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By CivilsTap Himachal

For HPAS & other Competitive Exam in Himachal Pradesh

Prelims

NEWS

1.POLITY

1.1   UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

❖ The **five-member committee** constituted for **drafting the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand** handed over its final report to the State's Chief Minister.

ABOUT THE RECOMMENDATIONS

❖ The **UCC draft**, spanning around **750 pages** and spread across **four volumes**, is **written in 'full' Hindi and does not have a single word of 'Urdu' or any other language.**
❖ The committee has **recommended strict punishment** for **triple talaq and nikahhalala practices**, pertaining to Muslim personal laws and also **suggested keeping the tribal community out of the UCC ambit.**
  ✓ The **tribal population of Uttarakhand constitutes around 2.9 per cent of the total population.**
❖ The final UCC draft has **focused on all sections, be it gender equality or elimination of arbitrariness and discrimination, from uniform laws on property rights to adoption rules.**
❖ The Bill has recommended that **no tampering should be done with the Schedule Tribes (STs), transgender rights, religious matters, and traditions.**
❖ The draft has **also advised ban on polygamy and polyandry.**
❖ It has recommended to **make live-in relationships legal** but **ensure mandatory registration of such couples.**
❖ It also recommended the **minimum age of marriage for women to be 21 years** and **women will have equal rights in inheritance as men**.
❖ The committee has **also recommended for uniform use of the existing laws** under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act** to ensure same adoption laws for all communities.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

❖ The Uttarakhand government in June 2022 had **formed a committee to examine ways** for the **implementation of UCC**.
❖ The committee, headed by **retired Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai**, also has **retired Justice Pramod Kohli**, social worker **Manu Gaur** (heading Taxpayers Association of Bharat), retired IAS officer **Shatrughan Singh and Vice Chancellor of Doon University Surekha Dangwal as members.**
❖ The committee had **convened 72 meetings to interact with about 10,000 people in Uttarakhand** and those from the State living outside, to finally prepare the report.
❖ The **State has given four extensions to this committee in the span of around 20 months.**

1.2   ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION (ANRF) ACT

❖ The **provisions of the Anusandhan Research Foundation (ANRF) Act** have been **brought into force on February 5, 2024** in line with the **commitment of the Government to boost Research and Innovation as the fulcrum of growth and development of the country.**
  ✓ ANRF Act **repealed Science and Engineering Research Board Act, 2008.**
❖ It establishes the **ANRF** , that will **seed, grow and promote Research and Development (R&D)** and **foster a culture of research and innovation** throughout India's **universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.**
❖ It is **operationalized by Department of Science and Technology.**
❖ The Governing Board of ANRF is **headed by Prime Minister of India.**

❖ The Government has appointed **Prof. Abhay Karandikar, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology (DST)** as the **interim Chief Executive Officer of ANRF.**

❖ ANRF is a **government's strong move** to provide a **high-level strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the fields of natural sciences** including **mathematical sciences, engineering and technology, environmental and earth sciences, health and agriculture** and have **long-term effect, long term outcomes for each citizen.**

1.3 UTTARAKHAND GOVERNMENT FORMS 9-MEMBER PANEL TO DRAFT UCC RULES

❖ The Uttarakhand government has constituted a **nine-member committee** to prepare the draft rules for the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC).**

❖ The committee will be headed by retired IAS officer **Shatrughan Singh**. Mr. Singh was also in the five-member committee formed by the State government in May 2022, to prepare a draft for the UCC.

❖ Additional Secretary (Justice) Uttarakhand Sudhir Singh, Inspector General of Police Training Barinderjit Singh, Doon University Vice-Chancellor Surekha Dangwal and social worker Manu Gaur are among the members of the committee set up to prepare UCC rules. Ms. Dangwal and Mr. Gaur too were part of the UCC draft committee.

1.4 ASHAS

❖ The **Central government** has decided to include **Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)** in the **Ayushman Bharat free public health cover scheme**.

RESPONSE:

❖ The Health Ministry has received Aadhaar details of:
  ✓ 23 lakh Anganwadi workers and helpers.
  ✓ Over **three lakh ASHA** workers from various States.

SIGNIFICANCE:

❖ This initiative aims to extend health cover benefits to ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and helpers under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Key Component: Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)

Coverage:

❖ Provides health coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per year for poor and vulnerable families.

