satisfying a substantial amount of the country's energy requirement. Seawater stores tidal, wave, and Ocean thermal energy. Among them, the harnessing of 40GW wave energy is possible in India."

Sea Trials:

- The product has been named 'Sindhuja-I,' which means 'generated from the ocean.' The system has a floating buoy, a spar, and an electrical module. The buoy moves up and down as the wave moves up and down. In the present design, a balloon-like system called a 'buoy' has a central hole that allows a long rod called a spar to pass through it.
- The spar can be fixed to the seabed, and passing waves will not affect it, while the buoy will move up and down and produce relative motion between them. The relative motion gives rotation to an electric generator to produce power. In the present design, the spar floats, and a mooring chain keeps the system in place.

1.65. JAPAN'S ISPACE LAUNCHES WORLD'S FIRST COMMERCIAL MOON LANDER.

- Japan is elated and proud of its space startup that successfully launched a spacecraft to the moon recently, marking a significant step towards what would be a historic first, both for the nation and a private company.
- This has not been an easy task and got successful after multiple delays. Additionally, what makes it unique is the fact that it is the first successful venture to the moon by a private company.

About The Mission: ispace Inc's HAKUTO-R Mission:

- It took off from Cape Canaveral, Florida. Additionally, two inspections of the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket led to two postponements, however, the mission crossed all hurdles efficiently.

Mission of Its Kind:

- What makes the mission unique is that soft landings on the moon have already been done by national space agencies of countries like Russia, China, and the United States, however, it is a new thing for a company to achieve this goal. Moreover, the mission is also a vital step taken in achieving space cooperation between Japan and the United States.

What Is HAKUTO: More About This Mission:

- HAKUTO is a term used for a white rabbit that resides on the moon, as per Japanese folklore. The ispace craft intends to deploy a tiny NASA satellite into the orbit of the moon to look for water deposits prior to its touch in the Atlas Crater.
- Additionally, the M1 lander will station two robotic rovers, a baseball-sized device from the JAXA space agency, and the four-wheeled Rashid explorer. The Rashid explorer is crafted by the United Arab Emirates.

About ispace:

- The ispace is a privately funded organization based in Tokyo. It shares a contract with NASA to ferry payloads to the lunar surface from the year 2025. It aims to create a permanently staffed lunar colony by the year 2040.

1.66. UAE SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHES FIRST-EVER ARAB-BUILT LUNAR SPACECRAFT.

- A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carried into space the first ever Arab-built lunar spacecraft. It was launched from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

- The Rashid Rover was built by Dubai's Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and is being delivered by the HAKUTO-R lander, engineered by Japanese lunar exploration company ispace.
- The mission is due to arrive at Moon around April 2023. According to Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) in Dubai on Sunday, the Rashid rover will provide 'novel and highly valued data, images, and insights,' as well as 'collect scientific data on matters relating to the origin of the solar system, our planet and life.'

1.67. WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN STEM.

Why in News?

- **Female enrolment in** Indian Institutes of Technology **(IIT)** has **increased from 8% in 2016 to 20% in 2021-2022.**
- In a written reply, Minister of State for Education Dr. Subhas Sarkar said this in the Rajya Sabha .
- To promote female students for pursuing higher education and research, University Grants Commission provides special post-graduate scholarships for girl students across the country.
- The Minister said, the **All-India Council for Technical Education** is also giving ten thousand scholarships to girls entering technical education.
- He said, there has been consistent improvement in the enrolment of female students in STEM Courses.
- As per **AISHE Report**, the number of **female students enrolled in STEM Courses** has **increased from 41 lakh 97 thousand 186 in 2016-17 to 43 lakh 87 thousand 248 in 2020-21.**

About STEM:

- The STEM acronym was **introduced in 2001** by scientific administrators at the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF).
- The organization previously **used the acronym SMET** when referring to the career fields in those disciplines or a curriculum that integrated knowledge and skills from those fields.
- It is a **curriculum based on the idea of educating students** in 4 specific disciplines — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — in an interdisciplinary and applied approach.
- **India is one of the countries** that produce the **highest number of scientists and engineers,** the growth of STEM has picked up significantly over the last few years.
- **Under Article 51A of the Constitution of India**, it is a duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Significance:

- A **robust STEM education creates** critical thinkers, problem-solvers, and next-generation innovators.
- According to the **National Science Foundation**, it is predicted that 80% of the jobs created in the next decade will require some form of math and science skills.

1.68. RECENTLY, NASA HAS LAUNCHED A SATELLITE TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF OCEANS, RIVERS AND LAKES AROUND THE WORLD.

About:

- The launched satellite is named as **SWOT (Surface Water and Ocean Topography).**
- The advanced radar satellite is designed to give an unprecedented view of the life covering 70% of the planet, shedding new light on the mechanics and consequences of climate change.
- The satellite incorporates advanced microwave radar technology which will collect surface measurements of oceans, lakes, reservoirs and rivers in high-definition details.

Partners:

- SWOT is being jointly developed by **NASA and Centre National D'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) with contributions from the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) and United Kingdom Space Agency**.

Advantages of the satellite:

- It sweeps of the planet **at least twice every 21 days,** will enhance Ocean circulation models bolster weather and climate forecasts and aid in managing scarce freshwater supplies in drought-stricken regions.
- It is equipped to observe the entire length of nearly all rivers wider than 330 feet and more than 1 million lakes and reservoirs larger than 5 acres.
- It will precisely measure fine differences in surface elevations around smaller currents and eddies, where much the oceans' drawdown of heat and carbon is believed to occur.

1.69. INDIA'S MAIDEN HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT GAGANYAAN.

Why in News?

- The Government has said, the country's maiden human space flight mission, **Gaganyaan,** is targeted **to be launched in the fourth quarter of 2024.**
- This was stated by Union Minister, Dr. Jitendra Singh in a written reply in the Lok Sabha.
- The Minister said, in view of the paramount importance of crew safety, two uncrewed flights are scheduled, before the final human space flight- 'H1 mission', to demonstrate the performance of the crew escape system and parachute-based deceleration system for different flight conditions.
- He said, uncrewed 'G1 mission' will be targeted in the last quarter of next year, followed by the 'G2' in the second quarter of 2024.
- Dr. Jitendra Singh said the astronaut designates for the Gaganyaan are identified and undergoing mission-specific training at Bengaluru.

What is Gaganyaan Mission?

- **About:**
    - Gaganyaan is a mission by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).**
    - Under the Gaganyaan schedule:
        - Three flights will be sent into orbit.
        - There will be two unmanned flights and one human spaceflight.
    - The Gaganyaan system module, **called the Orbital Module** will have three Indian astronauts, including a woman.
    - It will circle Earth at a **low-earth-orbit** at an altitude of 300-400 km from earth for 5-7 days.
- **Payloads:**
    - The payload will consist of:
        - **Crew module**: Spacecraft carrying human beings.
        - **Service module:** Powered by two liquid propellant engines.
        - It will be equipped with emergency escape and emergency mission abort.
- **Launch:**
    - **GSLV Mk III, also called the LVM-3** (Launch Vehicle Mark-3,) the three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle, will be used to launch Gaganyaan as it has the necessary payload capability.
- **Training in Russia:**
    - In June 2019, the Human Space Flight Centre of the ISRO and the Russian government-owned Glavkosmos signed a contract for the training, which includes Russian support in the selection of candidates, their medical examination, and space training.
        - The candidates will study in detail the systems of the Soyuz manned spaceship, as well as be trained in short-term weightlessness mode aboard the Il-76MDK aircraft.
        - The Soyuz is a Russian spacecraft. The Soyuz carries people and supplies to and from the space station.
        - The Il-76MDK is a military transport plane specially designed for parabolic flights of trainee astronauts and space tourists.

1.70. JAPAN FLIPS NUCLEAR POLICY, PROPOSES BUILDING NEW PLANTS

- The Fukushima disaster of 2011 soured Japan on nuclear energy, leading the island nation to rely less on atomic power and more on imported fossil fuels. But with an intent to hit net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, Japan's government has recently announced a reversal on its nuclear strategy.

- **The new policy is two-pronged**: **Firstly,** it aims to extend the lifespan of Japan's existing nuclear fleet beyond the current limit of 60 years. Its **second** object is to build new next-generation plants. These new nuclear plants -- variously called "generation 4" or "small modular reactors" -- are designed to be cheaper to build and incapable of melting down.
- Last year China became the first country to connect one, a "pebble bed" reactor, to its energy grid. These reactors encase atomic fuel within graphite balls that can withstand more heat than nuclear fission is capable of generating, theoretically making a meltdown impossible. Similar plants are being developed in the US by a company called X-Energy. Meanwhile, Bill Gates-backed TerraPower is building one of its next-gen plants in Wyoming.
- Though approved by a panel, the policy still needs to be submitted to Japan's Diet parliament. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party holds a majority in both of the Diet's two houses.
- The turnaround reflects a changing perception of nuclear power over the decades. Nuclear power is among the safest forms of power generation -- brown coal kills about 350 times as many people per terrawatt produced as nuclear, primarily through pollution -- but has been criticized for its impacts on local environments.
- As the threat of climate change looms larger, and governments attempt to live up to net-zero commitments, atomic energy has become more appealing. Building new plants is costly, especially so in the US due to a more complicated legal framework, but nuclear energy itself emits next to no carbon.
- **In the decade prior to Fukushima, Japan was getting over 40 gigawatts of power from its nuclear plants, according to the World Nuclear Association**. Following a decade of stripping back on the nuclear program, that had fallen to 18 gigawatts in 2021. The void left by nuclear energy was filled by gas and coal.
- At its peak, at the turn of the century, nuclear energy was providing 30% of Japan's electricity. That's fallen to just below 7% in 2021.
- **The strategy unveiled is part of Japan's plan to have nuclear power account for 20% to 22% of its electricity mix by 2030.**

Nuclear Energy in India:

- Nuclear power is the 4th largest source of electricity in India after thermal, hydroelectric and renewable sources of electricity.
- Approximately 2.5% of India's energy requirements are met through nuclear energy.
- India has **22 nuclear reactors** in operation in 7 nuclear power plants, having an installed capacity of 6780 MW.
- Till 2009, India was excluded from global nuclear trade as it was a non-signatory of the Nuclear Non-proliferation treaty due to its nuclear weapons program.
- This was a hindrance to the development of India's Civil Nuclear energy program.

1.71. SJVN EXPANDS FOOTPRINT IN WIND ENERGY, SECURES 100 MW PROJECT

- Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam **(SJVN),** a public sector undertaking involved in hydroelectric power generation and transmission **has won 100 MW Wind Power Project** at the rate of Rs 2.90 per unit **on Build Own and Operate basis through e-Reverse Auction.**
- SJVN participated in the tariff based competitive bidding for setting up **1200 MW Inter State Transmission System connected Wind Projects in India** (Phase -XIII) conducted by Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited.
- "The project will be developed anywhere in India through **SJVN's wholly owned subsidiary SGEL.**
- The tentative cost of the development of this **project is Rs 700 crores**.
- The project is expected to generate **262 MU in the first year of commissioning** and cumulative energy generation over a period of 25 years will be about 6574 MU," he said.

1.72. RECENTLY, RESEARCHERS AT IIT KANPUR HAVE DEVELOPED ORGANIC SOLAR CELLS UNDER THE DST-RCUK APEX PROJECT.

What is Organic Solar Cells?

- An organic solar cell consisting of a combination of an **organic polymer and PCBM (an organic semiconductor)** developed on steel substrates can potentially convert a steel roof into an energy-producing device.

Features:

- The devices consist of a blend of organic polymer PTB7 as a donor and PCBM as an acceptor.
- The devices were fabricated on opaque steel substrates with a **MoO_3/Au/MoO_3top electrode.** These electrodes offer higher optical transmission as compared to only metallic electrodes.
- The devices with multilayer electrodes showed a clear improvement in the photovoltaic performance by 1.5 times, as compared with those obtained with single-layer top metal electrodes of gold.

What is the DST-RCUK APEX project?

- It is a jointly developed programme of the Department of Science and Technology (Under the ministry of Science and Technology) and the Research Councils United Kingdom (RCUK) focussing on reducing energy demand in the built environment.

1.73. DARK PATTERNS ON THE INTERNET.

Why in News

- Some Internet-based firms have been **tricking users into agreeing** to certain conditions or clicking a few links.

About Dark Patterns

- These patterns are **unethical user interface designs** that deliberately make users' Internet experience harder or even exploit them.
- In turn, they **benefit the compan**y or platform employing the designs.
- By using dark patterns, digital platforms **take away a user's right to full information** about the services they are using and their control over their browsing experience.
- The term is credited to UI/UX (user interface/user experience) researcher and designer **Harry Brignull**, who has been working to catalogue such patterns and the companies using them since around 2010.

Use of Dark patterns

- Social media companies and Big Tech firms such as **Apple, Amazon, Skype, Facebook, LinkedIn, Microsoft, and Google** use dark or deceptive patterns to downgrade the user experience to their advantage.
- In social media, LinkedIn users often receive unsolicited, sponsored messages from influencers.

Concerns

- Dark patterns **endanger the experience of Internet users** and make them more vulnerable to financial and data exploitation by Big Tech firms.
- **Disabling** this option is a **difficult process** with multiple steps that require users to be familiar with the platform controls.
- Dark patterns **confuse users,** introduce online obstacles, make simple tasks time-consuming, and have users sign up for unwanted services/products

1.74. ARMY MAKES FIRST 3D PRINTED HOUSE FOR TROOPS.

- Embracing new technology, **the Indian Army inaugurated its first '3D' printing technology-based house for soldiers at Ahmedabad.** The unit has a ground floor and first floor configuration.
- The **Military Engineering Services (MES)** has done the construction in collaboration with a **private company MiCoB Private Limited** using the latest '3D rapid construction technology'.
- The construction work of the dwelling unit measuring 71 square metre (some 710 square yards) with garage space was completed in just 12 weeks by utilising the 3D printed foundation, walls and slabs.
- The disaster-resilient structures comply with Zone-3 earthquake specifications and green building norms.
- The 3D printed houses are symbolic of the modern-day rapid construction efforts to cater to growing accommodation requirements of the Armed Forces personnel.

- **The technique uses a concrete 3D printer that accepts a computerised three-dimensional design and fabricates a 3D structure in a layer-by-layer manner by extruding a specialised type of concrete specifically designed for the purpose.**
- Indian Army units have already started using 3D printing technology in construction of pre-casted permanent defences and overhead protection meant for operations. These structures are currently being validated over a period of one year and are incorporated in all terrains, the recent one being in Ladakh.

1.75. NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL POLICY 2022.

Why in News?

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has notified a National Geospatial Policy 2022, with the goal of making India a world leader in the global geospatial sector.

What is Geospatial Technology?

- Geospatial Technology is an emerging field of study that includes Geographic Information System (**GIS**), Remote Sensing (**RS**), and Global Positioning System (**GPS**).
- It has **applications in almost every domain of the economy** ranging from -
  - Agriculture to industries,
  - Development of urban or rural infrastructure,
  - Administration of land,
  - Economic activities of banking and finance, resources, mining, water, disaster management, social planning, delivery services, etc.
- It enables government systems, services, and initiatives to be integrated using **'location'** as a common and underpinning reference frame.
- **Geospatial data is now widely accepted** as a critical national infrastructure and information resource with proven societal, economic and environmental value.

The National Geospatial Policy, 2022:

- **Background:**
  - In 2021, the DST issued "**Guidelines for acquiring and producing Geospatial Data and Geospatial Data Services including Maps**".
  - The Guidelines deregulated the Geospatial sector by **liberalising Geospatial data acquisition/ production/ access**, with an aim to promote private sector participation through continued enhancements of Ease of Doing Business in the sector.
  - **The 2022 Policy** takes it further by laying down an overarching framework for holistic development of the Geospatial ecosystem.
  - It comes at a time when India's geospatial economy is expected to cross Rs 63,000 crore by 2025 at a growth rate of 12.8%
- **About:** It is a citizen-centric policy that seeks to strengthen the Geospatial sector to support national development, economic prosperity and a thriving information economy.

Vision and goals:

- To make India a World Leader in Global Geospatial space with the best in the class ecosystem for innovation.
- To develop a coherent national framework in the country and leverage it to move towards a digital economy and improve services to citizens.
- To develop Geospatial infrastructures, Geospatial skill and knowledge, standards, Geospatial businesses.
- To promote innovation and strengthen the national and sub-national arrangements for generation and management of Geospatial information.

Following are the milestones (2025, 2030 and 2035) in the journey towards realisation of the aforesaid vision:

- **Year 2025:** Put in place an enabling policy and legal framework that supports liberalisation of the Geospatial sector and democratisation of data for enhanced commercialization with Value Added Services.

- **National Digital Twins of India's major cities and towns by 2035:** The digital twin is a virtual replica of a physical asset, process or service that lies at the core of the new digital revolution.
- This facilitates policymakers to understand how infrastructure will function in different situations such as increase of population or during natural disasters.

Institutional framework:

- A Geospatial Data Promotion and Development Committee (GDPDC, will be a 17-member body) at the national level shall be the apex body for formulating and implementing strategies related to promotion of the Geospatial sector.
- GDPDC would replace and subsume the functions and powers of the National Spatial Data Committee (NSDC) constituted in 2006 and GDPDC constituted in 2021.

Significance:

- To make geospatial technology and data as agents of transformation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Bringing efficiency in all sectors of economy and instilling accountability and transparency at all levels of governance.

1.76. RECENTLY, U.S. DRUGMAKER PFIZER INC SAID THAT ITS EXPERIMENTAL GENE THERAPY FOR THE TREATMENT OF HAEMOPHILIA B, MET ITS MAIN GOAL IN A LATE-STAGE STUDY.

About:

- Data from the study showed that a single dose of the therapy was superior to the current standard of care in helping reduce the bleeding rate in patients with moderately severe to severe forms of hemophilia B.

What is Haemophilia?

- It is a medical condition, **mostly inherited**, in which the ability of blood to clot is severely reduced.
- This disease is caused by **a mutation in one of the genes,** that provides instructions for making the clotting factor proteins needed to form a blood clot.
- This change or mutation can prevent the clotting protein from working properly or to be missing altogether. These genes are located on **the X chromosome**.
- Men are more vulnerable to haemophilia than women. It is a rare disease where in about 1 in 10,000 people are born with it.

ECONOMY

1.77. IN 5 YRS, MOST NUMBER OF ELECTORAL BONDS SOLD IN MUMBAI, DATA SHOWS.

- In terms of sheer numbers and value, most electoral bonds sold since the introduction of the scheme five years ago have been in Mumbai, followed by Kolkata and Hyderabad, with the highest amount being enchased in Delhi, an analysis of the data acquired using the right to information act has revealed. A total of over ₹10,700 crore worth of electoral bonds have been sold so far to political parties.
- Mumbai accounted for 25.4% of the total electoral bonds sold by value at over ₹2742 crore. In the city, bonds worth ₹194.1 crore were encashed, which makes the city the sixth-highest in this respect.
- Kolkata accounted for the second-highest numbers of bonds sold, with a total value of ₹2,387 crore. In terms bonds encashed, the city stood third with ₹1,022 crore worth bonds encashed.
- Hyderabad, with bonds sold worth ₹1,885 crore, accounted for 17.47%, or the third-highest sales by value. The city stood second in terms of bonds encashed, with a total value of a little over ₹1,384 crore.
- Delhi had the fourth-highest amount of electoral bond sales by value, at ₹1,519 crore were. But the Capital was where close to two-thirds, by value, of bonds were encashed: this came to be ₹6,748 crore, or nearly 63% of all bonds encashed.
- This happens as electoral bonds are sold in a different part of the country and enchased in different part of the country," Commodore Lokesh Batra (retd), who filed the RTI application said. "Delhi is the headquarter, so mostly the bonds sold elsewhere are enchased here."
- A similar trend is seen in terms of the number (not value) of electoral bonds that have been sold in the last five years. A total of 19,520 bonds have sold so far. In Kolkata, this number was 5,788, which includes bonds worth lower than ₹1 crore value. In Mumbai, 3,870 bonds were sold, followed by Hyderabad with 2,800.
- The number of bonds of ₹1 crore denomination, the highest value for a single bond, followed the same trend as the total sales by value: Mumbai, Kolkata and Hyderabad were the top three, with 2,643, 2,152 and 1,815 of these sold respectively.
- In Gangtok, Ranchi and Srinagar, not a single electoral has been sold, even though they have authorized sale branches, the analysis adds.
- The ₹1 crore denomination accounted for 93.6% of the total bonds sold, followed by the ₹10 lakh bond (6% by value).
- The electoral bond scheme, first floated in 2017 and implemented in 2018, has since met with criticism for lacking transparency. Those opposed to it have also asserted that a large chunk of the donations has gone to the BJP, the ruling party. In 2019-20, the BJP received over 75% of the electoral bonds, according to the Election Commission data. The critics have also argued that since the bonds are sold through a government-owned bank there is a possibility that the party in power can find out who is funding their political rivals.
- Sold four times a year (in January, April, July and October) for 10 days as notified by the government; electoral bonds allow political parties to accept money from donors whose identities are kept anonymous. They are sold in multiples of ₹1,000, ₹10,000, ₹1 lakh, ₹10 lakh, and ₹1 crore.
- SBI is the sole authorised bank to sell and redeem the bonds. Customers of other banks can also purchase the bonds via different payment channels provided to them. However, a political party can only redeem the bond from one of the 29 authorized branches of the bank.
- A political party must also have at least 1% vote share in most recent general elections or assembly elections to receive donations via electoral bonds.
- A petition seeking a stay on the sale of the bonds is pending before the Supreme Court. The court is scheduled to hear the matter on December 6.
- Batra added much "ink has been spilled on opaque political funding through 'Electoral Bonds' that is affecting the conduct of 'Free and Fair' electoral process, thus weakening our democracy". "The irony' of 'EB scheme' is that while donors who buy 'Electoral Bonds' are not required to pay any service charges (commission) to SBI and even printing cost of EBs, it is the Government or ultimately, the Tax-Payers that bear this Cost - for enabling Transactions of 'Anonymous Tax-Free Funding' to Political Parties thru Opaque 'Electoral Bonds Scheme 2018'," he said.

1.78. NSWS FACILITATES OVER 44,000 APPROVALS SINCE LAUNCH.

- National Single Window System (NSWS) has facilitated over 44 thousand approvals since launch. Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a release that over 28 thousand applications are under process.
- National Single Window System currently accepts applications for 248 G2B clearances from 26 Central Ministries and Departments.
- The portal is rapidly gaining traction amongst the investors community. It was soft launched to all stakeholders and the public on the 22nd of September last year.
- NSWS was created by Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, DPIIT as per the budget announcement of creation of an Investment Clearance Cell.
- It provides a single platform to enable the identification and obtaining of approvals and clearances needed by investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses in India.

1.79. INDIA'S MANUFACTURING PMI EXPANDS AT ROBUST PACE IN NOV; EMPLOYMENT RISES FOR THE NINTH MONTH.

- India's manufacturing PMI expands at a robust pace in November; Employment rises solidly for the ninth month in a row.
- A stronger upturn in factory orders helped drive India's manufacturing industry's headline Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) higher in November, according to a private agency survey.
- The S&P Global India Manufacturing PMI highlighted a seventeenth successive expansion in manufacturing production across India, as companies responded to ongoing increases in new work intakes. As per the report, the upturn in output was sharp, above trend, and the strongest since August.
- Posting PMI at 55.7 in November, up from 55.3 in October, the seasonally adjusted PMI signalled the strongest improvement in operating conditions for three months.
- The headline figure was also above its long-run average of 53.7. The indices vary between 0 and 100, with a reading above 50 indicating an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease.
- The index is compiled by S&P Global from responses to questionnaires sent to purchasing managers in a panel of around 400 manufacturers.
- The S&P agency said firms were confident that demand would remain strong in the coming 12 months. As a result, they foresee growth of production volumes, and Sentiment improved to its highest level in close to eight years. Companies readjusted operating capacities in line with a pick-up in sales.
- Employment rose solidly, and for the ninth month in a row. The PMI is a weighted average of the five indices, namely New Orders (30%), Output (25%), Employment (20%), Suppliers' Delivery Times (15%), and Stocks of Purchases (10%). According to survey participants, demand strength and successful marketing efforts boosted overall sales.
- November data highlighted a seventeenth successive expansion in manufacturing production across India, as companies responded to ongoing increases in new work intakes.

1.80. REMITTANCE TO INDIA IS SET TO CROSS RECORD $100-BILLION MARK IN 2022.

- India is expected to receive a record $100 billion in remittance in 2022, the top recipient this year, the World Bank has said. In its Migration and Development Brief, the World Bank has said India's remittance will grow 12 per cent from 7.5 per cent last year, resulting in $100 billion flow as compared to $89.4 billion in 2021. It attributed the feat to the large share of Indian migrants earning relatively high salaries in the United States, United Kingdom and East Asia.
- However, the report has noted, "Despite reaching a historic milestone at $100 billion and retaining its position as the top recipient of remittances globally, India's remittance flows are expected to account for only 3 per cent of its GDP in 2022."

- Led by strong performances in India and Nepal, the World Bank has predicted that remittance flows to South Asia this year will grow 3.5 per cent to reach $163 billion in 2022. This is, however, a slowdown from the 6.7 per cent gain of 2021, reflecting "the impact of an amalgam of external global shocks (inflation, slowing demand) in destination and source countries alike, as well as domestic factors."
- The overall remittance growth in South Asia reflects a disparity in individual country results; while India has gained 12 per cent and Nepal 4 per cent, other countries have reported an aggregate decline of 10 per cent, the report states.
- The report also says that despite global challenges in 2022, remittances to low- and middle-income countries will grow by 5% to $626 billion.

Reasons for high remittance to India this year

- According to World Bank, there's been a "gradual shift in destinations" for Indian migrants aided by a "structural shift in qualifications" that helped them move into the "highest-income-earner-category", especially in services.
- "Higher education mapped on to high income levels with direct implications for remittance flows," the World Bank says. Migrants moved "from largely low-skipped, informally employment in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to a dominant share of high-skilled jobs in high-income countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and East Asia (Singapore, Japan, Australia, New Zealand)."
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, Indian migrants in high-income countries benefited from work-from-home and large fiscal stimulus packages, the report said. As the pandemic eased, the wage hikes and "record-high employment conditions" helped migrants send money home despite high global inflation, the report added.
- Despite Indian migrants in the Gulf Cooperation Council returning to India during the pandemic, "price support policies kept inflation at bay… and demand for labour increased with higher oil prices, which in turn increased remittances for Indian labourers."
- The report says, "Remittances to India were enhanced by wage hikes and a strong labour market in the United States and other OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development] countries. In the GCC destination countries, governments ensured low inflation through direct support measures that protected migrants' ability to remit."
- Depreciation of the Indian rupee to the US dollar — it fell 10 per cent between January and September 2022 — may have also proven to be advantageous for Indian migrants and increased remittance flows, according to the brief.
- In 2022, vaccinations and the resumption of travel helped migrants resume work, increasing remittance to the country.

What is remittance?

- The World Bank defines it as "the sum of worker's remittances, compensation of employees, and migrants' transfers as recorded in the IMF Balance of Payments. Workers remittances are current transfers by migrant who are considered residents in the source."
- Remittances are a vital source of household income for low- and middle-income countries.

Global remittance: What's predicted in 2023?

- The growth of remittance flows into South Asia in 2023 is expected to slow to 0.7 per cent. "The year will stand as a test for the resilience of remittances from white-collar South Asian migrants in high-income countries," the report notes.
- Remittance flows in India, specifically, are predicted to decrease due to inflation and an economic slowdown in the United States. Decline in economic growth in the GCC coupled with a fall in oil prices will further pull remittance flows down to all South Asian countries, the report states.

1.81. THE RESERVE BANK OF INDIA (RBI) RECENTLY ANNOUNCED A FOUR-TIERED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR CATEGORISATION OF URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANKS (UCBS).

About:

- According to RBI, such framework is needed to balance the spirit of mutuality and co-operation more prevalent in banks of smaller sizes and those with limited area of operation vis-a-vis the growth ambitions of the large-sized UCBs and undertake more complex business activities.
- Based on size of deposits of the UCBs, **the four-tiered regulatory framework** will come into force with immediate effect.
- The extant regulatory framework classifies UCBs into two tiers – Tier I and Tier II.
    - The RBI has categorised all unit UCBs and salary earners' UCBs (irrespective of deposit size), and all other UCBs having deposits up to ₹100 crore in **Tier 1.**
    - **In Tier 2**, it has placed UCBs with deposits more than ₹100 crore and up to ₹1,000 crore.
    - **Tier 3** will cover banks with deposits more than ₹1,000 crore and up to ₹10,000 crore.
    - UCBs with deposits more than ₹10,000 crore have been categorised in **Tier 4.**
- **Net worth and capital adequacy:**
    - RBI also has come out with norms pertaining to the net worth and capital adequacy of these banks.
    - **Tier 1 UCBs** operating in a single district should have minimum net worth of ₹2 crore.
    - **For all other UCBs (in Tier 1, 2 and 3) tiers),** the minimum net worth should be ₹5 crore.
    - The UCBs, which currently do not meet the revised minimum net worth requirement, will have to achieve the minimum net worth of ₹2 crore or ₹5 crore (as applicable) in a phased manner.
- **Minimum capital to risk weighted assets ratio:**
    - The central bank also prescribed minimum capital to risk weighted assets ratio requirement for UCBs.
    - **Tier 1 UCBs** have to maintain a minimum capital to risk weighted assets ratio of 9 per cent of Risk Weighted Assets (RWAs) on an ongoing basis.
    - **Tier 2 to 4 UCBs** have to maintain a minimum capital to risk weighted assets of 12 per cent of RWAs on an ongoing basis.

1.82. NSE LAUNCHES NEW NIFTY BHARAT BOND INDEX.

- The National Stock Exchange's subsidiary NSE Indices has said it has launched one more index under the Nifty Bharat Bond Index series.
- The Bharat Bond Index series follows a target maturity date structure wherein each index in the series measures the performance of a portfolio of 'AAA' rated bonds issued by government owned entities maturing in a specific year.
- Nifty Bharat Bond Index — April 2033 - has been launched within the Nifty Bharat Bond Index series, a release said on Thursday.
- In December 2019, NSE Indices launched the first two indices in the Bharat Bond Index with maturities in April 2023 and April 2030, and in July 2020, further two indices with maturities in April 2025 and April 2031 were launched.
- "The upcoming Bharat Bond ETF which is sixth in the Bharat Bond ETF series will track the newly launched Nifty BHARAT Bond Index maturing in 2033. The first Bharat Bond ETFs tracking the Nifty Bharat Bond indices were launched in December 2019.

1.83. RESERVE BANK OF INDIA RAISES REPO RATE BY 35 BASIS POINTS.

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has hiked the policy repo rate - for a fifth consecutive time - by 35 basis points to 6.25 %.
- The key interest rate has been hiked a total of 190 basis points - by 50 basis points thrice since June, and once by 40 basis points - during an off-cycle meet in May. The central bank increased the rate after inflation continues to stay above its tolerance band.
- Governor Shaktikanta Das, delivering the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) announcements, said that the FY23 real GDP forecast had been lowered to 6.8%, which is 0.1% lower than the revised estimates released by the World Bank yesterday.
- In addition, the RBI has maintained a FY23 Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation forecast at 6.7%. Shaktikanta Das said he expects inflation to moderate as the winter harvest comes in.

- He further said that the RBI is ready to undertake liquidity operations to inject liquidity, but it will for durable signs of turn in liquidity cycle. He said the Rupee resilient and stable, but there is a need to focus on orderly evaluation of the exchange rate. He said forex exchange reserves have gone up by USD 36.7 Billion.
- The RBI chief hailed the Indian economy's performance in the face of global challenges like the war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, and underlined that it is the fastest growing in Asia this year.

1.84. DECRIMINALISATION OF OFFENCES UNDER GST.

Why in News

- Recently, the 48th GST Council meeting was held which recommended decriminalising certain offences under Section 132 of the Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) Act, 2017**.**
    - **There were also some other recommendations which included for the facilitation of trade, include an increased threshold of the amount of tax for prosecution, reducing the compounding amount in GST etc.**

What was previously criminalised under GST?

- **Tax evasion:**
    - Since the implementation of GST, there has been a significant increase in tax evasion with numerous cases of taxpayers using multiple strategies to avoid indirect tax coming to light.
    - Tax authorities are actively using technology and data from e-way bills and GST returns to check evasion.
        - The GST law establishes stringent penalties and guidelines that taxpayers must abide by to ensure smooth intrastate or interstate trade of goods and to combat corruption and maintain an effective tax collection system.
- **The GST Law provides for two different types of penalties:**
    - **Monetary fines:** The department authorities have the authority to impose monetary fines and the seizure of goods as penalties for violating statutory provisions.
    - Criminal penalties include imprisonment and fines, which are also provided by GST Law, but which can only be awarded in a criminal court following a prosecution.
- **Sections 122 to 131 of the CGST Act of 2017**
    - It contains provisions relating to penalties, while Sections 132 to 138 contains provisions relating to prosecution and compounding.
    - The amount of tax evaded, the amount of Input Tax Credit (ITC) improperly claimed or used, or the amount of refund improperly claimed determines the length of the prison sentence.
- **Cognisable and non-cognisable offences:**
    - The section further divides offences into those that are cognisable and bailable and those that are not cognisable and bailable.
    - It is observed that many non-compliances fall under both categories of penalties, prosecution, and compounding.

Offences under GST law which attract IPC and CrPC provisions

- **Under the CGST Act:**
    - Criminal conspiracy: If a group of two persons or more agree to commit an illegal act like tax evasion, fraud etc. they are held liable under the act of criminal conspiracy.
        - Section 120A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) defines criminal conspiracy.
        - Section 120B deals with punishment for it.
        - Section 46 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) deals with how the arrest is made.
- **Section 69 of the CGST Act** provides the power to arrest a person by an order of a commissioner when he believes that a person has committed any offence under Section 132.
- **Section 67 of CrPC** states that if a summons is issued outside the local authority, a duplicate copy of that summons should be sent to the Magistrate of that outside authority to serve the summons.
- **Section 165 of CrPC** deals with the search by the police officer.
- **Section 67 of the CGST Act** defines that only an officer not below the rank of joint commissioner can authorise in writing an inspection or search.

What are the recommendations of the 48th GST Council meeting

- **It has recommended various measures to decriminalise the GST offences such as:**
    - Raising the minimum threshold of tax amount for launching prosecution under GST from one crore to two crore, except for the offence of issuance of invoices without supply of goods or services or both.
    - Reducing the compounding amount from the present range of 50 to 150% of the tax amount to the range of 25 to 100%.
    - Decriminalising certain offences specified under Section 132 of the CGST Act, 2017 such as obstructing or preventing any officer from doing his duties, deliberate tempering of material evidence and failure to supply information.

1.85. GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX

Why in News

- Recently, the **Members of the European Union agreed** in principle to implement a minimum tax of 15% on big businesses.
    - The global corporate minimum tax was approved at the **G20 Leaders Summit in Rome in 2021.**

Background

- **136 countries** had agreed on a plan to redistribute tax rights across jurisdictions and **enforce a minimum tax rate of 15%** on large multinational corporations in 2021.

What is Global Minimum Tax?

- **Meaning:** It is a proposal to impose a minimum rate of taxation on corporate income in most countries of the world by international agreement.
    - The agreement established a two-pillar solution revising tax rules to address profit shifting and tax base erosion caused by tax avoidance practices.
- **OECD's Plan:** EU members have agreed to implement a minimum tax rate of 15% on big businesses in accordance with Pillar 2 of the global tax agreement framed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
    - **Pillar 1** of the OECD's tax plan, on the other hand, tries to address the question of taxing rights.
- **Governments will be equipped to impose additional taxes** in case companies are found to be paying taxes that are considered too low.

What is the need for a global minimum tax?

- **Decreasing taxes:** Corporate tax rates across the world have been dropping over the last few decades because of competition between governments to spur economic growth through greater private investments.
    - Global corporate tax rates have **fallen from over 40% in the 1980s to under 25% in 2020.**
- **Race to the bottom:** The OECD's tax plan tries to put an end to this race to the bottom which has made it harder for governments to shore up the revenues required to fund their rising spending budgets.
- **Deteriorating Fiscal Health:** The minimum tax proposal is particularly relevant at a time when the fiscal state of governments across the world has deteriorated as seen in the worsening of public debt metrics.

Significance of the move

- **Boost global tax revenues:** It is estimated that the minimum tax rate would boost global tax revenues by $150 billion annually.
- **Ending tax havens:** This is to ensure that big businesses with global operations do not benefit by domiciling themselves in tax havens to save on taxes.
    - Large multinational companies have traditionally paid taxes in their home countries even though they did most of their business in foreign countries.
- **Taxing rights:** The OECD plan tries to give more taxing rights to the governments of countries where large businesses conduct a substantial amount of their business.
- **Countries both within and outside the cartel** will have the incentive to boost investments and economic growth within their respective jurisdictions by offering lower tax rates to businesses.

1.86. RBI GOLD BONDS

Why in News

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced the Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2022-23 – Series III.

What are Gold Bonds?

- Gold bonds are government securities denominated in grams of gold.
- They are substitutes for holding physical gold. Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity.
- The bond is issued by the RBI on behalf of the government.
    - While the tenor of bonds is eight years, it can be redeemed after five years.

Benefits

- These bonds offer a superior alternative to holding gold in physical form.
- The risks and costs of storage are eliminated.
- Investors are assured of the market value of gold at the time of maturity and periodical interest.
- It's free from issues like making charges and purity in the case of gold in jewellery form.
- The bonds are held in the books of the RBI or in Demat form eliminating the risk of loss.

1.87. RECENTLY IFSCA AND THE COUNCIL ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT AND WATER (CEEW) HAVE SIGNED A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU). THE MOU BETWEEN THESE TWO ORGANISATIONS WILL HELP MUTUAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION IN THE AREA OF SUSTAINABLE FINANCE.

What is IFSCA?

- It is a **statutory authority** established under the **International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019 ("IFSCA Act").**
- **Mandate:** To develop and regulate the financial products, financial services, and financial institutions in the International Financial Services Centres ('IFSC').
- The IFSCA aims to develop a strong global connection and focus on the needs of the Indian economy as well as to serve as an international financial platform for the entire region.
- Before the establishment of IFSCA, the domestic financial regulators, namely, RBI, SEBI, PFRDA and IRDAI regulated the business in IFSC.
- **GIFT-IFSC** is the maiden IFSC in India.

Who are the Members of the IFSCA?

- The International Financial Services Centres Authority consist of **nine members**, appointed by the central government.
- They will include the chairperson of the authority, a member each from the **RBI, SEBI, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority, and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority.**
- Two members from the Ministry of Finance. In addition, two other members will be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee.
- **Term:** All members of the IFSC Authority will have a **term of three years**, subject to reappointment.

1.88. FOREX RESERVES OF INDIA.

Why in News?

- **Forex reserves decline $571 mn to $563.5 bn**
- After rising for five consecutive weeks, India's forex kitty dropped USD 571 million to USD 563.499 billion for the week ended December 16, according to RBI data released on 23rd December 2022.
- In October 2021, the country's foreign exchange kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 645 billion.
- Foreign Currency Assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, decreased USD 500 million to USD 499.624 billion during the week to December 16, as per the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

- Expressed in dollar terms, FCA includes the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased USD 150 million to USD 40.579 billion, it said.
- The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) jumped USD 75 million to USD 18.181 billion. The country's reserve position with the IMF also rose USD 4 million.

Foreign Exchange Reserves:

- Foreign exchange reserves are assets held on reserve by a central bank in foreign currencies, which can include bonds, treasury bills and other government securities. It needs to be noted that most foreign exchange reserves are held in US dollars.
    - **India's Forex Reserve include:**
        - Foreign Currency Assets
        - Gold reserves
        - Special Drawing Rights
        - Reserve position with the **International Monetary Fund (IMF).**
- **Objectives of Holding Forex Reserves:**
    - Supporting and maintaining confidence in the policies for monetary and **exchange rate** management.
    - Provides the capacity to intervene in support of the national or union currency.
    - Limits external vulnerability by maintaining foreign currency liquidity to absorb shocks during times of crisis or when access to borrowing is curtailed.

Special Drawing Rights

- The SDR is an **international reserve asset**, created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries' official reserves.
- The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF. Rather, it is **a potential claim on the freely usable currencies of IMF members**. SDRs can be exchanged for these currencies.
- The value of the **SDR is calculated** from a weighted basket of major currencies, **including the US dollar, the euro, Japanese yen, Chinese yuan, and British pound.**
- The interest rate on SDRs or (SDRi) is the interest **paid to members on their SDR holdings.**

1.89. CENTRE FOR ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS RESEARCH (CEBR)

Why in News?

- The Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), a British consultancy, has said **India's will become third largest economy by 2035** from the current fifth spot.
- In its annual World Economic League Table, the Centre for Economics and Business Research said that over the next five years, India's annual rate of GDP growth is expected to average 6.4 percent after which growth is expected to average 6.5 percent in the subsequent nine years.
- CEBR also adds that by **2037, world gross domestic product will be doubled as developing economies will catch up with the richer ones.**
- The shifting balance of power will see the East Asia and Pacific region account for over a third of global output by 2037, while Europe's share shrinks to less than a fifth.
- It said on the other hand, the global economy will face recession in 2023 mainly due to rises in interest rates by the central banks to arrest higher inflation.
- In its **annual World Economic League Table**, it said global **economy surpassed 100 trillion Dollar for the first time in 2022**, but will stall in 2023 as policy makers continue their fight against soaring prices.

About Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR)

- The **Centre for Economics and Business Research** is an economic consultancy based in London, United Kingdom.
- CEBR supplies economic forecasting and analysis to private firms and public bodies. It provides a range of economic services, including economic impact studies, macroeconomic forecasting, policy research, and general economic strategy and consultancy

History

- CEBR was founded in 1992 by Douglas McWilliams, a former Chief Economic Adviser to the Confederation of British Industry and Chief Economist for IBM (UK) and later Gresham College professor of commerce.

Structure

- **Forecasting and Thought Leadership**
  - The Forecasting and Thought Leadership team delivers forecasts of the British and global economies. The team is also responsible for delivering a range of economic tracker reports, such as the Irwin Mitchell UK Powerhouse Report, and the Asda Income Tracker.
- **Economic Advisory**
  - The Economic Advisory team covers areas such as economic impact analysis, economic simulations, policy analysis, market sizing and valuations. Cebr has provided economic advisory to various industries, including tech, energy, maritime, financial services, international trade, manufacturing, engineering, and the arts.
- **Environment, Infrastructure and Local Growth**
  - The Environment, Infrastructure and Local Growth team has provided analysis for transport planning and other areas of policy and strategy, including digital connectivity, and housing.

World Economic League Table.

- Since its first publication in 2009, CEBR's World Economic League Table (WELT) has provided a yearly measure of the comparative economic success of the countries of the world. It regularly receives global coverage upon its release every Boxing Day (26 December)

1.90. RECENTLY, INDIA AND ADB SIGN A $125 MILLION LOAN TO IMPROVE URBAN SERVICES IN TAMIL NADU.

About:

- The Government of India and the ADB signed a $125 million loan to develop climate-resilient sewage collection and treatment, and drainage and water supply systems in three cities in the state of Tamil Nadu.
- The financing is the third and the last tranche of the $500 million multi-tranche financing facility (MFF) for the Program approved by ADB in 2018 to build priority water supply, sewerage, and drainage infrastructure in strategic industrial corridors across 10 cities in the state. The tranche 3 loan covers **Coimbatore, Madurai, and Thoothukudi**.
- This financing will help ensure universal access to basic water and sanitation services and improve resilience against floods in the project target areas which are also the industrial hubs of Tamil Nadu

What is ADB?

- It is a regional development bank established on **19th December 1966**.
- It envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
- **Headquarters:** Manila, Philippines.
- **Members:** 68 members, 49 from within Asia.
- Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by the USA, because Japan is one of the largest shareholders of the bank, and the president has always been Japanese.
- ADB is an official **United Nations Observer.**

1.91. NATIONAL STOCK EXCHANGE OF INDIA (NSE INDIA) RECENTLY RECEIVED AN IN-PRINCIPLE APPROVAL FROM THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (SEBI) TO SET-UP SSE AS A SEPARATE SEGMENT.

What is SSE?

- SSE is a novel idea in India, and a stock exchange of this kind is intended to **benefit the private and non-profit sectors by directing more capital to them.**
- During her Budget speech for the fiscal year 2019–20, Finance Minister first proposed the concept of SSE. **The Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956** was then invoked by the government, which subsequently published a gazette notification announcing a new security as "zero coupon zero principal".

- The SSE will **function as a distinct division of the current stock exchanges** under the new regulations.

Who can list on SSE?

- Not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) and for-profit social enterprises with social intent and impact as their primary goal will be eligible to participate in the SSE.
- The social enterprises will have to engage in a social activity out of 16 broad activities listed by the regulator.
- The eligible activities include-
    - Eradicating hunger poverty, malnutrition and inequality
    - Promoting healthcare, supporting education, employability and livelihoods
    - Gender equality empowerment of women and lgbtqia communities
    - Supporting incubators of social enterprise.
- Corporate foundations, political or religious organisations or activities, professional or trade associations, infrastructure companies, and housing companies, with the exception of affordable housing, **will not be eligible to be identified as social enterprises.**
- According to Sebi's framework, **minimum issue size of ₹1 crore and a minimum application size for subscription of ₹2 lakh are currently required for SSE.**

1.92. SEBI PROPOSES REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR INDEX PROVIDERS.

About:

- Markets regulator Sebi proposed a framework for index providers, aimed at improving transparency and accountability in governance and administration of the financial benchmarks or indices in the domestic securities market.
- The index provider shall be a legal entity incorporated under the Companies Act in the country of origin and should have a minimum net worth of Rs 25 crore.
- The proposed regulation shall apply to **index providers of both domestic and foreign.**
- The index providers must be assessed by independent external auditors to evaluate **adherence to International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO)** principles once in two years.

What is IOSCO?

- Established in 1983, it is the international body that brings together the world's securities regulators and is recognized as the global standard-setter for the securities sector.
- It works intensively with the G20 and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) on the global regulatory reform agenda.
- There are three categories of members: **Ordinary, Associate and Affiliate**.
- Recently, **the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)**has become an **associate member** of this organisation.

DEFENCE

1.93. INDIAN COAST GUARD CONDUCTS 24TH NATIONAL OIL SPILL DISASTER CONTINGENCY PLAN AND PREPAREDNESS MEETING IN CHENNAI.

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG) conducted the 24th National Oil Spill Disaster Contingency Plan (NOS-DCP) and Preparedness Meeting in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on November 30, 2022. Director General, ICG Shri VS Pathania, who is the Chairman of NOS-DCP, chaired the meeting.
- About 100 delegates, including representatives of various Ministries, Central and State Government departments and agencies, State Pollution Control Board, Ports and Oil Handling Companies participated. National capabilities with the common aim to ensure collective preparedness to respond to any oil and chemical spill contingency in Indian waters were reviewed.
- In his address, Shri VS Pathania stated that ICG is prepared to deal with threats to the region and its resources, including marine oil and chemical spill at sea. He stressed that as new vulnerabilities continue to emerge, the stakeholders must recognise the opportunity to enhance cooperation through stronger partnerships, effective coordination and imbibing best practices of the developing technology.
- Presently, as the third largest importer of crude, India receives a large volume of oil through ships. Similarly, it stands sixth in the world as major chemical importer country.
- Both oil and chemicals if spilled pose inherent risks to the maritime zones of India and the connected coastlines housing large coastal population, marine ecosystem, industries and various installations along with supporting tourism industry.
- Therefore, preventive measures by the Central Coordinating Agency, Ports, Ship Owners, Oil Handling Facilities, Coastal States and other concerned stakeholders are required to be taken to prepare for any likely marine spill.

1.94. INDIAN ARMY TRAINS KITES & DOGS TO BRING DOWN ENEMY DRONES.

- Facing threat of drones from across the Himalayas, the Indian Army has trained kites and dogs who work as a team to prey on enemy drones. The use of two trained animals was demonstrated during the ongoing exercise “Yudh Abhyas” between India and the US. The Army created a situation to test a trained kite and a dog. The dog used its sensory skills to identify the location of a drone and, subsequently, the kite was launched to bring it down.
- Though multiple automated drone-kill options are being tried out, the kite-dog combination has the capability to tackle the menace of drones coming from across the border into Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Several cases have been reported where drones coming from Pakistani side have dropped consignments of drugs, guns and money in J&K and Punjab.
- The 18th edition of the India-US joint training exercise “Yudh Abhyas” commenced at Auli, Uttarakhand, two weeks ago. The scope of the exercise involves exchanges and practices on a wide spectrum of combat skills, including combat engineering and employment of counter-UAV techniques.
- The scope of the field training exercise includes validation of integrated battle groups, force multipliers, establishment and functioning of surveillance grids, validation of operational logistics, mountain warfare skills, casualty evacuation and combat medical aid in adverse terrain and climatic conditions.
- The exercise is conducted annually between India and US with the aim of exchanging best practices, tactics, techniques and procedures between the armies of the two nations. The previous edition of the exercise was conducted at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska, US, in October 2021.
- US Army soldiers of 2nd Brigade of the 11th Airborne Division and Indian Army soldiers from the Assam Regiment are participating in the exercise.

1.95. INDIAN COAST GUARD COMMISSIONS ADVANCED LIGHT HELICOPTER MK-III SQUADRON; REFLECTS SELF-RELIANCE IN FIELD OF HELICOPTER MANUFACTURING.

- In a major boost to further strengthening the Coast Guard Region East, 840 Sqn (CG), an Indian Coast Guard Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Mk-III squadron, was commissioned by DG Shri VS Pathania at ICG Air Station, Chennai on November 30, 2022.
- The commissioning of 840 Sqn (CG) is indicative of the leap towards self-reliance in the field of helicopter manufacturing, in line with the government's vision of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. It will provide a major fillip to the abilities of the Indian Coast Guard in the security sensitive waters off Tamil Nadu and Andhra region.
- The ALH Mk-III helicopters, indigenously manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), features state-of-the-art equipment including advanced RADAR as well as Electro optical sensors, Shakti engines, full glass cockpit, high-intensity search light, advanced communication systems, automatic identification system as well as search-and-rescue homer.
- This feature enables the helicopter to undertake maritime reconnaissance as well as carry out search and rescue at extended ranges while operating from ships, both by day and night.
- The aircraft has the ability to switch roles from an offensive platform with a heavy machine gun to that of a benign one carrying a Medical Intensive Care Unit to facilitate the transfer of critically ill patients.
- A total of 16 ALH Mk-III aircraft have been inducted into the Indian Coast Guard in a phased manner and four of these aircraft are positioned in Chennai. Since induction, the squadron has flown over 430 hours and conducted numerous operational missions.

1.96. JOINT EXERCISE AGNI WARRIOR WITH SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES CONCLUDES AT DEVLALI (MAHARASHTRA)

- The 12th Edition of Exercise Agni Warrior, a bilateral exercise between the Singapore & Indian Army, which had commenced on 13 November 2022 concluded at Field Firing Ranges, Devlali (Maharashtra) on 30 November 2022. Exercise Agni Warrior, involved showcasing joint firepower planning, execution and use of New Generation Equipment by the Artillery arm of both armies.
- Exercise also included participation by both sides in a joint computer war-game as part of joint planning process. Both sides utilised niche technology and Artillery Observation Simulators as part of joint training phase. Expert academic discussions were conducted on modern trends in Artillery and refinement of Artillery planning process. Indigenously manufactured Artillery guns and howitzers also participated during the final phase of the exercise.
- The exercise achieved its aim of enhancing mutual understanding of drills & procedures and improving interoperability between the two armies. The closing event was witnessed by Mr Wong Wie Kuen, High Commissioner of Singapore to India & Lieutenant General S Harimohan Iyer, Commandant, School of Artillery along with other dignitaries from Singapore & serving officers from both armies.

1.97. INDIAN NAVY SHIPS KOCHI, KAVARATTI AND SUMEDHA PARTICIPATING IN IFR-22 AT COX'S BAZAR, BANGLADESH.

- Indian Navy ships Kochi, Kavaratti and Sumedha arrived in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh to participate in the maiden International Fleet Review (IFR) being conducted by the Bangladesh Navy (BN).
- The ships are taking part in a variety of activities being conducted as a part of BN IFR-22 from 06 to 09 December 2022.
- IFR-22 is being conducted by BN this year, to commemorate the Birth Centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Bangladesh.
- The Chief Guest for the Fleet Review scheduled was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mrs Sheikh Hasina.
- The visiting Indian Navy ships Kochi, Kavaratti and Sumedha are the latest indigenously designed and developed guided missile stealth Destroyer, anti submarine Corvette and Off-shore Patrol Vessel

respectively. INS Kochi is a part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet based at Mumbai, whilst INS Kavaratti and INS Sumedha form part of the Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam.

- All three ships are equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors, carry multi-role helicopters and symbolise India's warship building capabilities, keeping in line with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

1.98. THE 39TH EDITION OF INDIA-INDONESIA COORDINATED PATROL (IND-INDO CORPAT) BETWEEN THE INDIAN NAVY AND THE INDONESIAN NAVY IS BEING CONDUCTED.

About:

- India and Indonesia have been carrying out CORPATs **twice a year since 2002.**
- **Aim**: Keeping the vital part of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) safe and secure for commercial shipping, international trade and conduct of legitimate maritime activities.
- CORPATs help build understanding and interoperability between navies, and facilitate institution of measures to prevent and suppress Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, drug trafficking, maritime terrorism, armed robbery and piracy.
- It helps to enhance the operational synergy by exchange of information for prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and for conduct of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations at sea.
- As part of Government of India's vision **SAGAR** (Security And Growth for All in the Region), Indian Navy has been proactively engaging with countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to enhance maritime security in the region.

1.99. SPECIAL COMMITTEE IN MHA TO MONITOR USE OF MODERNISATION FUNDS BY PARAMILITARY FORCES.

- **The Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) are now required to submit a monthly progress report to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on the utilisation of modernisation funds to ensure optimal use of the taxpayers' money.**
- A high-level committee has been set up in the Police Modernisation (PM) division of MHA which will monitor the reports on a quarterly basis. The committee is chaired by the Joint Secretary (PM) and has the Inspectors General (Provisioning) of all CAPFs and Director (Finance) in the MHA as members.
- For proper monitoring of the progress of Modernisation Plan-IV for the optimum utilisation of funds, detailed scheme guidelines have been issued on May 25, 2022.
- In the scheme guidelines, a monitoring framework has been prepared which stipulates that the PM Division will carry out detailed review of progress of Modernization Plan-IV on quarterly basis.
- CAPFs would provide a monthly progress report to the PM division by 5th of every month," states an action taken report on the demands for grants (2022-23) of the MHA laid in Parliament by the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.
- The first review of fund utilisation status in CAPFs under Modernization Plan-IV was done on August 25, according to the report.
- A **Management Information System (MIS)** would also be developed to monitor activities of this plan.
- The Modernisation Plan-IV for CAPFs, which is in continuation of the Modernisation Plan-III, has a duration from February 2022 to March 2026, with a total financial outlay of Rs 1,523 crore. It is aimed at improving the overall operational efficiency and preparedness of these forces to address the challenges being faced on the borders as well as in different theatres affected by left-wing extremism, terrorism, insurgency and communal unrest.
- **The CAPFs include** the Border Security Force(**BSF**), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police(**ITBP**)and Sashastra Seema Bal(**SSB**), which are the border guarding organisations, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Central Industrial Security Force (**CISF)**, which are meant for internal security duties, the Assam Rifles (**AR**), a paramilitary force that has a dual responsibility of guarding the border with Myanmar and internal security duties in the northeast, and the National Security Guard**(NSG**), which is a specialist counter-terrorism force.
- **The combined strength of all CAPFs is about 10 lakh personnel.**
- These forces function under the administrative control of the MHA, which is responsible for their annual budget and provisioning of grants for modernisation or other special purposes as required.

- In an earlier report, the committee on Home Affairs had pointed out under-utilisation of funds by over 50 per cent by the CISF and the AR under the Modernisation Plan-III. The committee had recommended that MHA should closely monitor the progress of Modernisation Plan-IV and review the remedial measures at regular intervals to make necessary changes to it, as and when required, so that the funds for the purpose are optimally utilised.
- In its report the committee observed that CISF and AR are having better plans for optimum utilisation of funds under this scheme. "CISF and AR explained their respective action plan for FY 2022-23 for procurement of all items approved under this scheme and assured to utilise the allocated funds by the end of this financial year.

1.100. 6TH EDITION OF INDO - KAZAKHSTAN JOINT TRAINING EXERCISE -KAZIND-22 TO BE CONDUCTED AT UMROI (MEGHALAYA) FROM DECEMBER 15

- The **6th edition of Indo - Kazakhstan** joint training exercise -**KAZIND-22** will be conducted at Umroi (**Meghalaya**).
- The exercise will enhance the level of defence cooperation between the Indian Army and the Kazakhstan Army which will further foster the bilateral relations between the two nations.
- Kazakhstan Army soldiers comprising troops from the Regional Command, and South and Indian Army soldiers from the **11 Gorkha Rifles** will be participating in the exercise.
- The **aim of the exercise** is to build positive military relations, imbibe each other's best practices and promote the ability to operate together while undertaking counter-terrorist operations, under a UN peace enforcement mandate.
- This joint exercise will enable the two armies to train, plan and execute a series of combined tactical drills for neutralising threats.

1.101. SURYA KIRAN: 16TH EDITION OF INDO-NEPAL JOINT ARMY TRAINING EXERCISE BEGINS.

- **Nepal and India** are all set to conduct the **16th edition of Surya Kiran**, the joint military training exercise between the two South Asian nations, from 16th December 2022.
- The exercise, which will focus on counter-terrorism, martial arts, humanitarian aid, natural disasters, environmental protection, will take place at the **Integrated Military Training Centre in Saljhandi, Rupandehi district, Nepal.**
- According to the Nepal Army, the **Surya Kiranis a 14-day long joint training** based on counter-insurgency operations in the jungle and mountainous terrain.
- The forces share their experiences drawn from several counter-insurgency operations during the exercise.
- Both armies familiarize themselves with each other's weapons, equipment, tactics, techniques and operating procedures in a counter-insurgency environment.
- As many as 350 army personnel will take part in the joint exercise from both sides, according to the Nepal Army. It will conclude on December 29.
- **The joint exercise first started in 2011.**
- The **15th edition of Surya Kiran** had taken place on September 20, 2021, in **Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand**.

1.102. INDIA SUCCESSFULLY CARRIES OUT NIGHT TRIALS OF NUCLEAR-CAPABLE ''AGNI-FIVE MISSILE''

- India has successfully conducted night trials of nuclear-capable ballistic missile Agni V, capable of striking targets at ranges up to 5,000 kilometers with very high degree of accuracy.
- The missile test firing was conducted from APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the Odisha coast at around 5.30 pm yesterday.
- This was the latest test in the Agni missile series. According to defence sources, the test was carried out to validate new technologies and equipment on the missile that are now lighter than before.

About Agni-V

- **Agni-5 is an ingeniously built** advanced surface-to-surface ballistic missile developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).

- It is a **fire-and-forget missile**, which cannot be stopped without an interceptor missile.
- The **Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)** is the **brain-child** of **Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam**, who aimed at making the country self-sufficient in the field of missile technology.
- **The program had five missiles P-A-T-N-A, Prithvi, Agni, Trishul, Nag, and Akash.**

1.103. INSV TARINI TO PARTICIPATE IN 50TH EDITION OF CAPE TOWN TO RIO RACE 2023

- INSV Tarini has set sail for an expedition to Cape Town, South Africa for participating in the 50th edition of Cape to Rio Race 2023. This ocean sailing race will be flagged off from Cape Town on 2nd January, 2023 and will culminate at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
- The race is one of the most prestigious Trans-Atlantic Ocean races. The expedition is being undertaken by an Indian Navy crew of five officers including two women officers.
- During the expedition while transiting from Goa to Rio de Janeiro via Cape Town and back, INSV Tarini would be covering a distance of almost 17000 nautical miles.
- The crew, over a period of 5-6 months in this trans-oceanic voyage is expected to face extreme weather and rough sea conditions of the Indian, Atlantic and the Southern oceans.
- The expedition aims to train the crew onboard, in essential seamanship skills including Navigation, Communication, Technical and Planning. The expedition is an important milestone in training of the two women officers onboard for undertaking solo circumnavigation sailing expedition of the globe.
- INSV Tarini is known for circumnavigating the globe with an all-women officer crew in the historic expedition titled 'Navika Sagar Parikrama' in 2017.

1.104. PROJECT 75: INDIGENOUS CONSTRUCTION OF SIX SUBMARINES OF SCORPENE DESIGN

Why in News?

- The fifth Scorpène submarine, Vagir of Project - 75 Kalvari Class submarines has been delivered to the Indian Navy by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai.

About Project 75:

- Project-75 includes the indigenous construction of six submarines of Scorpene design. These submarines are being constructed at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai, under collaboration with Naval Group, France.
- INS Kalvari, the first of the Scorpene-design submarines built by MDL in collaboration with the French Naval Group (earlier DCNS), was commissioned in December 2017. Khanderi, Karanj and Vela - the 2nd, 3rd and 4th boats under this project – were commissioned in September 2019, December 2020 and December 2021 respectively.
- The delivery of the Vagir also starts the countdown to the conclusion of Project 75. Vagsheer, the sixth and final boat under this programme to build a new line of diesel-electric submarines, is under sea trials and is expected to be handed over to the Indian Navy within a year.

More About submarines:

- A 30-year submarine building plan for the Indian Navy was approved in 1999 to build 24 submarines under two production lines. This programme is running way behind schedule. Issuance of an estimated Rs 42,000 Crore tender for the second line of six submarines to be produced under Project 75 (I) has undergone repeated delays. India aims to build the Project 75(I) submarines under the ambitious Strategic Partnership Programme, in which Indian shipyards will bid for the contract in technical collaboration with a foreign partner.
- The Indian Navy submarine arm is now equipped with seven Russian-origin Kilo class submarines (Sindhughosh class), four German-designed HDW submarines (Shishumar class) and five of the French-designed Scorpenes (Kalvari class), besides one Arihant class nuclear deterrence submarine (SSBN).
- The Chinese PLA Navy is reported to operate at least 60 submarines while the Pakistan Navy has a fleet of eight submarines.

1.105. INDIAN NAVY LAUNCHES INS ARNALA; FIRST SHIP OF ASW SWC PROJECT.

- **Arnala, the first ship of the ASW SWC Project**, being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers, **GRSE for the Indian Navy was launched on December 20 at Kattupalli, Chennai.**
- The **Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC)** corvettes, are a class anti-submarine warfare vessel currently being built for the Indian Navy, by Cochin Shipyard (CSL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE).
- She made her first contact with the water of the Bay of Bengal at 1040 hrs at the launch ceremony graced by Rasika Chaube, Financial Adviser, Ministry of Defence.
- In keeping with the Naval maritime tradition, Ms Chaube **launched the ship to the chanting of invocation from Atharva Veda.**
- The ship has been named Arnala to signify the strategic maritime importance accorded to the island of Arnala located about 13 Km north of Vasai, Maharashtra by the great Maratha warrior, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- **The contract for building eight ASW SWC ships was signed between Defence Ministry and GRSE, Kolkata in April 2019.**
- **Arnala class of ships will replace the Abhay class ASW Ships of the Indian Navy** and are designed to undertake anti-submarine operations in coastal waters and Low Intensity Maritime Operations including subsurface surveillance in littoral waters.
- **The ASW SWC ships will have over 80 per cent indigenous content**, ensuring that large-scale defence production is executed by Indian manufacturing units. It will generate employment and capability build up within the country.

1.106. IDEX REACHES MILESTONE WITH SIGNING OF ITS 150TH CONTRACT.

- Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), the flagship initiative of Department of Defence Production, has reached a milestone with the signing of its 150th contract in New Delhi on December 21, 2022.
- The contract relates to an Indian Navy project of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC 7) SPRINT edition.
- The challenge was titled ‘Expendable Mobile Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Training Target (EMATT) capable of simulating the sound and movement of a submarine’ and the winner was Altair Infrasec Pvt Ltd, Pune.
- The Challenge envisaged development of a training target capable of being deployed from P8I aircraft, MH60R helicopters, ships doing speed up to 10 knots and other Remotely Piloted Aircraft without undertaking any modification on the platform from which the EMATT is required to be launched.

About iDEX framework:

- The iDEX framework was launched by the Prime Minister in 2018 with the objective to provide a platform of co-creation and co-development in the defence sector, engage start-ups and develop defence and aerospace set up in the country.
- The iDEX is being implemented by Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO), established under Department of Defence Production.

1.107. PRALAY — INDIA’S FIRST TACTICAL QUASI-BALLISTIC MISSILE, A STEP TOWARDS OWN ROCKET FORCE.

- The decision by the Defence Ministry to procure indigenous short-range ballistic surface-to-surface (SRBM) missile Pralay, a conventional weapon that has become ready for induction in just seven years, gives Indian military the heft to its war-fighting capabilities.
- **The missile will be India’s first tactical quasi-ballistic missile** and will give the armed forces the capability to hit enemy positions and key installations in actual battlefield areas.

- **Pralay, along with the BrahMos** supersonic cruise missile, will form the **crux of India's planned Rocket Force** — a concept that was **envisaged by former Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the late General Bipin Rawat.**
- Only conventional missiles would come under the planned Rocket Force as and when it's ready, while nuclear weapons would continue to be under the ambit of the Strategic Forces Command.
- The **Pralay missile project was sanctioned in 2015** and is a derivative of the Prahaar missile programme, which was first tested in 2011.
- Pralay was formed through elements from multiple missile programmes that include the K-series of submarine-launched ballistic missiles and the ballistic defence shield programme.
- The canisterised Pralay missile, with a range of 150-500 kilometres, has been developed according to the specifications and requirement of the Army, which was looking to arm itself with a tactical conventional missile that could be used on the battlefield.
- Incidentally, both China and Pakistan have tactical ballistic missiles.

What makes Pralay deadly?

- The **Indian missile can be compared to China's Dong Feng 12** and the Russian Iskander missile that has been used in the ongoing war with Ukraine.
- The **US Army** is in the process of increasing the range of a similar short-range ballistic missile called the **Precision Strike Missile (PrSM).**
- **What makes Pralay deadly** is that it is a quasi-ballistic weapon, which means that while **it has a low trajectory and is largely ballistic**, **it can manoeuvre in flight**. It has been designed to evade interceptor missiles.
- Ballistic missiles are initially powered by a rocket or series of rockets in stages, but then follow an unpowered trajectory that arches upwards before descending to reach its intended target at high speed.
- Unlike intercontinental ballistic missiles that exit the Earth's atmosphere, short-range ballistic missiles stay within it.
- Pralay would eventually be part of the Rocket Force, which will also include the BrahMos as well as the Smerch and indigenous Pinaka multi-barrel missile launchers, besides a few other systems that are being built.
- Pralay is powered with a solid propellant rocket motor and multiple new technologies and, according to sources, accuracy is a highlight of this missile.
- It is capable of carrying a conventional warhead of about 350 kg to 700 kg, which gives it a deadly punitive capability.
- It can carry a high explosive preformed fragmentation warhead, penetration-cum-blast (PCB) and runaway denial penetration submunition (RDPS).

What was the need for a ballistic missile when there is already a cruise missile whose range can be shortened for use in a battlefield?

- **Both have their own distinct advantages.** While BrahMos has high agility, stealth and even loitering capability, Pralay has the advantage of speed and countering it is a difficult task, even for modern air defence systems.

1.108. RECENTLY UNION HOME MINISTER LAUNCHED 'PRAHARI' APP FOR BORDER SECURITY FORCE (BSF) JAWANS.

About:

- BSF 'Prahari' app is a great example of Proactive Governance, now Jawans can get personal and service-related information, housing, Ayushman-CAPF and leave related information on their mobile.
- Other features of the app include:
  - Availability of Bio Data
  - Grievance redressal on "Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System" (CP-GRAMS)
  - information on various welfare schemes.

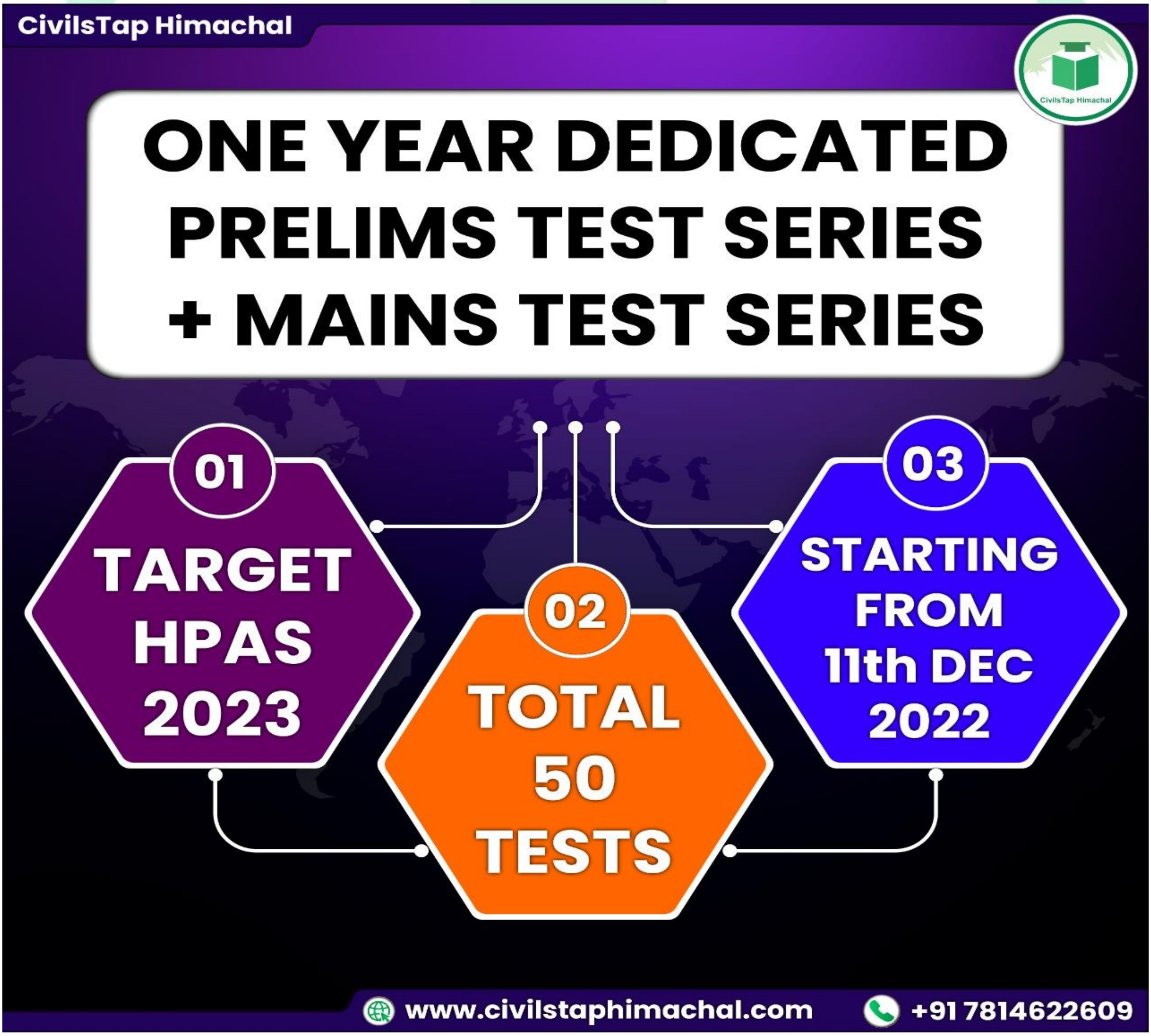
- The app will also connect the Jawans with the portal of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Border Security Force (BSF)

- It is India's border guarding organisation on its border with **Pakistan and Bangladesh.**
- It is one of the seven **Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF)** of India, and was raised in the wake of the 1965 war on 1 December 1965.
- It comes under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- BSF contributes its personnel every year for UN Missions.

1.109. INDIAN COAST GUARD CONCLUDES MAIDEN CONTRACT FOR 10 MULTICOPTER DRONES.

- The Indian Coast Guard has concluded **maiden contract for ten multicopter drones** to boost marine surveillance and interdiction capabilities.
- This is in consonance with Government’s policy of embracing drone technology.
- Defence Ministry said these drones are capable of being launched from ships whilst underway, as well as shore stations.
- These drones are going to assist in search and rescue, both by day as well as night. **The Coast Guard plans to induct one hundred additional drones by 2025.**
- This will meet the growing challenges in India’s Maritime Zones and Search and Rescue Region.



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INDEX AND REPORTS

1.110. INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN SPACE COOLING TO BE $1.5TN BY 2040 IN INDIA: WORLD BANK REPORT.

- According to the World Bank report, Market potential and investment opportunities in space cooling will be $1.5 trillion by 2040 in India. Therefore, it would be imperative for the government to create an adequate enabling investment framework that can attract financing from the private sector.
- The report titled "Climate Investment Opportunities in India's Cooling Sector" further estimated that by 2050, 45 per cent of the country's peak electricity demand in 2050 is expected to come from space cooling alone.
- This will require sizeable investments in creating costly peak generating capacity and result in a significant increase in greenhouse gas emissions unless suitable low-energy alternatives are available to meet thermal comfort needs in buildings, the report noted.
- India is experiencing higher temperatures every year. By 2030 over 160-200 million people across the country could be exposed to lethal heat waves annually, the report said in its finding.
- Around 34 million people in India will face job losses due to heat stress-related productivity decline.
- The current food loss due to heat during the transportation is close to $13 billion annually. By 2037, the demand for cooling is likely to be eight times more than current levels.
- This means there will be a demand for a new air-conditioner every 15 seconds, leading to an expected rise of 435 per cent in annual greenhouse gas emissions over the next two decades, the study revealed.
- "India's cooling strategy can help save lives and livelihoods, reduce carbon emissions, and simultaneously position India as a global hub for green cooling manufacturing," said Auguste Tano Kouame, the World Bank's country director in India.
- The report further noted that sustainable cooling can also support India's development and help in a green Covid-19 recovery by creating jobs and boosting the economy.

1.111. 690 MN INDIANS TO USE 5G ON MOBILES BY 2028: REPORT

- According to the latest 'Ericsson Mobility report, 5G will represent around 53 per cent of mobile subscriptions in India by 2028, with 690 million users.
- 5G subscriptions in India are expected to reach around 31 million by the end of this year, as telecom providers like Jio and Airtel continue to roll out 5G services across the country.
- Average data traffic per smartphone in the country is projected to grow from 25GB per month in 2022 to around 54 GB per month in 2028, according to the latest 'Ericsson Mobility Report'.
- The smartphone subscriptions in India as a percentage of total mobile subscriptions are expected to grow from 77 per cent this year to 94 per cent in 2028.
- 4G subscriptions are expected to peak in India in 2024 at around 930 million, and from there, will decline to an estimated 570 million by the year 2028, the report mentioned.
- "5G will play a crucial role in achieving India's digital inclusion goals especially for bringing broadband to rural and remote homes," said Nitin Bansal, Head of Ericsson India and Head of Network Solutions for South east Asia, Oceania and India, Ericsson.
- Enhanced mobile broadband (eMBB) and fixed wireless access (FWA) are expected to be the early use-cases for 5G in India, "which will help address the concern of the limited fixed broadband penetration levels in the country and improve the data experience while on the move," Bansal added.
- The average data traffic per smartphone in the India region is the highest globally at the moment.
- Total mobile data traffic in the India region is estimated to grow from 18 EB per month in 2022 to 53 exabyte (EB) per month in 2028, growing at a CAGR of 19 per cent, said the report.
- Global 5G subscriptions remain on track to top one billion by the end of this year, and five billion by the end of 2028, despite current and developing economic challenges in many parts of the world.

- On 5G, about 110 million subscriptions were added globally between July-September 2022, bringing the total to about 870 million globally.

1.112. UKIBC'S 'DOING BUSINESS IN INDIA' REPORT 2022.

- UK India Business Council released the eighth edition of the 'Doing Business in India' Report.

About the 'Doing Business in India' Report 2022

- 'Doing Business in India' Report 2022 was released by the UK India Business Council (UKIBC). Its findings are based on a survey of 111 UK businesses and higher education institutions. It is consistent with the 7 previous surveys that were conducted each year from 2015 to 2021. Their purpose is to assess the views and experiences of UK businesses and higher education institutions in India's business environment.
- The findings of the 2022 report were shared with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) – the nodal department for promoting ease of doing business in India – and with the Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation, which is responsible for supporting investors in the state.

The key findings of the report

- Maharashtra was rated the highest among the Indian states in terms of the operating environment. Other top performers are Gujarat, Chandigarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh.
- The reforms most desired by UK businesses are improving turnaround time of approvals and bureaucratic processes. Simplification of the GST processes and increasing regulatory certainty also received large vote shares as the most desired reforms.
- The Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative is seen by more than 67 per cent of surveyed businesses as an opportunity to do more trade and investment in India. 33 per cent of the businesses see this initiative as a hurdle, raising concerns about the prioritization of local goods and manufacturing over international alternatives.
- The requirement to transfer intellectual property is seen as an issue by the UK business. These businesses are looking for improved investor protection, regulatory certainty and IP protection and processes.
- The strong elements that are supporting business operations in India are telecommunication facilities, skilled labour force and availability of supply chain.

1.113. AIR POLLUTION SECOND LARGEST CAUSE OF DEATH & DISABILITY IN BANGLADESH: WORLD BANK.

- Air pollution was the second largest cause of death and disability in Bangladesh and cost about 3.9 to 4.00 percent of the country's GDP, said Danden Chan, the acting World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- According to a World Bank report released on Sunday, December 4, air pollution caused the death of between 78,000 to 88,000 thousand people in Bangladesh in 2019.
- The report finds that major construction sites and persistent traffic have the highest level of pollution in Dhaka. At these sites, the fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which is considered most hazardous to health, is on average 150 percent above the WHO Air Quality Guidelines (AQG), which is equivalent to smoking about 1.7 cigarettes per day.
- The second highest concentration of PM2.5 levels is found near brick kilns in Greater Dhaka, which is 136 percent above the WHO AQG – equivalent to smoking 1.6 cigarettes per day.
- In Bangladesh, Dhaka is the most polluted division while Sylhet is the least polluted. From 2018 to 2021, Dhaka was ranked as the second most polluted city in the world. The western regions (Khulna and Rajshahi) are more polluted than the eastern ones (Sylhet and Chattogram).
- In the Dhaka division, in addition to local pollution sources, up to one-fifth of the total PM2.5 concentration comes from transboundary sources, says the report.
- Air pollution also affects mental health. Depression is most reported in locations with major construction and persistent traffic. The study finds that a one percent increase in exposure to PM2.5 above the WHO AQG is associated with a 20 percent higher probability of being depressed.

- Exposure to high levels of air pollution significantly raises the risks of breathing difficulties, cough, lower respiratory tract infections, as well as depression, and other health conditions. Children under five years, the elderly, and people with comorbidities such as diabetes, heart or respiratory conditions, are most vulnerable, says the World Bank report.
- Addressing air pollution is critical for the country's sustainable and green growth and development. Through analytical work and new investments, the World Bank is helping Bangladesh reduce air pollution, said Dandan Chen, Acting World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

1.114. PAKISTAN RANKS ATOP LIST OF 82 NATIONS MOST INFLUENCED BY CHINA: TAIWAN-BASED RESEARCH ORGANISATION.

- **The China Index**, a database **relaunched** by **Doublethink Labs, a Taiwan-based research organisation** has ranked **Pakistan atop a list of 82 other nations** around the world and said that its links and dependency on China with regard to foreign and domestic policy, technology, and the economy make it particularly susceptible to Chinese influence.

Objective of this Index:

- A major goal of this Index is to raise awareness around the world about the different aspects of Chinese influence and what that can actually look like.

Parameters used in the Compilation of this Index:

- **It** has **nine Parameters to monitor influence around the world**, which includes the following:
- Higher education
  1. domestic politics
  2. economic ties
  3. foreign policy
  4. military cooperation
  5. media
  6. technology
  7. cultural links.
  8. law enforcement

Ranking of Countries:

- **Following Pakistan, Cambodia and Singapore are listed at the second spot while Thailand at third position.**
- South Africa and Peru are tied at the fifth spot on the index.
- The Philippines is listed at the seventh spot.
- Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are at the eighth and ninth spots on the index. These two countries share a border with China's Xinjiang Province and are the Central Asian countries most influenced by Beijing.
- Malaysia lies in the 10th position.
- Kyrgyzstan ranks in the 10th place while Kazakhstan holds the 15th spot.
- Germany is the highest-ranked European country at 19th spot while the United States leads North America in the 21st position.
- Uzbekistan is listed at the 24th spot while Turkmenistan which sells a large portion of its natural gas to China is listed at the 45th position.
- The United Kingdom is in the 27th spot on the index and is ranked as the second-highest European country.
- **This time, the database involved 82 nations, however, DoubleThink Labs plans to expand it in the future, particularly across Africa.**

1.115. SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX (SPI)

Why in News?

- Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM) will release the Social Progress Index (SPI) for states and districts of India on December 20, 2022.

About Social Progress Index (SPI):

- SPI is a comprehensive tool intended to be a holistic measure of the Social Progress made by the country at the national and sub-national levels.
- The report has been prepared by **Institute for Competitiveness,** headed by Dr Amit Kapoor and the **Social Progress Imperative,** headed by Michael Green.
- It was mandated by **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister of India.**

What is the objective of the SPI?

- The report aims to provide a systematic account of the social progress made at all levels in the country with state and district-wise rankings and scorecards.
- The report also sheds light on the achievements of the districts that have performed well on the index and the role of the states in achieving social progress.
- A special section of the report provides an analysis of the Aspirational Districts of India, leading to a broader understanding of the social progress at the grassroots level.
- The report will act as a critical enabler and tool for policymakers in the coming years for achieving sustained socio-economic growth.

Components:

- SPI assesses the performance of states and districts on three dimensions of social progress: **Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. Within each dimension, there are four components.**
- The **dimension of Basic Human Needs** assesses the performance of states and districts in terms of Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Personal Safety and Shelter.
- The **dimension of Foundations of Wellbeing** evaluates the progress made by the country across the components of Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Quality.
- The **dimension of Opportunity** focuses on aspects of Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education.

1.116. INDIA JUMPS FROM 7TH TO 3RD GLOBAL RANKING IN SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS.

- India has jumped from 7th to 3rd global ranking in scientific publications.
- According to the report of National Science Foundation (NSF)'s Science & Engineering Indicators 2022 of the United States, India's scholarly output has increased from 60,555 papers in 2010 to 1,49,213 papers in 2020.
- India now ranks **3rd in terms of number of PhDs in science** and **engineering.**
- The number of patents granted to Indian scientists at **India Patent Office (IPO)** during the last three years has also increased from **2511** in **2018-19** to **4003** in **2019-20** and **5629** in **2020-21.**
- The **National Science Foundation** is an **independent agency** of the **United States** government that **supports fundamental research** and **education** in all the **non-medical fields of science and engineering.**

About Controller General of Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks

- The Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks (CGPDTM) is located at Mumbai.
- The Head Office of the Patent office is at Kolkata and its Branch offices are located at Chennai, New Delhi and Mumbai.
- The Trade Marks registry is at Mumbai and its Branches are located in Kolkata, Chennai, Ahmedabad and New Delhi.
- The Design Office is located at Kolkata in the Patent Office. The Offices of The Patent Information System (PIS) and National Institute of Intellectual Property Management (NIIPM) are at Nagpur.
- The Controller General supervises the working of the Patents Act, 1970, as amended, the Designs Act, 2000 and the Trade Marks Act, 1999 and also renders advice to the Government on matters relating to these subjects.
- In order to protect the Geographical Indications of goods a Geographical Indications Registry has been established in Chennai to administer the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registrationand Protection) Act, 1999 under the CGPDTM.

1.117. PUDUCHERRY, LAKSHADWEEP AND GOA ADJUDGED BEST PERFORMERS AMONG STATES/UTS IN SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX,2022.

- **The Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister (EAC-PM) along with Institute for Competitiveness and Social Progress Imperative today released the Social Progress Index (SPI) for States and Districts of India as mandated by the EAC-PM.**
- **Puducherry, Lakshadweep, and Goa stand out as the best-performing States** in the index. The **top three performing districts** are **Shimla** in Himachal Pradesh, **Solan** in Himachal Pradesh, and **Aizawl** in Mizoram.
- Puducherry has the highest SPI score of 65.99 in the country, attributable to its remarkable performance across components like Personal Freedom and Choice, Shelter, and Water and Sanitation. Lakshadweep scored 65.89 and Goa closely follow with 65.53. Jharkhand and Bihar scored the lowest.
- For the dimension of Basic Human Needs, Goa, Puducherry, Lakshadweep, and Chandigarh are the top four States with the best performance in Water and Sanitation and Shelter as compared to the other States and Union Territories. Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, and Goa have emerged as the best-performing States for the Foundations of Wellbeing.
- The index assesses States and districts based on 12 components across three critical dimensions of social progress - Basic Human Needs, Foundations of well-being, and Opportunity.
- **The index uses an extensive framework comprising 89 indicators at the State level and 49 at the district level.**
- SPI is a comprehensive tool that can serve as a holistic measure of a country's social progress at the national and sub-national levels.

1.118. RECENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT &HIGHWAYS (MORTH) RELEASED THE ANNUAL REPORT 'ROAD ACCIDENTS IN INDIA 2021'

About:

- As per the report, there were 4,12,432 unfortunate incidences of road accidents during 2021 which claimed 1, 53,972 lives and caused injuries to 3, 84,448 persons.
- This report has been developed by reporting, management, claim processing and analysis of road accident data by **using the Integrated Road Accident Database (iRAD) system.**

What is iRAD?

- It is an initiative of **the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** and is **funded by World Bank**, to improve road safety in the country.
- This will facilitate road accident data collection by 4 stakeholder departments; Police, Transport, Highways and Health Departments.
- Through a collection of road accident data from all over the country, a road accident database will be developed. The collected data will be analysed using different data analytics techniques for the identification of accident-prone areas and the causes of the accidents.
- The analysis output will be represented in appropriate dashboards, access to higher authorities of stakeholder departments and MoRTH. And accordingly, a strategy will be formed for the reduction of the number of road accidents in India and to enhance road safety.

1.119. SATARK NAGRIK SANGATHAN' (SNS).

Why in News?

- 'Satark Nagrik Sangathan' (SNS) has prepared the '**Report Card** on the **Performance** of **Information Commissions in India, 2021-22.**

About Satark Nagrik Sangathan' (SNS).

- Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) or Society for Citizens Vigilance Initiatives (SCVI), **set up in 2003,** is a citizens' group with a mandate to promote transparency and accountability in government functioning and to ensure active participation of citizens in governance.

- SNS creates awareness about the **Right to Information Act, 2005** and seeks to enable citizens' participation in governance by using the RTI law to obtain information about the various activities of the government.

Facts from this Report:

- Nearly 60% information commissioners were retired government officials. "Merely 10% of all commissioners across India have been women and at present no information commission is headed by a woman.
- Low disposal rates and vacancies in commissions are leading to a large backlog of cases and long waiting time for information seekers.
- The **number of appeals and complaints pending on June 30, 2022 in the 26 information commissions, from which data was obtained, stood at 3.14 lakh."**
- **Penalty was imposed in just 3% of the cases disposed of by Information Commissions**," said the report on the performance of the 29 information commissions set up under the RTI Act across India.
- The SIC (State Information Commission) of **Tamil Nadu** was found to have the **worst performing IC** (Information Commission) **in terms of responsiveness under the RTI Act** furnishing only 14% of the information sought.
- **Maharashtra SIC** with an alarming backlog of nearly 1,00,000 (one lakh) had the **highest number of appeals/complaints pending** as of June 30, 2022.
- The estimated waiting time for disposal of a new case in West Bengal SIC was found to be 24 years & 3 months," said the report released by Anjali Bhardwaj on Thursday.
- In **Odisha and Maharashtra SICs, estimated time for disposal was more than 5 years.** The assessment shows that 12 commissions would take one year or more to dispose of a matter.
- Most of the information- including regarding the number of appeals and complaints dealt with by the IC, details of penalty imposed & compensation awarded- was denied (by Tamil Nadu IC) stating that the information could be provided only "after getting the approval of the State Legislative Assembly", though no such provisions exist in the RTI Act.
- Large number of cases being returned by ICs- Several ICs were found to be returning a very large number of cases without passing any orders. The CIC, UP SIC and Andhra Pradesh SIC returned around 40% of the appeals/complaints received by them.
- Several commissions have an **extremely low rate of disposal per commissioner**. For instance, the SIC of West Bengal had an **annual average disposal rate of 222 cases per commissioner** -- each commissioner effectively disposing of less than one case a day -- even though more than 10,000 cases were pending.
- **Of all the 29 information commissions, only the CIC has adopted a norm regarding the number of appeals/complaints to be disposed of by each commissioner in one year.**
- Many commissions are functioning at reduced capacity and without a Chief due to governments not filling vacancies in a timely manner. SICs of Jharkhand and Tripura are completely defunct as no new commissioners have been appointed upon the incumbent's demitting office.