ASHA PROGRAM SIGNIFICANCE:

❖ ASHA program noted as a key component of community processes.

❖ Recognized for continuous evolution over the last decade and a half.

❖ Functions as a facilitator, mobilizer, and provider of community-level care.

❖ Acknowledged as the cornerstone of the National Health Mission.

ASHA AND COMMUNITY FIGURES:

❖ Over 13 lakh Anganwadi workers and over 10 lakh Anganwadi helpers in the country as of December 31, 2023.

❖ India has 9.83 lakh ASHAs in position against the target of 10.35 lakh across 35 States and UTs.

AYUSHMAN BHARAT SCHEME FIGURES:

❖ Currently, 55 crore individuals, corresponding to 12 crore families, are covered under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

❖ Many States/UTs implementing AB-PMJAY have further expanded the beneficiary base at their own cost.

1.5	DECLINE IN AVERAGE ANNUAL SITTING OF MPS

❖ **The 17th Lok Sabha, which concluded in February 2024, witnessed a notable decline in its average annual sitting days to 55 according to a statistical study by the non-profit PRS Legislative Research.**

AVERAGE ANNUAL SITTING DAYS:

❖ **First Lok Sabha (With Jawaharlal Nehru as Leader):**
  ✓ Average: 135 days per year.
❖ **17th Lok Sabha (Concluded in February 2024):**
  ✓ Average: 55 days per year.
  ✓ Total sittings: 274.
❖ **Factors Influencing Decrease:**
  ✓ **Pandemic Impact:** Pandemic mentioned as one explanation for the decrease in sitting days.
❖ **Session Adjournments:**
  ✓ 11 out of 15 sessions during the 17th Lok Sabha were adjourned early.
  ✓ Resulted in the cancellation of 40 scheduled sittings.
❖ **Year-wise Sitting Days:**
  ✓ **Lowest Sitting Days:** Parliament sat for the lowest number of days in 2020 - a total of 33 days.
❖ **Constitutional Position:**
  ✓ **Deputy Speaker** Absence**:**
    ➢ 17th Lok Sabha operated without a Deputy Speaker.
    ➢ Constitutionally mandated position as per Article 93

1.6	SC RULES AGAINST ELECTORAL BOND SCHEME

❖ A **five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court unanimously** struck down the **Centre's electoral bond scheme which facilitates anonymous political donations for being unconstitutional**.
  ✓ It underscored that the **scheme violates the right to information under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution.**
  ✓ The court **also struck down the amendments made to the Income Tax Act** and the **Representation of People Act which enabled such anonymous political contributions.**
  ✓ **Amendments to Companies Act 2013 provision** allowing unlimited corporate contributions were declared **arbitrary and violative of Article 14.**

DETAILS

1. **Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 restricted corporate donations**, imposing **a cap (7.5% of the average profits of the preceding three fiscal years) and disclosure requirements.**
   a. The Finance Act, 2017 Intervention **removed the cap and disclosure obligations for corporate donations.**
2. **Section 29C of Representation of the People Act, 1951** mandated **political parties to disclose donations exceeding Rs 20,000**, balancing the right to information with donor privacy.
   a. Finance Act, 2017 introduced **an exception exempting donations via Electoral Bonds from disclosure requirements.**

3. **Section 13A(b) of Income-tax Act, 1961** mandated the **maintenance of records for contributions above Rs 20,000.**
   a. **Finance Act, 2017 exempted Electoral Bond contributions from record-keeping requirements.**

DIRECTIONS ISSUED

❖ The **SBI has been ordered to immediately stop the issuance of any further electoral bonds** and furnish **details of such bonds purchased by political parties since April 12, 2019, to the ECI by March 6.**

❖ Such details **must include the date of purchase of each bond, the name of the purchaser of the bond and the denomination of the bond purchased.**

❖ The **ECI shall subsequently publish all such information shared by the SBI on its official website by 13 March 2024.**

❖ **Electoral bonds** that are **within the validity period of fifteen days but have not yet been encashed** by the political party **will have to be returned following which the issuing bank will refund the amount to the purchaser's account.**

2.ECONOMY

2.1   CRUDE OIL BENCHMARKS

❖ Oil prices rose recently following a **decision by OPEC+** to keep its **oil output policy unchanged.**

GLOBAL CRUDE OIL BENCHMARKS

❖ There are **two global crude oil benchmarks for crude oil pricing**-
   ✓ **Brent crude**
      ➢ **Brent Crude** is the **benchmark** used for the **oil market in Europe, Africa, and Middle East**, originating from **oil fields in the North Sea.**
      ➢ Roughly **two-thirds of all crude contracts around the world reference Brent Crude**, making it the **most widely used marker of all.**
   ✓ **West Texas Intermediate (WTI)**
      ➢ WTI is the **benchmark for the US oil market** and is **sourced from US oil fields.**

ALSO DUBAI/OMAN

❖ This **Middle Eastern crude** is a useful **reference for oil of a slightly lower grade than WTI or Brent**.

❖ A "basket" product consisting of **crude from Dubai, Oman or Abu Dhabi**, it's **somewhat heavier and has higher sulfur content**, putting it in the "sour" category.

❖ It is **influential in the Asian market.**

2.2   COAL MINES PROVIDENT FUND ORGANIZATION

❖ Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs launched a **web portal of CMPFO** namely **C- CARES.**

❖ It has been **developed and designed** by the **Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC),** an **R&D organization under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.**

ABOUT CMPFO

❖ **Coal Mines Provident Fund Organization (CMPFO)** is an **autonomous organization** under the **aegis of Ministry of Coal.**

- ❖ Established in **1948,** for **administering provident fund** and **pension schemes** for the **purpose of providing social security to the coal sector workers**.
- ❖ The **organization** is **presently rendering services to about 3.3 lakh PF subscribers** and **6.1 lakh pensioners of coal sector.**
- ❖ At present, **CMPFO process settlement claims** of provident fund subscribers and pensioners **manually**.
- ❖ With the **launch of the portal**, **settlement of PF and pension claims will now be processed and settled online.**
- ❖ It will **facilitate faster processing**, **transparency** in operations, **better record management** and **monitoring**.
- ❖ It will **also instill confidence in the subscribers and pensioners.**

2.3	1ST EUROPEAN COUNTRY TO USE UPI

- ❖ **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)** in partnership with **Lyra**, a **French leader in securing e-commerce and proximity payments**, has announced the **acceptance of Unified Payments Interface (UPI) payment mechanism in France** starting with the **iconic Eiffel Tower.**
  - ✓ Indian tourists rank as the **second largest group of international visitors to the Eiffel Tower.**
- ❖ **UPI** can be **accepted internationally only** if the **payment operator in the home country** has an **arrangement with a similar payment operator in the overseas country**.
- ❖ France has become the **first European country to accept UPI.**

ABOUT NIPL

- ❖ **NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)** was incorporated on **April 3, 2020**, as a **wholly-owned subsidiary of National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).**
- ❖ As the international arm of NPCI, **NIPL is devoted for deployment of NPCI's indigenous, successful Real-Time Payment System** – **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** and **Card Scheme – RuPay**, outside of India.

2.4	INTERIM BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS SECTOR-WISE

1. HOUSING

- ❖ **Government will launch a scheme to help deserving sections of the middle class "living in rented houses, or slums, or chawls and unauthorized colonies" to buy or build their own houses.**
- ❖ **Rooftop solarization — one crore households will be enabled to obtain up to 300 units free electricity every month.**
- ❖ **PM Awas Yojana (Grameen)– Two crore more houses** will be taken up in the next five years to meet the requirement arising from increase in the number of families.

2. HEALTH

- ❖ **Vaccination** for girls in **age group of 9 to 14 years** for prevention of **cervical cancer**.
- ❖ Government plans to **set up more medical colleges by utilizing the existing hospital infrastructure under various departments.**
- ❖ Upgradation of anganwadi centres under **"Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0"** will be expedited.
- ❖ **U-WIN platform** for managing immunization and intensified efforts of Mission Indradhanush will be rolled out expeditiously.
- ❖ Extension of **healthcare cover under Ayushman Bharat scheme** to all ASHA workers, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers.

3. AGRICULTURE AND RELATED SECTORS

- ❖ Application of **Nano DAP on various crops will be expanded in all agro-climatic zones.**

- ❖ A strategy will be formulated to **achieve 'atmanirbharta' for oil seeds**.
- ❖ Focussed oil seeds: **mustard, groundnut, sesame, soybean, and sunflower.**
- ❖ A **comprehensive programme for supporting dairy farmers** will be formulated. The success of existing schemes such Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Livestock Mission, and Infrastructure Development Funds for dairy processing and animal husbandry will act as guiding light for such a programme.
- ❖ Implementation of **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**, according to the speech, will be stepped up to-
  - ✓ enhance aquaculture productivity from existing 3 to 5 tons per hectare,
  - ✓ double exports to ` 1 lakh crore and
  - ✓ generate 55 lakh employment opportunities in near future.
- ❖ **Five integrated aquaparks** will be setup.