Shortcomings highlighted by Report in the functioning of Information Commissions across India.

- Large backlogs
- Tardy disposal rate and
- Lack of diversity in the composition of information commissions.

SUMMITS

1.120. NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CEMENT AND BUILDING MATERIALS (NCB) TO ORGANIZE 17TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CEMENT, CONCRETE AND BUILDING MATERIALS.

- National Council for Cement and Building Materials (NCB), a premier R&D institute under Administrative Control Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India, is organizing 17th International Conference on Cement, Concrete and Building Materials.
- This year's theme of the conference is **"Moving towards Net Zero Carbon Emission".**
- Shri Anurag Jain, Secretary to Government of India, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry will inaugurate the international conference on 06th December 2022.
- Further in Concluding Session on 09th December,2022, Shri Som Prakash, Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India will be presenting the National Awards for Energy Efficiency, Environmental Excellence, Circular Economy and Total Quality Excellence in Indian Cement Industry.
- The biennial event is being organized this year from 6-9 December, 2022 at Manekshaw Centre, New Delhi. These conferences have emerged as a single largest event in this part of the globe, in which the cement and construction industry all over the world look forward to participation.
- The forthcoming conference has received overwhelming response from various industrial sectors, Government, academia, machinery manufacturers & consultants from India and across the globe.
- Besides panel discussions and keynote addresses from eminent speakers from industry and academia, about 150 technical papers shall be presented close to 20 technical sessions. More than 80 leading equipment manufacturers and service providers of India and the world, will also showcase their technological prowess, new products and services in a Technical Exhibition, in sync with conference.
- NCB's areas of work span over the entire spectrum of cement manufacturing and usage – starting with geological exploration of raw materials through the processes, the machinery, the manufacturing aspects, energy and environmental considerations to the final utilization of materials in actual construction, third party quality assurance services of construction projects, condition monitoring & rehabilitation of buildings and structures.
- It serves as the nodal agency for providing the Government the necessary support for formulation of its policy and planning activities related to growth and development of cement and construction industry.
- It is devoted to protect the interests of consumers of cement and concrete in the country. NCB's stakeholders are Government, Industry and Society, who perceive NCB's role as discharging national responsibility, providing adequate technology support and improving the quality of life respectively.

1.121. 4-DAY G20 SHERPA MEET BEGINS IN UDAIPUR; TO DISCUSS TECH TRANSFORMATION, GREEN DEVELOPMENT.

- The first Sherpa meeting under India's G20 presidency began in Udaipur, that would give New Delhi the opportunity to put the agenda of developing countries before the leaders' summit next September.
- India's Sherpa Amitabh Kant set the tone for the meeting by flagging issues such as charting the path for inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth, accelerating the pace of creating better livelihood and improving healthcare and quality of life as the world recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We are passing through massive geopolitical crisis. We have seen the breakdown of global supply chains, countries suffering from rising debt and the huge crisis of climate action and climate finance," Kant said addressing a side-event on Sustainable Development Goals at the first G20 Sherpa Meeting here.
- Earlier, in an informal chat with reporters Kant said the presidency of G20 has given an opportunity to India to place the issues of the developing countries on the agenda of the multilateral forum.
- Earlier, we used to get agenda items from the developed world. Now, we get to set the agenda for the G20 meeting. We will tell the world that we are the mother of democracy," Kant said.

- The discussion during the four-day meeting will focus on economics and finance with the International Monetary Fund making a presentation on the global economic scenario, Kant sharing India's priorities before his G20 counterparts, Department of Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth highlighting the priorities of the finance track.
- Leaders of G20 member nations, nine guest countries -- Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and the UAE -- and representatives of international organisations are attending the four-day meeting in this scenic lake city.
- Issues such as technological transformation, green development, spotlighting women-led development, accelerating implementation of SDGs, and facilitating inclusive and resilient growth have been flagged by India as part of its agenda for the G20 presidency.
- The Sherpa meetings will work towards building consensus on key cross-cutting issues, which will be discussed in the various G20 work streams for inclusion in the Leaders' Declaration, which will be tabled at the G20 Summit in New Delhi next year, Kant said.
- The Sherpas, personal emissaries of the G20 leaders, will oversee the negotiations to arrive at a consensus on key issues facing the world. There are 13 different working groups identified as Sherpa Tracks including the one on Disaster Risk Resilience and Reduction introduced by India for its presidency.
- The working group on Disaster Risk Resilience and Reduction is important as G20 countries have a high level of exposure to disaster risk.
- The working group is expected to encourage collective work by the G20, undertake multi-disciplinary research and exchange best practices on disaster risk reduction.
- During the meeting, India will introduce broad priorities of all Working Groups and hear views from G20 countries, guests, and international organisations, an official statement said.
- Discussions during the meet will focus on five overarching thematic areas of technological transformation, green development & LiFE, accelerated, inclusive and resilient growth, multilateralism and food, fuel and fertilizers, women-led development, tourism and culture.
- A 'Chai pe Charcha' will also be held to foster deeper conversations and strengthen ties among G20 member countries and their Sherpas.
- The first Sherpa meeting under India's presidency plans to offer delegates a unique 'Indian experience' through cultural performances, art exhibitions, and excursions to various destinations including locations such as the Kumbhalgarh Fort (in Rajasthan), a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the Ranakpur Temple Complex.

1.122. TECHNOTEX 2023 TO BE HELD IN MUMBAI FROM 22ND TO 24TH FEBRUARY, 2023.

- India's premier show on Technical Textiles - 'Technotex 2023' will be held in Mumbai from 22nd to 24th February 2023. The largest event of technical textile industry in India is focused on providing its attendees access and networking opportunities to meet top CEOs, manufacturers, industry peers, purchase managers and suppliers from India and around the globe.
- The event is being organized by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India in collaboration with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Industry, under National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM). The Union Minister further said that the Technotex 2023 is being organised at the most opportune time when India has assumed G-20 Presidency. "The G-20 Presidency offers an exceptional opportunity for India to contribute to the global agenda on insistent matters of global importance".
- Addressing a curtain raiser event for Technotex 2023 in Mumbai today, the Union Minister of State for Textiles Darshana Jardosh said Technotex 2023 offers a good opportunity for Startup Entrepreneurs who represent the fastest-growing category worldwide. "Keeping in view the high potential of startups in the technical textile arena, Technotex 2023 will focus on discussions to empower Startup Ventures, promote knowledge exchange on best practices and develop capacities of entrepreneurial ecosystem for startups".

- The curtain raiser was organized to brief the Foreign Missions in India, Media Houses and the leading Technical Textile industry about the significance of the event, the importance the ministry accords to the sector and to set the chord for meaningful deliberations in making the summit fruitful.
- The Minister exhorted the industry representatives to tap the potential of the growing global technical textile market. "The robust global market is waiting for the industry as both domestic consumption and export are expected to grow rapidly. It is very important that we build a strong connect with the global industry, attract domestic and global investments as well as project India's strengths, initiatives and facilities".
- The Minister of State for Textiles informed that the Government is making all efforts to promote Technical Textiles and has undertaken various initiatives in this direction, such as creation of PLI scheme, HSN Codes, National Technical Textiles Mission.
- National Technical Textile Mission (NTTM),the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved this mission in 2020 intending to lift India as a global leader in technical textiles and increase their use in the market.
- "The end-usage of Technical Textiles products covers a wide array of industries, thereby presenting plethora of opportunities as a high value sector in India".
- Textiles Minister for Government of Maharashtra Chandrakant Patil said that the Technical Textile sector is one of the key constituents of the Indian economy and a niche sunrise sector, aligning with the government's focus on Aatma Nirbhar Bharat. He mentioned that Maharashtra's Textile Policy is aimed at generating 10 lakh new jobs; attracting investments worth Rs. 36,000 crores, and providing many benefits including competitive power tariff and increased capital subsidy.
- Comparing the penetration of Technical Textile in Indian textile industries with that in global markets, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Govt. of India, Rajeev Saxena; Textiles Commissioner Roop Rashi; Vice Chairman, Indian Technical Textile Association (ITTA), Avinash Misar; and Chairman & Mentor, FICCI Technotex SME Organizing Committee & Chairman, Mohan Kavrie also addressed the occasion.
- The Ministry and the industry look forward to more than 15,000 business visitors in Feb 2023 and a huge interaction with user industries within the Government of India as well as abroad, including all diplomats and CEOs and so on, at the decadal edition of the event.

1.123. THE UNITED NATIONS-WATER SUMMIT ON GROUNDWATER 2022 UNDERLINED THAT GROUNDWATER MUST BE PROTECTED AT ALL COSTS SINCE IT IS KEY TO GLOBAL FOOD PRODUCTION AND FOOD SECURITY.

Major Highlights

- **About the Conference:**
    - The UN-Water Summit on Groundwater will take place on 7-8 December 2022 at UNESCO HQ, Paris.
    - The conference was organised by UN-Water, UNESCO and the International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre.
    - The summit was organised to **raise awareness on groundwater conservation** at the global stage.
    - It also marked the completion of the **"Groundwater: Making the invisible visible" campaign** run by UN-Water throughout 2022.
- **UN 2023 Water Conference:**
    - The UN 2023 water conference in New York City offers **unprecedented potential for progress on SDG 6** (Sustainable Development Goal 6 is about clean water and sanitation for all) and all water-related goals of the 2023 agenda.
- **Groundwater management:**
    - It needs to apply **five acceleration instruments** to ensure that this succeeds:
        - Governance
        - Data and information
        - Innovation
        - Capacity development
        - Finance

- **Coalition:**
    - A coalition was formed on transboundary water cooperation.
    - Transboundary waters accounted for 60 percent of the freshwater that flowed globally.
    - Only 32 countries have 90 percent or more of their transboundary basin and aquifer area covered by operational agreements.
    - The gap between water supply and demand is increasing. So the combination of these three facts can represent a huge potential for future conflicts or it can be a driver of mutually beneficial cooperation.
- **South Asia:**
    - South Asia was the largest consumer of groundwater in the world today.
    - As of today, in the region, we are drawing over **600 billion cubic metres** of groundwater every year — both from transboundary aquifers and from water sources that are very ancient.
    - This groundwater once drawn for use cannot be recharged back.
    - **South Asia hosts not more than five percent** of the global land cover.
    - But it hosts more than a third of the irrigated land and more than a fourth of the global population.
    - About **85 percent** of the water required for irrigation to produce food and **90 percent of drinking water is drawn from groundwater in south Asia.**
    - The huge extraction of groundwater is also drying out the rivers. This is another big challenge for this region.

Threat to Groundwater

- **Degradation from human activities**, often associated with poor land, agricultural, and waste management threatens:
    - Current uses of groundwater and
    - Human and ecosystem health
    - Limits benefits of future generations
- The problem is more pronounced in South Asia because much of the groundwater is **heterogenous**. Some 70 percent of groundwater is hosted only in 30 percent of land cover in south Asia and the rest is hosted in **areas covered by Himalayan rivers**.
- **Water pollution** is another issue as much of the groundwater is polluted by contaminants like **arsenic and Fluoride**. More than 400 million people are exposed to these pollutants. So, it is not just a quantity issue but also a water quality issue in India.

Significance

- Ground water has become an **increasingly important natural resource** catering to the fresh water requirements of various sectors in India.
- Ground water has steadily emerged as the **backbone of India's agriculture and drinking water security**.
- Groundwater is the principal water source for a **fourth of the world's population.** India is the world's largest groundwater user; nearly 250 cubic kilometres was taken out in 2017.
- About 90% of this was used for irrigation, the rest went to towns and villages.

1.124. THE 7TH INDIA WATER IMPACT SUMMIT (IWIS 2022)

Why in News?

- Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has inaugurated the 7th India Water Impact Summit (IWIS 2022) at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre in New Delhi.

About

- In the past 3 to 8 years many mega initiatives such as **Swachh Bharat Mission, Namami Gange Programme, Jal Jeevan Mission, Atal Bhujal Yojana, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Digital India**, etc. that directly or indirectly relate to restoration and conservation of river systems were launched.
- Similar initiatives are also taken by many state governments to restore and conserve river systems including efforts through MGNREGA. It is essential that various activities carried out by multiple agencies of central,

state and local governments as well as of international groups are scanned through the lens of a larger vision of river restoration and conservation to feed into the UN SDGs.

- It is imperative to understand the bottlenecks in bringing convergence of actions on ground through a large number of projects formulated via various sectorial programmes to achieve the vision of "Samarth Ganga".
- Managing the interplay amongst **five key factors** (**5P's: People, Policies, Plans, Programmes & Projects;**) appears to be the most crucial challenge.
- The theme of the summit this year is Restoration and Conservation of Small Rivers in a Large Basin.
- **This year, the Summit will deliberate on Restoration and Conservation of Small Rivers in a Large Basin with focus on select aspects of "Mapping and Convergence of 5P's".**
- The **Summit** will **give** an **insight** into the **potential causes** for **divergence and strategy to achieve convergence.**
- The Summit, like the previous editions of IWIS, will also host the **"Finance Forum",** a special track that will bring together global financial institutions and investors interested in river restoration and conservation programmes.

1.125. FIRST MEETING OF DWG UNDER INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY CONCLUDES; FOCUSES ON COLLECTIVE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

- The **first meeting** of the **Development Working Group under India's G20 Presidency concluded** in **Mumbai.**
- The final day's deliberations focussed on harnessing data for development and collective action on climate change.

The discussion was done on the following topics:

  - The need for quality data,
  - Related trust issues,
  - Steps needed to bridge the digital divide,
  - Capacity building in developing nations, and
  - Aligning the work of the DWG with that of the Digital Economy Working Group.
  - LiFE : Lifestyle for Environment - LiFE is a bold, transformative approach to sustainable living that proposes global shifts in both consumption (demand) and production (supply) pattern.

- Delegates from G20 countries welcomed India's focus on **SDG 12: 'Responsible Consumption and Production,'** and deliberated avenues to integrate localised realities and knowledge, delineate scope and scale, and identify policy measures that enable and incentivise shifts in this area.

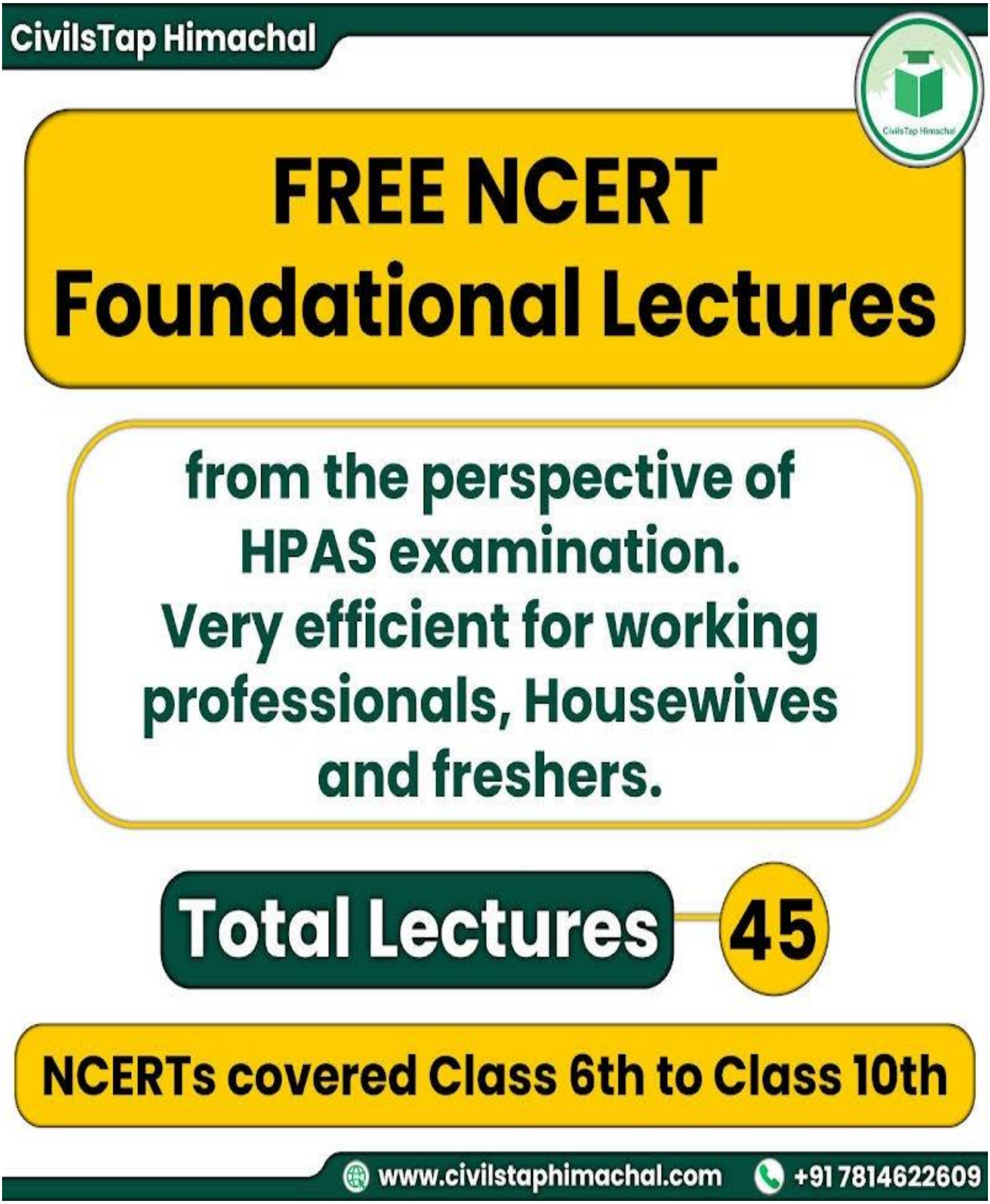
1.126. MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANISES CSR CONCLAVE IN COLLAB WITH TRIF.

- The Ministry of Rural Development has organised a Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR Conclave on PPP mode of development of Lighthouse Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY) Gram Panchayat.
- Rural Development Secretary Shailesh Kumar Singh on December 20, 2022 inaugurated the CSR conclave in collaboration with Transform Rural India Foundation (TRIF).
- It **aims** to **mobilize** the **resources** from **CSR,** Public Sector Undertakings (**PSUs**), and other **private voluntary sectors**.
- SAGY is focused on the holistic development of villages in tune with local potentials and aspirations of people through the convergence of resources allocated under existing Central/ State Government schemes as well as pooling of resources from private voluntary and cooperative organizations.
- Member of Parliaments, Corporates, and other SAGY stakeholders have participated in this conclave to get their support for the rapid transformation of SAGY Gram Panchayats.

About Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana

- **The scheme was launched by** the Prime Minister of India on 11th October, 2014 on the birth anniversary of **Jai Prakash Narayan.**
- **Goal**

  - Under the Yojana, Members of Parliament (MPs) are responsible for developing the socio-economic and physical infrastructure of three villages each by 2019, and a total of eight villages each by 2024. The first Adarsh Gram (Model Village) was to be developed by 2016, and two more by 2019.
  - From 2019 to 2024, five more Adarsh Grams must be developed by each MP, one each year. This implies that a total of 6,433 Adarsh Grams, of the 2,65,000 gram panchayats, will be created by 2024.



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POLICY AND PROGRAMME

1.127. ACCORDING TO THE UNION MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT ABOUT 5 LAKH PEOPLE GOT BENEFITS UNDER PM DAKSH PROGRAM.

About:

- **PM-DAKSH (Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi) Yojana was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E) in 2020-21.**
- It is a National Action Plan for skilling marginalized persons covering SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation workers including waste pickers.

Objective:

- The main objective of the PM-DAKSH Yojana is to increase the skill levels of the target youth by providing them short term and long-term skills, followed by assistance in wage/self-employment.

Target Group:

- It aims to improve all-round competency of 2.7 lakh persons, over the next 5 years, beginning with nearly 0.5 lakh youth in the first year i.e. 2021-22, from the following sections of the target group:
- **Artisans**- who may be able to improve their revenue generation capacities within their practicing vocations;
- **Women**- who may be able to enter into self-employment and financially empower themselves without neglecting their domestic activities; and
- **Youth**- who may acquire long-term training and specialization in employable vocations and gain a better standing in the job market.

Eligibility:

- **Candidates of age group 18-45 years**belonging to any of the following categories can apply for the training programme under PM-DAKSH:
  - Persons belonging to Scheduled Castes.
  - Other Backward Classes (OBCs) having annual family income below Rs. 3 lakh.
  - Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) having annual family income below Rs. 1 lakh.
  - De-Notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribe (DNT).
  - Safai Karamcharis (including waste pickers) and their dependants.

1.128. PMKVY 3.0 TO HELP PRESERVE & REVIVE NAMDA CRAFT OF KASHMIR.

- The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 3.0 and its component, Recognition of Prior Learning for upskilling of artisans and weavers of Kashmir will tremendously help in preserving and reviving the Namda craft of Kashmir.
- The Namda project will benefit more than two thousand persons of 30 Namda Clusters from six districts of Kashmir viz. Srinagar, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Bandipora, Budgam, and Anantnag.
- The RPL initiative targets to upskill around eleven thousand artisans and weavers of Jammu and Kashmir. Namda craft is a rug made of sheep wool through the felting technique instead of the normal weaving process.
- Earlier the export of this craft had declined and the Central Government through this special project under PMKVY, of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has designed a short-term training curriculum to preserve this endangered craft.
- The project is being implemented in 25 batches in 3 cycles of training and each training program is of approximately three and half months, which results in the cycles being completed in approximately 14-16 months.
- The Namda project will be an industry-based training program with beneficiaries involved in Namda Crafts Production who will contribute towards preserving and reviving the rich heritage associated with Namda craft in Kashmir.
- This will also improve the access of existing artisans of Namda crafts cluster in Kashmir and will improve their prospects of employability. The objective of these projects is to boost and preserve the traditional

Namda craft of Kashmir and upskill the local weavers and artisans to enhance their productivity through RPL assessment and certification.

- The vision of the Central Government is to revive and promote traditional and heritage skills and to give artisans support to make them economically sustainable. The Government is also offering artisans exposure to the international markets so that the world becomes aware of the vibrant culture of Kashmir.
- The programme will also focus on the skilling, upskilling, and reskilling of Kashmiri youth to create a ladder of career progression and make them strong pillars of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

1.129. GOVT APPROVES FORMATION OF ADVISORY GROUP FOR STREAMLINING DEVELOPMENT OF BAMBOO SECTOR.

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Tomar has approved the formation of an Advisory Group for streamlining the development of the Bamboo sector.
- The Advisory Group has a representation of various stakeholders including academicians, researchers, innovators, progressive entrepreneurs, designers, farmer leaders, marketing specialists, and policymakers.
- The inter-ministerial and public-private consultation is envisaged to help revamp the developmental architecture of the sector by incorporating synergy between all the sections related to the bamboo value chain.
- The restructured National Bamboo Mission was launched during 2018-19 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. It mainly focuses on the development of a complete value chain of the Bamboo sector to link growers with consumers.
- The bamboo industry is witnessing a phase change by the opening of multiple avenues of resource utilisation.

1.130. PRIME MINISTER SHRI NARENDRA MODI TO DEDICATE THREE NATIONAL AYUSH INSTITUTES TO THE NATION ON 11 DECEMBER 2022.

- Union Minister of Ayush Shri Sarbananda Sonowal announced that three National Ayush Institutes - All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Goa, National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Ghaziabad and National Institute of Homoeopathy (NIH), Delhi will be dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on 11th December 2022. These satellite institutes will further strengthen the research, international collaborations and facilitate affordable Ayush services for larger community.
- While addressing the media Shri Sarbananda Sonowal also gave details of 9th World Ayurveda Congress (WAC), which will showcase the scientificity, efficacy, strength of Ayush System of Medicines at Global level in Panjim, Goa.
- Minister of State of Ayush Dr. Munjapara Mahendrabhai along with Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha and other officials of Ministry of Ayush were present on this occasion. Prime Minister will also attend the valedictory function of WAC on 11 December in Goa.
- On this occasion, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, Establishment of these institutes is in line with the Prime Minister's vision of expansion of infrastructure and human resources, promotion of research in the traditional medical systems. Through these institute Government of India will be further strengthen its capabilities to provide affordable healthcare to every citizen and every region of the country.
- Establishment of these three National Ayush institutes in Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Unani will create 400 additional seats for 400 students, who want to pursue UG, PG and Doctoral courses and also add 550 additional beds in these three streams.
- All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Goa will work to provide the highest quality facilities for UG, PG and post-doctoral streams in the aspects of education, research and patient care services through Ayurveda system of medicine. It will be developed into a wellness hub of Ayurveda promoting Medical Value Travel (MVT) and will function as a model centre for international and national collaboration for academic & research purposes.

- The National Institute of Homoeopathy (NIH), Delhi is first of its kind to be established in Northern India for developing the Homoeopathic system of medicine and to provide health care facilities. It will work in mainstreaming and integrate Ayush healthcare services with modern medicines and encourage R&D and innovation and to develop National Institutes of repute.
- National institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh will be a satellite Centre of the existing National Institute of Unani Medicine, Bangalore. It will first such institute in Northern India and cater to the patients around Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and other states of India as well as foreign nationals under MVT.
- Ministry of Ayush is collaborating to organize 9th World Ayurveda Congress (WAC) at Panjim, Goa and will showcase the scientificity, efficacy, and strength of Ayush System of Medicines at Global level. To this end various activities are being planned and Ayush fraternity is also participating in different discussions, presentations etc.

1.131. MULTI-STATE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022 SCHEDULED TO BE INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA.

- The Multi-State Co-operative Societies (Amendment) Bill, 2022 is scheduled to be introduced in the Lok Sabha to amend the Multi-State Co-operative societies Act 2002. The Bill will be introduced by the Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah.
- The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019 will also be introduced in the House for consideration and passing.
- It will be introduced by the External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, to make special provisions for repression of piracy on high seas and to provide for punishment for the offence of piracy.
- The Minister will also make a statement regarding the latest developments in India's Foreign Policy.
- Minister for State in the Prime Minister Office Dr. Jitendra Singh will also make a statement regarding the status of implementation of the Recommendations contained in the 360th report of the Department related to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change on demands for grants (2022-2023), pertaining to the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.
- In Rajya Sabha, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav will move the Wildlife Protection Bill, 2022 to amend the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The bill has already been passed by the Lok Sabha.

1.132. PRADHAN MANTRI SURAKSHIT MATRITVA ABHIYAN.

Why in News?

- The Government has said that **more than three crore sixty lakh pregnant women** have received comprehensive **antenatal care under the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan programme** across all States and Union Territories.
- **Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar said this in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha**.
- Dr. Pawar said, the percentage of pregnant women with **institutional births in public facilities** has **increased** from over **52 per cent in 2015-16** to around **62 per cent in 2019-21.**

About Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan

What is the program?

- The Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan has been launched by the **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW),** Government of India. The program aims to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care, free of cost, universally to all pregnant women on the 9th of every month.
- Hon'ble Prime Minister highlighted the aim and purpose of introduction of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan in the 31st July 2016 episode of Mann Ki Baat.
- PMSMA guarantees a minimum package of antenatal care services to women in their 2nd / 3rd trimesters of pregnancy at designated government health facilities

- The programme follows a systematic approach for **engagement with private sector** which includes motivating private practitioners to volunteer for the campaign developing strategies for generating awareness and appealing to the private sector to participate in the Abhiyan at government health facilities.

Objectives of the program:

- Ensure at least one **antenatal checkup** for all pregnant women in their second or third trimester by a physician/specialist
- Improve the quality of care during ante-natal visits. This includes ensuring provision of the **following services:**
    - All applicable **diagnostic services**
    - Screening for the applicable **clinical conditions**
    - Appropriate management of any existing clinical condition such as Anaemia, Pregnancy induced hypertension, Gestational Diabetes etc.
    - Appropriate counselling services and proper documentation of services rendered
    - Additional service opportunity to pregnant women who have missed ante-natal visits
- **Identification** and line-listing of **high-risk pregnancies** based on obstetric/ medical history and existing clinical conditions.
- **Appropriate birth planning** and **complication readiness** for each pregnant woman especially those identified with any risk factor or **comorbid condition**.
- Special emphasis on early diagnosis, adequate and appropriate management of women with malnutrition.
- Special focus on **adolescent and early pregnancies** as these pregnancies need extra and specialized care.

1.133. UNIFORM CIVIL CODE.

Why in News?

- **Opposition parties resisted the introduction of the Uniform Civil Code in India Bill, 2020 in the Rajya Sabha.** The controversial bill has been **introduced as a private member bill** in the Upper House that envisages a collection of laws to protect the personal rights of all citizens without consideration of religion.
- BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena introduced the Bill in the Upper House. The private member's Bill that seeks to provide for a panel to prepare a Uniform Civil Code. The Uniform Civil Code in India Bill, 2020 seeks to provide for the constitution of the national inspection and investigation committee for the preparation of a Uniform Civil Code and its implementation throughout the country and for matters connected therewith during the private member's business.
- The private member's Bill was opposed by the members from the Congress, CPI, CPI (M), and Trinamool Congress. The Opposition members said the bill will 'destroy' the social fabric and unity in diversity of the country.

What is private member bill?

- A bill introduced by the Member of Parliament (MP) who is not a Minister, i.e., a non-government member is known as the Private Members' bill. Members of Parliament (MPs) other than ministers are private members. Private Members can also move legislative proposal or bill which he/she thinks is appropriate to be present in the Statute Book. However, it must be noted that a private member can give a maximum of three notices for the introduction of Private Members Bills during a Session.

What is a Uniform Civil Code?

- A Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is one that would provide for **one personal civil law for the entire country**.
- This would be **applicable to all religious communities** in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Basis for UCC

- **Article 44**, one of the **Directive Principles** of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavour to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- These, as defined in **Article 37**, **are not justiciable** (**not enforceable by any court**) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.

1.134. UNION MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SMRITI IRANI HAS RECENTLY SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET UP OVER ONE THOUSAND FAST TRACK COURTS IN THE COUNTRY WITH THE HELP OF NIRBHAYA FUND.

About:

- **Objective:** For implementation of initiatives aimed at enhancing the safety and security for women in the country.
- **Established in:** 2013
- **Established by:** Union Finance Ministry.
- **Type:** It is a non-lapsable corpus fund.

Schemes of Ministry of Women and Child Development under Nirbhaya Fund:

- **One Stop Centre Scheme (Sakhi Centres):**
  - It is being implemented across the country since 1st April 2015. It aims at establishing Centres to facilitate women affected by violence.
  - It provides First aid, Medical aid, Police assistance, Legal aid and counselling support.
- **Women Helpline (181):**
  - The Department of Telecommunication has allocated the number 181 to all States/UTs for Women Helpline.
  - This helpline number will link the One Stop Centres being established by the Ministry of Women & Child Development.
- **Mahila Police Volunteers (MPVs):**
  - These will act as a link between police and community and help women in distress.
  - Haryana launched the scheme in 2016, thereby becoming the first state to launch it.

Schemes of other Ministries/Departments under Nirbhaya Fund:

- **Integrated Emergency Response Management System:**
  - The project aims to provide round the clock security to women passengers in all Railway Stations by strengthening of Security Control Rooms of Railways with Security Helpline, Medical Facilities, RPF and police, installation of CCTV cameras, etc.
  - Ministry in charge: Railways.
- **Central Victim Compensation Scheme (CVCF):**
  - It has been created with a corpus of Rs.200 crores under section 357A CrPC.
  - It will support States/UTs in providing fund towards compensation to the victim or her dependents who have suffered loss or injury as a result of the crimes (including survivors of rape and acid attack).
  - Ministry in charge: Home affairs.
- **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS):**
  - ERSS envisages an integrated computer aided emergency response platform to respond to distress calls and ensure speedy assistance to the distressed persons.
  - It aims to integrate all emergency numbers to 112 with state of art technology.
  - **Ministry in charge:** Home affairs.

1.135. RECENTLY MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS HAS REVAMPED THE EXISTING SCHEME OF 'SPECIAL CENTRAL ASSISTANCE TO PRADHAN MANTRO ADI ADARSHA GRAM YOJANA.

About Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana:

- **Aim:** Transforming villages with significant tribal population into **model village (**Adarsh Gram) covering about population of 4.22 crore (About 40% of the total Tribal Population)

Objective

- To achieve integrated **socio-economic development** of selected villages through convergence approach.
- Improving the infrastructure in vital sectors like **health**, **education**, **connectivity and livelihood.**
- It includes maximizing the coverage of **individual / family benefit** schemes of the Central / State Governments.

- The scheme envisions to mitigate gaps prominently in **8 sectors** of development viz. Road connectivity , Telecom connectivity , School, Anganwadi Centres, Health Sub-Centre, Drinking water facility.

Revised Guidelines of the scheme

- The Scheme was revised to capture the Gaps in critical socio-economic '**Monitorable Indicators'** as part of various sectors/domains namely;water and sanitation, education, health and nutrition, agricultural best practices etc

New Approach for implementation

- The identification of needs or Gaps with regard to the '**Monitorable Indicators'** are based on a **Need Assessment exercise.**
- The '**Village Development Plan' (VDP**) is based on the data collected as part of the Need Assessment exercise.
- PMAGY provids the platform for convergent implementation of other Schemes with the aim to achieve saturation in the various domains.

1.136. NEW DELHI INTERNATIONAL ARBITRATION CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2022.

Why in News?

- Recently, both Houses of Parliament passed the **New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (Amendment) Bill, 2022.**

More about the news

- **Renaming Arbitration Centre:**
  - The bill renames the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre as the India International Arbitration Centre.
- **International and domestic arbitration:**
  - The Act requires the Arbitration Centre to strive to facilitate the conduct of international and domestic arbitration and conciliation and the new legislation expands this to include the conduct of other forms of alternative dispute resolution.
  - The bill will help India emerge as an attractive destination for arbitration at the global level.
- **Other highlights:**
  - The manner of conduct of arbitration and other forms of alternative dispute resolution will be specified by the Central government through regulations.
  - The Bill also allows the government to provide for removing any difficulties in implementing the Act up to five years from the date of commencement of the Act.
- **Other ADRs:**
  - Bill also includes the conduct of other forms of alternative dispute resolution (ADRs) besides arbitration.

Significance

- **Changing name:**
  - Important cities in India such as Mumbai and Kolkata have their own arbitration centres.
    - Even in Delhi, another body Delhi Arbitration Centre [DAC] is functioning.
  - So it was envisaged that it will not be good to have two arbitration centres having the same name of Delhi.
- **Making India international hub of arbitration:**
  - India is the fifth biggest economy in the world, yet we are not the international hub of arbitration, while small countries and cities have emerged as major centres for arbitration.
    - Presently people prefer places such as Singapore, London and Hong Kong for arbitration.
  - India can provide arbitration awards at more affordable charges in comparative to those centres.
- **Institutaionalisation of Arbitration:**
  - The main problem in arbitration in the country right now is of delays – resulting from ad hoc arbitration – which are often appealed in courts.
  - Considering the issue of pending cases in different levels of courts, the current system of arbitration is not institutionalised and through this Bill, the Government is making it institutionalised.
- **Not under pressure:**

  - Government also rejected the allegations that the government has brought this bill and procedure under the pressure of the World Bank.

More About Arbitration

- **Arbitration:**
  - **About:**
    - Arbitration is outside the court settlement of a dispute by one or more (odd number) persons who are appointed as arbitrators by both the parties.
    - According to Section 2(1)(a) of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 "Arbitration means any arbitration whether or not administered by permanent arbitral institution".
    - In other words, any form of arbitration irrespective of its nature has been recognised statutorily in India by bringing such arbitration under the ambit of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.
  - **How does it work?**
    - It consists of a simplified trial, with simplified rules of evidence and with no discovery.
    - Arbitration hearings are usually not a matter of public record.
    - The arbitral award is binding on the parties just like a court decree or order.
- **Arbitration Council of India (ACI):**
  - Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act 2019 seeks to insert a new Part to the Act of 1996 for the establishment and incorporation of an independent body namely, the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the purpose of grading of arbitral institutions and accreditation of arbitrators, etc
  - **Composition:**
    - The ACI will consist of a Chairperson who is either: (i) a Judge of the Supreme Court; or (ii) a Judge of a High Court; or (iii) Chief Justice of a High Court; or (iv) an eminent person with expert knowledge in the conduct of the arbitration.
    - Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.
  - **Functions:**
    - Framing policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators
    - Making policies for the establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters
    - Maintaining a depository of arbitral awards (judgments) made in India and abroad.

1.137. THE CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY (CCPA) NOTICE TO FLIPKART, MEESHO OVER ACID SALE.

Why in News?

- In the **recent acid attack on a girl in New Delhi**, the accused had bought acid on Flipkart.
- The **Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA)** has sent notices to e-commerce players Flipkart and Meesho for gross violation of norms relating to the sale of acids.
- The **Delhi Commission for Women** has already issued notices to Flipkart and Amazon in the case.

Acid attack victim under PWD Act, 2016:

- The **PWD Act, 2016** has defined 'specified disability', which includes physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment, etc.
- The '**acid attack victim' is included in PWD Act,2016** and is defined as 'person disfigured due to violent assaults by throwing of acid or similar corrosive substance'.
- The **Bombay High Court** in **one of its judgements** held that an acid attack victim would be considered a person suffering from 'specified disability' and therefore entitled to additional compensation, rehabilitative

measures and free medical treatment available for persons with disabilities as per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities **(PWD) Act, 2016.**

About Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA):

- CCPA is a **regulatory body** established in 2020 based on the provisions of the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019.**
- CCPA works under the administrative control of **the Ministry of Consumer Affairs.**

Composition:

- It will have a **Chief Commissioner as head**, and **only two other commissioners** as members — one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while the other will look into cases relating to services.
- The CCPA will have an **Investigation Wing that will be headed by a Director General**.
- **District Collectors too**, will have the **power to investigate complaints of violations of consumer rights,** unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements.

Powers and Functions:

- Inquire or investigate into matters relating to violations of consumer rights or unfair trade practices suo moto, or on a complaint received, or on a direction from the central government.
- Recall goods or withdrawal of services that are "dangerous, hazardous, or unsafe.
- Pass an order for refund the prices of goods or services so recalled to purchasers of such goods or services; discontinuation of practices which are unfair and prejudicial to consumer's interest".
- **Impose a penalty up to Rs 10 lakh, with imprisonment up to two years**, on the manufacturer or endorser of false and misleading advertisements. **The penalty may go up to Rs 50 lakh, with imprisonment up to five years**, for every subsequent offence committed by the same manufacturer or endorser.
- Ban the endorser of a false or misleading advertisement from making endorsement of any products or services in the future, for a period that may extend to one year. The ban may extend up to three years in every subsequent violation of the Act.
- File complaints of violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practices before the District **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission**.

1.138. SWADESH DARSHAN SCHEME

Why in News?

- Eco-tourism has been identified as one of the Niche Tourism areas for development in the country, including Odisha, by the Ministry of Tourism.

About:

- **Implementing Ministry:** Ministry of Tourism.
- **Type of Scheme:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Launched in:**2014-15.
- **Objective:**
    - Developing critical tourism infrastructure to make India a world class tourist destination.
    - This scheme is envisioned to synergise with other schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, the driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.
- **Circuits:**
    - Under the **Scheme 15 circuits** have been identified for development namely Himalayan Circuit, North East Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Buddhist Circuit and Coastal Circuit, Desert Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Rural Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Tirthankar Circuit and Sufi Circuit.

Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0

- It aims to evolve Swadesh Darshan Scheme as a holistic mission to develop sustainable and responsible tourism destinations covering tourism and allied infrastructure, tourism services, human capital development, destination management and promotion backed by policy and institutional reforms.

- **Major themes have been identified for tourism under the Scheme.**
    - Culture and Heritage
    - Adventure Tourism
    - Eco-Tourism
    - Wellness Tourism
    - MICE Tourism
    - Rural Tourism
    - Beach Tourism
    - Cruises – Ocean & Inland

1.139. THE 5TH EDITION OF YOUTH CO:LAB WAS LAUNCHED ON DECEMBER 15TH 2022.

About:

- Youth Co:Lab is an initiative launched in **2019 by UNDP India in partnership with Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog.**
    - Youth Co:Lab was co-created in **2017 by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, Youth Co:Lab.**
    - It is a multi-dimensional and multi-level response to tackle the challenges young people face by positioning youth at the forefront in finding solutions to global challenges tackling Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- It aims to establish a common agenda for Asia-Pacific countries to invest in and empower youth to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through leadership, social innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- The Youth Co:Lab initiative, till date, has been implemented in 28 countries and territories, reaching over 200,000 participants, benefitting more than 11,000 young social entrepreneurs and supporting over 1,240 social enterprises.
- Through Youth Co: Lab, 30 early-stage start-ups would be supported by the springboard programme, and the best would be provided a seed grant for scaling up their start-up.
- **The 5 focus thematic areas for Youth Co: lab 2022-23 are:**
    - Digital and Financial Literacy for Youth
    - Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment
    - Developing FinTech Solutions focused on Biodiversity Conservation
    - Promoting Biodiversity-friendly Lifestyles through Technological Solutions in Finance
    - Accelerating Circular Economy through Upcycling Innovations
    - Behavioural Nudges for LiFE (Lifestyle For Environment)

1.140. PRODUCTION-LINKED INCENTIVE (P LI) SCHEMES FOR THE LARGE-SCALE ELECTRONICS MANUFACTURING SECTOR.

Why in News?

- **NITI Aayog approves incentives for Foxconn India & Padget Electronics for mobile manufacturing**
- These incentives have been approved under Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes for the Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing sector.

What is the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme?

- **About:**
    - The PLI scheme was **conceived to scale up domestic manufacturing capability,** accompanied by **higher import substitution and employment generation.**
    - The government has set aside **Rs 1.97 lakh crore under the PLI schemes** for various sectors and an additional allocation of Rs 19,500 crore was made towards PLI for solar PV modules in **Budget 2022-23.**
    - Launched in **March 2020,** the scheme initially **targeted three industries:**
        - **Mobile and allied Component Manufacturing**
        - Electrical Component Manufacturing and
        - **Medical Devices**

- **Incentives Under the Scheme:**
  - The incentives, calculated on the **basis of incremental sales,** range from as low **as 1% for the electronics and technology products to as high as 20%** for the manufacturing of critical key starting drugs and certain drug intermediaries.
  - In some sectors such as **advanced chemistry cell batteries, textile products and the drone industry,** the incentive to be given will be **calculated on the basis of sales, performance and local value addition done** over the period of five years.

- **Sectors for the which PLI Scheme has been Announced:**
  - So far**, the government has announced PLI schemes for 14 sectors** including **automobile and auto components, electronics and IT hardware, telecom, pharmaceuticals, solar modules, metals and mining, textiles** and **apparel, white goods, drones, and advanced chemistry cell batteries.**

- **The production of mobile phones has risen from about six crore in 2014-15 to approximately 31 crore in 2021-22. The export of mobile phones has also seen a sharp increase.**

About Foxconn India

- Foxconn India is the first global company that has been approved under the target segment 'Mobile Phones' to receive incentives for the period 1 August 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- The incentive amount approved is 357.17 crore rupees. Foxconn India is part of the Foxconn Group, which is the world's No. 1 manufacturer and assembler of mobile phones. Foxconn India is a Taiwanese multinational electronics contract manufacturer with its headquarters in Tucheng, New Taipei City.

About Padget Electronics Pvt. Ltd

- Padget Electronics Pvt. Ltd, a domestic company, has been approved by the Empowered Committee to receive incentives under mobile manufacturing for the quarter January-March 2022.
- The incentive amount approved is 58.29 crore rupees. Padget Electronics Pvt. Ltd is a 100 percent subsidiary of Dixon Technologies Pvt. Ltd and has manufacturing facilities in Noida, and Uttar Pradesh. Padget Electronics has already received an amount of 53.28 crore rupees under the PLI scheme for the period August-December 2021.

1.141. CURRENTLY, THE MINISTRY OF AYUSH IS RUNNING A SCHEME NAMELY, AYURSWASTHYA YOJANA.

What is AYURSWASTHYA Yojana?

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme.**
- It is having **two components**
  - **AYUSH and Public Health (PHI)** and
  - **Centre of Excellence (CoE)** from the Financial Year 2021-22 by merging two erstwhile schemes of this Ministry namely
    - Central Sector Scheme of Grant-in-Aid for Promotion of AYUSH Intervention in Public Health Initiatives (PHI) and
    - Central Sector Scheme for assistance to AYUSH organizations (Government / Non-Government Non-Profit) engaged in AYUSH Education/ Drug Development & Research / Clinical Research etc. for upgradation to Centre of Excellence (CoE).
  - Under the Centre of Excellence component of AYURSWASTHYA Yojana, financial assistance is provided to eligible individual organizations/institutes for establishing and upgrading their functions & facilities and/or for research & development activities in AYUSH.
  - The objectives of the Centre of Excellence component of AYURSWASTHYA Yojana are:
    - To support **establishment of advanced/ specialized AYUSH medical health unit** in reputed AYUSH and Allopathic institutions both in Government and Non-Government sector.
    - To support creative and innovative proposals for **establishment and upgradation** of both functions and facilities of reputed institutions to strengthen competencies of AYUSH

    - professionals in education technology, research & innovation and such other fields necessary for promotion of AYUSH at national as well as international level.
    - To support **creative and innovative proposals for prestigious organizations** which have well-established buildings and infrastructure, and wish to work for AYUSH systems to the level of Centre of Excellence.
  - The maximum admissible financial assistance under the Centre of Excellence component of AYURSWASTHYA Yojana, to an organization/institute is **10.00 crores for maximum period of three years.**

1.142. PRADHAN MANTRI FASAL BIMA YOJANA (PMFBY).

Why in News?

- **Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), the claims paid to the farmers have dropped by 48.7 per cent in the current year.**
- In a surprise to the experts, this decline, in the farmer's claims, has been registered despite the overall rise in farmer's enrolment in the scheme this year.
- According to the government, the scheme had already become the number one crop insurance scheme in the world in terms of farmer applications enrolled. In terms of gross premium, the scheme is the third largest in the world.
- The PMFBY is the scheme that provides the farmers their comprehensive risk insurance against crop damage owing to the non-preventable natural risks.
- Devinder Sharma, agriculture expert, said farmers seemed to have lost faith in the scheme. He said, "The problem is that the loss is evaluated at village level rather than individual cases."

What is Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana?

- **About:**
  - Launched in 2016 and is being **administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**
  - It replaced the **National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS).**
  - The **risk** is counted from **pre-sowing** to **post-harvest** for the crops/areas notified by the concerned state government.
- **Eligibility:**
  - Farmers including **sharecroppers and tenant farmers** growing notified crops in the notified areas are eligible for coverage.
- **Objectives:**
  - To provide **insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure** of any of the notified crops as a result of natural calamities, pests & diseases.
  - To **stabilize the income of farmers** to ensure their continuance in farming.
  - To encourage farmers to adopt innovative and modern agricultural practices.
  - To ensure the flow of credit to the agriculture sector.
- **Premium:**
  - There will be a **uniform premium of only 2% to be paid by farmers** for all Kharif crops and 1.5% for all Rabi crops.
  - In the case of **annual commercial and horticultural crops**, the premium to be paid by farmers will be only 5%.
  - The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low and the balance premium will be paid by the Government to provide full insured amount to the farmers against crop loss on account of natural calamities.
  - **There is no upper limit on Government subsidies. Even if the balance premium is 90%, it will be borne by the Government.**

- Earlier, there was a **provision of capping the premium rate** which resulted in low claims being paid to farmers.
- This capping was done to **limit Government's outgo on the premium subsidy.**
- This capping has now been removed and farmers will get a claim against the full sum insured without any reduction.

1.143. UNDER THE G20, THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS IS ORGANIZING THE URBAN 20 EVENT IN AHMEDABAD.

About:

What is The Urban 20 (U20) Summit?

- It is a city diplomacy initiative **launched on December 12, 2017, at the One Planet Summit in Paris.**
- Urban-20 (U20) **provides a platform for cities from G20 countries to facilitate discussions on various important issues** of urban development including climate change, social inclusion, sustainable mobility, and affordable housing, and propose collective solutions.
- C40 Cities (C40) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) convene the U20 under the **leadership of a Chair city that rotates annually**, based in the G20 host country.
- The **U20 2023** Cycle will be chaired by **the City of Ahmedabad.**
    - Ahmedabad will showcase its unique urban development and climate change initiatives and rich culture and heritage to the participants.

1.144. RECENTLY, THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT STATED THAT UNDER SAMARTH SCHEME, MORE THAN 13,235 ARTISANS HAVE BEEN TRAINED IN THE LAST THREE YEARS.

About SAMARTH Scheme:

- Government of India launched the **"Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SCBTS)" which is called SAMARTH**, for the entire value chain of textiles except Spinning and Weaving in the organized sector, for a period of three years from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

Objectives:

- To provide demand-driven, placement-oriented National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF) compliant skilling programmes to incentivize and supplement the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors, covering the entire value chain of textile, excluding Spinning and Weaving.
- To promote skilling and skill upgradation in the traditional sectors of handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and jute.
- To enable the provision of sustainable livelihood either by wage or self-employment to all sections of the society across the country.

The skilling programmes would be implemented through the following Implementing Agencies:

- Textile Industry.
- Institutions/Organizations of the Ministry of Textiles/State Governments having training infrastructure and placement tie-ups with the textile industry.
- Reputed training institutions/ NGOs/ Societies/ Trusts/ Organizations/ Companies /Start-Ups / Entrepreneurs active in the textile sector having placement tie-ups with the textile industry.

1.145. THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING & URBAN AFFAIRS (MOHUA) RECENTLY SAID MORE THAN 5,000 INTERNSHIPS HAVE BEEN OFFERED UNDER THE TULIP.

About The Urban Learning Internship Program (TULIP):

- TULIP is a programme for providing internship opportunities to fresh graduates in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Smart Cities across the country.
- **The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Education (MoE)** and **All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE)** has developed this programme.

- At the State level, TULIP will be supported by the Urban Development departments in providing a clear roadmap for the ULBs/smart cities to adopt TULIP in their respective organisations.
- **Duration:** Internship durations can range from eight weeks to one year.

Benefits of the TULIP:

- Enhanced employability through **"learning by doing"** and opportunity to co-create innovation for cities.
- TULIP interns would get exposure in a large number of areas including but not limited to urban planning, urban design, different branches of engineering, information and technology, mobility, finance, social sector issues and environmental issues.
- Strengthen institutional capacity of the urban ecosystem and youth engagement towards urban initiatives, creating an ecosystem wherein youth can contribute towards building a liveable city.
- Skilled, high-quality workforce and innovative citizen-centric solutions that help them address critical challenges.

1.146. SCHEME FOR ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF DNTS((SEED) SCHEME.

Why In News

- Recently, the Parliamentary panel on Social Justice and Empowerment has pulled up the Union government over the **"very slow" process to categorise over 260** denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes under either the SC/ST/OBC lists.

Scheme for Economic Empowerment of DNTs((SEED) Scheme

- **Aim:**
  - To provide free competitive exam coaching to students, health insurance and financial assistance for housing and uplift clusters of these communities through livelihood initiatives.
- **Implementation:**
  - The Scheme will be implemented through a portal, developed by the **Department of Social Justice & Empowerment.**
  - The **funds** will be **transferred directly** to the beneficiaries in their account. The other implementing agencies are the Ministry of Rural Development, National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and National Health Authority (NHA).
- **4 components:**
  - To provide **coaching of** good quality for DNT candidates to enable them to appear in competitive examinations.
  - To provide **Health Insurance** to them.
  - To facilitate **livelihood initiative** at community level; and
  - To provide financial assistance for **construction of houses** for members of these communities.
- **Budget:**
  - The Ministry has been allocated **200 crore** for this scheme to be spent over five financial years from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

The De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes

- They are the **most neglected, marginalized** and economically and socially deprived communities.
- Most of them have been **living a life of destitution** for generations and still continue to do so with an uncertain and gloomy future.
- They somehow escaped the attention of India's developmental framework and thus are **deprived of the support** unlike Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

1.147. AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME FOR INDIAN RAILWAYS.

- Ministry of Railways has formulated a new policy for modernization of stations named "Amrit Bharat Station" scheme.
- Amrit Bharat Station scheme envisages development of stations on a continuous basis with a long term vision.

- It is based on Master Planning for long term and implementation of the elements of Master Plan as per the needs and patronage of the station.

Broad objectives:

- The scheme aims at preparation of Master Plans of the Railway stations and implementation of the Master Plan in phases to enhance the facilities including and beyond the Minimum Essential Amenities (MEA) and aiming for creation of Roof Plazas and city centres at the station in long run.
- The scheme shall aim to meet the needs of the stakeholders, station usage studies as far as possible based on availability of funds and inter-se priority.
- The scheme shall cater for introduction of new amenities as well as upgradation and replacement of existing amenities.
- This scheme will also cover the stations where detailed techno-economic feasibility studies have been conducted or are being conducted but the work for construction of Roof Plazas has not been taken up yet, ensuring the phasing of Master Plan being suitably implemented and relocation of structures and utilities being given more emphasis in the phasing plans.

1.148. NATIONAL SC-ST HUB

Why in News?

- The Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) organized National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) Conclave at Sahid, Smruti Bhavan, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha to promote entrepreneurship culture and spread awareness of the NSSH Scheme and other Schemes of the Ministry.

Participation in Mega Conclave:

- The programme also witnessed the participation of CPSEs like Power Grid Corporation, Steel Authority of India, Indian Oil Corporation, Mahanadi Coalfield Ltd. who gave presentations on their vendor empanelment process and details of products/services to be procured.
- The program also had financial institutions such as UCO Bank, and State Bank of India, which detailed various lending schemes pertaining to the MSME sector. Training institutes like IIT Kharagpur, Central Tool Room and Training Centre, Bhubaneswar, Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology also participated in the program by putting up a stall and demonstrating their technology and various skill development programmes.
- The program also had facilitation desks of UDYAM Registration for facilitating registrations of SC/ST MSE participants on the spot.
- Senior officers from the Ministry of MSME and the State Departments of Odisha were also present during the event.
- For inclusive growth, various initiatives under NSSH Scheme to promote entrepreneurship culture among SC-ST communities and their active participation in the public procurement process to reach 4% mandate as per public procurement policy has also been described.

Key Objective

- The National SC ST Hub is set up to provide professional support to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Entrepreneurs to fulfill the obligations under the Central Government Public Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises Order 2012, adopt applicable business practices and leverage the Stand-Up India initiatives.

The other main action points includes:

- To encourage SC/ST owned units to achieve their share of at least 4% of total procurement being made by Central/State Governments, CPSEs and other government agencies
- To prepare strategy for intervention through industry associations to sensitize, encourage and enable the SC/ST owned units for participation in Public Procurement Process
- Collection, collation and dissemination of information regarding SC/ST enterprises and entrepreneurs
- Facilitating SC/ST Entrepreneurs to be part of vendor development programs and mentoring support by specific CPSE matching the products/services of such entrepreneurs

- Facilitating SC/ST Entrepreneurs' participation in Public Procurement through the e-platform of DGS&D and monitoring the progress.

1.149. REVAMPED E-HRMS 2.0 PORTAL.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh has launched revamped Probity Portal, **e-HRMS 2.0 Portal and Mobile Application of iGoTKarmayogi Portal.**

About

- **e-HRMS 2.0 portal:**
    - The portal provides various services such as transfers (rotation/mutual), deputation, APAR, IPR, iGOT trainings, vigilance status, deputation opportunities, service book and other basic HR services like leave, tour, reimbursements, etc.
    - The **revamped e-HRMS 2.0 portal** was launched as the earlier iteration of the e-HRMS was limited in scope, where employees could avail limited services and it was not connected with other HR applications.
        - The employees were unable to get full benefits of digital service deliveries and seamless connection with HR applications and initiatives of the government.
    - The **revamped e-HRMS 2.0 is the first digital system in government of India** to provide end-to-end HR services.
- **Significance of e-HRMS 2.0 portal:**
    - **Revamped e-HRMS 2.0** will save several thousand man-hours and tonns of printing paper.
    - This will also go a long way in improving employee satisfaction, promoting ease of doing/processing HR work and enhancing productivity and transparency in administrative functioning.
- **iGoT Karmayogi Portal:**
    - It is an Integrated Government Online Training digital platform under the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD). which will deliver capacity building programmes by drawing content from global best practices rooted in Indian national ethos.
    - The **iGOT Karmayogi platform** is envisaged as a democratised, competency driven solution space that all of the government can access to enhance their execution capabilities.
    - **iGOT-Karmayogi mobile app a**nd the platform will allow all government servants, at multiple levels, to undergo continuous training, depending on their domain areas. The app and the platform will provide anytime-anywhere-any-device learning to train about two crore users which was hitherto not achievable through traditional measures.

1.150. NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SYSTEM (NMMS)

Why in News?

- The Union government has made digitally capturing MGNREGA attendance universal from January 1, 2023 through (NMMS).
    - From May 16, 2022, capturing attendance via the app was made compulsory for all worksites with 20 or more workers. This required uploading two time-stamped and geotagged photographs of the workers.

National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS)

- **About:**
    - The National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) App was launched by the Ministry of Rural Development in 2021.
    - It aimed at bringing more transparency and ensuring proper monitoring of the schemes.
- **Significance:**
    - The NMMS App permits taking real time attendance of workers at Mahatma Gandhi NREGA worksites along with geo-tagged photographs.
    - The app helps in increasing citizen oversight of the programme.
- **Issues:**
    - Poor internet connectivity, little access to smartphones and glitches in the app have created a problem in the daily activities of the workers.

  - The workers are forced to buy a smartphone which is pushing them to leave the job.
  - Many workers have complained that the process is very difficult, and they are illiterate.

1.151. REMOTE VOTING FOR MIGRANT WORKERS.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Election Commission (EC) announced that it is ready to pilot remote voting for domestic migrants.

About the Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM)

- **About:**
  - EC has developed a **prototype for a Multi-Constituency Remote Electronic Voting Machine (RVM)** that can handle **multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth**.
  - It is based on the currently used **EVM system.**
  - The VVPAT system is expected to work along the same lines with the new technology.
- **Developed by:**
  - The RVM is developed with the assistance of **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL)**.
- **Characteristics & functioning:**
  - The RVMs are **stand alone, non-networked systems,** which will effectively be providing the voter the same experience as currently used EVMs.
  - **Set up:**
    - They will be **set up in remote locations outside the state** under similar conditions as current polling booths.
  - **Single Remote Ballot Unit for multiple constituencies:**
    - The unique feature of RVMs is that a single Remote Ballot Unit (RBU) will be able to cater to multiple constituencies (as many as 72) by using a **"dynamic ballot display board"** instead of the usual printed paper ballot sheet on EVMs.
  - **Ballot Unit Overlay Display:**
    - The Ballot Unit Overlay Display (BUOD) will show the requisite candidates based on the constituency number read on the voter's Constituency card.
    - A barcode scanning system will be used to read these cards.
- **The voting process will be as follows:**
  - After verifying a voter's identity, their constituency card will be read with a public display showing the constituency details and candidates.
  - This will also be displayed privately, on the BUOD in the RVM's RBU.
  - The voter will then vote and each vote will be stored constituency-wise in the control unit of the voting machine.

ENORONOMENT

1.152. IN KAZIRANGA, INDO-FRENCH PARTNERSHIP BEARS FRUIT.

- Artificial highlands where animals can escape during floods; more than 200 anti-poaching camps; alternate livelihood training for local communities — these measures at the Kaziranga National Park in Assam will form the cornerstone of an Indo-French initiative announced earlier this year.
- With French and Indian technical and financial support, the Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership will facilitate partnership activities for interested natural parks of the Indo-Pacific region. These activities include biodiversity conservation, wildlife management and engagement with local communities.
- The Kaziranga project is a part of a larger Assam Project on Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) for which the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) has committed funding of €80.2 million for a 10-year period, between 2014-2024. The project conceptualised the reforestation of 33,500 hectares of land and the training of 10,000 community members in alternate livelihoods by 2024.
- But it is the 457 sq km Kaziranga National Park that remains the heart of the programme.
- Chief Conservator of Forests and Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve Director Jatindra Sarma says that the population of animals in the park is the healthiest it has ever been. With the aid of AFD funding, conservation has been ramped up with few poaching cases recorded in the past five years.
- “There was just one case of poaching this year, one in 2021 and two cases the year before that. We have successfully stopped poaching in the area,” says Sarma.
- Sarma adds that what the AFD programme has been most effective in is the skilling of communities in the area, particularly forest-dwelling communities.
- Assam officials say that many of the community members would sometimes be engaged in illegal tree felling by middlemen for illegal timber trade, and would also give shelter to poachers, which no longer happens.
- The illegal timber trade is one of the main reasons for the degradation of forests around the reserve. The Assam government has now begun a massive reforestation drive with the help of the AFD.
- Divisional Forest Officer, Kaziranga Park, Ramesh Gogoi says that the “protection strategy” adopted by Kaziranga involves setting up 223 anti-poaching camps across the park.
- “We ensured that the concentration of camps is higher in areas where there has traditionally been a poaching pressure. The AFD funding has helped us equip the camps as well as build the requisite infrastructure,’’says Gogoi.
- There are 35 six-seven foot tall embankments or highlands that have been constructed in various areas around the park, that animals can climb on to and seek refuge during the annual flooding. The project has also developed infrared-based early warning systems, triggered by elephant footfall, to either scare off herds from human habitat or to warn villagers.

1.153. MOST ASIAN COUNTRIES BEHIND BIODIVERSITY TARGETS FOR PROTECTED AREAS: STUDY

- Most countries in Asia have failed to achieve a global minimum target of protecting at least 17 per cent of land by 2020, according to a study based on data from 40 countries.
- Under current trends, the outlook for achieving the UN Global Biodiversity Framework's 2030 target to protect at least 30 per cent of land is bleak, with Asia set to miss this by an even greater margin, the researchers said.
- To counter the global biodiversity crisis, at the 2010 UN Convention on Biological Diversity, almost 200 countries pledged to protect at least 17 per cent of their terrestrial environments by 2020 (known as Aichi Target).
- The Aichi Biodiversity Targets are an ambitious set of global goals aimed at protecting and conserving global biodiversity
- To investigate whether they achieved this, researchers from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK, with collaborators in Asia, analysed data from official reports submitted to the World Database on Protected Areas.

- The study, published in the journal Communications Biology, found that only 40 per cent of Asian countries achieved the target of a minimum of 17 per cent coverage for protected areas by 2020.
- In particular, very few countries in West and Central Asia achieved the target. Overall, Asia was the most underperforming continent, with just 13.2 per cent of land being designated as a terrestrial protected area in 2020 -- compared with a global average of 15.2 per cent protection, the researchers said.
- Only 40 per cent (16) of Asian countries, mainly in East and South Asia, had met the 17 per cent protection target by 2020. However, 14 out of 19 West and Central Asian countries had not met the target, they said.
- Asian countries also tended to have a slower year-on-year increase in the amount of land protected for conservation, at just 0.4 per cent per year on average, according to the study.
- For 241 highly at-risk mammal species across Asia, on average 84 per cent of their ranges fell outside protected areas, the researchers said.
- They calculated that almost all Asian countries will fail to meet the 2030 target unless their rate of establishing protected areas increases by up to six times faster.
- Under the current trajectory, Asia as a whole would only achieve 18 coverage by 2030 -- far below the target of 30 per cent protection.
- The outlook was worst for West and South Asia, projected to achieve 11 per cent and 10 per cent coverage respectively by 2030.
- "Asia is a challenging continent for setting targets for protected areas, since areas of high biodiversity typically conflict with dense human populations and rapid economic growth," said study lead author Mohammed Farhadinia from the University of Oxford.
- "While this research demonstrates the need for more investment in protected areas in Asia, it also shows the importance of establishing realistic, achievable goals that take into account socio-geographical restrictions," Farhadinia said.
- The findings carry important significance ahead of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15), when the governing body of the Convention of Biological Diversity will convene in Montreal, Canada from December 7-19.
- At this meeting, government representatives will review the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and discuss strategies for meeting the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets.

1.154. 31.5% DECLINE IN STUBBLE-BURNING CASES THIS YEAR.

- Punjab registered a reduction of 29.99 per cent and neighbouring Haryana a significant 47.60 per cent decline in the paddy crop residue burning events this year, which the Environment Ministry attributed to “vigorous and consistent efforts” made by Union and state governments and other stakeholders.
- Overall Punjab, Haryana, NCR-UP, NCR-Rajasthan and the Delhi-NCT saw the stubble-burning cases coming down from 78,550 in 2021 to 53,792 in 2022, a reduction of 31.5 per cent as per figures based on Standard ISRO Protocol for monitoring paddy crop residue burning events between September 15 and November 30 in the five regions.
- Though there was an overall reduction in the area monitored, two districts of Punjab (Bathinda and Fazilka), one in the NCR district of UP (Bulandshahr) and one of Haryana (Yamunanagar) reported significantly higher number of fires as compared to the corresponding period last year.
- In Punjab, the five hotspot districts were Sangrur, Bathinda, Firozepur, Muktsar and Moga, recording a total of 21,882 cases, 43.83 per cent of the total. In 2021, there were 11 districts with a fire count of more than 3,000 contributing to 79.6 per cent of the total fires reported in Punjab. This year, there were seven districts with more than 3,000 fire counts contributing to 57 per cent of the total. The single day highest fire counts in Punjab were 3,916 in 2022 as compared to 5,327 in 2021, a reduction of about 26.5 per cent, said officials.
- In Haryana, the five hotspot districts with maximum number of farm fire counts this year were Fatehabad, Kaithal, Jind, Sirsa and Kurukshetra, which recorded 2,548 fire counts, 69.6 per cent of the total fires.
- These five districts reported 4,644 fire counts last year, a reduction of 45.1 per cent. The single day highest fire counts in Haryana were 250 in 2022 as compared to 363 in 2021, a reduction of about 31.1 per cent.

1.155. AROUND 200 BIRD SPECIES WERE DOCUMENTED DURING THE KANGER VALLEY BIRD SURVEY IN STATE'S FIRST-EVER SYSTEMATIC INTER-STATE BIRD SURVEY.

About:

- It is located in the state of Chhattisgarh. The name of Kanger Ghati National Park is derived from the Kangar river, which flows in its length.
- Kanger Valley got the status of a national park in the year 1982.
- Kanger Valley National Park is a typical mixed humid deciduous type of forest, in which the Sal, Saugaun, teak and bamboo trees are available in abundance.
- The most popular species in this area is Bastar Maina (The state bird of Chattisgarh). Bastar Maina, is a type of Hill maina (gruncula Dhariosoa), which is capable of emulating the human voices.
- This National Park is home to three exceptional caves – famous for their amazing geological structures of Kutumbasar, Kailash and Dandak- Stellagmites and Stalactites. National Park is known for the presence of underground limestone caves with dripstone and flowstone.
- Tirathgarh Waterfall is located in Kanger Valley National Park.

1.156. BIODIVERSITY PARK AND LAKE TO BE DEVELOPED ON 500 ACRES IN GURUGRAM.

- **Biodiversity parks** are **unique landscapes** which consist of the form of diverse communities and provide ecological, cultural & educational benefits to the urban society.
- About **420 acres** of Biodiversity Park will be developed in three villages — **Damdama, Khedla and Abhaypur** — of Gurugram. The project was formally started by Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.
- Damdama Lake will be restored to about 80 acres.
- Apart from the development of a Biodiversity Park and Lake, it is also proposed to make a jungle safari in about 10,000 acres in the Aravalli hills in Gurugram and Nuh districts.
- This will also promote tourism and employment opportunities will be available to the people.
- The **Biodiversity Park** will be **developed** in **four phases.** In the first phase, along with studying the plants and soil of the area, the construction of a nursery and cleaning of the lake will be done.
- In the second phase, watershed management and tree plantation will be started, in the third phase the lake will be developed and in the fourth phase, the plantation will be done.
- The renovation of Damdama Lake would be completed in four years and the work of developing Biodiversity Park would be completed in 10 years.

1.157. CM PINARAYI VIJAYAN DECLARES KERALA SEED FARM IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT AS FIRST CARBON-NEUTRAL FARM IN THE COUNTRY.

- **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan declared the State Seed Farm at Aluva** in Ernakulam district as the **first carbon-neutral farm in the country.**
- The declaration was the culmination of decade-long efforts which included totally organic agricultural activities and scientific interventions to maintain soil health in the farm.
- Studies by the Kerala Agricultural University held last August had found that the carbon emissions from the activities in the farm was 43 tonnes, while carbon sequestration was 213 tonnes, thus making it not only neutral but also carbon negative.
- The state aims to achieve 40 percent of its energy needs from renewable energy sources by 2025.
- Pinarayi Vijayan said the government has also plans to set up model carbon-neutral farms in all the 140 assembly constituencies in the state.

What is Carbon Neutral Farming?

- Carbon emissions from agriculture account for almost **24%** of the total Greenhouse gas emissions. Both field inside and related land use factors contribute to carbon emission.
- From crop management to manure addition, every step has revealed glaring numbers for the world.
- According to a report by **FAO**, the carbon contribution of the agriculture sector accounted for **9.3 billion tons in 2018.**

The carbon emissions from farming can be divided into following three ways for a holistic understanding:

Emissions due to land use pattern

- These include carbon emissions because of inappropriately using the land.
- For example, the use of pesticides and fertilizer on cropland determines the absorption rate and the amount of carbon discharged into the atmosphere.

Emissions due to ruminant farming

- Ruminants are herbivore animals that perform fermentation on plant-based food to obtain nutrients in a specialized chamber.
- Large-scale domestication of animals like a cow has resulted in massive Greenhouse gas emissions.
- One cow can expel about **220 pounds of methane** in one year. Methane has a 28% more chance of ocean warming than other gases.

Emissions due to rice growth

- Emissions from rice farming not only contribute to an early climate crisis but also reduces the nutrient quotient of the variety.
- Food production causes immense emissions into the environment. From using machinery to adding fertilizer, farmers unintentionally have been fuelling the ejection of excessive carbon into the atmosphere.

Ways to control carbon emissions from the agriculture sector

- Carbon-neutral farming is all about practicing a scientifically proven methodology that arrests carbon emissions without affecting agricultural output.
- Proper farm management techniques can result in healthy crop yields, without endangering the planet.
- This section discusses various approaches from multiple standpoints that can result in a climate-friendly crop occupation.

1.158. INDIA CAN COMFORTABLY ACHIEVE 30X30 BIODIVERSITY TARGET: COP15 DELEGATE.

- India has about 27 per cent of its area under conservation and can comfortably reach the target of protecting 30 per cent of land and water by 2030, according to a senior delegate negotiating for the country at the COP15 biodiversity conference here in Canada.
- According to the J Justin Mohan, the Secretary of the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), that India is already a member of the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), a group of 113 countries that aims at bringing 30 per cent of the geographical area under conservation by 2030, also known as 30X30 target.
- With our protective area network comprising reserved forests, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, mangroves, Ramsar sites, eco-sensitive zones, and community reserves, India has already achieved about 27 per cent of the area under conservation.
- India is focusing on more areas to be brought under conservation through biodiversity heritage sites and Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMS). India can comfortably achieve the targets of 30X30 in 2030.

What is 30x30 target?

- In the spirit of Stockholm+50, to build on 50 years of multilateral environmental action to achieve the urgent action needed to secure a healthy planet, the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People is taking concrete steps towards moving into a new phase to support implementation of the global goal to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's land and at least 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030.
- The 30x30 target is a global target, which aims to halt the accelerating loss of species, and protect vital ecosystems that are the source of our economic security.
- The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, which is now supported by nearly 100 countries, is evolving into a new phase to support implementation of the global goal.
- The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People was officially launched in January 2021 at the One Planet Summit (OPS) on biodiversity. The coalition is currently co-chaired by France and Costa Rica, with the United Kingdom as ocean co-chair.
- India joined the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People in October 2021.
- Adopting a global '30x30' target within a new post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is a key part of the solution to halt and reverse biodiversity loss.
- The HAC for N&P will continue to work, together with all Parties, towards the adoption of this target at the CBD's fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) later this year.

- It currently works closely with the Global Ocean Alliance on the 30x30 target, as well as with the Leaders' Pledge for Nature.

Why 30x30?

- • In order to address both the biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis, there is growing scientific research that half of the planet must be kept in a natural state. Some papers have suggested that the number should be even higher, and some have suggested slightly lower.
- Despite this, experts agree that a scientifically credible and necessary interim goal is to achieve a minimum of 30 per cent protection by 2030.
- There is a wealth of scientific data documenting the need for increased spatial targets in order to help achieve goals related to biodiversity conservation, which help justify the 30x30 target both at a global level and a regional level.
- When the Aichi Targets were established in 2010, roughly 13 per cent of the world's terrestrial areas were protected while very few protections existed in the ocean.
- Currently, an estimated 15 per cent of the world's land and 7 per cent of the ocean are protected. In order to achieve the goal of protecting at least 30 per cent by 2030, we will need to double the current land protections and more than quadruple current ocean protections.

1.159. 1752 CLIMATE RESILIENT CROP VARIETIES RELEASED IN INDIA SINCE 2014.

- **The Indian Council of Agricultural Research** has developed resilient varieties in different crops tolerant to climatic stresses to improve food grain production in the face of changing climate.
- Since 2014, as many as 2122 varieties have been released, out of which 1752 are climate resilient varieties, which include 400 abiotic stress tolerant varieties and 1352 are biotic stress tolerant.
- Although climate change is understood to have its negative impact on food crops, through the help of technology the negative impacts have been dealt with effectively.
- **ICAR has launched** a flagship network project, namely **National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)**, to study the impact of climate change on agriculture, including crops, livestock, horticulture and fisheries and develop and promote climate resilient technologies in agriculture which will address vulnerable areas—regions prone to extreme weather conditions like droughts, floods, frost, heat waves, etc.
- Apart from climate resilient food varieties, 68 location-specific climate-resilient technologies have been developed, agricultural contingency plans for 650 districts prepared.
- Based on vulnerability assessment, climate-resilient technologies are being demonstrated on farmers' fields in 151 clusters covering 446 village.
- In the past decade, 16,958 capacity building programmes were conducted throughout the country under NICRA project to educate stakeholders on various aspects of climate change and resilient technologies, covering 514816 different stakeholders including farmers to enable wider adoption of climate resilient technologies.

1.160. US: WILDLIFE OFFICIALS DECLARE 'NEVADA WILDFLOWER' AS ENDANGERED SPECIES.

- In the United States, wildlife officials declared a Nevada wildflower endangered at the only place it's known to exist - on a high-desert ridge where a lithium mine is planned to help meet the growing demand for electric car batteries.
- The Fish and Wildlife Service has formally listed Tiehm's buckwheat and its accompanying area of 910 acres for the 6-inch-tall flower with yellow blooms. With an estimated remaining population of only about 16,000 plants, the service concluded that Tiehm's buckwheat is on the brink of extinction.
- Ioneer, the Australian mining company that is planning to dig for lithium where the flower grows, said that it has developed a protection plan which will allow the plant and the project to coexist.
- Federal agencies are prohibited from approving any activity on federal lands that could destroy, modify or adversely affect any listed species' critical habitat.

About Lithium

- **Lithium** gets its name from "**lithos," the Greek word for stone**, because it is present in trace amounts in virtually all rocks. It might help mental disorders by increasing the activity of chemical messengers in the brain. Lithium might also be needed for other functions, like the development of blood cells.
- People use lithium supplements for alcohol use disorder, Alzheimer disease, depression, and many other conditions, but there is no good scientific evidence to support any of these uses.
- Lithium carbonate and lithium citrate are approved by the U.S. FDA as prescription drugs for bipolar disorder. These and other lithium drugs aren't covered in this topic. Lithium supplements contain much lower doses of lithium than drugs.

1.161. G-7 APPROVES 15.5 BILLION US DOLLAR DEAL WITH VIETNAM TO HELP CUTTING CLIMATE-DAMAGING POLLUTION.

- A group of nine rich industrialized nations has approved a deal to provide Vietnam with 15.5 billion US dollars to help the Southeast Asian nation move faster from coal power to renewable energy, cutting its climate-damaging pollution.
- The Group of Seven major economies, along with Norway and Denmark, said in a statement that the aim is to help Vietnam reduce its emissions to “net zero” by 2050. It is a goal which experts say needs to be met globally to cap global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- The Just Energy Transition Partnership with Vietnam is among a series of agreements that developing and rich nations are negotiating.
- The first such deal was signed with South Africa last year, and a similar agreement was reached with Indonesia last month.
- British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said that Vietnam is a dynamic, emerging economy at the heart of Southeast Asia. He said the investment they are making today means the country can cut its emissions while simultaneously creating new jobs and growth.

1.162. E-20 FUEL WITH 20% BLENDING OF ETHANOL.

Why in News?

- **India will soon launch E-20 fuel with 20% blending of ethanol, says Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.**
- Addressing a curtain raiser press conference on India’s flagship Energy Event, India Energy Week 2023 in Bengaluru, the minister announced that India will soon launch **E-20 fuel with 20 percent blending of ethanol as by 2025 the ethanol production in the country would reach 1000 crore litres.**
- The minister said that India is looking forward to setting up an international biofuel alliance under India’s G20 presidency.
- **India has achieved the target of 10 percent blending of ethanol** and produced 455 crore litres of ethanol last year, **saving around 40,000 crore rupees on import of crude oil,** helping the farmers and conserving the environment.
- There are 43 plants that produce green ammonia and the target is to increase such plants to 5000 in number.
- In the coming days CNG, CBG and Electric Vehicles will be promoted across the country to reduce dependency on crude oil imports.

1.163. RECENTLY, AT THE 15TH CONFERENCE OF PARTIES (COP15) TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY, SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES HAVE AGREED TO FORM COALITION FOR NATURE.

About:

- The Coalition for Nature is formed for the implementation and adoption of the **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.
- The goal of the coalition is to advocate for agreed common SIDS priorities and needs such as greater means of implementing biodiversity objectives in these places by putting up a unified front.

Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

- It is a new framework that will guide actions worldwide through 2030, to preserve and protect nature and its essential services to people

Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

- SIDS are a distinct group of 38 UN Member States and 20 Non-UN Members/Associate Members of United Nations regional commissions that face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.
- The three geographical regions in which SIDS are located are: the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea (AIS).
- SIDS were recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

1.164. OVER 190 NATIONS ADOPT LANDMARK BIODIVERSITY PACT TO RESTORE NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS.

- Over 190 countries have adopted a landmark biodiversity pact to restore natural ecosystems.
- At the UN Biodiversity Conference, COP15 in Montreal, these countries agreed to protect 30 percent of the planet by 2030.
- The countries pledged to achieve 23 targets to reverse ecosystem degradation under four overarching goals for the survival of the natural world.
- Under the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), countries also agreed to reduce harmful government subsidies worth 500 billion dollars annually, while vowing to identify subsidies that are harmful to biodiversity by 2025. The biodiversity plan gives India legroom on farm subsidies.
- The GBF gives elbow space to India both in terms of continuing farm subsidies and pesticide use. This has been a priority for India, which has been voluntarily pitching for natural farming in a big way.
- The Global Biodiversity Framework is considered equivalent to the Paris Agreement on climate change in terms of its significance for protecting biodiversity.
- Its other targets include reducing the use of pesticides by half and raising annual international financial flows from developed to developing countries to at least 20 billion dollars by 2025, and to at least 30 billion dollars by 2030.

1.165. THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA HAS RECENTLY APPROVED THE PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVE SCHEME (TRANCHE II) ON 'NATIONAL PROGRAMME ON HIGH-EFFICIENCY SOLAR PV MODULES', WITH AN OUTLAY OF RS. 19,500 CRORES

About National programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Module:

- The national programme on High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules aims to build an ecosystem for the manufacturing of high-efficiency solar PV modules in India.
- **Associated Ministry:** The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy.
- **Funding:** Under it, the government has provided an outlay of Rs.19,500 crores for achieving manufacturing capacity.
- PLI will be disbursed for 5 years post commissioning of solar PV manufacturing plants on sales of high-efficiency solar PV modules from the domestic market will be incentivised.

What is the Significance?

- This programme will strengthen the Atamnirbhar Bharat initiative and generate employment.
- It will help in reducing the country's import dependence in the area of Renewable Energy.

1.166. A RECENT REPORT FROM THE (CPCB) SAID THAT THE NUMBER OF POLLUTED STRETCHES IN INDIA'S RIVERS HAS FALLEN FROM 351 IN 2018 TO 311 IN 2022 THOUGH THE NUMBER OF MOST POLLUTED STRETCHES IS PRACTICALLY UNCHANGED.

About:

- The CPCB network monitors water quality at 4,484 locations in 28 States and seven Union Territories including rivers, lakes, creeks, drains and canals.
- The number of polluted river stretches categorised in 'Priority 1 to 5.

  - Priority 1: River stretches with a BOD exceeding 30 mg/L are considered the most polluted and thus need the most urgent remediation.
  - Priority 2: Indicating a BOD of 20-30 mg/L.
  - Priority 3: BOD between 10-20 mg/l
  - Priority 4: BOD between 6-10 mg/l.
  - Priority 5: Indicating 3-6 mg/L.
- While Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh had the maximum number of 'Priority 1' river stretches (6), Maharashtra had the maximum number of polluted river stretches i.e. 55, followed by Madhya Pradesh (19), Bihar (18), Kerala (18), Karnataka (17) and Uttar Pradesh (17).

What is Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD)?

- BOD is defined as the amount of dissolved oxygen needed by bacteria in decomposing the organic wastes present in water. The higher value of BOD indicates low dissolved oxygen content of water.

What is Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)?

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India is a statutory organisation under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It was established in 1974 under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

1.167. NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG).

Why in News?

- Centre has approved projects worth **around 2,700 crore rupees** for developing sewerage infrastructure in the Ganga basin.
- Out of these projects, 12 pertain to develop the sewerage infrastructure in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- Along with this afforestation programmes for the year 2022-23 for Uttarakhand and Bihar were also approved at an estimated cost of 42.80 crore rupees.
- The approvals were given during the **6th meeting of the Executive Committee of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).**
- Another project titled **'Scientific exploration of floral diversity** near the Ganga river banks for ethnobotanical purposes along with their conservation was also approved in the meeting for all the **five states**.
- The project will be implemented in collaboration with Patanjali Research Institute (PRI) and **Patanjali Organic Research Institute (PORI),** Haridwar, Uttarakhand.

About National Mission for Clean Ganga:

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was **implemented by** the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga also known as the **National Ganga Council** (set in 2016; which replaced the National Ganga River Basin Authority – NGRBA).
- This mission was established in 12th August 2011 under the **Societies Registration Act,1860** as a registered society.
- It has a two-tier management structure and comprises of **Governing Council** and **Executive Committee**.
- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under National Ganga Council is supported by the **State level Programme Management Groups (SPMGs**) in the state of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal.
- It is an initiative taken by the Government of India to **address the pollution of the river Ganga** by **providing financial and technical assistance**.

1.168. STUDY: ANTARCTICA'S EMPEROR PENGUINS MAY GO EXTINCT BY 2100

- New research has found that, if necessary, conservation efforts are not taken, the populations of up to 97 percent of land-based Antarctic species could decline by the end of this century.

About Antarctica's biodiversity

- Antarctica has a unique species of plants and animals that can survive the coldest, windiest, highest and driest continent on Earth. These species include 2 flowering plants, hardy moss and lichens, numerous microbes, invertebrates and breeding seabirds like emperor and Adélie penguins. These animals and plants are threatened because of global warming and climate crisis.

What are the key findings of the study?

- Greater conservation efforts are required for the protection of Antarctic ecosystems, which are threatened because of climate crisis.
- Climate change is the biggest threat to the plant and animal species living in Antarctica. Addressing global warming is an effective step to secure their future.
- With the worsening global warming, Antarctica's ice-free areas are predicted to expand further, causing rapid changes in the natural habitat of animals and plants living there.
- Humanity's presence in the region, besides causing environmental pollution, supports the thriving of invasive species.
- According to the study, under the worst-case scenario, if the current conservation efforts remain the same, the population of 97 percent of Antarctic terrestrial species and breeding seabirds could decline between now and 2100.
- At the best-case scenario, 37 percent of the species would decline.
- The most likely scenario would mean a 65 percent decline in the population of the terrestrial species by 2100.
- Emperor penguins are at the risk of going extinct by 2100 in the worst-case scenario. It is the only species in the study that is facing this fate.
- Climate change is also threatening the nematode worm Scottnema lindsayae, which lives in extremely dry soils. It is threatened as melting ice is increasing soil moisture.
- Not all species in Antarctica are facing population decline. Some are expected to benefit initially. **These include 2 Antarctic plants, some mosses and the gentoo penguin. Their populations are expected to increase and become more widespread** in the event of more liquid water, more ice-free and warmer temperatures.

How can these threats be addressed?

- An estimated 23 million USD per annum could be enough to implement 10 key strategies to minimise threats faced by Antarctica's biodiversity. This is relatively small sum that can benefit 84 percent of the terrestrial bird, mammal and plant groups. It is lesser than the cost of reviving the threatened species, which is estimated to be more than 1.2 billion USD per annum.
- Reducing global warming to not more than 2°C could benefit up to 68 percent of terrestrial species and breeding seabirds. Managing non-native species and diseases and effectively managing and protecting native species can also benefit Antarctica's biodiversity. They can be achieved by providing special protection for species, and increasing biosecurity to prevent the introduction of non-native species.

1.169. LION@47: VISION FOR AMRUTKAL : NEW PLAN FOR CONSERVATION OF ASIATIC LIONS.

- The central government has unveiled a plan for the conservation of Asiatic lions in Gir, a region in Gujarat. Titled "Lion@47: Vision for Amrutkal," the plan is part of Project Lion and aims to secure and restore habitats to manage the growing lion population.
- It also aims to generate livelihoods for local communities, establish a global hub of knowledge on big cat disease diagnostics and treatment, and promote inclusive biodiversity conservation.

Objectives of Project Lion:

- The main objectives of Project Lion are to secure and restore habitats for the management of the growing lion population, scale up livelihood generation and participation of local communities, establish a global hub of knowledge on big cat disease diagnostics and treatment, and create inclusive biodiversity conservation through the project initiative.
- The project aims to conserve Asiatic lions in Gujarat through a landscape ecology-based approach that integrates conservation and eco-development.

Comparison to Project Tiger

- Project Lion is being implemented in the Gir landscape in Gujarat, which is the last remaining habitat of Asiatic lions.
- In contrast, Project Tiger is being implemented in 53 tiger reserves across the country. Both projects aim to ensure the overall conservation of the ecosystems inhabited by these flagship species.

Implementation and Funding

- Project Lion is being implemented by the Gujarat government and other stakeholders, including the Central Zoo Authority and is funded by the central government.
- The new plan for the conservation of Asiatic lions in Gir aims to secure and restore habitats, generate livelihoods for local communities, establish a global hub of knowledge on big cat disease diagnostics and treatment, and promote inclusive biodiversity conservation.

1.170. POWER MINISTRY, DRDO SIGN MOU FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEM FOR VULNERABLE HYDRO PROJECTS AND POWER STATIONS.

- **Power Ministry** and the Defence Research and Development Organisation, **DRDO, have signed an Memorandum of Understanding, MOU,** for implementation of **Early Warning System for Vulnerable Hydro Projects and Power Stations.**
- It is to work jointly towards developing suitable mitigation measures against **avalanches, landslides, glaciers, glacial lakes and other geo-hazards.**
- Power Ministry has taken the initiative of implementing Early Warning System, EWS, in the Hydro Power Projects, especially in upper reaches of Hilly regions.
- **EWS is an integrated system of hazard monitoring, forecasting and prediction, disaster risk assessment, communication and preparedness** for timely action to reduce disaster risks in advance of hazardous events.
- The expertise of DRDO will also be utilized in developing comprehensive EWS for vulnerable hydro projects and power stations in hilly regions. Expertise of DRDO will also be utilized in developing comprehensive EWS, for these projects.

1.171. STATE-OWNED POWER GENERATION COMPANY NTPC HAS RECENTLY PARTNERED WITH TECNIMONT TO EXPLORE GREEN METHANOL PRODUCTION AT A COMMERCIAL SCALE.

About:

- The green methanol project involves capturing carbon from NTPC power plants and converting it into a green fuel.
- The objective of the partnership was to demonstrate technologies for firing a higher percentage of Torrefied Biomass in NTPC's coal fired units, Methanol Firing and Ammonia Firing.

What is Green methanol?

- Green methanol is defined as "methanol produced via a process that emits zero or a minimal amount of GHGs, usually measured as an equivalent amount of CO2."
- Green methanol is methanol that is **produced renewably and without polluting emissions,** one of its variants being generated from green hydrogen.
- It is a low-carbon fuel that can be made from **either biomass gasification or renewable electricity and captured carbon dioxide (CO2).**
- This chemical compound can be used as a **low-carbon liquid fuel and is a promising alternative to fossil fuels** in areas where decarbonisation is a major challenge, such as maritime transport.

Other classifications:

Grey methanol

- It is obtained by synthesis reaction from methane present in natural gas (or in some cases, as in China, still from coal). It is therefore not a renewable or clean energy.