4. WOMEN

- ❖ Eighty-three lakh SHGs with nine crore women are transforming rural socio-economic landscape with empowerment and self-reliance", said the Finance Minister.
- ❖ The government **aims to enhance the target for Lakhpati Didi from 2 crore to 3 crore.**

5. Youth And Technology

- ❖ For the tech savvy youth — **A corpus of rupees one lakh crore** will be **established with fifty-year interest free loan.** "The corpus will provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors and low or nil interest rates", said the Finance Minister.
- ❖ A new scheme will be launched for **strengthening deep-tech technologies for defence purposes and expediting 'atmanirbharta'.**

6. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ The outlay for the **next year is being increased by 11.1 per cent to eleven lakh, eleven thousand, one hundred and eleven crore rupees.** This would be 3.4 per cent of the GDP.
- ❖ Three major economic railway corridor programmes will be implemented. These are:
  - ✓ **energy, mineral and cement corridors,**
  - ✓ **port connectivity corridors, and**
  - ✓ **high traffic density corridors.**
  - ✓ The projects have been **identified under the PM Gati Shakti for enabling multi-modal connectivity.**
- ❖ Expansion of **Metro and NaMO Bharat** will be supported in large cities focusing on transit-oriented development.

7. ENVIRONMENT AND GREEN ENERGY

- ❖ **Viability gap funding** will be provided for harnessing **offshore wind energy potential**.
- ❖ **Coal gasification and liquefaction capacity of 100 MT will be set up by 2030.**
- ❖ **Financial assistance** will be provided for procurement of **biomass aggregation machinery**.
- ❖ **Phased mandatory blending of compressed biogas (CBG)** in compressed natural gas (CNG) for transport and piped natural gas (PNG) for domestic purposes will be mandated.
- ❖ **Electric Vehicle Ecosystem**– Support to manufacturing and charging infrastructure.
- ❖ **Greater adoption of e-buses for public transport networks** will be encouraged through payment security mechanism.
- ❖ For promoting green growth, a **new scheme of bio-manufacturing and bio-foundry will be launched**.
- ❖ **Blue Economy 2.0**— A scheme for **restoration and adaptation measures, and coastal aquaculture and mariculture with integrated and multi-sectoral approach will be launched.**

8. TOURISM

- ❖ States will be **encouraged to take up comprehensive development** of iconic tourist centres, branding and marketing them at global scale.

- ❖ A framework for rating of the **centers based on quality of facilities and services will be established.**
- ❖ **Long-term interest free loans** will be provided to **States for financing such development** on matching basis.
- ❖ **For domestic tourism**— projects for **port connectivity, tourism infrastructure, and amenities will be taken up on our islands. It will also include Lakshadweep.**

9. FDI

- ❖ The **FDI inflow during 2014-23 was USD 596 billion marking a golden era**.
- ❖ For encouraging sustained foreign investment– **Negotiating bilateral investment treaties with the foreign partners, in the spirit of 'first develop India'.**

10. REFORMS IN THE STATES

- ❖ A provision of **seventy-five thousand crore rupees as fifty-year interest free loan is proposed this year to support reforms by the State Governments.**

11. REVISED ESTIMATES 2023-24

- ❖ The Revised Estimate of the total receipts other than borrowings is Rs. 27.56 lakh crore, of which the tax receipts are 23.24 lakh crore.
- ❖ The Revised Estimate of the total expenditure is Rs. 44.90 lakh crore.
- ❖ The revenue receipts at Rs. 30.03 lakh crore are expected to be higher than the Budget Estimate.
- ❖ The Revised Estimate of the fiscal deficit is 5.8 per cent of GDP

12. BUDGET ESTIMATES 2024-25

- THE fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP, adhering to that path.
- The scheme of fifty-year interest free loan for capital expenditure to states will be continued this year with total outlay of Rs. 1.3 lakh crore.
- The total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs. 30.80 and 47.66 lakh crore respectively.
- The tax receipts are estimated at Rs. 26.02 lakh crore.