Blue methanol

- It is also obtained by synthesis derived from natural gas, but includes as part of the process the capture and storage of the carbon generated during its production, converting it into a less polluting product.

About NTPC

- NTPC Ltd. is a **central Public Sector Undertaking** (PSU) under the **Ministry of Power.**
- It is **India's largest energy conglomerate** with roots planted way back in 1975 to accelerate power development in India.
- **Aim:** To provide reliable power and related solutions in an economical, efficient and environment-friendly manner, driven by innovation and agility.
- It became a **Maharatna company** in **May 2010.**
- It is located in **New Delhi.**

1.172. CAG Report on Plastic Waste Management.

Why in News?

- Recently, the CAG, in an audit report, has said that plastic waste management rules could not be implemented effectively.

Report highlights

- **No action plan with ministry:**
    - **The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC)** has no action plan for the implementation of **Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016**, as a result, plastic waste management rules could not be implemented effectively and efficiently, stated the report.
- **Lack/ineffectiveness of data:**
    - There were data gaps due to which the **CPCB (Central Pollution Control Board) as well as the MoEF&CC** did not have a complete and comprehensive picture of plastic waste generation in the entire country **during the period 2015-20**.
    - The CAG report also said that all **three sampled ULBs (urban local bodies) of Delhi** did not furnish the data of plastic waste generated to the DPCC every year during 2015-20.
    - **Loss of expenditure:**
        - The report also stated that the **ineffective monitoring by MoEF&CC and delay in release of financial assistance** resulted in **non-achievement of environmental benefits** from the demonstration project and unfruitful expenditure of Rs 73.35 lakh.

Recommendations

- **Effective data collection:**
    - The CAG has recommended that the Ministry needs to put a system in place for effective data collection in relation to generation, collection and disposal of plastic waste, through its agencies (CPCB, SPCBs/PCCs) and monitor their performance.
- **Assessment of plastic waste being generation:**
    - It also said that the CPCB and state PCBs/PCCs in coordination with local bodies need to carry out, periodically, a comprehensive assessment of the quantity of plastic waste being generated and collected data according to parameters like
        - population size, geographical size of the area,
        - economic growth,
        - increased demand for consumer goods and
        - change in manufacturing methods etc.
- **Notification of rules:**
    - It recommended that local bodies may expedite the process of notifying their bye-laws by incorporating plastic waste management rules.

Hazards of Plastic waste

- **Environmental pollution & Climate change:**
    - Millions of tonnes of plastic waste are lost to the environment or sometimes shipped thousands of kilometres to destinations where it is mostly burned or dumped.
    - Plastic, which is a petroleum product, also contributes to **global warming**.
        - If incinerated, its toxic compounds are spewed into the atmosphere to be **accumulated in biotic forms throughout the surrounding ecosystems**.

      - **If incinerated**, it also releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, thereby **increasing carbon emissions**.
- **Soil, water & ocean pollution:**
  - When buried in a landfill, plastic lies untreated for years.
  - In the process, toxic chemicals from plastics drain and seep into groundwater, flowing downstream into lakes and rivers.
  - The seeping of plastic also causes soil pollution due to the presence of microplastics in the soil.
  - Rivers and lakes also carry plastic waste from deep inland to the sea, making them major contributors to ocean pollution.
- **Tourism:**
  - Plastic waste damages the aesthetic value of tourist destinations, leading to decreased tourism-related incomes and major economic costs related to the cleaning and maintenance of the sites.

The Plastic Waste Management Rules

- **The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016:**
  - It clearly stipulates that urban local bodies (ULBs) should ban **less than 50 micron** thick plastic bags and not allow the usage of recycled plastics for packing food, beverage or any other eatables.
  - It introduced the concept of **EPR**(Extended Producer Responsibility) to manage plastics in India.
    - EPR means the responsibility of a producer for environmentally sound management of the product until the end of its life.
- **Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022:**
  - The guidelines on **EPR(Extended Producer Responsibility) coupled with the prohibition of identified single-use plastic items**.
  - It banned the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of carry bags made of virgin or recycled plastic less than **seventy-five microns**.
  - **The items that will be banned are**—Earbuds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (thermocol) for decoration, plastic plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons and knives, straw, trays, wrapping films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100-microns and stirrers.
    - The ban will not apply to commodities made of compostable plastic.
  - **The Central Pollution Control Board**, along with state pollution bodies, will monitor the ban, identify violations, and impose penalties already prescribed under the Environmental Protection Act.

1.173. FISHERMEN OF PULICAT AND ENNORE ARE RAISED CONCERNS OVER THE SPREAD OF AN INVASIVE SPECIES OF MUSSEL THAT IS A THREAT TO THE PRAWNS OF BOTH WATERBODIES.

About:

- The marine biologists identified these species as **Mytella strigata or Charru mussels** which are **Native to South America**.
- These mussels have invaded tidal wetlands in several parts of the world, including **Vembanad in Kerala.** This is spreading due to the discharge of ballast waters from ships visiting the ports of Kattupalli.
- After **Cyclone Vardah** in December 2016, the mussels began to intensify and spread far north towards the Pulicat waters.
- Human interference in the wetlands, pollution and nature's actions have triggered the rapid spread of the species.
- **Threats**: These mussels spread like a carpet over the river bottoms and thus preventing prawns from grazing or burying themselves in the sediment.
- Its spread is wiping out the locally prevalent yellow clams and green mussels.

What is an invasive species?

- An invasive species is an non-native organism that is introduced into the local environment either intentionally or by chance.
- Its presence more often has a negative impact on the local ecosystem, completely altering it and bringing about environmental or economic damage.

Facts about the Charru Mussel

- A mussel is a common term for several families of bivalve molluscs primarily found in saltwater and freshwater habitats
- Charru Mussels are found in Panama, Argentina, Brazil and Venezuela. In the Philippines, Thailand and India however, they are invasive species.
- Charru Mussels are also speculated to be native to the Galapagos Islands and the Pacific Coast from Mexico to Ecuador.
- These species of mussels can survive bst in temperatures from 20℃ – 23℃but they have also been known to thrive in 13℃-36℃. They cannot survive beyond 36℃ and have lower chances of survival in colder temperatures.
- A Mytella Strigata spawns between the months of July and October. The embryos develop larvae before mauring into a bivalve veliger resembling small clams.

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GEOGRAPHY

1.174. RESEARCHERS IN CANADA HAVE DISCOVERED TWO NEW MINERALS IN A METEORITE THAT LANDED IN SOMALIA.

About:

- The 15-tonne **El Ali meteorite** was unearthed in Somalia in 2020.
- It is the ninth largest celestial rock found on Earth at over 2 metres wide.
- The meteorite came from an asteroid in the Asteroid Belt between Mars and Jupiter.
- The 2-metre-wide meteorite has been well known to generations of people who live in the area, where it was named **Nightfall**.
- **The minerals have been named "elaliite," after the town where the meteorite crashed, and "elkinstantonite," after planetary scientist Lindy Elkins-Tanton.**
- Around 4,000 minerals are known to science, and they comprise all the rocks already on Earth.
- Of those minerals, only about 300 were discovered in meteorites, alien rocks that crashed on Earth.

1.175. THE CITY OF VISAKHAPATNAM IS BLESSED WITH A NUMBER OF SITES THAT HAVE GEOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE. ONE AMONG THEM IS THE COASTAL RED SAND DUNES, POPULARLY KNOWN AS ERRA MATTI DIBBALU.

About:

- The site is located along the coast and is about 20 km northeast of Visakhapatnam city and about 4 km southwest of Bheemunipatnam.
- This site, spread across an area of about 20 sq km, was declared **as a geo-heritage site by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) in 2014 and the Andhra Pradesh government has listed it under the category of ‘protected sites’ in 2016.**
- This site needs to be protected to study the impact of climate change, as Erra Matti Dibbalu have seen **both the glacial and the warm periods.**
- The site is probably about 18,500 to 20,000 years old and it can be related to the last glacial period.

Distribution:

- Such sand deposits are rare and have been reported only from **three places in the tropical regions in south Asia** such as **Teri Sands in Tamil Nadu, Erra Matti Dibbalu in Visakhapatnam and one more site in Sri Lanka.**
- They do not occur in equatorial regions or temperate regions due to many scientific reasons.

Significance:

- The uniqueness of this site is that the **red sediments are a part of the continuation of the evolution of the earth** and represent the late quaternary geologic age.
- **With a height of up to 30 m, they exhibit badland topography** with different geomorphic landforms and features, including gullies, sand dunes, buried channels, beach ridges, paired terraces, the valley in the valley, wave-cut terrace, knick point and waterfalls.
- It is a lively scientific evolution site, which depicts the real-time effects of climate change.
- The site also has archaeological significance, as studies of artefacts indicate an Upper Palaeolithic horizon and on cross dating assigned to Late Pleistocene epoch, which is 20,000 BC.

1.176. INDONESIA'S MOUNT SEMERU VOLCANO ERUPTS; NEARLY 2,000 PEOPLE EVACUATED.

- Indonesia's Mount Semeru volcano has erupted, sending ash billowing into the sky and sparking evacuations on the country's main island, Java.
- Authorities raised the volcano's warning status to the highest level, meaning its activity had escalated. No injuries have been reported but nearly 2,000 people were evacuated from the area around the volcano.
- Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" where tectonic plates collide, causing frequent volcanic activity as well as earthquakes.

- Semeru - also known as "The Great Mountain" - is the highest volcano in Java at 3,676 meter (12,060ft) and one of the most active.
- Semeru's last major eruption was in December 2021.
- Semeru, also known as Mahameru, has erupted numerous times in the past 200 years.

1.177. HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA.

Why in News?

- Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar chairs 32nd meeting of Board of Directors of NHB.
- He stresses on easing digital process for farmers.

Key points of Meeting:

- The government has decided to make a digital process for horticulture projects and provide approval in just 45 days. It will ease farmers in getting projects without delay across the country.
- The decision was taken in the 32nd meeting of the Board of Directors of the National Horticulture Board (NHB)held in New Delhi, under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and Chairman of the Board, Narendra Singh Tomar. The new simple design will come into effect from first January next year.
- The Minister expressed the hope that this process will make the system more transparent and efficient, promote ease of doing business for the benefit of the farming community and generate more hi-tech commercial projects for NHB funding.
- The meeting also discussed a new initiative of NHB- Swachh Plant Programme, under which problem of availability of planting material to the farmers will be solved by spending 21 hundred crore rupees with the assistance of Asian Development Bank.
- This programme will go a long way in providing a major contribution to the much-needed quality planting material for horticulture crops in the country.

About NHB

- The National Horticulture Board (NHB) was set up by the Government of India in 1984 as an Autonomous organization under the administrative control of Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and registered as a society under Societies Registration Act with its headquarters at Gurugram.
- Presently, NHB has 29 field offices located all over the country.

Aims and Objectives of NHB

- The main objectives of the NHB are to improve integrated development of Horticulture industry and to help in coordinating, sustaining the production and processing of fruits and vegetables. Some of the Detailed objectives of the Board are as under:-
    1. Development of hi-tech commercial horticulture in identified belts and make such areas vibrant with horticultural activity, which in turn will act as hubs for development of horticulture.
    2. Development of modern post-harvest management infrastructure as an integral part of area expansion projects or as common facility for cluster of projects.
    3. Development of integrated, energy efficient cold chain infrastructure for fresh horticulture produce.
    4. Popularization of identified new technologies / tools / techniques for commercialization / adoption, after carrying out technology and need assessment.

1.178. ASSAM'S GAMOSA, TELANGANA'S TANDUR REDGRAM, LADAKH'S APRICOT GET GI TAG.

- The government has granted Geographical Indications (GI) tag to various products, including Gamosa of Assam, Tandur Redgram of Telangana, and an apricot variety of Ladakh.
- The commerce and Industry ministry said on Wednesday that the total number of GI has reached to 432.
- "Famous Gamosa of Assam, Tandur Redgram of Telangana, RaktseyKarpo Apricot of Ladakh, Alibag White Onion of Maharashtra have got their GI tags," it said.
- The top five states holding maximum number of GIs are Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala, it added.
- Recently, the government has supported the promotion of GIs by approving an expenditure of Rs 75 crore for three years for promotion at awareness programmes.

- A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- There is a proper process of registration of GI products, which includes filing of application, preliminary scrutiny and examination, show cause notice, publication in the geographical indications journal, opposition to registration, and registration.
- Any association of persons, producers, organisation or authority established by or under the law can apply. The applicant must represent the interest of the producers.
- The famous goods which carry GI tag include Basmati rice, Darjeeling Tea, Chanderi Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Thanjavur Paintings, Allahabad Surkha, Farrukhabad Prints, Lucknow Zardozi and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving.

1.179. RARE EARTH MINERALS.

Why in News?

- Union Minister Dr Jitendra says, India is not reliant on China for accessing rare earth minerals.
- In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, Dr Jitendra Singh said, in India, capacity and capabilities in terms of mining, processing, extraction, refining and production of high pure RE oxides is adequately available.

About Rare Earth Minerals:

- Rare Earth Elements or Rare Earth Metals are a set of 17 elements in the periodic table — the 15 lanthanides, plus scandium and yttrium, which tend to occur in the same ore deposits as the lanthanides, and **have similar chemical properties.**
- They used in production in a huge number of sectors, including renewable energy technology, oil refinery, electronics, and the glass industry.
- Rare Earth elements are used in space shuttle components, jet engine turbines, and drones.
    - **Cerium**, the most abundant Rare Earth element, is essential to NASA's Space Shuttle Programme.
- **Although called "rare", they are actually found relatively abundantly in the Earth's crust.**
- However, they are hazardous to extract, and there are relatively few places in the world that mine or produce them.
- According to the Rare Earth Technology Alliance (RETA), the estimated size of the Rare Earth sector is between $10 billion and $15 billion. About 100,000-110,000 tonnes of Rare Earth elements are produced annually around the world.

Reserves of rare-earth minerals:

- China has the largest reserve (37 percent), followed by Brazil and Vietnam (18 percent each), Russia (15 percent), and the remaining countries (12 percent).
- India has the world's fifth-largest reserves of rare earth elements (contributing a total value of nearly $200 billion to the Indian economy), nearly twice as much as Australia.

1.180. PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA SAMPADA YOJANA (PMMSY)

Why in News?

- Government has said that the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana envisages to generate direct and indirect employment opportunities to about 55 lakh personnel in fisheries and aquaculture sector by 2024-25.
- Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Parshottam Rupala said this in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.
- He said, the scheme aims to create employment opportunities for fish farmers, fish vendors and entrepreneurs through the implementation of various targeted interventions in fish production, fisheries infrastructure and marketing.

About Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)

- PMMSY is a **flagship scheme for focused and sustainable development of the fisheries** sector in the country as a part of the **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.**

It aims to:

- **Adopt 'Cluster or Area-based Approaches'** and **create fisheries clusters** through backward and forward linkages.
- **Focus especially on employment generation** activities such as seaweed and ornamental fish cultivation.
- **Address critical gaps in fish production and productivity,** quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and management, modernisation and strengthening of the value chain, traceability, establishing a robust fisheries management framework and fishers' welfare.
- **Consolidate the achievements of the blue revolution** and **bring new interventions** such as fishing vessel insurance, support for new/up-gradation of fishing vessels/boats, integrated aqua parks, e-trading/marketing, etc.

Targets:

- **Enhance fish production** by an additional 70 lakh tonne and increase fisheries export earnings to Rs.1,00,000 crore by 2024-25.
- **Double the incomes** of fishers and fish farmers.
- **Reduce post-harvest losses** from 20-25% to about 10%.
- **Generate** an additional 55 lakhs direct and indirect gainful **employment opportunities** in the fisheries sector and allied activities.

1.181. KERALA'S FIVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS RECENTLY GOT GI TAG. WITH THE LATEST FIVE GIS, 17 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS OF KERALA FACILITATED BY THE KERALA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY HAVE RECEIVED THE GI STATUS.

What is a Geographical Indication?

- A geographical indication (GI) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- India, as a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 has come into force with effect from 15th September 2003.
- GI Tag is basically given to the products related to agriculture, handicrafts, foodstuffs, spirit drinks and Industrial Products.
- In 2004-2005 the Darjeeling Tea was given the first GI Tag in India.

About:

- Attappady Attukombu Avara (beans), Attappady Thuvara (red gram), Onattukara Ellu (sesame), Kanthalloor-Vattavada Veluthulli (garlic), and Kodungalloor Pottuvellari (snap melon) are the latest Geographical Indications that have been registered.
- The unique features of the products, imparted by the agro-climatic conditions of the geographical area of their production, are the basis for getting geographical indication tag.

Attappady Attukombu Avara:

- Attappady Attukombu Avara, cultivated in the Attappady region of Palakkad, is curved like a goat's horn as its name indicates.
- Its higher anthocyanin content compared to other dolichos beans imparts violet colour in the stem and fruits.
- Anthocyanin is helpful against cardiovascular diseases along with its antidiabetic properties.
- Other than this, calcium, protein, and fibre content are also high.
- The higher phenolic content of Attappady Attukombu Avara imparts resistance against pest and diseases, making the crop suitable for organic cultivation.

Attappady Thuvara:

- Attappady Thuvara is having seeds with white coat.
- Compared to other red grams, Attappady Thuvara seeds are bigger and have higher seed weight.

- This delicious red gram, which is used as vegetable and dal, is rich in protein, carbohydrate, fibre, calcium and magnesium.

Kanthalloor-Vattavada Veluthulli (garlic):

- Compared to the garlic produced in other areas, the garlic from the Kanthalloor-Vattavada area of Devikulam block panchayat in Idukki contains higher amount of sulphides, flavonoids, and proteins.
- It is rich in allicin, which is effective against microbial infections, blood sugar, cancer, cholesterol, heart diseases, and damages to blood vessels.
- The garlic cultivated in this area is also rich in essential oil.

Onattukara Ellu (sesame):

- Onattukara Ellu and its oil are famous for its unique health benefits.
- Relatively higher antioxidant content in Onattukara Ellu helps in fighting the free radicals, which destroy the body cells.
- Also, the high content of unsaturated fat makes it beneficial for heart patients.

Kodungalloor Pottuvellari (snap melon):

- Kodungalloor Pottuvellari cultivated in Kodungalloor and parts of Ernakulam is consumed as juice and in other forms.
- This snap melon, which is harvested in summer, is an excellent for quenching thirst.
- It contains high amount of Vitamin C.
- Compared to other cucurbits, nutrients such as calcium, magnesium, fibre and fat content are also high in Kodungalloor Pottuvellari.

1.182. SCIENTIST RECENTLY FREEZE GREAT BARRIER REEF CORAL IN WORLD –FIRST TRIAL.

About:

- Scientists used the cryomesh to freeze coral larvae at the Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS).
- The Great Barrier reef coral has suffered four bleaching events in the last seven years including the first ever bleach during a La Nina phenomenon.
- The Great Barrier Reef is a site of remarkable variety and beauty on the north-east coast of Australia. It contains the world’s largest collection of coral reefs, with 400 types of coral, 1,500 species of fish and 4,000 types of mollusc. It also holds great scientific interest as the habitat of species such as the dugong (‘sea cow’) and the large green turtle, which are threatened with extinction.

What is Cryomesh?

- Cryomesh is a specially fabricated mesh **used as substrate in cryopreservation**. This is lightweight and can be manufactured cheaply. It better preserves coral and has the properties of cryoplates.
- The mesh technology will help **store coral larvae at -196°C (-320.8°F).**

Significance of Coral Cryopreservation –

- Cryogenically frozen coral can be stored and later reintroduced to the wild. This could eventually help to rewild reefs threatened by climate change.
- It can build a bigger, more diverse bank of frozen living corals, preserving biodiversity.

What are corals?

- Corals are animals which live in a **symbiotic relationship** with microscopic algae called **zooxanthellae** (which live within the coral tissue).
- The zooxanthellae convert sunlight into food, providing corals with up to 90 per cent of their energy needs. They also give corals much of their colour.

1.183. UNION MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) EARTH SCIENCES RECENTLY SAID THAT SAMUDRAYAAN MISSION IS AIMED AT SENDING THREE PERSONNEL TO 6000-METRE DEPTH IN A VEHICLE CALLED ‘MATSYA 6000’.

About Samudrayaan Mission:

- Samudrayaan Mission is aimed to develop a self-propelled manned submersible to carry three human beings to a water depth of 6,000 meters in the ocean with a suite of scientific sensors and tools for deep ocean exploration.
- The experts will be sent in a manned submersible vehicle called **'MATSYA 6000'.**
- This vehicle is being designed and developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It has an endurance of 12 hours under normal operation and 96 hours in case of emergency for human safety.
- Manned submersible provides a feel of direct physical presence for researchers and has better intervention capability.
- With the launch of 'Samudrayaan' in October 2021, India joined the elite club of nations such as the US, Russia, Japan, France, and China to have niche technology and vehicles to carry out subsea activities.

Why is it relevant for India?

- India has a unique maritime position, a 7517 km long coastline, which is home to nine coastal states and 1,382 islands.
- The mission aims to boost the Central government's vision of 'New India' that highlights the Blue Economy as one of the ten core dimensions of growth.
- For India, with its three sides surrounded by the oceans and around 30% of the nation's population living in coastal areas and coastal regions play a major economic factor. It supports fisheries and aquaculture, tourism, livelihoods, and blue trade.

1.184. TEN CAPTIVE-BRED ASIAN GIANT TORTOISE (MANOURIA EMYS) JUVENILES WERE RELEASED INTO A PROTECTED AREA OF NAGALAND'S INTANKI NATIONAL PARK.

About:

- The soft release of Asian Giant Tortoise is an attempt to boost conservation and repopulating the species. The **soft release is a process of gradually releasing captive-raised species into the wild.**
- **Distribution:** They are found in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia and other places.
- **Diet:** Bamboo shoots, tubers and other juicy vegetation and some invertebrates and frogs.
- **Threats:** Hunting for consumption, habitat loss, anthropogenic activities like construction and slash and burn.
- **Conservation Status**
    - **IUCN: Critically Endangered**
    - CITES: Appendix II
    - Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972: Schedule IV

Intanki National Park:

- It is also known as the Ntangki National Park, which was established by British administrators in the year 1923.
- **Flora:** it has thick rain forests which creates natural habitat for many animals.
- **Fauna:** Wild buffaloes, Hoolok gibbo, Tigers, Sloth bear, Wild dogs and flying squirrels.

1.185. NDMA AND IMD TO WORK ON HEAT ACTION PLANS.

Why in News?

- **NDMA and IMD are working with 23 States to develop Heat Action Plans.**
- The Government has said that the National Disaster Management Authority and India Meteorological Department are working with 23 States to develop Heat Action Plans. Earth Science Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said this in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha today.

Where heat action plans are being developed?

- The heat action plans are being developed in the **States prone to high temperatures** leading to heat-wave conditions.

Effects of Heatwaves:

- As per studies, the stress induced due to heat waves;
    - Increases respiration and mortality,
    - Reduces fertility,
    - Modifies animal behavior, and
    - Suppresses the Immune and endocrine systems.

About Heat Action Plan

- The Heat Action Plan is a comprehensive early warning system and preparedness plan for extreme heat events.
- The Plan presents immediate as well as longer-term actions to increase preparedness, information-sharing, and response coordination to reduce the health impacts of extreme heat on vulnerable populations.
- Heatwave is one of the severe weather phenomena for which IMD issues an early warning.

Successful example of Heat Action Plan: Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan

- The Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan was unveiled in 2013.
- It has brought down heat wave linked deaths by up to 25%.

1.186. BOMB CYCLONE CONTINUES TO BATTER US AS DEATH TOLL MOUNTS TO 34.

What is Bomb Cyclone?

- A bomb cyclone is a **mid-latitude storm** in which the **central pressure drops fast at one millibar per hour for at least 24 hours**. However, the millibar readings can change based on where the storm is forming.
- This quickly increases the pressure difference, or gradient, between the two air masses, making the winds stronger. This process of rapid intensification has a name: **bombogenesis**.
- As the winds blow, the rotation of the Earth creates a cyclonic effect. The direction is counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere (when viewed from above).
- **Formation**:
    - A bomb cyclone is formed when the air of different air masses (cold, dry) comes together.
    - As the warm air rises, it creates a cloud system lowering air pressure and forming into a storm circulating counterclockwise around the low-pressure area.
- **Characteristics**:
    - The bomb cyclone will be characterised by cold winds, which are also expected to pick up, and wind chill temperatures could drop to dangerous lows far below zero — enough to cause frostbite within minutes.
    - The dangerous storm is expected to hit everyone east of the Rockies — around two-thirds of the country.

1.187. RAJASTHAN IDEAL LOCATION FOR SHIPPING CONTAINER HUB: MSME-EPC

- Rajasthan has a huge potential to become a 'cluster of shipping containers' to bridge the widening demand-supply gap as currently India is manufacturing only 10,000 shipping grade containers per year as against the requirements of 1,50,000 containers in the next three years.
- **Currently, the Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) has a fleet of 3,700 containers**, but the entire fleet catering to the domestic segment is imported to China.
- Hence, **Rajasthan** has a **huge potential** of becoming a **cluster of shipping containers', a study conducted by the MSME-EPC revealed (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises–Export Promotion Council).**
- "While the global shipping container market is growing at a CAGR of 12 per cent, by 2028, it is likely to touch Rs 1.75 lakh crore. India has a shortage of shipping grade containers as a result of which shipping lines often increase their rates phenomenally severely impacting India's export/import supply chain and competitiveness of industry," MSME-EPC said.

CONCOR

- It was incorporated in March 1988 under the Companies Act and commenced operation from November 1989.

- From its humble beginning, it is now an undisputed market leader having the largest network of 81 ICDs/CFSs in India (73 terminals and 8 strategic tie-ups).
- In addition to providing inland transport by rail for containers, it has also expanded to cover management of ports, air cargo complexes and establishing cold-chain.
- It has played an important role of promoting containerization in India through its modern rail wagon fleet, customer friendly commercial practices and extensively used Information Technology.

1.188. ASTRONOMERS AND SCIENTISTS AT THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ASTROPHYSICS (IIA), WHILE STUDYING THE OMEGA CENTAURI FOUND THAT HOT STARS AND WHITE DWARFS EMITTED LESS ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION THAN EXPECTED.

About:

- A team of Scientists at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics detected strange hot stars in the Globular clusters using the Ultra Violet Imaging Telescope (UVIT) images on **AstroSat (India's first dedicated space observatory, which has been operating since 2015).**

What are Globular clusters?

- Globular clusters are spherical aggregates of several thousand to millions of stars bound by gravity. These systems are thought to have formed early on in the Universe and can serve as perfect astrophysical laboratories for astronomers to understand how stars evolve through various phases.
- **Omega Centauri is a globular cluster** in the constellation of Centaurus that was first identified as a non-stellar object by Edmond Halley in 1677.
- Located at a **distance of 17,090 light-years**, it is the largest-known globular cluster in the Milky Way at a diameter of roughly 150 light-years.

What is Galaxy?

- A galaxy is a huge collection of gas, dust, and billions of stars and their solar systems bound together by gravity.
- Milky Way, is stuffed with between 100 billion and 400 billion other stars, many of them with planets of their own. The Milky Way got its name from the way it looks from the ground: like a streak of spilt milk across the sky

HEALTH

1.189. THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO) ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD START USING THE TERM "MPOX" FOR MONKEYPOX.

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) announced that it would start using the term "mpox" for monkeypox, which has infected about 80,000 people in the first major outbreak of the viral disease outside Africa that began early this summer.
- The disease spread mainly in the Americas including the United States and Europe, primarily among men who have sex with men (MSM).
- The change of name, announced after a series of consultations with global experts, has been provoked by the racist connotations that "monkeypox" sometimes carries. Both names will be used simultaneously for one year while "monkeypox" is phased out, the WHO said.
- "When the outbreak of monkeypox expanded earlier this year, racist and stigmatizing language online, in other settings and in some communities was observed and reported to WHO.
- In several meetings, public and private, a number of individuals and countries raised concerns and asked WHO to propose a way forward to change the name.
- In fact, monkeypox, which was named in 1970 because the virus that causes the disease was first discovered in captive monkeys in 1958, does not have much to do with monkeys.
- The most likely reservoir for the virus, which has circulated for several years in a few central African countries after jumping to humans through zoonosis in the bush, are rodents.
- This year's outbreak mainly among MSM has increased the marginalisation of the community that has traditionally been stigmatised for its association with HIV and AIDS.
- The WHO said that assigning names to new and, in some cases, existing diseases is the responsibility of the global body under the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) and the WHO Family of International Health Related Classifications through a consultative process which includes WHO Member States. In the case of monkeypox, the process was accelerated, the release said.
- According to WHO best practices, "new disease names should be given with the aim to minimize unnecessary negative impact of names on trade, travel, tourism or animal welfare, and avoid causing offence to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional or ethnic groups".
- The release said "various advisory bodies were heard during the consultation process, including experts from the medical and scientific and classification and statistics advisory committees which constituted representatives from government authorities of 45 different countries".

1.190. WORLD'S FIRST INTRA-NASAL VACCINE FOR COVID GETS CDSCO APPROVAL FOR RESTRICTED USE IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

- The world's first intra-nasal vaccine for COVID developed by India has got approval from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for restricted use in emergency situations in the age group of 18 and above.
- Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh said this while chairing the meeting of the Societies of Autonomous Institutions of the Department of Biotechnology in Delhi.
- The Minister informed that the product development and clinical trials were funded by the Department of Biotechnology and Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) under the Mission COVID Suraksha Program.
- The Minister said that India's efforts through Mission COVID Suraksha has not only strengthened Atmanirbhar Bharat but also bolstered India's status as a worldwide vaccine development and manufacturing center.
- He also informed me about the decision to merge the 14 societies of Biotechnology Institutes into a single society in the interest of convenient functioning, cost-effectiveness and integrated working.

1.191. DCGI OK'S 1ST 'MADE-IN-INDIA' TB KIT.

- With Mylab's PathoDetect kit patients can with a single test know their active TB infection as well as drug resistance to 2 most common drugs - Isoniazid and Rifampicin - so that they take treatment that will actually work.
- The first 'Made in India' kit recently approved by the DCGI, TB expert panel under the ICMR has been developed by Mylab. The kit is a RT-PCR based kit for accurate detection and will be used with Mylab Compact device systems – which will allow completely automated testing of multiple samples within 2 hours.
- This will be instrumental in supporting the Prime Minister's vision to eliminate TB by 2025 from India, said Hasmukh Rawal, the MD of Mylab.
- He explained that the device will help address several problems simultaneously. It can not only do multiple tests at one time but also does not need highly technical people which we are already short of to handle samples and reagents, he added.
- The kit has been approved after rigorous and large-scale field trials and recommended by the TB Expert Committee under ICMR.
- "Multicentre centre evaluation study and field feasibility testing studies were carried out for the "PathoDetect MTB RIF and INH drug resistance kits" & Compact device systems. The centres of trials included the most reputed Tb research centres of India, which evaluated the performance of the kit against the currently used diagnostic assays for Tuberculosis," said Rawal.
- He further said, "There is a huge problem of resistance to drugs when it comes to TB. Until now, India had to conduct 2 tests: one to detect TB first and to check drug resistance – that against only one drug (Rifampicin). But with Mylab'sPathoDetect™ kit, the test pattern will be changed."
- Also, the test kits have been designed to work in ambient temperatures compared to existing PCR options which need 2–8-degree cold storage. Mylab Compact™ device systems do not require special infrastructure for operations and feasibility studies done on mobile vans in rural areas indicate them to be very robust.

1.192. GOVERNMENT-FREE TELEMEDICINE SERVICE, ESANJEEVANI HAS RECENTLY CROSSED ANOTHER MILESTONE BY CLOCKING EIGHT CRORE TELECONSULTATIONS.

- In a significant achievement, eSanjeevani, Govt. of India's free telemedicine service, has crossed another astounding milestone by clocking 8 crore teleconsultations. The last 1 crore consultations were recorded in a remarkable time frame of around 5 weeks, signaling a wider adoption of telemedicine. An e-health initiative of Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, eSanjeevani is a national telemedicine service that strives to provide an alternative to the conventional physical consultations via digital platform.
- In less than 3 years, this initiative has garnered the distinction of being the world's largest government owned telemedicine platform. It consists of two verticals that cater to patients across all states and UTs successfully making its presence felt in the innermost regions of the nation.
- The first vertical eSanjeevaniAB-HWC endeavors to bridge rural-urban digital health divide by providing assisted teleconsultations, and ensuring that e beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat Scheme are able to avail of the benefits they are entitled to.
- This vertical operates on a Hub-and-Spoke model wherein the 'Ayushman Bharat-Health and Wellness Centers' (HWCs) are set up at state level, act as spokes, which are mapped with the hub (comprising MBBS/ Specialty/Super-Specialty doctors) at zonal level. With the objective to provide quality health services to a patient residing in rural areas, this model has been successfully implemented in 1,09,748 Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) and 14,188 Hubs, achieving a total of 7,11,58,968 teleconsultations.
- eSanjeevaniOPD is the latter vertical which caters to citizens in both rural and urban alike. It leverages technology via smartphones, tablets, laptops enabling doctor consultations to be accessible from the patient's residence regardless of location. eSanjeevaniOPD has acquired 1,144 online OPDs with 2,22,026 specialists, doctors and health workers that have been trained and onboarded. This platform has an impressive record of having served over 4.34 lakhs patients in one day. Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Mohali, which is providing holistic technical training and support to users, is augmenting the faculties of this vertical to be able to serve up to 1 million patients per day.
- eSanjeevani is a cohesive part Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Mission (ABDM), and more than 45,000 ABHA IDs have been generated via eSanjeevani application.

- Leading ten states for usage of this platform are: Andhra Pradesh (28242880), West Bengal (10005725), Karnataka (9446699), Tamil Nadu (8723333), Maharashtra (4070430), Uttar Pradesh (3763092), Madhya Pradesh (3283607), Bihar (2624482), Telangana (2452529), Gujarat (1673888).

1.193. PM MODI STRESSES ON DOCUMENTATION OF DATA BASED EVIDENCE TO FURTHER PROMOTE AYURVEDA; VIRTUALLY INAUGURATES THREE NATIONAL AYUSH INSTITUTES FROM GOA.

- **Prime Minister** Narendra Modi **inaugurated** virtually three National Ayush Institutes **in Goa.**
- The institutes are **All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), Goa**, the **National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM), Ghaziabad** and the **National Institute of Homeopathy (NIH), Delhi.**
- Addressing the valedictory function **of 9th World Ayurveda Congress (WAC**) and Arogya Expo, he said these 3 institutions will give speed to AYUSH healthcare system.
- Ayurveda is not just about treatment but it also promotes wellness.
- The Prime Minister stressed the need for documentation of Data Based Evidence to further promote Ayurveda.
- The event witnessed the active participation of more than 400 overseas delegates representing over 50 countries, international students and various other stakeholders of Ayurveda.
- The **theme** of this year's edition of WAC is **'Ayurveda for One Health'.**

AYUSH System of Medicine:

- **AYUSH** is the acronym of the medical systems that are being practiced in India such as **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.**
- These systems are based on **definite medical philosophies** and represent a **way of healthy living** with established concepts on prevention of diseases and promotion of health.
- The **basic approach** of all these systems **on health, disease and treatment** are holistic.

1.194. THE NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY AND AYUSHMAN BHARAT DIGITAL MISSION

Why in News?

- **NHA announces Digital Health Incentive Scheme for stakeholders to give boost to digital health transactions under ABDM**
- The National Health Authority, NHA has announced a Digital Health Incentive Scheme, DHIS for the stakeholders of the digital health ecosystem.
- The scheme aims to give a further boost to digital health transactions in the country under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- The incentives under this scheme would be provided to hospitals and diagnostic labs and also to the providers of digital health solutions such as Hospital/ Health Management Information Systems and Laboratory Management Information Systems.
- Under the DHIS, the eligible health facilities and digital solutions companies shall be able to earn financial incentives of up to Four crore rupees based on the number of digital health records they create and link to Ayushman Bharat Health Account, ABHA.
- This incentive can be availed by the hospitals and diagnostic labs registered with Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission's Health Facility Registry and fulfilling the eligibility criterion specified under the scheme.

About NHA

- National Health Authority (NHA) is the apex body responsible for implementing India's flagship public health insurance/assurance scheme called "Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana" & has been entrusted with the role of designing strategy, building technological infrastructure and implementation of "National Digital Health Mission" to create a National Digital Health Eco-system.
- National Health Authority is the successor of the National Health Agency, which was functioning as a registered society since 23rd May, 2018.
- NHA has been set-up to implement PM-JAY, as it is popularly known, at the national level. An attached office of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with full functional autonomy, NHA is governed by a Governing

Board chaired by the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare. It is headed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), an officer of the rank of Secretary to the Government of India, who manages its affairs. The CEO is the Ex-Office Member Secretary of the Governing Board.

- To implement the scheme at the State level, State Health Agencies (SHAs) in the form of a society/trust have been set up by respective States. SHAs have full operational autonomy over the implementation of the scheme in the State including extending the coverage to non SECC beneficiaries.
- NHA is leading the implementation for Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission ABDM in coordination with different ministries/departments of the Government of India, State Governments, and private sector/civil society organizations.

About Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

- Prime Minister launched the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) via video conferencing on 27th September 2021, in the presence of Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, among other dignitaries.
- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission will connect the digital health solutions of hospitals across the country with each other.
- The Mission will not only make the processes of hospitals simplified but also will increase ease of living.
- The Digital Ecosystem will also enable a host of other facilities like Digital Consultation, Consent of patients in letting medical practitioners access their records, etc. With the implementation of this scheme, old medical records cannot get lost as every record will be stored digitally.

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission was piloted successfully for one year in the six Union Territories:

- Andaman & Nicobar Islands
- Chandigarh
- Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu
- Ladakh
- Lakshadweep
- Puducherry

1.195. THE CENTRAL DRUGS STANDARD CONTROL ORGANISATION (CDSCO).

Why in News?

- **Government starts joint inspection of drug manufacturing units across the country to ensure high quality of medicines.**
- The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has started conducting joint inspections of identified Drug Manufacturing Units along with State Drugs Control Administration as per a risk-based approach.
- The Joint Inspections are being conducted all over the country as per the Standard Operating Procedures.
- A Committee of two Joint Drugs Controllers has been constituted at CDSCO Head Quarters to monitor the process of inspection, reporting, and subsequent action so as to ensure compliance with the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and the Rules thereunder.

About the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO):

- **The objective of drug regulation** is to **ensure the safety, efficacy, and quality of the drugs available in the country**. The drug control administration is required to ensure that manufacturing units comply with Drugs and Cosmetics Act, especially to the requirements of Good Manufacturing Practices.
- **The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation(CDSCO)**under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) of India.
- Its **headquarter is located in New Delhi** and also has six zonal offices, four sub zonal offices, thirteen Port offices and seven laboratories spread across the country.

- **The Drugs & Cosmetics Act,1940 and rules 1945** have entrusted various responsibilities to central & state regulators for regulation of drugs & cosmetics.
- It envisages uniform implementation of the provisions of the Act & Rules made there under for ensuring the safety, rights and well-being of the patients by regulating the drugs and cosmetics.
- CDSCO is constantly thriving upon to bring out transparency, accountability and uniformity in its services in order to ensure safety, efficacy and quality of the medical product manufactured, imported and distributed in the country.
- **Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, CDSCO** is responsible for approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials, laying down the standards for Drugs, control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country and coordination of the activities of State Drug Control Organizations by providing expert advice with a view of bring about the uniformity in the enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- Further CDSCO along with state regulators, is jointly responsible for grant of licenses of certain specialized categories of critical Drugs such as blood and blood products, I. V. Fluids, Vaccine and Sera.

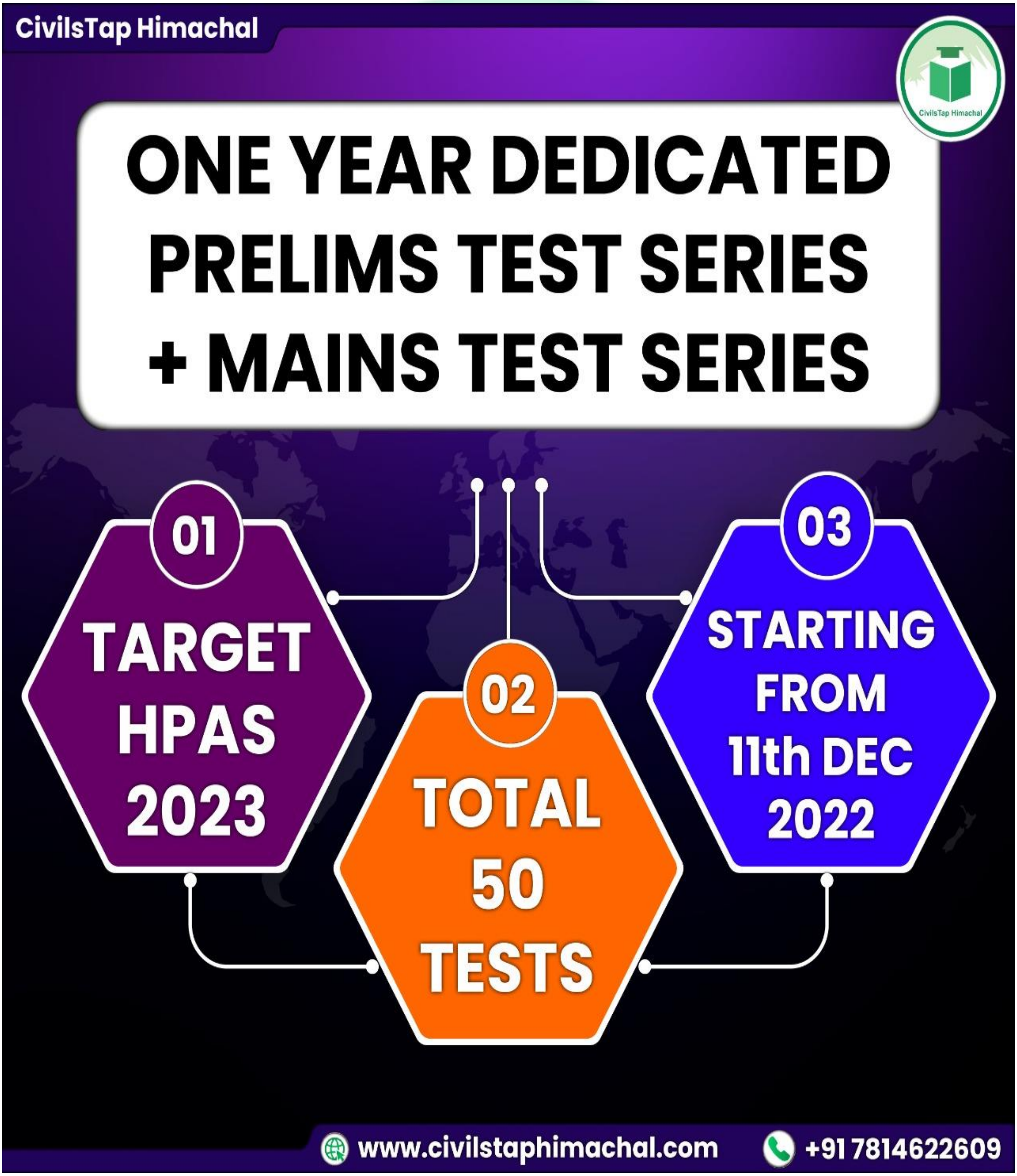
1.196. NATIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY RELEASE BETA VERSION OF LIGHTWEIGHT, ROBUST, AND ABDM-COMPLIANT HMIS.

- **National Health Authority (NHA)** has **released a beta version** of the lightweight, robust, and **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission-compliant Hospital Management Information System (HMIS).**
- It envisions providing a digital platform for healthcare providers, particularly focusing on private clinics and small health facilities.
- This beta version will allow doctors to generate and fetch Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts for patients as well as to manage their calendars, appointments, and patient details in a single window.
- **It will also facilitate e-prescription services** and view previous health records and prescriptions for registered patients and take video consultations.
- This is also **expected that it will digitize small clinics** and improve the discoverability of healthcare providers in India.
- The NHA is also inviting healthcare providers to participate in its beta-testing and share their feedback.

About HMIS

- Health Management Information System **(HMIS)** is a **Government to Government (G2G) web-based Monitoring Information System** that has been put in place by **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW),** Government of India to monitor the National Health Mission and other Health programmes and provide key inputs for policy formulation and appropriate programme interventions.
- HMIS has been utilised in Grading of Health Facilities, identifications of aspirational districts, review of State Programme Implementation Plan (PIPs), etc.
- The analytical reports generated through HMIS also provides gap analysis and evidence-based course correction.
- HMIS was launched in October 2008. Currently, around 2 lakh health facilities (across all States/UTs) are uploading facility wise service delivery data on monthly basis, training data on quarterly basis and infrastructure related data on annual basis on HMIS web portal.
- HMIS captures facility-wise information as follows:
    - Service Delivery (Reproductive, Maternal and Child Health related, Immunisation family planning, Vector borne disease, Tuberculosis, Morbidity and Mortality, OPD, IPD Services, Surgeries etc. data) on monthly basis.
    - Training Data (Trainings imparted to Medicals and Paramedics staff at District and State level data) on quarterly basis.
    - Infrastructure (Manpower, Equipment, Cleanliness, Building, Availability of Medical Services such as Surgery etc., Super Specialties services such as Cardiology etc., Diagnostics, Para Medical and Clinical Services etc. data) on annual basis.
- The HMIS Portal facilitates the flow of physical performance from the Facility level to the Sub-district, District, State and National level using a web based Health Management Information System (HMIS)

interface. The portal provides periodic reports on the status of the health services performances and Human Resources and Infrastructure services facilities available.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SPORTS

1.197. NADA INDIA TO HOST INCLUSION CONCLAVE TO SHARPEN FOCUS ON ATHLETES WITH DISABILITIES ON 2ND DECEMBER 2022.

- National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA India) will break ground on 2nd December 2022 when it hosts an Inclusion Conclave for the first time to sharpen the focus on anti-doping education and processes for athletes with disabilities. Secretary Department Sports Smt. Sujata Chaturvedi, UN Resident Coordinator Shombi Sharp and WADA Asia-Oceania Regional Office Manager, Kenny Lee will address the conclave.
- NADA India has already developed comprehensive modules on anti-doping education & awareness in Universal Design of Learning (UDL) for athletes with disabilities. UDL is a multi-modal framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all persons using sign language visual representation, transcribed subtitles and content audio. Some material, usually available in print only, has now been produced in Braille and audio formats as well. Besides, NADA India has conducted sensitisation workshops for Dope Control Officers (DCO) who collect samples from athletes with disabilities and has upgraded the DCO kit for such athletes.
- In a further step towards building an inclusive anti-doping landscape in India, the Conclave will take a holistic view, including sessions on policy landscape and legal framework, challenges faced by such athletes, education of and engagement with such athletes and Doping Control processes for athletes with disabilities.
- Besides Deepa Malik, G Mahanteesh, Kavitha Suresh and Suresh Kumar who head federations for sport for athletes with disabilities, the participation of para-athletes like Singhraj Adhana and Sharad Kumar as well as coach Maha Singh Rao in the discussions will sharpen the focus on anti-doping matters in sport for athletes with disabilities.
- Institute of National Anti-Doping Organisations (iNADO) CEO Jorge Leyva, Asian Paralympic Committee, Anti-Doping Sub-Committee Chairman Dr. Badrul Rashid, University of Birmingham's Prof. Ian Bradley and International Inclusion and Para Sports expert Dr. Halim Jebali headline the panelists from overseas who will join an array of Indian experts.
- The Conclave will be followed by a two-hour long inclusive anti-doping education workshop for Athletes with Disabilities with focus on Therapeutic Use Exemption, Doping Control Process, Anti-Doping Rule Violations as well rights and responsibilities of athletes with disabilities and support personnel.
- National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) was set up as registered society under the Societies Registration Act of 1860 on November 24, 2005 with a mandate for Dope free sports in India.

1.198. PT USHA FORMALLY ELECTED AS FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF INDIAN OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION.

- The legendary former athlete PT Usha has been formally elected as the first woman president of Indian Olympic Association (IOA).
- Ajay H Patel has been elected as senior Vice President, Rajlaxmi Singh Deo and Gagan Narang as Vice Presidents of the Indian Olympic Association.

About PT Usha

- The 58-year-old Pilavullakandi Thekkeparambil Usha – for short – is recognised as a phenom in Indian athletics and came onto the scene during the 1980s.
- Later, she became active as a coach and member of sports administration and was **nominated as a Rajya Sabha MP in 2022** by the central government.
- The 58-year-old Usha is a **multiple Asian Games gold medallist** and a fourth-place finisher in the **1984 Olympics 400m hurdles final**.
- She was also Known as the **'Payyoli Express'**

HISTORY

- India first participated in the Olympics in 1900 in Paris. The country was represented by Norman Pritchard, an Anglo Indian who was holidaying in Paris during that time.
- The seeds for creation of an organisation for coordinating the Olympic movement in India was related to India's participation in the 1920 and 1924 Olympics, when Sir Dorabji Tata suggested the need for a Sports body at National level for promoting Olympic Sport in united India. After the 1920 Games, the Committee sending the team to these Games met, and, on the advice of Sir Dorabji Tata, invited Dr. A.G. Noehren (Physical Education Director of YMCA India) to also join them.
- Subsequently, in 1923-24, a provisional All India Olympic Committee was set-up, which organised the All India Olympic Games (that later became the National Games of India) in February 1924. Eight athletes from these Games were selected to represent India at the 1924 Paris Summer Olympics, accompanied by manager Harry Crowe Buck. This gave impetus to the development and institutionalization of sports in India, and, in 1927, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) was formed, with Sir Dorabji Tata as its founding President and Dr. A.G. Noehren as Secretary.
- In the following months Harry Buck and Dr. Noehren travelled across India and helped many States establish their Olympic Associations, as member units of the IOA.
- The same year as it was formed, 1927, the Indian Olympic Association was officially recognised by the International Olympic Committee.

1.199. FIFA World Cup 2022:

- **Argentina** clinched their **3rd World Cup trophy** from six final appearances in history, seeing off France 4–2 on penalties to win the biggest prize in men's football at the at **Lusail Stadium in Lusail, Qatar.**
- It had won two in **1978 and 1986 under Diego Maradona.**
- The **2026 World Cup** will be held across three different countries, **the United States, Canada and Mexico.**

2022 FIFA World Cup Awards:

- Top 4 team Rankings: Argentina (Winner), France (2nd), Croatia (3rd) and Morocco (4th)
- Golden Boot Award: **Kylian Mbappe (France); (8 Goals)**
- Golden Ball Award: **Lionel Messi (Argentina); (7 goals and registering 3 assists)**
- Golden Glove Award: **Emiliano Martinez (Argentina)**
- FIFA Young Player Award: **Enzo Fernandez Enzo Fernandez**
- FIFA Fair Play Award: **England**
- Silver Boot Award: **Lionel Messi**
- Bronze Boot Award: **Olivier Giroud (France)**
- Silver Ball Award: **Kylian Mbappe**
- Bronze Ball Award: **Luka Modric (Croatia)**

About the black robe that Messi was wearing when he lifted the World Cup.

- In his crowning moment Lionel Messi's white and light blue iconic Argentine jersey was covered by the **robe the Emir of Qatar Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani** made him wear just before he was handed the trophy.
- The **bisht is a robe made of camel hair and goat wool worn** in the Arab world on special occassions. It is a **garment worn by royalty or religious leaders.**

FIFA World Cup Winners List- Country-wise

Country Name	No. of times Winner	Winning Year
Brazil	5	1958, 1962, 1970, 1994, 2002
Italy	4	1934, 1938, 1982, 2006
Germany	4	1954, 1974, 1990, 2014
Uruguay	2	1920, 1950
France	2	1998, 2018

Argentina	3	1978, 1986, 2022
England	1	1966
Spain	1	2010

1.200. CYCLIST SWASTI SINGH GETS EKALABYA PURASKAR.

- The '**Ekalabya Puraskar'** for the year **2022** was presented to **cyclist Swasti Singh**.
- The **award is given every year** to encourage young sports talents.
- She presented with a citation, trophy and Rs 5 lakh cash in a programme organized by **Indian Metals Public Charitable Trust (IMPaCT),** the charitable wing of IMFA.
- She was honoured for her performance from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2022 at both national and international levels.
- **Ekalabya Puraskar, instituted by IMPaCT in the year 1993,** has come a long way to be recognized as the most prestigious sports award of Odisha, drawing parallels with many national awards.

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AWARDS

1.201. FILMS FROM NORTHEAST WIN AT 'TVE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY AWARDS' IN LONDON.

- Two films from Northeast India - one about rhino conservation in Assam and the other on water scarcity in one of the world's wettest places Cherrapunji - have won prizes at 'tve Global Sustainability Film Awards (GSFA) 2022'.
- The tve GSFA, now in its 11th year, recognises outstanding films from the business, non-profit, media and creative sectors that inspire audiences with real-world solutions for a more sustainable future.
- While the film from Assam, 'Bad Blood', by Vice Media won in the Greener Living Short Film Award category, the special tve Trustee Choice Award was given to 'Water for Life' by Green Hub.
- On the film 'Bad Blood', the jury said: "The theme of a poacher-turned-gamekeeper is an evergreen theme. But this riveting film by Vice News, narrating the personal guilt of a reformed rhino killer, was special; not least because such films come from Africa, but this was from the Indian border in Assam."
- The other winning films were: Transforming Society category: 'Road to Fulfillment' (UAE); Documentary Impact: 'Eating Our Way to Extinction' (UK); Young Filmmaker: 'Changing Paradigms' (Henry Smith, Australia); Digital Technology and AI for Sustainable Living: 'Age of Change: Circulor' (UK).
- The award ceremony was held here at the Merchant Taylors' Hall on Tuesday night.
- According to Nick Nuttall, chair of the jury, "The films we judged and awarded were undoubtedly inspiring but also told fascinating stories that reflect both the threats, and importantly the solutions, to climate change and the loss of animal and plant life up to how to build sustainable livelihoods."
- The films not only demonstrated creativity and quality but the fact that the answers to these multiple emergencies are emerging everywhere if only we choose to deploy them at scale, said Nick, who is also a director and presenter of digital broadcaster 'We Don't Have Time'.
- During the tve GSFA ceremony, the founder of the awards and president of tve Surina Narula said, "I am delighted that we have two winning films from India this year. The quality of the films participating in these awards is a matter of great satisfaction as this indicates the success we have had in getting more organisations and individuals to actively engage in the conversation on global sustainability over the last eleven years."
- tve is a UK-registered charity founded by the United Nations Environment Programme, WWF-UK, and Central Television (now part of ITV) in 1984. Its mission is to use the power of storytelling to drive real world change for a more sustainable future.

1.202. BOOK ON CHIPKO MOVEMENT BAGS KAMALADEVI CHATTOPADHYAY NIF PRIZE.

- A book on the popular forest conservation campaign Chipko Movement, written by historian-activist Shekhar Pathak, was named the winner of the Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay NIF Book Prize 2022.
- Translated from Hindi by Manisha Chaudhry, "The Chipko Movement: A People's History" was selected from a diverse shortlist of five books covering a wide expanse of modern Indian history and encompassing distinct topics and perspectives.
- The other shortlisted books were "Accidental Feminism: Gender Parity and Selective Mobility Among India's Professional Elite" by Swethaa S Ballakrishnen; "Whole Numbers and Half Truths: What Data Can and Cannot Tell Us About Modern India" by Rukmini S; "Midnight's Borders: A People's History of Modern India" by Suchitra Vijayan; and "Born a Muslim: Some Truths about Islam in India" by Ghazala Wahab.
- The winner was selected by a six-member jury panel chaired by political scientist Niraja Gopal Jayal.
- On the winning entry, the jury said, "This is the definitive history of the Chipko movement by a scholar who has practically lived it. It is fitting that a book that tells the story of a movement through the eyes of the local communities, especially women, should be as readable as this one is."

- "Translated from Hindi by Manisha Chaudhry, Shekhar Pathak's book is a salutary reminder of the transformative, and not just an important work of history but one that speaks to the contemporary moment and its twin crises of ecology and democracy," it added.
- In India, modern environmentalism was inaugurated by the Chipko Movement, which began in 1973. Because it was led by Gandhians, included women participants, occurred in "spiritual" Himalayan regions, and used innovatively non-violent techniques of protest, it attracted international attention.
- Chipko's historians have hitherto focused on its two major leaders, Chandi Prasad Bhatt and Sunderlal Bahuguna. The voices of "subalterns" - ordinary men and women such as Gaura Devi who made Chipko what it was - have not been recorded.
- Pathak has lived in their valleys, studied the landscapes, talked to protesters and communities, and trawled local newspapers of the time. He shows that in leadership and ideology, Chipko was diverse and never a singular Gandhian movement.The Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay NIF Book Prize recognises and celebrates excellence in non-fiction writings on modern or contemporary India by writers from all nationalities. It carries a cash award of Rs 15 lakh, a trophy and a citation.

1.203. JAMNALAL BAJAJ AWARD 2022:

- The Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation has on 8 December 2022 announced the winners of the Jamnalal Bajaj award 2022. The Foundation gives 4 awards in different categories. Three are given to Indians and one award, for promoting Gandhian values outside is given to a foreigner.

Jamnalal Bajaj Award: Categories

- Constructive Works
- Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development
- Development and Welfare of Women and Children
- International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India

Jamnalal Bajaj 2022 winners

For Constructive Works

- **Nilesh Desai of Madhya Pradesh** has been chosen for the Jamnalal Bajaj award for Constructive Works. He is the founder of the Sampark Samaj Sevi Sansthan which works for the upliftment of the Bhil Community.

Award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development:

- **Mansukhbhai Prajapati of Gujarat** was awarded the Jamnalal Bajaj award for Application of Science and Technology for Rural Development. He was selected for his innovation and entrepreneurship in bringing traditional pottery making into the mainstream. His company Mitticool produces clay products and clay pots .He has helped the rural artisans making clay pottery to find new markets and business.

Award for Development and Welfare of Women and Children:

- **Sophia Saik of Odisha** was awarded the Jamnalal Bajaj award for Development and Welfare of Women and Children. She is a social service activist who works for women empowerment and gender rights. She is a prominent activist for women beedi workers in Odisha.

International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India:

- **Dr Ogirat Younan and Dr Walid Slyabi of Lebanon** was awarded the Jamnalal Bajaj award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India.
- They are the founders of the Academic University College for Non-Violence and Human Rights. They are the pioneers of non-violence in Lebanon and Arab world and spreading the Gandhaian ideas in the region.

About the Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation:

- The Jamnalal Bajaj Foundation established in 1977, instituted four Awards, to globally propagate the ideals of Jamnalal Bajaj. The annual awards are the Foundation’s gratifying felicitation to those women and men involved at the grassroots level, who are committed to inclusive development, working in line with Mahatma Gandhi’s constructive work program and who have taken a vow to selflessly serve the people, their community and nation, at large. Jamnalal Bajaj Awards are categorized into three National and one International Award. Each award carries a Citation, a Trophy and a Cash Prize of Rs. 10, 00,000.

1.204. MINISTRY OF HOUSING & URBAN AFFAIRS WINS PLATINUM ICON IN DIGITAL INDIA AWARDS 2022

- **The Smart Cities Mission, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** has **won the Platinum Icon in the Digital India Awards 2022** for their **initiative "DataSmart Cities: Empowering Cities through Data".**
- The **award** was **announced under** the '**Data Sharing and Use for Socio-Economic Development' category.**
- The DataSmart Cities Initiative is a key step in creating a robust data ecosystem that enables evidence-based decision-making in cities. It aims to harness the power of data for better governance in India's **100 Smart Cities.**
- Digital India Awards presents an opportunity to bring to the fore digital initiatives being adopted to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.
- It is a prestigious National competition that seeks to encourage and honour innovative digital solutions by government entities in realising the Digital India vision.

1.205. RECENTLY, THE UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY OF INDIA (UIDAI) HEADQUARTERS IN NEW DELHI HAS WON THE PRESTIGIOUS GRIHA EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE AWARD 2022.

About Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA):

- UIDAI believes in and promotes the idea of recycling and reusing to reduce carbon footprint.
- It has been harnessing solar power to meet a portion of its energy consumption.
- It is recycling and reuses water and has been adhering to sustainable waste management practices.

What is GRIHA?

- It is the national rating system of India for any completed building construction.
- It was jointly set up by **The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.**
- **Objective:** To help design green buildings and help evaluate the 'greenness' of the buildings.

Parameters used in Rating:

- Site selection and planning
- Conservation and efficient utilization of resources
- Building operation and maintenance
- Innovation points

STATE NEWS

1.206. ODISHA CABINET CLEARS STATE TOURISM POLICY-2022.

- The Odisha Cabinet has approved the Odisha Tourism Policy 2022 incorporating the latest tourism products and potentials in the state ahead of the 'Make in Odisha Conclave'.
- "Gauging the transformative changes in the last decade, the new policy is drafted to promote sustainable & responsible tourism encouraging professional management and private sector participation driven by lucrative investment opportunities.
- It focuses on accelerated development of the sector with a view to creating employment opportunities and bring about socio-economic benefits to the stakeholders," said officials.
- According to the government officials, the policy paves the way for enhancement of enhancement of capital incentive Subsidy (CIS) to 30% from the previous 20%-25% CIS with an aim to encourage investment in tourism sector in the state.
- They said "health, wellness & medical tourism" will now be an eligible tourism unit and provision of incentives to the interested investors.
- This initiative is said to have aimed not only at incentivizing establishment of advanced and super-specialty health establishments within the state, but also to encourage inbound travel of people seeking such services from outside.
- The new tourism policy provides innovative tourism products & offerings to ensure round the year tourism, said the officials adding that it shall help Odisha become a major destination for the tourists.
- It is also expected to promote beach tourism, Buddhist tourism, heritage tourism, religious tourism, meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) tourism, caravan, campervan/camping van tourism, health and wellness tourism, marine, cruise and yacht tourism, sand art tourism, adventure tourism, in a mission mode.

1.207. LADAKH TO SOON HAVE INDIA'S FIRST DARK NIGHT SKY RESERVE WITH 18 TELESCOPES INSTALLED FOR STARGAZING

- Ladakh is all set to have India's first Dark Night Sky Reserve at Hanle village in Changthang region. In about eighteen locations in Hanley, powerful telescopes will be installed for stargazing.
- Union Territory Ladakh administration has distributed eighteen telescopes to the trained youths of Hanley village.
- At an elevation of 4,500 meters, Hanle is home for the second-highest optical telescope in the world, established in 2001 by Indian Institute of Astrophysics. On his maiden visit to Hanley, Ladakh Lieutenant Governor RK Mathur was convinced with the unique potential lied for Astro tourism in the area.
- Following a tripartite MoU between UT Administration, Leh Hill council and Indian Institute of Astrophysics in June this year, necessary approvals from Department of Science and Technology and Ministry of Environment and Forests were issued for Dark sky sanctuary.
- On the other hand, Leh Hill Council CEC Tashi Gyaltson and MP Jamyang Tsering Namgyal have convinced the villagers about the economic development through Home stays and new avenues in tourism. LG Mr Mathur has kept establishment of Dark Sky Sanctuary on priority.
- He already instructed the concerned authorities to get affiliation with International Dark Sky Association and Star Light Foundation for Hanley Dark Sky Sanctuary. Sanctuary opens up personalized experiences to Astro tourists, economic opportunities for youths through the Telescope operation and villagers from the home stays.
- UT administration is also planning for mobile and static planetariums in the region. 24 youths from three hamlets of Hanley were provided with training by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics under the guidance of Engineering Chief Dorjey Angchuk.

- Locations are identified for the installation of telescopes including one big telescope in Punguk village. Nyoma Councillor Ishey Spalzang thanked the Centre for sanctioning the Sanctury, UT and Hill council for speedy execution of works.

1.208. COUNTRY'S LARGEST BUSINESS JET TERMINAL COMMISSIONED AT COCHIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

- **Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan** inaugurated the **country's first chartered gateway, and a business jet terminal** at the **Cochin International Airport**. With this, Cochin airport has become the fourth airport in the country to operate a private jet terminal.
- The state has achieved **114 per cent growth** in the **hospitality sector** and **75 per cent growth** in the **aviation sector.**
- The new facility at the airport will boost tourism as well as the **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) sector** in the state. It will propel the airport to the forefront of the aviation industry in the country. The facility will also serve as a platform to integrate the hospitality and aviation sectors.
- The Chief Minister, who is also the Chairman of the Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL) said the International Cargo Complex at the airport will be commissioned in October next year. He said work on the **25,000 sq ft commercial zone project** in front of the International Terminal at the airport will commence next month.
- The business jet terminal inaugurated was built at a cost of 40 crore rupees by renovating the old domestic terminal. It covers an area of 40,000 sq ft.
- **The gateway features facilities** like exclusive private car parking space, drive-in porch, a grand lobby, five comfortable lounges, business center, check-in, immigration, customs, health and security systems, duty free shop, foreign exchange counter and state-of-the-art video conferencing system.
- Apart from this, a 'safe house' is also set up for high-security VIP guests.
- **Kerala is the only state in India that has four international airports**.
- **They are:**
  1. Thiruvananthapuram International Airport.
  2. Cochin International Airport
  3. Calicut International Airport
  4. Kannur International Airport

1.209. J&K AWARDED 1ST PRIZE IN CATEGORY FOR AYUSHMAN BHARAT HEALTH ACCOUNT ID GENERATION.

- **Jammu and Kashmir** has been awarded **1st prize** in the category for **Ayushman Bharat health account ID generation** and **2nd prize** in the category for **Teleconsultation conducted** during the celebration of **Universal Health Coverage Day 2022** which is being celebrated on **10th** and **11th December at International Cooperation and Convention Centre, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.**
- Universal Health Coverage Day is celebrated every year to commemorate the significance of Universal health coverage which aims to ensure quality healthcare closer to the people without any financial hardships.

ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)

- ABHA number is a 14 digit number that will uniquely identify you as a participant in India’s digital healthcare ecosystem.
- ABHA number will establish a strong and trustable identity for you that will be accepted by healthcare providers and payers across the country.

1.210. TAMIL NADU BECOMES THE FIRST STATE TO LAUNCH ITS OWN CLIMATE CHANGE MISSION IN INDIA.

- Tamil Nadu will be the first state to establish its own Climate Change Mission. It began the Green Tamil Nadu Mission in September 2021, and the Tamil Nadu Wetlands Mission in August 2022.
- The State Climate Action Plan will be implemented through a Special Purpose Vehicle, the Tamil Nadu Green Climate Company (TNGCC).

- To establish plans to reduce total greenhouse gas emissions in the state, promote public transportation usage, develop measures to minimize emissions by using green and renewable energy, expand forest cover, and efficiently manage waste.
- The aims also include developing strategies to alleviate the effects of climate change, gaining access to financial resources for adaptation, initiating climate education in educational institutions, and focusing on climate action for women and children.

1.211. ‘ORUNODOI’ SCHEME OF ASSAM GOVERNMENT.

Why in News?

- New beneficiaries added to this scheme.
- 10.54 In lakh, the additional number of people will benefit from Assam government’s second edition of ‘Orunodoi’.
- With this, the total number of beneficiaries will come to 27 lakh.

About ‘Orunodoi’ Scheme:

- It is a scheme of the Government of Assam is launched on **2nd October 2020.**
- Under ‘Orunodoi’, monetary benefits have been envisaged for more than 24 lac poor household in the state.
- Government of Assam will provide monthly financial assistance to the eligible beneficiaries for procuring medicines, pulses, and sugar.
- The schematic benefit has been enhanced from 830/- to Rs. 1000/ Women.
- Women being the primary caretakers of the family are kept as beneficiaries of the scheme.
- ‘Orunodoi’ scheme will provide Financial Assistance of Rs. 1000 per month through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme.
- The financial outlay for Orunodoi is ₹4,142 crore per annum.

Beneficiaries:

- The preliminary selection of the beneficiaries will be done at the **level of Gaon Panchayat (GP) Village Council Development Committee (VCDC) Urban Local Body (ULB)** based on eligibility/ineligibility conditions.

1.212. 200 HEALTH ATMS SET UP ACROSS UTTAR PRADESH.

- The Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has set up 200 health ATMs at different locations across the state and has provided experts to run them.
- The state government intends to install health ATMs at all 4,600 wellness centres in the state.
- Efforts are also afoot to provide the facility of tele-consultation at all health centres of the state. Accordingly, health workers are being trained.
- The first health ATM of the state was inaugurated in September this year to upgrade health services. A health ATM can conduct tests for more than 30 diseases immediately.
- Health ATMs will be very effective in making health facilities accessible to the general public.
- Through expert health workers, reports of 30 types of tests will be made available to the patients in a very short time through printout, WhatsApp, e-mail and SMS. Simultaneously, the results of the test will be shared by the doctors on the telemedicine hub.
- There is also a provision to provide medical consultation through telemedicine if there is no doctor at places where health ATMs have been set up.
- Provision of video consultation has already started after the prescribed tests at 200 places.

What is Health ATM?

- Similar to a bank's Automated Teller Machine (ATM), a **health ATM is a touch-screen kiosk hardware** built for **managing health-related information**. This enables consumers to access their personal health information from any internet-connected web browser.
- It **empowers patients** and allows them to **actively participate in managing their health requirements** by providing **access to world-class medical facilities**.

- Health ATM **addresses the issue** of **primary health care** in rural and distant places. It is a sophisticated, modern, simple, accurate, and automated healthcare kiosk.
- **A one-stop digital touch-point integrated equipment** developed to diagnose all chronic diseases while also providing primary care and diagnostics in rural places.
- ATMs for healthcare are outfitted with cutting-edge diagnostic equipment for basic vitals, cardiology, neurology, pulmonary tests, gynecology, clinical diagnostic and life-saving equipment, and emergency services.

1.213. UP GOVT BRINGS A NEW WAREHOUSING AND LOGISTIC POLICY

- In order **to make Uttar Pradesh a trillion-dollar economy**, a new **'Uttar Pradesh Warehousing and Logistics Policy-2022'** has been approved.
- This **policy** will be **effective** for the **next five years.**
- This policy has been made with a view to develop the logistics ecosystem in the state to create an international-level business environment.
- The new policy is to create a strong transport infrastructure network, upgrade and improve existing warehousing and logistics infrastructure, encourage integrated development of logistics services in the state to reduce logistics costs and improve efficiency.
- Under the new policy, there is a provision for **fast-track land allotment** for logistics parks, development of specified logistics zones as well as incentive scheme.
- Under the incentive scheme, the **logistics infrastructure facilities** are covered **under 3 heads** which include, **one warehousing facilities** such as warehouses, silos and cold chain facilities, **two logistics parks** and **dry ports** including multimodal parks, inland container depots, container freight stations including air freight stations and **three** other facilities, such as **truck lay-bays, private freight terminals**, private berthing terminals and inland vessels, and provision of attractive incentives and incentives.

1.214. STATES WITH ENCROACHED CENTRALLY PROTECTED MONUMENTS.

- Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of centrally protected monuments that have been illegally encroached.

Which states have the highest number of centrally protected monuments that have been encroached on?

- According to the Central Government, a total of 356 centrally protected monuments have been illegally encroached into across India. This is an increase from the 2019 figure of 321 protected monuments that have been infringed.
- Uttar Pradesh, at 743, has the largest number of centrally protected monuments that have been illegally encroached.
- Tamil Nadu has the second-highest number of illegally encroached centrally protected monuments at 412.
- It is followed by Karnataka and Maharashtra with 48 and 46 such monuments respectively.
- Gujarat has the fifth highest number of illegally encroached centrally protected monuments.

What are centrally protected monuments?

- Centrally Protected Monuments are those that are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- Under this Act, construction activities are prohibited within 100 meters of a centrally protected monument and construction within 100 to 200 meters of these structures is strictly regulated.
- The regulations under this Act are implemented by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).

How are the centrally protected monuments protected?

- The officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) regularly inspect the monuments to assess their present conditions.
- Besides conducting various conservation and preservation works based on the requirement, the ASI officials also file police complaints, issue show cause notices to defaulters for the removal of the illegal encroachments, and also issue orders to the Collector requesting for the demolition or removal of these encroachments.

About Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958

- The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) regulates the preservation of ancient and historical monuments as well as archaeological sites and remains of national importance. The ASI, which comes under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Culture, functions under the provisions of this Act.
- This Act protects monuments and sites that are more than 100 years old. An area within 100 meters of the monuments that are protected under this Act is considered a "prohibited area". Here, all construction activities are banned. The area within 200 meters of the monument is a regulated area. Any repair or modifications of structures within this area can be done only with prior permission from the ASI.

1.215. KARNATAKA STARTUP POLICY 2022.

- Karnataka's government has introduced a new startup policy (2022-27) aiming to add around 10,000 startups to the state's business ecosystem in the next five years, with a focus on high-growth startups.
- The policy, which was introduced on 22nd December 2022, aims to stimulate the growth of around 25,000 startups in the coming five years, particularly focusing on increasing the number of high-growth startups.

Positioning Karnataka as the "Champion State" for Startups

- The new policy, which has been framed by the Department of Electronics and IT/BT, aims to position Karnataka as the "Champion State" for startups and further increase the number of high-growth startups by 2027.
- The policy will create an enabling environment for growing startups and make the state an innovation hub. It will also provide a conducive environment and ideal business environment for growth for tech-enabled startups operating outside of Bengaluru.

Supporting Startups through Funding and Incubation

- As part of the policy, the state government will launch an INR 100 Cr venture capital fund to back deeptech startups working in areas such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, electric vehicles, medtech, robotics, and drones.
- The policy also provides funding to startups at various stages of their business life cycle, including seed funding, venture capital funding, angel investor funding, and sector-specific funding.
- It also offers incubation support, mentorship, co-working spaces, and a dedicated Start-up Cell to help startups grow and succeed.

Expanding the Startup Ecosystem in Karnataka

- Karnataka currently houses around 15,000 startups, and the new policy aims to add around 10,000 more in the next five years.
- The policy also establishes 50 new-age innovation network (NAIN) centres – 35 in IT/electronics and 15 in bio-technology institutions of higher learning located outside Bengaluru Urban district – to support the growth of startups in these sectors.

Aim of Karnataka's new startup policy

- Karnataka's new startup policy aims to position the state as a leading destination for startups and drive the growth of the startup ecosystem in the region.
- It provides a range of support measures, including funding, incubation, mentorship, co-working spaces, and a dedicated Start-up Cell, to help startups grow and succeed.
- The policy also establishes 50 new-age innovation network (NAIN) centres to support the growth of startups in the IT/electronics and bio-technology sectors.

1.216. MAHARASHTRA LOKAYUKTA ACT, 2022.

Why in News?

- Recently, The Maharashtra Assembly unanimously passed the **Maharashtra Lokayukta Act, 2022.**
    - The Act will now be presented in the Legislative Council for approval.

About the Act

- **Anna Hazare Committee report:**

  - The Maharashtra government has approved the Anna Hazare Committee report of introducing Lokayukta in the State along the lines of the Centre's Lokpal law.
- **Key highlights:**
  - The Act will give additional powers to the Lokayukta to direct state agencies to probe public servants, including the chief minister and state ministers.
    - The Act will give additional powers to **not only recommend action** but also direct state agencies **to undertake the investigation**.
  - **Process of investigation:**
    - As per the Act, any present or former chief minister of Maharashtra can be investigated by the Lokayukta **only if the motion for the same is passed by the Legislative Assembly** by a **two-thirds majority**.
    - **Requirement of approvals:**
      - **For present or former ministers:**
        - Approval of the **governor** and **views of the group of ministers** appointed by the governor is required to conduct an inquiry into **present or former ministers**.
      - **For Legislative member:**
        - The approval of the **Council chairperson or Assembly speaker** is required to probe the **Legislative member**.
      - **For IAS officer:**
        - The draft has **even brought IAS officials** under the scope of the probe but the Lokayukta will require the approval of the chief minister and the views of the chief secretary to initiate the probe.
      - **For municipal corporator or sarpanch:**
        - The Lokayukta will require approval from the minister concerned to probe even the municipal corporator or sarpanch.
    - **Significance of approvals:**
      - The filters will ensure no false complaints are filed
  - **The Anti-corruption Act:**
    - The Anti-corruption Act will be made a part of this law.
  - **Composition:**
    - The Lokayukta will be a retired chief justice of the High Court or a Supreme Court (judge).
    - The Lokayukta will have a team of five people including retired judges.

More about Lokayukta

- **About:**
  - The Lokayukta is an **anti-corruption authority** constituted at the state level.
  - It investigates allegations of **corruption and maladministration** against **public servants** and is tasked with **speedy redressal of public grievances**.
- **Origin:**
  - The origin of the Lokayukta can be traced to the **Ombudsman in Scandinavian countries.**
  - The **Administrative Reforms Commission headed by Late Morarji Desai** in **1966 recommended** the creation of the Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayukta in the states.
  - The State of Maharashtra is the first and pioneer State in India to introduce the **concept of Lokayukta by enacting the Maharashtra Lokayukta and Upa-Lokayuktas Act, 1971**.
- **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013:**
  - The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 provided for the **establishment of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States**.
  - The Act states that not less than **50% of the members of the Lokpal** should be from among persons belonging to the **SCs, the STs, OBCs, minorities** and **women**.
  - The same rules apply to **members of the search committee**.
  - Salaries, allowances and service conditions of the Lokpal chairperson will be **the same as those for the Chief Justice of India**; those for other members will be the same as those for a judge of the Supreme Court.

  - These institutions are **statutory bodies without any constitutional status.**
- **The Lokpal and Lokayuktas (Amendment) Bill, 2016:**
  - The Bill amends the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 in relation to the **declaration of assets and liabilities by public servants**.
  - It requires a public servant to **declare his assets and liabilities**, and that of his spouse and dependent children.
  - Such declarations must be made to the **competent authority within 30 days of entering the office**.
- **Selection, Appointment and Removal of Lokayukta:**
  - The Lokayukta is usually a former **High Court Chief Justice or former Supreme Court judge** and has a **fixed tenure**.
  - The Chief Minister selects a person as the Lokayukta after consultation with
    - The High Court Chief Justice, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,
    - The Chairman of the Legislative Council,
    - Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly and the
    - Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council.
    - The appointment is then made by the Governor.
  - Once appointed, Lokayukta **cannot be dismissed nor transferred** by the government, and can only be **removed by passing an impeachment motion by the state assembly**.
- **Work and Functions:**
  - The Lokayukta (sometimes referred to as the institution itself) investigates allegations of corruption and maladministration against public servants and is tasked with speedy redressal of public grievances.

Way ahead

- In order to tackle the problem of corruption, the institution of the ombudsman should be strengthened both in terms of functional autonomy and the availability of manpower.
- The appointment of Lokpal in itself is not enough. The government should also address the issues based on which people are demanding a Lokpal.
- The slogan adopted by the government of “less government and more governance”, should be followed in letter and spirit.

HIMACHAL PRADESH NEWS

1.217. CWG MEDALLIST FROM HIMACHAL PRADESH GETS ARJUNA AWARD 2022.

- Three-time Commonwealth medallist Vikas Thakur has been conferred with the Arjuna Award by President Droupadi Murmu for the year 2022 at the Rashtrapati Bhavan today.
- The 29-year-old weightlifter, who hails from Patnaun village, had bagged a silver medal at the Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2022 in Birmingham in the 96-kg category. He had also won silver and bronze medals at the CWG in 2014 and 2018, respectively.
- Vikas, who is currently serving in the Indian Air Force, received a cash prize of Rs 15 lakh along with a certificate and a bronze statue of Arjuna. He said now his aim was to win gold for the country at the Asian Games 2023, which are due to be held in China.

1.218. SATLUJ JAL VIDYUT NIGAM (SJVN) GETS ISO CERTIFICATION.

- The SJVN has become an ISO 31000:2018 company with the successful implementation of the Risk Management System.
- "The SJVN is the first Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) to achieve this distinction from National Productivity Council after comprehensive audit as per ISO standards.
- Risk Management System of the company is well integrated with its business processes in corporate office as well as the projects," said SJVN chairman Nand Lal Sharma.

1.219. PONG DAM LAKE'S TOURISM POTENTIAL UNTAPPED.

- The Pong Dam Lake, an internationally recognised wetland, receives more than one lakh migratory birds every year, maximum in North India. However, despite such a spectacle of nature, the tourism potential of the lake is still to be tapped.
- The successive governments gave wide publicity to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) loan for promoting tourism at the lake. The first phase of the plan was to develop the area near the Pong Dam structure as a tourist destination. A few huts were built near the Pong Dam for tourists. However, despite an investment worth crore of rupees, these huts have never been put to use.
- The massive investment plan for tourism development had drawn criticism from the people living in the vicinity of the lake. They were sore at not being taken into confidence while chalking out the plan. The government spent about Rs 10 crore to develop the area near the Pong Dam structure for attracting tourists.
- Raghav, who lives in the area along the lake, said a few tourists came to visit Pong Dam. The government should first create infrastructure around the lake that can attract tourists rather than creating housing facility for them.
- The Department of Tourism had planned to bring up a tourist reception centre at a cost of about Rs 1.5 crore. The people of the area, however, say that the tourist reception centre should be created at the Gaggal airport or any other place where the tourist arrive so that they can be guided to visit the Pong Dam lake area.
- The stakeholders, at a meeting held at the district headquarters, had lodged their protest against the initial plan chalked out for spending Rs 10 crore to develop tourism in their area.
- Some participants said developing the entire infrastructure for tourism near the Pong Dam area would be a waste of funds. Due to security reasons, there are restrictions on the tourists visiting the Pong Dam area.
- The government should, in fact, provide basic infrastructure to private entrepreneurs, who want to create places for attracting tourists to the area.
- The much-celebrated village tourism should be promoted. There are many landmarks such as rock cut Masroor Temples, heritage properties of the former Guler state and Kangra art centres that can attract tourists. If the government involves locals, it can help generate employment and increase tourism in the Pong Dam area.

Rs 10 crore spent on developing area

- Huts were built near the Pong Dam for tourists. However, these huts have never been put to use
- There are many landmarks such as rock cut Masroor Temples, heritage properties of the former Guler state and Kangra art centres that can attract tourists to the lake's vicinity
- The government spent about Rs 10 crore to develop the area for attracting tourists.
- The investment plans have drawn criticism from people living in the vicinity. They were sore at not being taken into confidence while chalking out the plan.

1.220. HIMACHAL PRADESH GOVERNOR LAUNCHES TELEMEDICINE, MEDITATION SCHEMES FOR PRISONERS.

- Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar launched seven new schemes for inmates initiated by the Prisons and Correctional Services Department at the Model Central Prison, Kanda.
- The schemes launched today include meditation programme, telemedicine project, financial literacy programme, waste management, free online coaching and audio library. The occasion was also marked by release of a poetry collection 'Parwaz'.
- The Governor said it was an emotional moment for him to see the skills of the inmates of prison. He appreciated the efforts of Prisons and Correctional Services Additional Director General of Police Satwant Atwal.
- "Whatever may be the reason for coming here, prisoners are here to learn, experiment, get trained and move forward with positive thoughts," said Arlekar. He said this was a correctional home, so various programmes were being run for prisoners which would not just benefit them but also the society at large.
- Earlier, the Governor launched transcendental meditation programme and training, which will be implemented by the Transcendental Meditation Institute. He also launched a telemedicine programme in prisons through e-Sanjeevani, under which specialist doctors will give online consultation to prisoners.
- The Governor also launched a financial literacy programme for prisoners in collaboration with the Reserve Bank of India. Free online coaching for children of prisoners with the help of Smile Foundation was also launched. An audio library was also started for the prisoners, who could not read books due to paucity of time.
- ADGP Atwal gave details about various activities organised by the Prisons and Correctional Services Department. "One barrack in every jail has been declared as a "free prison" where eligible prisoners are earning their livelihood by going out of the jail and taking care of their families," she revealed.
- She said Himachal was the only state in the country which had provided a facility like "free prison" to eligible women prisoners, which is now being followed by other prisons.

State jails overcrowded

- HP has 14 prisons in which 2,909 inmates are lodged against a capacity of 2,437. The undertrial and conviction rate is 68% and 32% respectively
- The maximum number of 1,187 inmates (40.8%) have been convicted under the NDPS Act while 22.89% have committed crime against women.

1.221. DHARAMSALA: ACT NOT IMPLEMENTED, 'STREET VENDORS SUFFERING.'

- The Street Vending Act (protection of livelihood and regulation of street vending) 2014 was not being implemented in the state. Former IAS officer and commissioner of Dharamsala MC JM Pathania said this while addressing a press conference recently.
- Pathania said that due to the non-implementation of the Act both the street vendors and common citizens in the cities and towns of the state were suffering.
- He said the state government had notified the rules for implementing the Street Vending Act in the state in the year 2016.

- Under the rules it was the duty of the officials governing the local bodies to identify vending zones in various parts of the city. In these vending zone facilities were to be provided to the street vendors under the National Urban Livelihood Mission.
- The Government of India was providing funds under various scheme for welfare and regulation of street vendors but the state government has failed take benefit of it, he said.
- Pathania said in Dharamsala Smart City a town vending committee was formed in the year 2016 which also had members of the local street vendors association. It identified and registered the street vendors in the city. A proposal was made under which a vending zone was to be brought up in McLeodganj. The proposal worth Rs 1 crore was sent to the union government, however, it was never followed.
- He said that lack of awareness regarding the Street Vending Act was leading to exploitation of the street vendors. Under the rules of the Street Vending Act 2014 notified by the state government the urban body can charge a maximum of Rs 1200 per month from the street vendors. However, the urban body here was charging Rs 1500 per month from the street vendors, he said.

1.222. CRI DIRECTOR WINS GOLD IN POWERLIFTING.

- Dr Dimple Kasana, Director, Central Research Institute, Kasauli, has won four gold medals in the 63 kg weight category, in the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championship 2022 organised by the International Powerlifting Federation and New Zealand on November 30.

1.223. APPLE TRANSPORTATION THROUGH DRONES TO BECOME REALITY IN TRIBAL KINNAUR DISTRICT OF HIMACHAL.

- Apple growers in remote and inaccessible areas of the tribal Kinnaur district are in for a new revolution as transportation of apples through drone technology would soon become a reality.
- Successful trials of transportation of 20 kg apple boxes were done in Rohan Kanda village in Nichar block of Kinnaur district and the boxes were transported for a distance of 12 km from an orchard to the main road in six minutes by the Vegrow apple procurement agency in collaboration with Skyeair.
- The trial for lifting apple boxes was done to check the feasibility, battery and rotation time and assess the load lifted in one rotation in November and the cost aspect is being worked on now. “Our target is to lift about 200 kg in one go to make the transportation economical for the apple growers and we are hopeful that the fruitful model would be implemented by the next season,” said incharge of Vegrow, Dinesh Negi.
- Financial feasibility is being chalked out and the administration would facilitate the company for getting the licence and other requirements but the deal is between the private company and the orchardists, said Deputy Commissioner Kinnaur, Abid Hussain Sadiq.
- “There is no road connectivity to the twin villages of Rohan Kanda and Chota Kanda in Nichar block of Kinnaur and the apple boxes are carried on foot and a maximum of three boxes (90kg) are brought to the road in one trip. It takes over four hours for one round due to hilly terrain and a coolie (labourer) can take maximum of three rounds in a day, said an apple grower from Nichar, Manoj Mehta, adding as the process is time consuming the freshness of the fruit is compromised and labour shortage is another problem.
- Successful trial has rekindled hope of timely and safe transportation especially at time of early snow and talks are going on with the private company to fix the prices and efforts are afoot to made transportation of 200 kg of apple boxes at one time to reduce the cost, said Vice-Pradhan of Gram Panchayat Nichar, Jagdev.
- The move would help in reducing the cost of transportation besides saving time as bringing apples from hilly terrain to the main road for loading in trucks is an expensive, time-consuming and tough task as these orchards are not connected by roads, he told PTI.
- Apple is grown on 10,924 hectares in the district. The apple transportation from the lower areas of Kinnaur starts in August-end but the bulk of transportation takes place from October 15 to November 15.
- This year, 40.83 lakh boxes were produced as compared to 24.33 lakh boxes in 2021 while the number of boxes was 36.64 lakh in 2020, 28.43 lakh in 2019 and 30.83 lakh in 2018. One box contains 20 kg of apple, officials in the Kinnaur horticulture department said.

- The price for transporting five kg weight for one kilometre has been fixed at Rs 45 and for 10 Kg at Rs 55 by the Himachal Pradesh State Electronics Development Corporation Ltd (HPSEDC) for government departments, said Managing Director of the corporation Mukesh Repaswal.
- The Himachal Pradesh government had given consent to Drone Policy 2022 with the objective of propagating Drone-enabled technology for heralding economic prosperity and creating employment avenues in June this year. In the agriculture and horticulture sector, drones would be used to gather farm and crop specific data to assess farm productivity, assess crop damage, spray of fertilizers on crops and reduce misapplication of resources, officials maintained.