13. DIRECT TAXES

- Over the last ten years, the direct tax collections have more than trebled and the return filers swelled to 2.4 times.
- Under the new tax scheme, there is now no tax liability for tax payers with income up to Rs. 7 lakh, up from Rs. 2.2 lakh in the financial year 2013-14.
- The threshold for presumptive taxation for retail businesses was increased from Rs. 2 crore to Rs. 3 crore.
- The threshold for professionals eligible for presumptive taxation was increased from Rs. 50 lakh to Rs. 75 Lakh.
- Corporate tax rate was decreased from 30 per cent to 22 per cent for existing domestic companies and to 15 per cent for certain new manufacturing companies.
- The age-old jurisdiction-brd assessment system was transformed with the introduction of Faceless Assessment and Appeal, thereby imparting greater efficiency, transparency and accountability.
- Introduction of updated income tax returns, a new Form 26AS and prefilling of tax returns have made filing of tax returns simpler and easier.
- Average processing time of returns has been reduced from 93 days in the year 2013-14 to a mere ten days this year, thereby making refunds faster.

14. INDIRECT TAXES

- ❖ GST has reduced the compliance burden on trade and industry.
- ❖ Tax base of GST more than doubled.
- ❖ The average monthly gross GST collection has almost doubled to Rs. 1.66 lakh crore.
- ❖ States' SGST revenue, including compensation released to states, in the post-GST period of 2017-18 to 2022-23, has achieved a buoyancy of 1.22.

❖ Number of steps were taken in Customs to facilitate international trade.

2.5 MIO OKA IS ADBS INDIA HEAD

❖ The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** which **started operations in India in 1986** has appointed **Japanese national Mio Oka** as **its new Country Director for India.**

ABOUT ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

❖ ADB assists its **members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** to promote social and economic development.

❖ ADB **maximizes the development impact of its assistance** by **facilitating policy dialogues, providing advisory services, and mobilizing financial resources** through co-financing operations that **tap official, commercial, and export credit sources.**

❖ Established **on 19 December 1966**, with **31 members**

❖ **Takeshi Watanabe** was **ADB's first President.**

❖ From **31 members at its establishment in 1966**, ADB has grown to **encompass 68 members**—of which **49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.**

❖ **Headquarters- Manila, Philippines.**

❖ **ADB's five largest shareholders** are **Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%).**

2.6 ROZGAR MELAS

❖ PM distributed more than **1 lakh appointment letters** to **newly inducted recruits** in **Government departments** and **organisations** under **Rozgar Mela.**

ROZGAR MELA:

❖ To give **impetus** to the **employment initiatives** in the country, **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** under the aegis of **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)**, Govt. of India has been organizing **Rozgar Melas** across the nation for providing **suitable job opportunities** in **private sector** to the **unemployed youth**.

❖ A **NSDC Rozgar Mela is a 1/2-day event** where several **employers** and **job seekers** come together for the purpose of **applying** and **interviewing** for jobs.

❖ These Rozgar Melas generally cater to the **youth** in the **age group** of **18-35 Years** with an academic qualification covering **8th/10th/12th Pass, ITI, Diploma, Graduates** etc. including the **trained** and **certified candidates** conforming to **National Skills Qualifications Framework**.

❖ With initiatives like **Rozgar Melas**, the Government is ensuring a **parallel growth** in the **private/ industrial sector**. There is no end to the potential for **industry to flourish** across the **States** with **big corporates** partnering the government and pledging to invest.

❖ **Rozgar Mela** is expected to leverage further **employment generation** and provide **gainful opportunities** to the **Youth** for their **empowerment** and **direct participation** in **National Development**.

ROZGAR MELA: WHY NOT A SOLUTION TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT CRISIS ?

❖ **No Adequate Jobs:** India needs to create anywhere between 20 million to 200 million new jobs but in comparison these Melas are providing negligible jobs.

❖ **No Job Creation:** These are only pre-existing vacancies, not new job creation.

2.7 KAJI NEMU IS ASSAM'S STATE FRUIT

- ❖ The Assam government has declared **'Kaji Nemu' (citrus lemon)** as the **state fruit**.
- ❖ 'Kaji Nemu' is **known for its unique aroma and health benefits**
- ❖ The fruit had **received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2016** and **has been commercially grown in the state**, along with being exported.
- ❖ It helps in **boosting immunity** and **bringing a unique flavour to food**.