1.224. IN CLEAN AIR SURVEY, NALAGARH & SUNDERNAGAR AMONG TOP THREE.

- Residents could be inhaling cleaner air as the air quality index (AQI) of Himachal has improved from 81 to 61 over the past four years, besides Sundernagar and Nalagarh being ranked second and third, respectively, in the latest Swachh Vayu Survekshan-2022.
- The improvement in the air quality since 2017 is being attributed to the effective enforcement of pollution control and environmental laws by the State Pollution Control Board. Seven cities Baddi, Damtal, Kala Amb, Nalagarh, Paonta Sahib, Parwanoo and Sundernagar, majorly industrial town, had been placed in the non-attainment cities and towns categories (NAC/Ts) with high particulate matter, leading to poor air quality.
- Now, Sundernagar and Nalagarh will be excluded from the list of NAC/Ts as the two have got the second and third ranking in terms of the cities which have improved their air quality levels. The award was received by Manoj Chauhan, Chief Scientific Officer, State Pollution Control Board.
- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, conferred the awards under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP). A cash award of Rs 25 lakh and 12.50 lakh were awarded to Sundernagar and Nalagarh.
- Apoorv Devgan, Member Secretary, Himachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board, said the problem to tackle was higher concentration of PM 10 in the ambient environment which had led to the categorisation of these seven cities/towns under the category of non-attainment.
- “The state has adopted a multi-pronged strategy by involving all stakeholder departments and prepared an action plan for mitigation the air pollution in all NAC/Ts,” said Devgan. The board has upgraded the air monitoring capability in all NAC/Ts along with effective periodic review in the implementation of the action plan by the Air Quality Monitoring Committee, headed by Additional Chief Secretary (Environment, Science and Technology).
- He said the efforts of the State Pollution Control Board as well as city-level implementation committee, headed by the District Magistrates, had been succeeded in the reduction of more than 40 per cent PM10 concentration in the ambient environment.
- The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2018 for the containment of air quality in 131 NAC/Ts in India. Various components of the action plan include containment of vehicular emissions, suppression of road dust and other fugitive emissions, control of air pollution from bio-mass burning, construction and demolition activities and industrial air pollution.

1.225. HP AGRICULTURE UNIVERSITY TRYING TO GET GI TAG FOR CROPS, OTHER PRODUCTS: VC

- The CSK HP Agriculture University here has been making efforts to get a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for important crops of the state.
- After getting the GI tag, growers will get special rights over these distinct crops and farm products and reap rich dividends by selling these.
- According to Vice Chancellor Prof HK Chaudhary, the crops selected for the GI tag are Japonica red rice, Bharmour, Barot and Kinnaur ‘rajmash’; Karsog, Shillai and Chamba ‘urdbean’; Karsog kulthi; Kullu, Kangra and Mandi red rice; and Chamba’s ‘chukh’, antique jewellery, animal breeds and their products.
- He said there were a good number of field crops such as rice, barley, ‘rajmash’, ‘kulthi’, mash, and potential crops such as buckwheat, amaranthus, chenopodium, millets, ‘kala zeera’, orchids, bamboo, forages, garlic, ginger, red ginger, ‘jimikand’, cucumber, ‘kakadi’, ‘ghandiyali’, radish, ‘kakora’, ‘tardi’, ‘lingroo’; and animals — Pahari cattle and buffalo, Spiti horse and donkey; Rampur Bushair and Gaddi sheep; Chegu and Gaddi

goats; Himachali yak; snow trout; Golden Mahseer, carps and hill stream fish — had drawn the attention of the university for the GI tag.

- The VC further said unique traditional jewellery of Gaddi women such as 'chak and chiri', 'chandan har' and 'champakali', 'loung', 'koka', 'tilli' and 'balu', 'bunde', 'jhumke', 'kante', 'latkni'; 'tungni' and 'kanphuls', 'gojru', 'toke', 'kangnu', 'snangu', 'singhi' and 'pari', and medical products such as white honey from Bharmour; aphids honey dew from Lahaul Spiti and Kinnaur, wild mushroom (Kira jari), and woollen products such as 'charkhani pattu', 'dohroo', 'pude' and pashmina from Chegu goat had also been shortlisted for the GI tag.
- "The university is collaborating with the HP Council for Science, Technology and Environment, HP Patent Implementation Centre, Shimla, for its efforts to get the GI tag as scientific and technical data has to be generated for each and every crop, animal or other distinct products."
- The VC said in the recent past, the university made successful efforts and got certain research projects sanctioned, which would help in determining the distinct traits of the selected crops.

1.226. NOW, ADOPT ZOO ANIMALS, BIRDS; GET INCENTIVES.

- The Wildlife Wing of the Forest Department has launched 'Adoption and Donation Scheme' under which interested individuals and institutes can adopt zoo animals or an entire zoo in the state. The scheme aims to promote wildlife awareness, protection and better care of the animals.
- The Forest Department wants to create public participation through the scheme in order to ensure good care of animals lodged in the zoos and pheasantries across the state. As per the scheme, anyone can adopt an animal or a bird or an entire zoo or pheasantry or rehabilitation centre on an annual basis.
- So far a leopard and three pheasants have been adopted by a company and individuals. The annual cost for adopting an Asiatic lion has been pegged at Rs 2 lakh while for a snow leopard and black Himalayan bear it is Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1.50 lakh, respectively. Those adopting a sambhar or a herd of deer will have to shell out Rs 40,000 and Rs 50,000, respectively. An entire zoo can be adopted for Rs 1 crore and a pheasantry for Rs 25 lakh per annum.
- Three zoos at Kufri in Shimla district, Gopalpur in Kangra district and Renukaji in Sirmaur district are located in the state. The pheasantries are located at Chail in Solan district, Manali in Kullu district and Sarahan in Shimla district.
- "The zoos are maintained under the Himachal Pradesh Zoo and Conservation Breeding Society, which covers all our nature parks and mini zoos. Anyone can adopt an Asiatic lion, snow leopard, Himalayan black or brown bear. Pheasant, including the beautiful and endangered cheer pheasants or monal or western tragopan, can also be adopted," Rajeev Kumar, Principal Chief Conservator Forest (Wildlife), said. The adopters can also gift the animal, by getting the adoption certificate transferred, to their children, friends and relatives on special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries.
- The name of the individual who adopts the animal will be displayed outside the enclosure of the animal. Besides, those who adopt the entire zoo or pheasantry will be guests of honour at all function of the Wildlife Wing. Those adopting animals will be entitled to special privileges such as free passes for visit to zoos or complimentary stay at wildlife rest houses.
- "The HP Zoo and Conservation Breeding Society gets the funds through grant-in-aid and the revenue generated by zoos is barely sufficient to meet with the annual requirements of the zoos," he said.

1.227. HPAU SCHOLAR BAGS YOUNG SCIENTIST AWARD.

- Dr Rakesh Kumar, working as assistant professor in the Department of Veterinary Pathology at the CSK HP Agriculture University, has been awarded the Prof S Ramachandran Memorial Young Scientist Award as the Best Molecular Oncologist-2022 during the International Veterinary Pathology Congress held at Hyderabad recently.
- He has been awarded for his research work on the "Evaluation of anti-cancerous effect of Saussurea lappa (Kuth) against breast cancer in laboratory rat model".

- Kuth is cultivated in Lahaul and Spiti and has shown to have anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidative and hepatoprotective effects.

1.228. HIMACHAL GETS MORE REVENUE FROM SALE OF POWER.

- Himachal has earned more revenue from the sale of power during the current year as the state has sold energy worth Rs 1465.38 crore as compared to Rs 1392.37 crore in 2021-22 with four more months for the closing of the financial year.
- The enhanced higher returns from the power sector, viewed as one of the revenue generating areas, is good for the state as the economy was still limping back to normalcy. "Himachal has so far sold power worth Rs 1465.38 crores till end of November this year.
- The generation till November end stands at 2986.13 million units. So, we are hoping to exceed last year's generation figure of 3364.14 million units as there are still four months to go," revealed said RD Dhiman, Chief Secretary, who is looking after power sector.
- He said last year the state was able to sell power worth Rs 1392.37 crore out of which Rs 1216.42 crores had been realized. Post-Covid, Himachal has suffered economic distress due to major decline in income from areas like tourism, so enhanced returns from power is a good news.
- However, power generation in the state has declined to a mere 15 per cent due to reduced melting of snow. As such the state will have to meet its requirement through the energy being received as royalty to the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board (HPSEB).
- There has been a sharp decline in the daily generation from 1.56 million units on November 21 to 90 lakh units these days. "Despite the generation being reduced to mere 15 per cent, there will no cuts, either in domestic or industry as the power received as royalty from other projects will be directed to the HP State Electricity Board," said Dhiman.
- Reduction in power generation during the winter months is a normal and Himachal manages to meet the daily requirement of consumers, both domestic and industry by getting 12 per cent free power, royalty and exchange from some other State like Punjab.
- The shortfall is likely to continue throughout the winter months and it is not until end of April that the generation starts picking up with melting of glaciers. The highest generation is witnessed during the monsoon months of July-August when the rivers are flowing to their maximum capacity.

1.229. KULLU: ROPEWAY PROPOSED IN LUG VALLEY, PROJECT TO COST RS 60 CR.

- The Tourism Department has submitted a proposal to the government for the construction of a ropeway from Jathani to Mathasaur in the Lug valley of the district at a cost of about Rs 60 crore.
- In December last year, the state government had included the Lug valley under the 'Nai Rahein, Nai Manzilein' scheme to develop untouched destinations to attract tourists.
- A team of the department visited Mathasaur to explore the Lug valley's development from tourism point of view. There is a huge green pasture at Mathasaur.
- The place is reachable by foot and hasn't been explored yet. Mathasaur will emerge as a new tourist destination after the completion of the ropeway.District Tourism Development Officer Sunayna Sharma says that the project file has been sent to the Ropeway Corporation and further proceedings are underway.
- The Tourism Department is preparing a road map for paragliding and other adventure sports in the Lug valley. Efforts are being made to bring the valley on the tourism map by providing basic facilities. Residents are being encouraged to opt for the homestay scheme," she adds.Sharma says this will give a boost to tourism in the valley and people will get employment nearby their homes. Even the Forest Department has prepared a detailed project report and submitted it to the government to develop earmarked spots in the valley from tourism point of view.The Forest Department's rest house at Kaisdhar, roads around Kadaun, rest hut at Badasaur and a rain shelter at Naudhar will be developed. The repair of bridges, paths of Mathasaur and other work will be carried out at a cost of Rs 3.41 crore.

1.230. FOREST DEPARTMENT TO DEVELOP 'NAGAR VAN' IN KULLU.

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has approved a proposal submitted by Parvati division, HP Forest Department, for the creation of a 'Nagar Van' (urban forest) in Shamshi area of Kullu. It will eventually be extended up to Mohal Nature Park along the Beas next year.
- Giving details, IFS Aishwarya Raj, Deputy Conservator Forest (DCF), Parvati division, Kullu, said this area in Shamshi was also home to office complexes, housing colonies and riverside areas. "Unfortunately, a few parts of this area are being used for dumping waste by nearby localities for a long time. The brunt of this is being borne by the Beas, its banks and local inhabitants," he added.
- Biotic stress and the frequenting of anti-social elements were also a cause for concern, he added.
- The DCF said a small part of the total area had already been converted into a 'Sangam Swarnim Vatika' in March 2021, which was welcomed by locals and tourists alike. "The space wherein only anti-social elements were found loitering in late evenings earlier, the vatika is now frequented by regular walkers, elderly people and youngsters in a safe, green and conducive environment," he added.
- Raj said expanding this concept further and merging it with the Nagar Van Yojana would be a classic example of dovetailing of the government schemes in the field of environment conservation.
- He added that focus would be on upcycling techniques and using local material for landscaping and signage purposes. "Nature awareness boards and messages will form an important part of bringing environmental consciousness closer to people."
- The DCF further said preparation had already begun, as linear and regional models of planting and recreational avenues, including eco-restoration, would be created.
- "Thematic forests such as 'arogya van' (highlighting ethnobotanical richness of Kullu flora), Miyawaki plantation zones, birding trails, oriental zone and butterfly breeding zone, etc, would be developed.
- Planting species will highlight the local floral diversity. A riverside walking trail starting from the Shamshi complex till the SSB will be developed along the Beas with Victorian lighting and seating facilities."
- He said the idea was to blend an entire living area into the concept of city forest rather than only working on a vacant patch of land.

1.231. HIMACHAL PRADESH ELECTIONS: CONGRESS SECURES 43.9 PER CENT VOTE SHARE, BJP CLOSE BEHIND WITH 43 PER CENT, AAP GETS ONLY 1.1 PER CENT.

- The Congress secured 43.90 per cent vote share as it wrested Himachal Pradesh from the BJP, winning 40 seats in the 68-member Assembly in the hill state which maintained its tradition of voting incumbent government out of power since 1985.
- Despite getting 43 per cent vote share, the BJP could only manage to win 25 seats, with many segments witnessing lower victory margins.
- Three Independents also emerged victorious in the assembly polls, results for which were declared on Thursday.
- The vote share was up for the Congress as against previous assembly elections.
- The BJP and the Congress contested on all 68 constituencies, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) fielded its candidates on 67 seats, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on 53 and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) on 11 seats.
- The AAP failed to open its account and the CPI-M also did not win any seat while its sitting MLA from Theog also lost.
- The AAP received 1.10 per cent votes, the CPI-M 0.66 per cent, the BSP 0.35 per cent, and Independents and others got 10.39 per cent, while 0.59 per cent went to NOTA.

1.232. INDO-TIBETAN TOURISM FEST IN DHARAMSALA ON DECEMBER 10-11.

- The Indo-Tibetan Friendship Association (ITFA), an organisation of Tibetans and Indian working in Dharamsala since 1995, will organise a tourism fest on December 10 and 11. The fest will feature Tibetan and Indian cultural events.
- Sanjeev Gandhi, executive member of ITFA and coordinator of the fest, said tourism had been lean since the outbreak of the pandemic.

- The ITFA, which included Tibetans and locals as members, decided to take the onus of organising the event till the government help came in, he said.
- Gandhi said the two-day event would be held on the premises of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA), McLeodganj.
- President of the Tibetan government-in-exile Penpa Tsering was expected to inaugurate the event. Cultural teams of TIPA, the North Zone Cultural Centre and Government College, Dharamsala, would perform during the event.
- He said a workshop on Kangra paintings would be held during the tourism fest. Various food stalls would be set up by local restaurants and people from outside the state to provide variety of cuisines to the visitors.
- The ITFA has urged the Tourism Department to give publicity to their event in adjoining states too.

1.233. EC'S CVIGIL APP GETS OVER 1K COMPLAINTS.

- The Election Commission's CVIGIL App has emerged as a force multiplier and a powerful tool to promptly report unlawful campaigning activities and violation of Model Code of Conduct (MCC), officials said.
- A total of over 1,000 cases were reported from Himachal Pradesh in which over 800 cases were found correct and action was taken. Over 580 cases reported were for posters and banners without permission and 185 cases were for money distribution.

What is CVIGIL App?

- **“CVIGIL**" is a user-friendly and easy to operate Android application. It will be operational only where elections are announced. However, the beta version of the app will be made available for the public and election staff to download so that they can acquaint themselves with its features and also try sending dummy data.
- “cVIGIL” will allow anyone in the election-bound state to report violations of Model **Code of Conduct (MCC)** that comes into effect from the date of announcement of elections and goes on till a day after the polls.
- By using this app, citizens can immediately report on incidents of misconduct within minutes of having witnessed them and without having to rush to the office of the returning officer to lodge a complaint.
- The vigilant citizen has to click a **picture or record a video of upto two minutes’** duration of the scene of violations of the model code. The photo or video is to be uploaded on the app. The automated location mapping will be done by the app using the **Geographic Information System**. After its successful submission through the app, the vigilant citizen gets a Unique ID to track and receive the follow up updates on her or his mobile. A citizen can report many incidents in this manner and will get a unique id for each report for follow up updates.
- **The identity of the complainant will be kept confidential.**

1.234. 41% NEW LEGISLATORS FACING CRIMINAL CASES.

- The 14th Vidhan Sabha will have 40 Congress MLAs, 25 of the BJP and three Independent MLAs, most of whom are younger, richer and more qualified than the legislators in the previous Assembly.
- However, one exception is the higher percentage of MLAs with criminal cases against them. Data compiled by the Association for Democratic Reforms and the HP Election Watch reveals that 41% of the newly elected MLAs face criminal charges while and 18% of them face serious criminal charges. In all, 23 of the 40 Congress MLAs and five of the 25 BJP legislators are facing criminal cases this time.
- The percentage of crorepati MLAs has gone up from 76% in 2017 to 93% this time. As per the data, 95% of the Congress MLAs 88% of the BJP MLAs are crorepatis. All three Independent MLAs are also crorepatis.
- Two MLAs have doctorate degrees, 15 are postgraduates, 16 graduates, seven Class XII pass and nine Class X pass. The lone woman MLA, Reena Kashyap from Pachhad in Sirmaur, has been elected for the second time.
- The average value of assets of the MLAs in the Assembly, too, has increased from Rs 8.88 crore in 2017 to Rs 13.26 crore this time. Also, 34 MLAs have assets worth over Rs 5 crore while 23 MLAs have assets worth between Rs 2 crore and Rs 5 crore. Nine MLAs have assets valuing between Rs 2 crore and Rs 50 lakh while only two MLAs have assets worth less than Rs 50 lakh.

- The 40 Congress MLAs have total assets worth Rs 14.25 crore while 25 of the BJP havea ssets worth Rs 12.42 crore. The three Independent MLAs have assets worth Rs 7.09 crore. Balbir Verma, BJP MLA from Chopal, is the richest with assets worth Rs 128.45 crore, followed by Vikramaditya Singh Rs 101.39 crore and RS Bali from Nagrota Bagwan Rs 92.36 crore.
- Lokender Kumar, BJP MLA from Anni in Kullu, has the minimum valued assets of Rs 29 lakh.
- The highest number of 28 MLAs fall in the 50 to 60 years age category and 20 in the 40 to 50 years group. Eight MLAs each are in the 60 to 70 years and the 30-40 years groups.

1.235. 23 FIRST-TIME MLAS IN HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY, BIG NAMES DISAPPOINT.

- Among the 68 newly elected legislators, 23 are first-timers —14 of the Congress, eight of BJP and one Independent.
- Eight Cabinet minister lost the elections. Only three — outgoing Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur and his cabinet colleagues Bikram Singh and Sukh Ram Chaudhary — managed to retain their seats. Former BJP president Rajeev Bindal, who was elected MLA five times in a row, lost the elections.
- Thirty-six outgoing MLAs will not be members of the 14th Assembly; 26 members lost the elections while 10 others did not contest. Senior Congress leaders and former ministers, including Kaul Singh, Asha Kumari and Ram Lal Thakur, also lost the elections.
- The new faces include Lokender Singh (Anni), Dr Janak Raj (Bharmour), Trilok Jamwal (Bilaspur), DS Thakur (Dalhousie), Puran Chand (Darang), Deep Raj (Karsog), Dilip Singh (Sarkaghat) and Ranvir Singh Nikka (Nurpur), all from the BJP.
- The Congress gained 20 seats and increased its tally to 40 in the 68-member House. Its 14 new faces include Suresh Kumar (Bhoranj), Neeraj Nayyar (Chamba), Sudarshan Singh Babloo (Chintpurni), Chander Shekhar (Dharampur), Chetanya Sharma (Gagret), Malender Rajan (Indora), Devinder Kumar (Kutlehar), Bhuvneshar Gaur (Manali), Raghuvir Singh Bali (Nagrota), Ajay Solanki (Nahan), Kewal Singh Pathania (Shahpur), Harish Janartha (Shimla), Kuldeep Rathore (Theog) and Vinod Sultanpuri (Kasauli).
- Independent MLA Ashish Sharma, a BJP rebel, was elected from Hamirpur.
- The new Assembly has three six-time MLAs, namely Jai Ram Thakur, Chander Kumar and Harshwardhan Chauhan.
- Leader of the Opposition in the outgoing Assembly, Mukesh Agnihotri, Anil Sharma and Kuldeep Singh Pathania are all five-time legislators.
- Sukhvinder Singh Sukku, former BJP president Satpal Singh Satti, Speaker Vipin Parmar, Jagat Singh Negi, Nand Lal, Rohit Thakur, Sudhir Sharma, Vinay Kumar and Bikram Singh and Sukh Ram Chaudhary are among the four-time legislators.
- There are 11 three-time MLAs and 18 two-time legislators.

1.236. MANALI'S AMITABH SHARMA ELECTED IOA EXECUTIVE MEMBER.

- Amitabh Sharma of Manali has been elected as an executive member of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).
- Sharma’s appointment has delighted winter sports lovers in Manali, who are hopeful that he will play a crucial role in promoting winter sports in the region.
- Six-time Olympian and Arjuna awardee Shiva Keshavan of Manali has also been elected to the IOA Athletes Commission as part of a 10-member panel.
- Roop Chand Negi, Secretary General of Ski and Snowboard India, Ludar Thakur, president of HP Winter Games Association, Secretary Pintu Sood and Roshan Thakur, president of HP Ice Skating Association, today congratulated both Sharma and Keshavan for the achievement.

1.237. NOTA VOTES SEE BIG DROP IN HIMACHAL ASSEMBLY POLLS.

- A fewer voters opted for the NOTA option this time. In the 2017 Assembly polls, 34,232 voters (0.9% of the votes polled) had pressed NOTA but this time only 24,861 voters (0.6%) exercised the option.
- The NOTA appear to have made a difference on three seats of Bhoranj, Shillai and Naina Devi where these votes were higher than the victory margin.

- The highest NOTA votes (669) were polled in Baijnath. The other seats to receive over 500 NOTA votes were Solan (634), Nalagarh (590), Darang (579), Chopal (550), Chamba (539), Shillai (525) and Anni (520).

What is NOTA?

- None Of The Above (NOTA) is a ballot option designed to allow the voter to indicate disapproval of all of the candidates in a voting system.
- It was introduced in India following the 2013 Supreme Court directive in the People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India judgment.
- However, NOTA in India does not provide for a 'right to reject'.
- The candidate with the maximum votes wins the election irrespective of the number of NOTA votes polled.

1.238. THE BILL INTRODUCED IN LOK SABHA FOR SCHEDULED TRIBE STATUS TO HATTIS.

- Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda introduced in Lok Sabha 'The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Third Amendment) Bill, 2022' to grant ST status to the state's Hattis.
- There are around **1.6 lakh members of the Hatti community Trans-Giri region.**
- The Bill will amend the existing law to include Hattis in the Scheduled Tribe list.
- BJP was defeated in Shillai and Renuka ji constituencies in Sirmaur district where Hattis are in significant numbers.
- The Hatti community in the **Jaunsar region** of Uttrakhand had already been given tribal status. "The Trans-Giri region of Sirmaur shares the border with Jaunsar, and the two have a cultural similarity.

1.239. HIMACHAL PRADESH GOVERNMENT APPOINTS 3 ADVISERS WITH CABINET RANK

- The Himachal Pradesh government has appointed three advisers with Cabinet rank.
- While Sunil Sharma had been appointed political adviser to Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu; Gokul Butail was on Tuesday appointed principal adviser, IT and innovation, to Himachal CM.
- The state government also appointed Naresh Chauhan as principal adviser (media) to the Chief Minister.

1.240. KALESHWAR MAHADEV TEMPLE IN KANGRA DISTRICT.

Why in news?

- Despite the High Court's 2018 order for taking over the management of the Kalinath Kaleshwar Mahadev Temple at Rakkar in Dehara Gopipur, Kangra District with immediate effect, the direction is yet to be implemented.
- The entire temple complex was in the possession of some South Indian saints, who are also receiving the offerings.
- In the last four years, the situation has moved from bad to worse as many persons have encroached upon the land of the temple.
- Rakkar Tehsildar Amit Kumar had been given an additional charge of the temple officer but the government failed to depute regular staff to manage the affairs of the ancient temple.

About the Temple:

- The 400-year-old ancient temple situated on the bank of the Beas near Garli Paragpur in Kangra is spread over 120 kanal of land and is in a state of neglect.
- Kaleshwar Mahadev temple is a popular ancient monument. It is believed that Kalesar and Shiva worshipped Maha Rudra of Mata Chintpurni in this temple.
- During the Maha Shivratri festival as well as in the Sharavan Navratra (Hindu month), a large number of devotees visit this place.

Present Situation:

- At present, a private person is collecting the entire offerings of the temple.
- The temple gets a lot of offerings in a year and these must be utilised to provide the devotees with better facilities.
- The Rakkar Tehsildar, who is also the temple officer, said so far, the government had not appointed any staff in the temple.

- Besides, in a writ petition filed by one of the saint, Swami Vishvanand, the High Court had granted stay for all type of construction activities in the temple complex and the government could not take up the renovation of the temple.

1.241. USE DEFENCE OPTICAL FIBRE FOR TELECOM COVERAGE IN REMOTE HIMACHAL PRADESH AREAS: TRAI

- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) has said that the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** should approach the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** for accessing a part of its optical fibre network or suitable bandwidth to extend telecom coverage in the far-flung areas of Himachal Pradesh.
- The regulator has recommended that in **Lahaul and Spiti, Mandi, Kullu and Chamba** districts, the villages that are **yet to be connected under the BharatNet Project,** should be immediately connected on VSAT media that can be surrendered as soon as the optical fibre cable (OFC) backhaul is made available.
- The identified districts have 181 uncovered villages, of which 14 are planned to be covered under the '354 village scheme' and 142 are to be covered under the 'Saturation of 4G Mobile' scheme of the USOF.
- Under the Project Kranti, also known as Network For Spectrum (NFS), the BSNL has implemented a nationwide OFC network is being, wherein almost 60,000 km OFC is being rolled out for exclusive use by defence forces in lieu of 65 megahertz spectrum surrendered by the defence forces for auction.
- The regulator has said that it is already in receipt of a reference on enabling the ICR for remote and hilly regions frequently prone to natural disaster-based emergency situations and it will come up with separate recommendations in this regard after due consultations.
- Trai has recommended that the government should fund capital expenditure and operating expenditure required for providing telecom infrastructure and connectivity to the 25 uncovered villages through the Universal Services Obligation Fund.
- "The authority recommends that the DoT may take up the case with the Himachal government for not levying any RoW (right of way) charges on telecom service providers and IP-Is for connecting remote and hilly areas in the state, including all locations in four districts," Trai said.
- The regulator has suggested that the DoT should take up with the state government, NHAI and the BRO that all road construction, road widening or other related works should be done with prior coordination with telecom operators, and the liability of contractor for making payments for damages to telecom networks should be included ab-initio in the contracts.
- The regulator has suggested that the DoT should ask the Himachal government to consider providing electricity to telecom sites within 15 days of connections request at utility or industrial tariff and consider waiving the last mile installation charges for extending electric connections to telecom sites in remote and hilly areas.

1.242. AMBUJA, ACC CEMENT PLANTS SHUT OPERATIONS AT DARLAGHAT, GAGAL.

- Incurring huge financial losses owing to the poor dispatch of cement from the twin plants of ACC at Gagal and Ambuja Cements Limited at Darlaghat, the management has decided to shut their operations from tomorrow. The two plants were taken over by the Adani group recently.
- The management has stated that the rising operational cost which includes transportation and raw material cost and the prevailing market conditions, the transportation of cement has been drastically reduced.
- This has led to poor dispatch of cement which has hit the company's market share. The company was incurring huge financial losses.
- Keeping in view these circumstances, the management has been forced to shut the operations of its two plants and all related activities with immediate effect.
- All employees have been informed not to attend the duties with immediate effect till further instructions issued late this evening. Hundreds of employees are engaged in the two plants.

1.243. UNA DC HONOURS INDIAN DEAF CRICKET TEAM CAPTAIN.

- Deputy Commissioner Raghav Sharma honoured **Virender Singh, captain of the Indian deaf T20 men's cricket team**, and awarded him Rs 51,000.

- The **39-year-old cricketer**, who **hails from Amb in the Una district**, had **led** the **team** to victory at the **Deaf International Cricket Council (DICC) T20 Champions** Trophy at Ajman in the **UAE in October this year.**
- **Five teams** had **participated** in the tournament and **India** had **defeated South Africa in the final match.**
- **Nishad Kumar** also belongs to Una District who has won the **silver medal** for India in **high jump** in the **Tokyo Paralympics 2020.**

1.244. HIMACHAL PRADESH POLICE RANKED THIRD IN ICJS.

What is ICJS?

- The ICJS is an ambitious all India project to link up all the pillars of the criminal justice system, including police, prisons, prosecution, forensics and courts.

Ranking:

- The **Himachal Pradesh Police** have been ranked at the **third place** in the **All-India Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS).**
- The National Crimes Records Bureau (**NCRB**) is organizing a **conference** on **"Good Practice in CCTNS & ICJS" at the NCRB headquarters, New Delhi.**
- **Director General of Police (DGP) Sanjay Kundu** and DK Choudhary, DIG-CID Crime, received the award from Ajay Kumar Mishra, Union Minister of State, Home Affairs, in New Delhi.

The Police Department signed a MoU with SBI:

- The Police Department signed a supplementary memorandum of understanding with the State Bank of India for enhancing the security cover for police personnel in case of sudden death.
- The **insurance cover** has been **enhanced** from **Rs 30 lakh** to **Rs 50 lakh**, besides other benefits.

1.245. SHIMLA FILM-MAKER SIDDHARTH CHAUHAN WINS 'BEST DEBUT DIRECTOR FROM INDIA' AWARD AT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL IN KERALA.

- **Siddharth Chauhan** from Shimla **won the 'Best Debut Director from India' award** for his debut feature film '**Amar Colony**' at the **International Film Festival of Kerala**.
- The film is set in Shimla and deals with the lives of three women living in a 'chawl'.
- Incidentally, 'Amar Colony' had **won the Special Jury Prize at the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival held in the capital of Estonia a fortnight ago.**
- **The only Indian entry among films from 18 countries**, the jury there had praised the movie for its 'originality of vision' and 'how it was delighted with a bold and innovative presentation of a small city community'.
- For Chauhan, winning the award at the Kerala festival is special for another reason as well. "My short film had won an award at this festival in 2016. I turned the film into a feature film and won the award for it as well.
- He plans to have a special screening of the film in Shimla shortly for his local fans.

1.246. TECHNIQUE TO CULTIVATE 'MEDICINAL' TURKEY TAIL MUSHROOM DEVELOPED.

- **The Indian Council of Agricultural Research-run Directorate of Mushroom Research (DMR), Chambaghat**, near here, has developed a technique to cultivate **turkey tail mushroom,** which is believed to have **medicinal properties**, under controlled environment.
- DMR Director Dr VP Sharma said, "The research work has been planned by the directorate on the nutraceutical properties of the mushroom, after getting success in cultivating it under controlled environment in a mushroom house."
- He said, "Turkey Tail mushroom is one of the most important medicinal mushrooms. It is a **coloured bracket fungus** and derives its common name from the **colour pattern that resembles the tail of a turkey."**
- Different mushrooms have been used to treat various ailments as traditional medicine in different parts of the world. Sharma said that people use turkey tail mushroom to improve response to cancer medications and counter the side effects of treatment.
- This mushroom is commercially available in China and Japan, where it is used in the treatment of cancer," said Sharma. However, there is no scientific evidence to support these uses, he added.

- Sharma said that it is in demand for its anti-cancer properties. The dry mushroom is being sold at Rs 5,000 per kg and its cultivation will yield rich dividends to the growers. He said that complete technology would be transferred to the growers and entrepreneurs for their benefit.

1.247. 5 ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EV)CHARGING STATIONS IN SHIMLA SOON.

- The local Municipal Corporation will set up five charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) in Shimla.
- Following Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu's announcement that he plans to replace all government vehicles running on fossil fuel with electric ones as part of the efforts to make the state pollution free, there's a sense of urgency to build the required infrastructure for facilitating the switch from conventional to EVs.
- Five sites have been allotted for setting up the charging stations to two PSU companies and a private one. We have already signed an MoU with **Rajasthan Electronics Industries Limited and Sunfuel Electric, a private Gurugram-based company**. A pact with Energy Efficiency Service Limited will be signed shortly," said MC Commissioner Ashish Kohli.
- These companies will **set up five charging stations** —two each by **two PSUs** and one by **Sunfuel Electric** — at different places in the city.
- These companies will build, operate and maintain these charging stations and share the revenue with the civic body as per their agreements.
- Sunfuel Electric, which will set up a charging station near Hotel Cecil and primarily cater to tourist vehicles.
- "EVs will be more effective than conventional vehicles, owing to regenerative braking system and instant torque delivery. Also, driving an EV will be much cheaper than the vehicle running on fossil fuel. An EV will cost you from **80 paise to Rs 1.30,** depending on the vehicle one is driving," said Sudhir Nayak, one of the co-founders of the company.
- The **charging time for any car** through a **fast charger** is normally **30 to 45 minutes,** depending on the rate and size of the battery.
- **The vehicle once fully charged could cover at least 250 km**. "Considering distances travelled are short on a daily basis in the hilly terrain, it's another advantage of having an EV.

1.248. NURPUR TEACHER WINS AWARD FOR RESEARCH ON TB.

- Nishant Gupta has been adjudged the best researcher on tuberculosis (TB) and its connection with human genes in the recently concluded **three-day International Conference on Recent Advances in Biotechnology organised by Dr BR Ambedkar National Institute of Technology** in **Jalandhar**.
- The conference was attended by scientists from Switzerland, the US, Ireland, Singapore, China and India.
- **Nishant is a teacher in the department of biochemistry, Government Medical College, Hamirpur**, presented his research work titled "CD209 receptor variants and susceptibility to TB in North Indian Punjabi population".
- His work pertains to the Punjabi population and is expected to help identify new targets for developing efficient strategies to combat the TB infection.
- Besides the award, he received a citation. Nishant said he found that CD209 gene plays a big role in susceptibility to TB. "This gene influences the ability of the TB pathogen to get inside the immune cells, survive and hide from the surveillance mechanisms of humans."

1.249. INDIAN, GREEK SCHOLARS TO TRACE ALEXANDER'S LINK TO MALANA IN KULLU.

- Indian and Greek scholars will collaborate to trace common threads between the two countries through detailed research in India, especially in Malana (a cluster of villages in Kullu district) where men from the Army of 'Alexander the Great' are believed to have settled after the war with Porus in 326 BC.

Villagers have greek features

  - Experts say that the people of Malana have facial and physical features resembling Greeks.
  - A folklore suggests that while Alexander returned home, some of his soldiers settled down in Malana, as they were very tired.

- This was among the issues discussed at the first international conference of 'Greek World and India' in the JNU.

- In 2009, a Swedish University had held talks with the Institute of Tribal Studies of Himachal Pradesh University for joint research on the people of Malana, who claim to be the descendants of Alexander's soldiers, trace their genetics and the origin of their dialect.
- While there is no real scientific backing the hypothesis, some reports suggest the discovery of artifacts belonging the Alexander period from the area.

1.250. ELECTRIC VEHICLES TO BE FIRST INTRODUCED IN SECTT: DY CM

- Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri said that efforts would be made to bring about a radical change in the transport sector and gradually switch over to electric vehicles to reduce pollution in Himachal.
- He said that a new electric vehicle policy was being implemented in the state and the Transport Department would soon get a fleet of electric vehicles.
- Initially, the use of electric vehicles will be promoted in the Secretariat. Thereafter, their use in public transport services will also be encouraged.
- The government would take appropriate steps for setting up of charging stations for electric vehicles.
- In the initial phase, the charging facilities will be provided in various government institutions, including the Secretariat and Himachal sadans and bhavans outside the state.
- The Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) has about 1,000 vehicles of zero book value and these will be replaced with electric vehicles in a phased manner.
- Electric buses will also be included in the HRTC fleet. The electric vehicle policy will prove fruitful in reducing financial losses, besides reducing the daily expenditure of about Rs 1.5 crore.

Himachal Pradesh EV Policy 2021

- Himachal Pradesh EV Policy 2021 Notification Date: December 2021 (Cabinet Approval on 30-11-2021)
- Validity: HP EV Policy 2021 is **valid for a period of FIVE years** from the date of issue Gazette Notification of this policy.
- As per the Himachal EV Policy 2021, the subsidies & incentives offered by Himachal Pradesh Government will be in addition to incentives available in FAME II incentives of Government of India
- As per Himachal Electric Vehicle Policy 2021, Registration fees & Green Tax will be exempted.
- Annual Permit fee for Electric Commercial Vehicles will be waived-off.
- Electric Vehicles registered in the state of Himachal Pradesh (HP) will be exempted from State Toll Taxes.

1.251. HIMACHAL PRADESH AMONG TOP PERFORMERS IN SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX,2022.

- Himachal Pradesh has emerged among the nine best-performing states and UTs in the **Social Progress Index (SPI),2022** for remarkable performance across components like personal freedom and choice, shelter, water and sanitation.
- Aizawl, **Solan** and **Shimla** are the **top three social progress districts**.
- The categorisation is part of the SPI for states and districts prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness and Social Progress Imperative.
- It was **released by Bibek Debroy, Chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.**
- The SPI assesses states and districts based on **12 components** across three critical dimensions of social progress — basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing and opportunity.
- According to the report, Puducherry has the highest SPI score of 65.99, followed by Lakshadweep (65.89), Goa (65.53), Sikkim (65.10), Mizoram (64.19), Tamil Nadu (63.33), **Himachal (63.28),** Chandigarh (62.37) and Kerala (62.05). Jharkhand and Bihar scored the lowest, 43.95 and 44.47, respectively.
- **Himachal Pradesh has been ranked 7th in the List.**
- Mizoram, HP, Ladakh, and Goa emerged top performers for the foundations of wellbeing.

1.252. TRADITIONAL FOOD CARNIVAL BEGINS IN SHIMLA.

- A 10-day food carnival to promote traditional cuisines of the state kicked off in Shimla.

- The self-help groups from all 12 districts of the state are serving their five-six traditional cuisines in the carnival that has been organized by the State Rural Livelihood Mission under the Department of Rural Development.
- Even as the focus is mainly on traditional dishes, some SHGs have experimented a little to attract customers. For instance, an SHG from Kullu is offering dosa of ‘koda’, an old millet found in the state.
- “Koda is very nutritious. We have prepared its dosa as an experiment. It was liked a lot by the people during the Dasehra, and it’s drawing good crowd here as well,” said Mohar Singh, a member of the SHG.
- For the tourists who have come to Shimla for celebrating Christmas and New year, the traditional food carnival has come like an icing on the cake.
- Getting a chance to taste the traditional cuisine of the whole state is awesome. We were enjoying the weather and scenic beauty of the place, getting such wonderful food has added to the joy,” said Akriti, a tourist from Delhi.
- Anil Sharma, Chief Executive Officer at State Rural Livelihood Mission, said the food carnival was the first effort at this level.
- The participants were given a bit of training in presentation and hygiene.

1.253. BEIJING COVID CURBS MAY CHOKE API SUPPLIES, FEAR HIMACHAL PHARMA FIRMS.

- Rising Covid cases in China may once again trigger a shortage of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in India, which imports over 65 per cent of APIs from the neighbouring nation.
- Though there is **no visible impact on API prices** or supplies in the Asia’s pharmaceutical hub of Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh (BBN) as well as the Paonta Sahib-Kala Amb belt, there is a **sense of fear in the industry.**
- **Reason:** The earlier Covid waves had severely crippled the manufacturing operations amid curtailed imports from China.
- “The manufacturers have already started procuring whatever supplies are available in the market. Traders are again trying to exploit the situation. Some commonly used products have become dearer by 15-20 per cent,” says a unit owner from Baddi.
- The manufacturers opine the impact of curbs in China would be visible in the next about a fortnight. There is, however, a tendency of hoarding, which leads to artificial shortage, they say.
- To cut dependence on China, **the Centre has approved a bulk drug park in the Una district of Himachal Pradesh, but it will take at least three years for API producers to start manufacturing here.**
- BK Sikri, chairman, Federation of Pharmaceutical Entrepreneurs, said, “There is no reason to panic as Indian API producers, who invested under the production-linked incentive scheme, are now manufacturing 35 of the 53 APIs for which India has 90 per cent import dependence.” He ruled out any immediate shortage of APIs and other key ingredients and said they were closely monitoring the situation.
- The state has about 650 pharmaceutical units, including 15 approved by the US Food and Drug Administration and 180 by the WHO.

1.254. TRAINING IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT.

- As many as 60 youth will be trained under the 14 days **Aapda Mitr Abhiyan** at Kaza in Lahaul and Spiti.
- The training will be held under the joint auspices of the sub-centre of **the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Mountaineering Institute at Jispa** and the District Disaster Management authorities.
- The district administration is organising the programme to prepare local youths to lead rescue operations effectively during disaster-like situations to save human lives and property.
- It is for the **first time** that the **institute’s sub-centre** is **imparting this type of training** to the local youth at **Kaza.**
- The trained youth will be called **disaster friend** (**Aapda Mitr).**
- These volunteers will render services to the Disaster Management Authority during any emergency and play an important role in saving human lives and property.”
- **Training** is being imparted to the youth **will make them capable** to **lead rescue operations** during disasters like floods, earthquakes, landslides and cyclones.

1.255. SHOOLINI UNIVERSITY LAB APPROVED BY NABL.

- Shoolini University's start-up — Shoolini Life Sciences Pvt Ltd — has been declared HP's first commercial food testing facility and approved by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL).
- The NABL is an autonomous body under the guidance of the Department of Science and Technology.

1.256. KULLU'S GREAT HIMALAYAN NATIONAL PARK TURNS HAVEN FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES.

- The **Great Himalayan National Park here has turned a haven for endangered species**. The population of **blue sheep** has **almost doubled** in a **decade** while that of **musk dear** has also increased, **reveals a census** carried out by the park management in October.
- Now, the park management has prepared data. The presence of **blue sheep** has been found to have **doubled** as compared to the **2010-11 census**. The team found herds of blue sheep in many places and the number was up to 10 in every sq km, as compared to four or five per sq km a decade ago. The habitat of blue sheep is about 3,500 m above sea level and their presence in the park is around 60 sq km to 70 sq km
- The number of musk deer, which is on the verge of extinction, has also been found to be more than the 2010-11 census. The average number density of musk deer was two per sq km about a decade ago. Even during the survey this time, the sample points were the same as a decade earlier and the average number density was found to be two or three per sq km.
- However, the authorities say that the data may vary if a large sample size is observed. The musk deer is found in areas with an altitude of about 3,000 m. The musk deer habitat is about 30 sq km to 40 sq km in the park.
- Park's Assistant Conservator of Forest Munish Rangra says that there is no direct sighting of brown bear, but teams have spotted its hair and footmarks. Brown bear is found at an altitude of about 2,500 m to 2,800 m above sea level.
- Rangra says that the reason for the increase in blue sheep and musk deer in the park is the ban on poaching. "At the same time, there is regular patrolling in the park area and monitoring is also being done with trap cameras installed at various places," he adds. The park is spread over 905.4 sq km. The process of increasing its area to 3,120 sq km is also underway.

1.257. SJVN'S HYDROPOWER PLANT BAGS AWARD.

- The **SJVN's 1500 MW Nathpa Jhakri Hydropower Station (NJHPS)** has **won** the **'Best Performing Hydro Sector Project' award.**
- The award was presented during the '**PRAKASHmay' 15th ENERTIA Awards 2022 - India** and the South Asia's Awards for Excellence in Sustainable Energy, Power and Renewables.
- Remarkable environment management measures have been undertaken at the NJHPS, which have been recognised at the national-level as well as by the World Bank," said SJVN chairman Nand Lal Sharma.
- "During the current financial year, the NJHPS established a new record of highest-ever single day energy generation on August 29 when the power station generated 39.526 million units energy, surpassing the previous record," he said.
- Sharma said the award was a recognition for the enterprise's excellence and sectoral performance in promotion of sustainable development goals via clean, green and renewable energy.

1.258. NTPC TO DEVELOP KOLDAM AREAS.

- Chief General Manager (CGM) of the Koldam Hydroelectric Power project Kulwinder Singh has said that the **National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC)** was committed to development of the areas affected by the dam.
- He said **skill development programmes** were being organised in **collaboration with the National Small Industries Corporation, Mandi,** to impart training to youth and women of the affected villages.