2.8   DATA EXCLUSIVITY

- ❖ India has **rejected the demand** of the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA)** for **'data exclusivity' provisions in the free trade agreement that both** sides are negotiating.
- ❖ **India and EFTA** have been **negotiating the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement since January 2008.**

WHAT IS DATA EXCLUSIVITY?

- ❖ Data Exclusivity is a **form of intellectual property protection** that **applies specifically to data from pharmaceutical clinical trials**.
- ❖ It means that **generic drug manufacturer cannot apply for regulatory approval** for **equivalent drugs** relying on the **originator's data for a specified number of years**.
- ❖ It is **not mandatory under Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement (WTO) and Indian laws do not provide for it.**
- ❖ Impact
  - ✓ **Data exclusivity provisions** will **bar generic drug producers from using data of preclinical tests** and **clinical trials of former patent holders.**
  - ✓ If **generic medicine makers wish to introduce their version** of an **off-patent drug** then they will have to **either generate their own clinical data or wait for the exclusivity period to end.**

ABOUT EFTA

- ❖ It is an intergovernmental organisation **established in 1960 by the Stockholm Convention.**
- ❖ EFTA's members — **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland — are countries that have opted out of the European Union.**
- ❖ The **members** of this organization **are all open, competitive economies committed to the progressive liberalisation of trade in the multinational arena as well as in free trade agreements.**
- ❖ In contrast to the European Union (EU), **it is not a customs union**.

2.9   SECURITY PRINTING AND MINTING CORPORATION OF INDIA LIMITED

- ❖ The **Finance Minister** recently presided over the **19th Foundation Day celebrations** of the **Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited (SPMCIL).**

ABOUT SPMCIL

- ❖ **Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Limited is a Miniratna Category–I, Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE).**
- ❖ **It is under the administrative control of Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.**
- ❖ SPMCIL is engaged in the manufacture**/ production of Currency and Bank Notes, Security Paper, Non-Judicial Stamp Papers, Postal Stamps & Stationery, Travel Documents viz. Passport and Visa, Security certificates, Cheques, Bonds, Warrant, Special Certificates with security features, Security Inks, Circulation & Commemorative Coins, Medallions, Refining of Gold & Silver, and Assay of Precious Metals.**

2.10	WORLD'S FIRST GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT AT AIRPORT

- ❖ In a strategic move to bolster its pathbreaking green energy initiatives, **Cochin International Airport Ltd (CIAL)** has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) with the **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL)** for setting up **a green hydrogen plant in the premises of Cochin Airport**.
- ❖ This collaborative effort will result in the **world's first green hydrogen plant and fueling station located within an airport setting.**
  - ✓ **CIAL** is already the **world's first airport fully solar-powered airport.**
- ❖ **Green hydrogen**, produced **from water using renewable energy sources**, is recognized as a future fuel and aligns with zero-carbon energy strategies.

2.11	GLOBAL PULSES CONFERENCE

- ❖ The **Global Pulses Conference**, an annual **meeting of pulses producers, processors and traders**, was recently held in **New Delhi.**
- ❖ It suggested that **India augment production of pulses to meet the nutritional requirements.**
- ❖ India is **represented by India Pulses and Grains Association in Global Pulse Confederation**
- ❖ The **two-day conference is jointly organised** by the **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED)** and the **Global Pulse Confederation (GPC).**

ABOUT PULSES

- ❖ Pulses, also known as **grain legumes**, are a **group of 12 crops** that includes **dry beans, dry peas, chickpeas, and lentils**.
- ❖ They are **high in protein, fibre, and various vitamins, provide amino acids, and are hearty crops.**
- ❖ **They also contribute to soil quality by fixing nitrogen in the soil.**
- ❖ **India is the world's largest producer and consumer of pulses.**
- ❖ **2016 was declared as the International Year of Pulses.**

ABOUT GPC

- ❖ The **Global Pulse Confederation** (GPC, formerly known as CICILS IPTIC) represents **all segments of the pulse industry value chain from growers, researchers, logistics suppliers, traders, exporters and importers to government bodies, multilateral organizations, processors, canners and consumers**.
- ❖ Its **membership includes 24 national associations** and **over 500 private sector members**.
- ❖ GPC is **based in Dubai** and **licensed by the Dubai Multi Commodity Centre (DMCC).**

2.12	FINANCIAL STABILITY AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (FSDC)

- ❖ **Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** chaired the **28th Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) in New Delhi** recently.