- They are being trained in activities such as embroidery, weaving, computer education and handicrafts so that they can earn their livelihood easily," he added.
- He said **free health check-up camps** were also organised in the affected villages this year.
- The project had **generated 24.51 billion units of power since it was commissioned.**
- **The dam had also bagged the Himachal Pradesh Environment Leadership Award 2021-22.**

1.259. HIMALAYAN GRID NEED OF THE HOUR, SAYS HIMACHAL GOVERNOR.

- Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar stressed the need to create a Himalayan grid to solve the problems of the Himalayan states after inaugurating a three-day **HIM Samvaad**- **"Trans Himalayan Conference on Localised Solutions and Implementation Strategy"** organised at Dr Y S Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry, Nauni.
- Nauni University, Sewa International, Prakritik Kheti Khushal Kisan Yojana and Indian Ecological Society are jointly organising the conference.
- Arlekar said, "The Himalayan region has its own problems which need to be solved collectively. The Himalayan Grid could be considered on the same lines as the **Coastal Guard Grid for the coastal regions."**
- "Natural calamities in the Himalayan regions could be solved through such platforms."
- Vice-Chancellor Rajeshwar Chandel said **natural farming** had shown a **potential** to be a **strong livelihood resource** for the **Himalayan farming communities.**

1.260. BAIJNATH FARMERS EARN MORE FROM OFF-SEASON CASH CROPS.

- **The Farmers First Project** launched by Himachal Pradesh Agriculture University in the Baijnath area (Kangra district) has transformed the lives of farmers. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (**ICAR)** had **sanctioned the project in 2017.**
- Under the project, the university had **selected 500 farmers of Tara, Dharer, and Kandkosari villages of Dharer panchayat.**
- Earlier, the farmers used to grow maize and barley for their own consumption.
- **After the introduction of high-yielding varieties of early radish, early peas, cauliflower and chilies, the farmers earned good income in the past three years.**
- It is for the first time that the farmers are selling vegetables in nearby markets of Baijnath and Palampur.
- **On an average, farmers are earning Rs 10,000 per kanal and around 66 per cent farmers have been able to double their farm income.**
- The farmers are **collectively harvesting and transporting crops** in a jeep to the market and marketing the crops themselves.

1.261. THE HIMACHAL PRADESH MINORITIES FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (HPMFDC)

Why in News?

- The Himachal Pradesh Minorities Finance and Development Corporation (HPMFDC) has distributed total loans of Rs 130.07 crore to 4,980 beneficiaries till October,2022.
- Social Justice and Empowerment Department Secretary M Sudha Devi said the corporation had disbursed loans of Rs 78.90 crore to 3,155 beneficiaries belonging to the minority communities.
- Besides, Rs 1.04 crore has been disbursed as education loans to 31 beneficiaries, and loans worth Rs 50.76 crore have been given to 1,794 disabled beneficiaries.

Targets achieved:

- The target of Rs 781 lakh fixed by the National Minorities Finance and Development Corporation for 2022-23, the corporation had achieved a target of Rs 958.95 lakh by October 31, 2022.

About The Himachal Pradesh Minorities Finance and Development Corporation (HPMFDC)

- The H.P. Minorities Finance & Development Corporation (HPMFDC) was registered under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956 (not for profit) on 23-09-1996 and was declared State Channeling Agency (SCA) for National Minorities Finance & Development Corporation, New Delhi (NMFDC) with the objective to give social, economic and educational up-liftment to the people of Minorities below double the poverty line in H.P. by providing financial assistance/loans to them for setting up of self employment ventures of income generating activities and education loan for acquiring professional/technical education and job oriented degrees in India and abroad as well, as per NMDFC guidelines and schemes.

- Similarly, the Corporation was also declared State Channeling Agency (SCA) for National Handicapped Finance & Development Corporation, Faridabad (NHFDC) on 20-01-1999 for providing them financial assistance/ loan for setting up of self employment ventures of income generating activities and education loan for acquiring professional/technical education and job oriented degrees in India and abroad as well.

1.262. KANGRA PAINTINGS 'NEGLECTED' DESPITE PM MODI'S PUSH.

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi is promoting Kangra art at international level**. He has gifted pieces of Kangra art to foreign dignitaries during his visits abroad.
- However, within Himachal there is no government institution that is making endeavours to promote and preserve the Kangra art. People associated with protecting Kangra art rue that little effort has been made by the government to protect the miniature painting styles that were made famous internationally by artists of the area.
- Raghav Guleria, who has been making efforts to protect Kangra art, says **Haripur-Guler was the birthplace of Kangra miniature painting style.** The art touched its zenith in the 18th century when **Nainsukh and Manaku, sons of illustrious Pandit Sau, a painter of former Guler state, created masterpieces of art which are now exhibited in Reitberg museum in Zurich, Switzerland, in London museum and Boston museum in the USA**, he adds.
- Guleria says the government of Himachal through the Government of India should try to bring back art pieces created by Pandit Nainsukh as they were part of the culture of Kangra. The government can also deploy artists to create replicas of paintings of Pandit Nainsukh and display them in a museum dedicated to Kangra art. This will attract international tourists to the place, he adds.
- Professor Akshay Runchal, who founded the Kangra Art Promotion Society in Dharamsala, says the society has trained about 40 artists in Kangra miniature art. He adds, “We have also created a private museum for Kangra art in McLeodganj.”
- “However, **it will be good if the government patronizes the Kangra miniature art.** One way of doing it can be to include it in the curriculum at the school and university level. **The Central University of Himachal Pradesh (CUHP) can also start a course on Kangra art.** It would help protect the art and provide a platform for research on Kangra miniature paintings,” Runchal said.
- **Kangra miniature paintings, though influenced by the Rajasthan miniature paintings,** evolved as a unique form of art under the aegis of rulers of the former Kangra state. However, without any government patronage the unique art form is dying a slow death.
- **The uniqueness of Kangra miniature paintings is that 19 natural colours generated from locally available sources are used to create the painting.** The colours are typically associated with the Kangra form of art. They are created from stones and plants found in Kangra valley. It takes about a year to create the required colours as they can be generated only from natural sources existing at particular times of the year.
- Besides the natural colours, **gold is also used in the paintings, giving them the required shine.**
- Another **unique feature of Kangra form of art painting is the use of natural poison that protects it from decay and natural paper that is created from the bio-waste of pine trees.**
- The natural poison used in the painting is generated from waste of slow fire (known as Dhuna in local language).
- **Fallen wings of Turtle Dove, a local migratory bird, were also used for creating the brushes used in the paintings.**

1.263. MISSION VATSALYA ROADMAP TO CHILD PROTECTION: HPHRC

- The Mission **Vatsalya scheme** is a roadmap to achieve development and child protection goals, said Justice Avtar Dogra (retd), a member of the Himachal Pradesh Human Rights Commission (HPHRC), at an awareness camp in Bilaspur.

- He said the scheme emphasises on spreading awareness about child rights and their advocacy. It also addressed issues pertaining to the strengthening of the juvenile justice care and protection system with the **motto, 'leave no child behind'.**
- The Juvenile Justice **(Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**, provides protection to children from sexual offences.

1.264. FARMERS INTERACT WITH EXPERTS ON AROMATIC CROP CULTIVATION IN CHAMBA DISTRICT.

- An interactive session with progressive farmers and entrepreneurs cultivating aromatic crops under the **CSIR Aroma Mission** was organised by the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology **(CSIR-IHBT**) at **Talla village, Sihunta, of Chamba district.**
- Farmers apprised the experts about the problems — monkey menace, hailstorm and the non-availability of farm inputs — being faced by them, resulting in crop loss.
- To overcome such problems, the CSIR-IHBT, **under the Aroma Mission Phase-II,** provided the technology and quality planting material to the farmers to grow **aromatic marigold.**
- **Scented marigold is able to withstand biotic and abiotic stresses and is not affected by grazing and stray animals.**
- Research Council chairman Dr Trilochan Mohapatra and other members visited the essential oil extraction unit set up in the fields by the CSIR-IHBT under the Aroma Mission for the value addition of aromatic crops.
- They appreciated the progress made by the institute under the ongoing mission.
- CSIR-IHBT director Dr Sanjay Kumar said the global essential oil demand was increasing day by day. "Its estimated world market demand of USD 8.8 billion during 2022 will be expected to reach USD 16.34 billion in 2027."
- Dr Kumar added that the institute supports the farmers by promoting the cultivation of aromatic crops and making efforts to double their income.

1.265. LOOKING BACK 2022: CRIMES IN HIMACHAL PRADESH.

Crime against women:

- The **maximum cases** of crime against women were **registered in Kangra** and **Mandi,** the most populous districts of the state, this year.
- As per the data from January 1, 2022, to November 30, most cases of cruelty to women (33) and molestation (102) were reported from Kangra, followed by Mandi at 28 and 59, respectively. Mandi reported the highest rape cases (55) followed by Kangra (51).
- **Overall, the graph of crime against women witnessed a slight dip in comparison to the last year**. As many as 1,515 cases were registered till November 30 compared to 1,700 cases reported last year.
- While the incidence of rape, molestation and abetment to suicide remained more or less the same as in the past few years, the **cruelty to women cases dipped to 183 from 222 last year – the lowest in the last one decade.**
- As for **dowry deaths, just one death has been reported this year.**

The cases registered under the NDPS Act:

- As for the cases registered under the NDPS Act**, Shimla** ended on **top with 225 cases** followed by Mandi (198) and Bilaspur (183).
- The number of cases registered under the NDPS Act hasn't seen much fluctuation from the last two years as against **1420 cases registered so far this year**, the count **last year was 1537** and **1538 in the year before.**
- Compared to last year when 14.9 kg heroin was seized, the seizure this year has been 10.1 kg.

The cases registered under the SC/ST Act:

- As for the cases registered under the SC/ST Act, the graph showed a **slight dip from last year and 234 cases have been registered so far this year as compared to 272 last year.**

- The **highest number of cases** has been **registered** in **Mandi** (43), followed by Hamirpur (34). The police maintain that **no particular area of the state is notorious for offence against SC/ST community,** and the incidents are sporadic.

1.266. JAI RAM THAKUR RECOGNISED AS HIMACHAL'S LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

- Former Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur has been accorded the status of the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Assembly by Protem Speaker Chander Kumar.
- The Congress won 40 seats in the 68-member Assembly. The BJP won 25 seats while three went to Independents. Thakur, a six-time MLA, won from Seraj with the highest margin. The ex-CM was elected unanimously as all 24 BJP MLAs proposed his name for the post.

Leader of the Opposition:

- The leader of the largest Opposition party having not less than one-tenth seats of the total strength of the House is recognised as the leader of the Opposition in a House.
- S/He provides constructive criticism of the government policies and to provide an alternative government.
- The leader of Opposition in both the Houses were accorded statutory recognition in 1977 and are entitled to the salary, allowances and other facilities equivalent to that of a cabinet minister.
- The office of leader of the opposition is not mentioned in the Constitution but in the Parliamentary Statute.

1.267. SPITI VILLAGES TO BE MADE 'VIBRANT'.

- Two villages near the China border in tribal district of **Lahaul and Spiti — Gue and Lalung** — have been **selected under the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)** by the **Central Government** for development purpose.
- An exercise by the Kaza administration to collect necessary data on the development requirements of people in these villages has been initiated.
- **A committee has been formed, comprising officials of Tourism, Art and Culture, Education, Jal Shakti, Health and other departments to conduct a survey of these villages to assess the necessary requirements of villagers.** A detailed report of the survey would be submitted to the Centre within a month for further action.
- Kaza ADC Abhishek Verma said a **DGP-rank officer of the Centre** and a **Director-level officer** of the **Textile Ministry had conducted a survey in Spiti valley** to select the border villages in this district under the programme.
- The ADC said earlier, of the 13-gram panchayats of the Spiti valley, 12 were selected under the **Border Area Development Programme (BADP**). The administration had requested the Centre to include the one which was left.
- In a majority of states or districts, only one border village was selected under the programme. However, **Lahaul and Spiti is the only district of which two villages have been selected under the programme to provide necessary development and infrastructure to stop migration of people out of the border villages**," he said.
- The finance minister had announced the programme in her Budget speech this year. The programme envisages coverage of border villages on the Northern border having sparse population, limited connectivity and infrastructure, which are often deprived of development projects. Convergence of existing schemes is proposed under the VVP.
- The **Centre is implementing the BADP through the state governments/UT administrations** in **habitations located within 0 to 10 km from the first habitation at the International Border** in 460 border blocks of 117 border districts in 16 states and two UTs.
- These include Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, J&K (UT) and Ladakh (UT).
- Under the BADP, annual action plans of the states/UTs consisting of works related to village infrastructure such as roads and bridges, health, education, agriculture, sports, drinking water and sanitation etc. are considered and approved as per the BADP guidelines.

1.268. SOON, FESTIVE ALLOWANCE TO INMATES OF DESTITUTE HOMES.

- Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu visited **Model Children Home and Old Age Home, Nari Sewa Sadan,** at **Mashobra** and the **Institute for Children with Special Abilities (ICSA) at Dhalli**, Shimla. He took stock of the facilities being provided to the inmates and directed officers to ensure best facilities to them.
- The CM said the government would provide **festive allowance to the inmates** of such institutions run by the government.
- The **three integrated social welfare institutions would be opened in different parts of the state to provide state-of-the-art facilities to destitute women, orphans and differently abled children.**
- He said he had directed the departments concerned to ensure proper planning, designing of the buildings to be constructed for such institutions.

1.269. LOOKING BACK 2022: MEGA PROJECTS OKAYED,

- The industrial sector saw the state getting mega projects like bulk drugs park and medical device park this year with Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying their foundation stones.
- The foundation stone of the **Rs 350-crore medical device park at Nalagarh** was laid on October 5.
- **Himachal Pradesh is one of the four states that has been selected for this park. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) of more than Rs 800 crore** have been signed for this project with prospective investors.
- **Himachal Pradesh** is the **second state** where a **bulk drugs park is being set up** while only three states have been granted this key project. Its foundation stone was laid by the Prime Minister on October 13.
- For the Rs 1,923-crore Bulk Drug Park Project, the Central grant will be worth Rs 1,118 crore while the state government will contribute the remaining amount of Rs 804. 54 crores.
- The drug park is expected to attract an investment of Rs 8,000 to Rs 10,000 crore and likely to generate employment for 15,000-20,000 persons.
- The project is slated to provide a major fillip to the socio-economic development of the region. Setting up of this park will reduce export dependence of active pharmaceutical ingredients of the pharmaceutical industries.
- Apart from these projects, as many as **209 industrial projects were approved in the state this year which are slated to generate employment for 25,564 persons,** while fetching an investment of Rs 8,314.98 crore.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) worth Rs. 5000 crore was signed between the State Government and M/s SMPP Private India Ltd regarding setting up of ammunition manufacturing facility in the State for tanks and artillery guns.
- In a bid **to develop the state's industrial hub of Baddi-Barotiwala-Nalagarh**, the **National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC)** has initiated an exercise under the **Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor Project**. It will provide ease of logistics to the industry, create jobs and spur economic growth.

1.270. RD DHIMAN IS CHIEF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER.

- The state government has appointed RD Dhiman, the incumbent Chief Secretary, as the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) of the state.
- RD Dhiman will retire from the post of Chief Secretary on December 31.
- His appointment as CIC will be for three years from the date on which he assumes the office.
- The post of CIC had been lying vacant since June, when last CIC Narendra Chauhan's term had expired.

OTHER IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

1. Laxmi Singh is 1st woman Police Commissioner in UP. The state government has appointed Inspector-General of Police (IG), Lucknow range, Laxmi Singh, as the first woman Police Commissioner of the state giving her the charge of Noida.
2. Melioidosis disease detected in Odisha. Melioidosis, an infectious disease transmitted to human body by contaminated soil and by inoculation, inhalation and ingestion, has been detected in the coastal state of Odisha.
3. BCCI enters Guinness World Record for biggest crowd attendance in T20 match. On 29 May 2022, the IPL 2022 final between Gujarat Titans and Rajasthan Royals at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad was attended by 1,01,566 people, setting a new world record.
4. The 23rd Hornbill Festival 2022 to begin at Naga Heritage Village Kisama from Dec 1- Dec 10.
5. Paralympic medallist Avani Lekhara receives Para Sports Person of Year award.
6. Merriam-Webster announced ‘Gaslighting’ as its Word of the Year 2022.
7. Iranian film Nargesi by Director Payam Eskandari has won the ICFT-UNESCO Gandhi Medal at the 53rd edition of International Film Festival of India, given for a film that best reflects Mahatma Gandhi’s ideals of peace, tolerance and non-violence.
8. French scientists have revived a 48,500-year-old Zombie Virus buried under a frozen lake in Russia.
9. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the top six engineering institutes of India for introducing Indian standards as an integral part of the curriculum. Indian Institute of Technology BHU, Malaviya National Institute of Technology Jaipur, Indian Institute of Technology Indore, Indian Institute of Technology Patna, Indian Institute of Technology Madras and National Institute of Technology Trichy.
10. "Red Planet Day" celebrated on 28 November 2022.
11. Researchers from IISER-Thiruvananthapuram and IIT-Indore have jointly developed an artificial light-harvesting system that will help capture solar energy.
12. CITES COP19 has recently accepted the proposal to downgrade the status of southern white rhinos from Appendix I to Appendix II.
13. Indian Army’s Sudarshan Chakra Corps carries out Exercise Sudarshan Prahar in deserts of Rajasthan.
14. Adani group wins the bid of 5069 crores for the redevelopment project of the country's largest slum 'Dharavi Slum'.
15. The Manthan platform won NSEIT the Best Tech Initiative of the Year at the Dun & Bradstreet Business Excellence Awards 2022 on 29th November 2022 during an event in Mumbai. The award was presented for building the technology infrastructure to support Manthan, a platform that promotes collaboration at scale between industry and the scientific research and development ecosystem.
16. NASA's Orion spacecraft reaches record-breaking distance of 270,000 miles away from Earth.
17. South Korea’s Mina Sue Choi Crowned Miss Earth 2022.
18. FIFA World cup 2022: Stephanie Frappart to be 1st woman referee.
19. “World’s 1st Hydrogen-Run” Aircraft Engine Tested by EasyJet, Rolls-Royce.
20. India and Germany have agreed upon development projects to the tune of Euro 1 billion for the next year. The focus is on measures that support India in a socially just energy transition through the expansion of renewable energies, safe and climate-friendly public transport, and sustainable, climate-resilient and inclusive urban development, said a German embassy statement.
21. External Affairs Ministry says India to assume chairmanship of Wassenaar arrangement on 1 Jan 2023.

22. PM Modi greets & appreciates BSF on its raising day. The country's first line of Defence, BSF was established on 1 December 1965 for ensuring security on the borders. BSF also plays a crucial role in preventing transborder crimes.

23. Baguette — the staple French bread — was inscribed into the UN's list of intangible cultural heritage (ICH).

24. Prasanth Kumar, CEO, South Asia of GroupM Media (India) Pvt Ltd, has been elected as the president of the Advertising Agencies Association of India (AAAI).

25. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery: 2 December.

26. The Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation (RAJSICO) will soon operationalise two new inland container depots (ICDs) at Bhilwara and Tanavada in Jodhpur.

27. Railways earnings increase by 76 % in passenger segment.

28. Indian Naval Ships Shivalik and Kamorta visit Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.

29. Govt approves Production Linked Incentive scheme for drones and drone components with an outlay of 120 crore rupees.

30. Union Minister of Tourism, Culture and Development of North Eastern Region G Kishan Reddy and Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen will inaugurate the Sylhet Festival 2022 at Silchar in the Barak Valley of Assam.

31. Formula 1 has cancelled the 2023 Chinese Grand Prix due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions in the country.

32. The International Day of Disabled persons marked on December 3.

33. Culture Ministry inaugrates a three-day long music, art and literature festival Swar Dharohar in New Delhi.

34. Japan successfully propels steam-powered spacecraft, named 'EQUULEUS' spacecraft.

35. Nation observed Indian Navy Day on 4th December.

36. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) is celebrating its 65th Founding Day on 5th-6th December, 2022.

37. Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal will be the Chief Guest at the 'Millets-Smart Nutritive Food' Conclave to be held in New Delhi on 05 December 2022.

38. Northrop Grumman Corp recently rolled out its new B-21 "Raider" jet, the first of a new fleet of long-range stealth nuclear bombers for the United States Air Force.

39. Pakistan tops list of nations at risk of violence: US think-tank report.

40. Third T20 World Cup for the blind will start in India from December 5.

41. Former Union Minister Hansraj Ahir takes charge as National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC)Chairman.

42. President of India Droupadi Murmu is set to launch the "Open Loop Ticketing System" for the Haryana State Transport Corporation on the occasion of Gita Mahotsav 2022 in Kurukshetra. The open-loop ticketing system aims to help commuters to do away with buying physical tickets for roadways buses.

43. Ladakh to initiate geo, drone mapping of wonder berry. Seabuckthorn, also identified as Leh Berry, grows in the wild across Ladakh and the adjoining tribal Lahaul-Spiti and Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh.

44. The European Union has reached a deal for a USD 60 per barrel price cap on Russian seaborne oil, with an aim to diminish Russia's revenues.

45. Minister of State for Atomic Energy and Space Dr. Jitendra Singh led the Indian delegation to the Global Space Summit in Abu Dhabi.

46. Saurashtra cricket team wins the 'Vijay Hazare Trophy 2022' title by defeating Maharashtra by five wickets.

47. Professor Rajeev Laxman Karandikar of Chennai Mathematical Institute appointed as the chairman of the National Statistical Commission (NSC).

48. On the lines of 'Khelega UP, Jeetega UP', UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath launched the 'One District One Sport' scheme.

49. India is ranked 8th among the countries that are at the highest risk for mass killing in 2022 and 2023, as per the recent report by the US think tank Early Warning Project.

50. India has jumped to the 48th position in the global aviation safety ranking by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

51. Indian shooter Rudrankksh Patil has clinched the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) President's Cup held in Cairo, Egypt.

52. India's Greenhouse-in-a-Box startup Kheyti won Earthshot Prize 2022.

53. IIFL Launches India's First Passive Tax-Saving Fund.

54. International Day of Banks celebrates on 4th December.

55. India, Germany sign Migration and Mobility Agreement for easier access to study, research and work in both countries.

56. Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has congratulated National Highway Authority of India and Maha Metro on achieving the Guinness Book of World Record by constructing longest Double Decker Viaduct with Highway Flyover and Metro Rail Supported on single column in Nagpur.

57. Parakram Diwas to be celebrated in Rajasthan to mark 51st anniversary of Longewala battle.

58. Nation pays homage to architect of Indian Constitution Dr B R Ambedkar on his 67th Mahaparinirvan Diwas. Babasaheb was conferred the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1990.

59. Padma Bhushan recipient and French author of famous books like 'The City of Joy' Dominique Lapierre passes away.

60. National Zoological Park celebrates International Cheetah Day and Wildlife Conservation Day.

61. World Bank upgrades India's GDP growth forecast for 2022-23 to 6.9 percent.

62. Adani Green becomes World's Largest Wind-Solar Hybrid Power Developer.

63. India's first real-time gold ATM set up in Hyderabad:

64. Indian billionaires Gautam Adani, Shiv Nadar and Ashok Soota, along with Malaysian-Indian businessman Brahmal Vasudevan and his lawyer-wife Shanthi Kandiah, were named in Forbes Asia's 16th Annual Heroes of Philanthropy List.

65. Armed Forces Flag Day is observed on December 7 every year.

66. Recently an artificial intelligence tool called ChatGPT was released on the internet.

67. 'Goblin Mode' is Oxford's Word of the Year for 2022. Chosen by public vote, the "slang term" means "a type of behaviour which is unapologetically self-indulgent, lazy, slovenly, or greedy, typically in a way that rejects social norms or expectations".

68. Sherpas of G20 countries and invitees to visit famous Kumbhalgarh Fort in Udaipur.

69. Inspector-General level talks between BSF & Border Guard Bangladesh begins in Tripura.

70. The Vice Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General B S Raju embarked on a three-day visit to Malaysia.

71. Protest against Vizhinjam sea port in Kerala called off for now.

72. Argentina's Vice President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner found guilty in corruption case.

73. Anish Thoppani clinches silver medal in U-15 category at Badminton Asia Junior Championships.

74. Union Minister Anurag Thakur inaugurates India's first Drone Skilling & Training Conference and Drone Yatra in Chennai.

75. Razorpay Becomes India's First Payment Gateway to Support Credit Cards on UPI.

76. FIFA World Cup: Deepika Padukone to unveil World Cup 2022 trophy during finals.

77. Star Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu wins silver medal at the World Weightlifting Championships 2022 held in Bogota, Colombia.

78. Former BPCL Chairman Arun Kumar Singh appointed ONGC Chairman for a term of 3 years.

79. Mallika Sarabhai, daughter of noted physicist-astronomer Vikram Sarabhai appointed as the Chancellor of Kerala Kalamandalam.

80. Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran appointed as Chair of B20 India.

81. State-owned Bank of Baroda wins 'EAG Award' on financial security.

82. Karthigai Deepam chariot festival held at Tiruppuranagunam in Madurai.

83. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Social Alpha to establish a SpaceTech Innovation Network (SpIN).

84. Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky was chosen as the 2022 Person of the Year by the Time Magazine.

85. Indian-American Krishna Vavilala receives US Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award.

86. 9th World Ayurveda Congress and Arogya Expo 2022 Inaugurated in Goa.

87. Meghna Ahlawat has been elected as first female president of TTFI.

88. A total of 22 Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals have been commissioned in the country so far. Under the Gati Shakti Cargo Terminal policy, it has been targeted to develop 100 terminals by the end of the financial year 2024-25.

89. Cyclonic Storm ‘Mandous’ to make landfall in north Tamil Nadu.

90. India ranked 87th in Global Passport Power Rank 2022 list released by Arton Capital

91. The first coins bearing the likeness of Britain's King Charles III have entered circulation in the UK. This was announced by the Royal Mint, the official producer of UK banknotes and coins. The new 50-pence piece features an effigy of Charles, who became king after the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II in September.

92. The Central Government has permitted Work from Home up to the 31st of December, 2023 for 100 per cent of employees of the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) units. It will benefit to economies of Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

93. 535 Railway stations covered with 572 One Station, One Product outlets. The One Station One Product scheme was launched with the objective to promote Vocal for the Local vision of the Government.

94. Dina Boluarte becomes Peru's first female president after Peruvian President Pedro Castillo was removed from office through impeachment.

95. Shaji KV becomes the chairman of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD); replaced chintala.

96. Nitin Gadkari’s announcement for the convenience of contractors, the country’s first ‘surety bond insurance product’ will be launched on December 19. The Surety Bond insurance will help in boosting the liquidity in infrastructure sector by freeing the contractors working capital stuck in bank guarantees.

97. ISRO to develop ‘Spatial Data Infrastructure Geoportal’ for Union Territory of Ladakh.

98. International Anti-Corruption Day 2022 celebrated on 09 December.

99. 1st meeting of G20 Finance Track agenda to be held under G20 Presidency in Bengaluru.

100. Former VP Venkaiah Naidu confers with SIES Award for public leadership.

101. Three medicinal plant species found in the Himalayas have made it to IUCN Red List of Threatened Species following a recent assessment. Meizotropis pellita has been assessed as ‘critically endangered’, Fritilloria cirrhosa as ‘vulnerable’, and Dactylorhiza hatagirea as ‘endangered’.

102. Recently National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), has developed and launched this portal. The portal - “GHAR - Go Home and Re-Unite” will be a platform for information on children from every district to smoothen the process of their repatriation and restoration.

103. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has appointed Indian-origin Sushmita Shukla as its First Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (COO).

104. Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin virtually inaugurates statue of 'Mahakavi Subramanian Bharathiyar' in Varanasi.

105. U.S. prints its first currency with two women's signatures on it. The new currency notes of $1 and $5 value carry the signature of the Secretary of Treasury (American Finance Minister) Janet Yellen and Lynn Malerba. The United States currency notes are popularly called as Greenback.

106. International Mountain Day is celebrated annually on December 11 to increase public awareness of the value of mountains to both life and climate.

107. Hurun Global 500 rankings: India ranked 5th in the list of valuable companies.

108. The drug, lecanemab, jointly developed by pharma companies Biogen and Eisai, was tested on patients with early Alzheimer's.

109. Badri cow is the first registered cattle breed of Uttarakhand which has been certified by the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR).

110. Recently, Birdwatchers have discovered a new species of the wren babblers in remote northeastern Arunachal Pradesh which has been named by them as Lisu wren babbler.

111. The Chennai Customs organised an event under the theme "Join Hands: Customs Force multiplier in protecting Flora & Fauna." To mark 60 years of enacting the Customs Act,1962.

112. Goa's Mopa International Airport named after former Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar.

113. Indian sailor Anandi wins gold medal in 34th King's Cup Regatta 2022.

114. Indian-origin science teacher Veena Nair wins Prime Minister's prize in Australia.

115. Nepal organises 19th Handicraft Trade Fair and 17th Craft Competition in Kathmandu.

116. Manu Bhaker bags gold medal in 10 metre pistol junior women's event at National Shooting Championship.

117. Divya T.S won women's air pistol gold in 65th National Shooting Championship, 2022.

118. RBI signs Currency Swap Agreement with Maldives Monetary Authority.

119. Ministry of Culture has set up seven Zonal Cultural Centers for the development Of Arts, Culture and Craft across the country.

120. WHO releases 2022 edition of annual World Malaria Report.

121. India's HS Prannoy beats Danish badminton player Viktor Axelsen in BWF World Tour Finals 2022.

122. Ex-Bombay HC Chief Justice Dipankar Datta takes oath as Supreme Court judge.

123. Meghalaya Awarded for TB Control Program 'Jan Andolan' against tuberculosis.

124. American hurdles star Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone and Swedish pole vaulter Mondo Duplantis named 'World Athletes of the Year'.

125. FIFA World Cup: France beat Morocco 2-Nil to set up summit clash with Argentina on 18th December.

126. FINA World Swimming Championship 2022: Chahat Arora sets national record in women's 100-metre breaststroke.

127. Innovator and Education Reformist Sonam Wangchuk supports India's Mission LiFE.

128. World Health Organization names Sir Jeremy Farrar as Chief Scientist, replaces Soumya Swaminathan.

129. ICC player of month: Jos Buttler and Sidra Ameen received ICC player of month for November 2022.

130. New Zealand passed tobacco law to ban smoking for next generation.

131. India signed joint declaration of Intent on migration and mobility with Finland.

132. Maruti Suzuki launched India's first mass-segment flex-fuel car.

133. Chief Justice of India Inaugurates Digitisation Hubs in 10 districts of Odisha.

134. ISRO Successfully Completes Hypersonic Vehicle Test Run.

135. H5N1 avian influenza virus confirmed in two panchayats in Kerala's Kottayam. The authorities have imposed a blanket ban on the movement of poultry in the 10 km radius of the affected areas.

136. ISRO successfully launches 177 foreign satellites for 19 countries in five years.

137. Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurates a direct flight between Mumbai & San Francisco. Air India will operate the non-stop flight on this route.

138. Slovakia's coalition government collapses after losing no-confidence vote in Parliament.

139. Sonakshi Sinha named PETA Person of the Year. Past recipients of PETA India's Person of the Year Award include former Supreme Court Justice KS Panicker Radhakrishnan, cricketer Virat Kohli, comedian Kapil

Sharma; and actors Alia Bhatt, John Abraham, Anushka Sharma, Sunny Leone, R Madhavan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Hema Malini, and Sonam Kapoor Ahuja.

140. Mormugao to be inducted into Navy on Dec 18. Mormugao, a stealth missile destroyer, is scheduled to be commissioned into the Navy by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on December 18

141. The District Tourism Promotion Council, Kozhikode has applied for a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the famous Beypore Uru (boat).

142. India win 6 gold medals at 19th International Junior Science Olympiad in Bogota.

143. Ladakh gets its first-ever GI Tag to its Raktsey Karpo Apricot.

144. Anniversary of victory in 1971 Indo-Pak war observed as Vijay Diwas at Konark War Memorial in Jodhpur.

145. Asian Development Bank (ADB) keeps India's GDP growth unchanged at 7% for fiscal 2022-23.

146. MoU signed between Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) Limited and TEXPROCIL on Branding, Traceability and Certification of “Kasturi Cotton India”.

147. Danish badminton player Viktor Axelsen and Japanese female badminton player Akane Yamaguchi wins badminton World Tour Finals 2022.

148. BJP MP Biplab Kumar Deb moves private member resolution in Rajya Sabha to setup Agarwood Board of India.

149. UN Ranks ‘Namami Gange’ Project Among World’s top 10 Initiatives.

150. India to Be First Country to Auction SatCom Spectrum.

151. Sikkim to host two G20 meetings in March 2023: Chief coordinator Harsh Vardhan Shringla.

152. Incidence of TB in India reduces by 18% from 256 per lakh population in 2015 to 210 per lakh population in 2021.

153. A grammatical problem that has defeated Sanskrit scholars since the 5th Century BC has finally been solved by Rishi Rajpopat, an Indian PhD student at the University of Cambridge.

154. All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) campus in the New Delhi declared "tobacco-free zone"

155. Smt. Smriti Zubin Irani: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kaam Karyakram (PMKKK) will now be known as 'PM Vikas Yojana'.

156. Mette Frederiksen re-elected as Prime Minister of Denmark.

157. Reliance Consumer Products launches indigenous Made-for-India FMCG brand 'Independence' in Gujarat.

158. Iga Swiatek and Rafael Nadal crowned ITF World Champions 2022 by The International Tennis Federation.

159. Cindy Hook named as CEO of 2032 Olympic organising committee.

160. Rehan Ahmed becomes England’s youngest-ever Test Cricketer to debut in the final match between Pakistan and England. Rehan Ahmed will be 18 years and 126 days old when the match begins. Till now, Brian Close, who was 18 years and 149 days old, was the youngest player in England during the New Zealand vs England match in 1949.

161. National Minorities Rights Day 2022: 18 December.

162. 20 New Nuclear Power Plants to be Commissioned in India by 2031.

163. India hockey team win’s Women’s FIH Nations Cup 2022.

164. Indian-origin Leo Varadkar is new Prime Minister of Ireland. This is the second time that Varadkar has been elected as Irish prime minister. He first became the Irish prime minister in June 2017.

165. India Announced Candidature for UNSC Membership for 2028-29 Term. The previous eight terms that India has been in the Council are 1950-1951, 1967-1968, 1972-1973, 1977-1978, 1984-1985, 1991-1992 and 2011-2012.

166. Tokyo Makes Solar Panels Mandatory for New Homes Built After 2025.

167. Gati Shakti University: Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw appointed as first Chancellor.

168. Harvard University named Claudine Gay, a dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science, as its new president, the first African American to hold the post at the prestigious university. Gay, 52, is just the second woman to be elected to head the school in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gay, the daughter of Haitian immigrants, will take over as the university's 30th president on July 1, 2023.

169. India and Sri Lanka to launch ferry service between Kankesanthurai port and Pondicherry.
170. Indian national blind cricket team defeats Bangladesh to win T20 World Cup for the Blind.
171. Sargam Koushal wins Mrs World 2022, becomes second Indian woman to win title after 21 years.
172. National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) wins IEI Industry Excellence Award 2022.
173. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launches 'Grih Pravesh programme' under Pradhan Mantari Awas Yojana - Urban, Rural in Tripura.
174. NASA'S Mars rover Perseverance to begin dropping samples of rock on surface of Red Planet
175. Steel Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia launched India's first Green Steel Brand - KALYANI FeRRESTA in New Delhi today. This first-of-its-kind steel has been manufactured by a Pune-based Steel company, Kalyani group by using renewable energy resources, leaving zero carbon footprints in the environment.
176. India to host next special negotiation round for Pillars 2-4 of Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.
177. The 6th Joint Staff Talks between India and the Maldives were held in New Delhi.
178. Egypt's Suez Canal registered a record-breaking revenue of $7.9 billion in 2022. The revenues of 2022 are the highest in the SCA's history. Wael Qaddour, the SCA's former deputy chairman,attributed the record revenue to the high demand for oil as maritime energy transport depends greatly on the canal.
179. Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs has launched a programme to create Impact Leaders in the areas of Environmental-Social-Governance (ESG). IICA is an autonomous institution under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
180. Book titled "The Light We Carry: Overcoming In Uncertain Times" authored by Michelle Obama unveiled.
181. FIFA selects Morocco to host 'Club World Cup' to run from February 1 to February 11, 2023.
182. European country Latvia hosted the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) Summit 2022 in Riga. Riga is the capital and largest city of Latvia.
183. National Mathematics Day is celebrated on December 22 across the nation every year. The National Mathematics Day is marked to recognise and celebrate the works of Srinivasa Ramanujan.
184. China enforces cyberspace censorship rules to supress information flow
185. Peru orders Mexico's ambassador to leave country within 72 hours.
186. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar becomes only University in India to get A grade by NAAC
187. United Arab Emirates to host next major WTO meeting in February 2024.
188. Bandhan Bank ties up with Govt to set up Sparsh service centres for Defence pensioners.
189. 40-yr-old Sethrichem Sangtam, who works with farmers in Nagaland wins inaugural 'Rohini Nayyar prize'.
190. Abigail Kawānanakoa, the "Last Hawaiian Princess," Dies at Age 96.
191. Twin cities of Hubballi-Dharwad in Karnataka will play a host to National Youth Festival to be organised on January 12 in connection with the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.
192. Coast Guard launches 'Operation Oliva' to save turtles in Odisha.
193. UNSC adopts first-ever resolution on Myanmar, demanding end to violence and release of political prisoners.
194. Indian National Farmer's Day 2022 celebrates on 23 December.
195. The Gujarati-language Chhello Show (The Last Show), which is India's official entry for the 2023 Academy Awards or Oscars awards in the International Feature film category, has been shortlisted for next year's Academy Awards. Meanwhile, the track Naatu Naatu from SS Rajamouli's RRR has been shortlisted in the Best Original Song Category.
196. India's leading and premier energy market platform Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) becomes the country's first carbon-neutral power exchange.
197. United World Wrestling: New Delhi to host 36th Asian Wrestling Championship 2023 next year.

198. Senior nuclear scientist Dinesh Kumar Shukla appointed as new head of Atomic Energy Regulatory Board.

199. Assam cabinet approves Industry Status to tourism sector in the state.

200. Bharti Airtel with Apollo Hospitals announced that they have carried out India's first 5G-driven, Artificial Intelligence (AI) guided colonoscopy trial. HealthNet Global, AWS and Avesha are the other three companies that collaborated in this trial.

201. E-commerce giant Flipkart announced the full ownership separation of digital payments platform PhonePe. The PhonePe Group was acquired by the Flipkart Group in 2016.

202. Infosys recognised with 'A' score for transparency on climate change. A detailed and independent methodology is used by CDP to assess these companies, allocating a score of A to D-based on the comprehensiveness of disclosure, awareness, and management of environmental risks and demonstration of best practices associated with environmental leadership, such as setting ambitious and meaningful targets.

203. Indian female wrestler Antim Panghal nominated for United World Wrestling Rising Star of the Year honour.

204. Indian scientist, Prof. Thalappil Pradeep, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras received VinFuture special prize on 20th Dec. 2022 in Hanoi for innovation of a low-cost filtration system to remove arsenic and other heavy metals from groundwater.

205. Kerala confirms Avian Influenza virus in Kottayam district.

206. The 10th Edition of the North East Festival began at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in New Delhi yesterday, December 23. The festival aims to promote the North East region's diverse life, culture, traditions, and tourism.

207. Ladakh is celebrating Losar Festival today, December 24, to mark the Ladakhi New Year. Ladakhi New Year is the major socio-religious festival of Ladakh celebrated in winter. Losar also known as Tibetan New Year.

208. Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur to inaugurate National level Kabaddi championship in Udupi Karnataka.

209. UIDAI wins Data Security Council of India's Best Security Practices in Government Sector award.

210. Centre approves Bharat Biotech's nasal Covid vaccine for booster dose; To be available on CoWIN app .

211. Cancer patients in Haryana will now get Rs 2,500 monthly pension.

212. Scotland passes gender recognition reform bill, making easier to legally change gender.

213. Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' to be sworn in as Nepal PM.

214. Sitiveni Rabuka elected as new Fiji Prime Minister.

215. First Veer Bal Diwas to be observed to commemorate martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's two young sons.

216. Country's first Infantry Museum opens for public in Indore, MP.

217. Beth Mead Awarded BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2022 Award.

218. The Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2021-22 jointly won by Sudeep Sen and Shobhana Kumar.

219. National Consumer Rights Day 2022 celebrated across India on 24 December.

220. India-Japan to conduct 1st bilateral air combat exercise "Veer Guardian 23" in 2023.

221. Former Maldives President Abdulla Yameen sentence to 11 years in prison for money laundering and bribery.

222. SS Rajamouli's film RRR features in the global list of Top 50 films of 2022 curated by Sight and Sound magazine.

223. India is ranked fifth on the global list of the best cuisines for 2022.

224. International Day of Epidemic Preparedness 2022 celebrates on 27 December.

225. Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal unveils 'Right to Repair' portal.

226. International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects 6.8 % growth in current fiscal for India.

227. Arunachal's 7-year-old Geto Sora wins Junior International Badminton Championship title.

228. The government has appointed senior bureaucrat Santosh Kumar Yadav as the Chairman of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
229. The first infection from Naegleria fowleri, or “brain-eating amoeba,” has been reported in South Korea.
230. Google moves NCLAT against CCI's order on unfair practices. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) in October slapped a steep penalty of Rs 1,337.76 crore on internet giant Google for abusing its dominant position in multiple markets in relation to Android mobile devices and ordered the internet major to cease and desist from various unfair business practices.
231. Indian Bank launched ‘MSME Prerana’ programme in Rajasthan.
232. IISc Bengaluru is secretariat for G20 working group on science.
233. Cuban social worker Aleida Guevara received with first KR Gouri Amma national award.
234. The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has greeted everyone as Dhanu Yatra begins. The vibrant Dhanu Yatra is associated with the culture of Odisha.
235. Kerala's Dharmadam becomes India's first full library constituency.
236. HDFC Securities launches Google search-powered education platform 'Roots'.
237. Lovlina Borgohain, Nikhat Zareen win gold in Elite Women's National Boxing Championship 2022.
238. Garuda Aerospace becomes the first drone company to receive dual certification by DGCA for 'Kisan Drone'.
239. International Space Registry named the star at coordinates 14 05 25.3 -60 28 51.9 after Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
240. Shri Ganji Kamala V Rao IAS has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).
241. Recently, India has officially recognised Esports as a part of 'multisport event'.
242. Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas organizes event 'Dance to Decarbonize' at National Stadium, Delhi.
243. Anil Kumar Lahoti appointed as the next Chairman and CEO of the Railway Board in place of Vinay Kumar Tripathi.
244. Union Home Ministry approves name change of 'Telia Afghan' village and 'Mundera Bazar' in UP.
245. Prabhu Chandra Mishra honored with ‘Atal Samman Award’
246. Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina Inaugurates First-Ever Metro Service in Dhaka.
247. IIT Madras won Wharton-QS Reimagine Education Awards 2022.
248. ICAR shares 1st indigenously-developed bird-flu vaccine to private firms.
249. The Indian Air Force successfully test-fired the extended-range version of the BrahMos air-launched missile, which can hit targets at a range of about 400 kms.
250. Brijesh Damani wins national billiards title at Senior National Billiards Championship.
251. RBI approves Baskar Babu’s re-appointment as Suryoday Bank’s Chief for 3 years.
252. Indian scientist Dr. Mahima Swamy honored as one of Europe's top talents in biology.
253. IIT Roorkee and Delhi AIIMS created 'Healthy Garbh' app, pregnant women will get special facility.
254. Dr. C. Rangarajan, the 19th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a book titled "Forks in the Road: My Days at RBI and Beyond".
255. IndianOil in collaboration with Central TB Division launches Intensified Tuberculosis Elimination Project in Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.
256. Brazil World Cup winner and football legend, Pele passes away. Brazilian football legend Edson Arantes do Nascimento, famously called Pelé, has passed away aged 82.
257. Tata Steel and TuTr Hyperloop signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) at IIT Madras to collaborate on the development and wide-scale use of Hyperloop technology.
258. India and Cyprus sign agreement on defence and military cooperation

259. The State Vigilance Academy (SVA), Bhubaneswar, a premier anti-corruption training academy and the first of its kind in the country, has been awarded ISO Certification for three years till December 2025.

260. The director of Russian gas giant Gazprom, Alexei Miller, has claimed that the world's demand for gas is predicted to reduce by 65 billion cubic metres in 2022, with 55 billion cubic metres going to the 27 countries that make up the European Union.

261. Benjamin Netanyahu again became PM of Israel, took oath for the sixth time.

262. US Vice President Kamala Harris nominates Indian-American Rajeev Badyal to National Space Council advisory group.

263. Suryakumar Yadav, Smriti Mandhana Nominated For 'ICC T20I Cricketer of The Year' Awards.

264. World class Kayaking-Canoeing Academy to be set up in Tehri, Uttarakhand – RK Singh

265. Praveen Kumar Srivastava became the interim Central Vigilance Commissioner.

266. Coal Minister inaugurates Rs 300 crore Angul-Balram rail line in Odisha.

267. REC Ltd organizes 'Electricity Festival' in Assam as part of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

268. Tamil Nadu Launched Project Nilgiri Tahr with Rs 25 Crore Budget.

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