ABOUT FSDC

- ❖ It was **set up by the Government as the apex-level forum in 2010.**
- ❖ It is **not a statutory body**. **No funds are separately allocated to it** for undertaking its activities.
- ❖ **Composition of FSDC-**
  - ✓ It is **chaired by the Union Finance Minister of India.**
  - ✓ Its **members** include the **heads of financial sector Regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, IRDA & FMC) Finance Secretary** and/or **Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser.**
  - ✓ The Council **can invite experts to its meeting if required.**

❖ The **Council deals**, inter-alia, with **issues relating to financial stability, financial sector development, and inter–regulatory coordination, etc.**

2.13   50 TUNNEL

❖ The **country's longest transportation tunnel** namely **'T-50' on Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL)** was dedicated by Prime Minister recently
❖ T-50 is **one of the most challenging tunnels on the Banihal-Khari-Sumber-Sangadal section of USBRL.**
❖ The tunnel is **12.77 km long.**
❖ At **every 375 meters**, a **connecting passage between the escape tunnel and T-50 has been made** so that the **passengers can be brought to the escape tunnel and then, carried to their desired destinations in vehicles.**
❖ Also the **first electrified trains of the Kashmir valley were flagged off.**
❖ **Two electrified trains simultaneously**, one from **Srinagar to Sangaldan in the down direction** and the other from **Sangaldan to Srinagar in the up direction** started service.

2.14   CENTRAL EXCISE DAY- FEBRUARY 24TH

❖ **Central Excise Day** is celebrated in India on **24th February every year.**
❖ This day is **dedicated to the establishment of the Central Excise and Salt Act of 1944**.
❖ This act was **a combination of 11 acts** regarding **excise duties**, and it was **passed to make changes in the law related to salt and central duties.**
❖ The day **was first observed in 1944**, and it is **celebrated to commemorate the contributions of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) to the country.**
❖ In **1966**, the **Central Excise and Salt Act** underwent a **name change to "The Central Excise Act 1944,"** specifying **values and rates of excise duties in Schedule 1 and 2 of the act.**

ABOUT CBIC

❖ The **Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBIC)** is **responsible for administering indirect taxes in India**.
❖ The CBIC was **established in the year 1944 to oversee the levy of central excise duties on goods** and **services produced or manufactured in India**.
❖ Central Board of Excise and Customs was **renamed the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs in 2018.**
❖ The **Central Board of Indirect Taxes**, under the **Ministry of Finance**, includes the **Department of Revenue**.
   ✓ This board **significantly contributes to formulating laws and policies** related to **Customs, Central Goods & Services Tax, Central Excise duties, IGST, and prevention of smuggling.**

2.15   SUDARSHAN SETU BRIDGE

❖ The Prime Minister inaugurated the **Sudarshan Setu**, a **four-lane cable-stayed bridge connecting Okha to Beyt Dwarka island in Gujarat.**
❖ **It is India's longest cable-stayed bridge of length around 2.32 km.**
❖ The **bridge spans 2.32 kilometres**, with **a central double-span cable-stayed portion covering 900 metres**, accompanied by a **2.45-kilometre-long approach road.**
❖ The bridge **aims to simplify access for devotees** commuting between Okha and Bet Dwarka.
❖ Before **its construction**, the **pilgrims had to rely on boat transport to reach the Dwarkadhish Temple in Beyt, Dwarka.**
❖ The **four-lane 27.20-metre wide bridge** has **2.50 metre wide footpaths on each side.**

❖ The bridge boasts a unique design, featuring a **footpath adorned with verses from Srimad Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on both sides.**

2.16   UAE OUT OF FATF GREY LIST

❖ The **United Arab Emirates' has been removed from** the **grey list**, nearly **two years after its inclusion by the Financial Action Task Force**

❖ It will **ease the road for the country's investors seeking to acquire significant influence in Indian NBFCs.**

ABOUT FATF

❖ The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the **global money laundering and terrorist financing watchdog**.

❖ It was **set up in 1989** out of a **G-7 meeting of developed nations in Paris.**

❖ The **Secretariat** is located at the **OECD Headquarters** in **Paris.**

❖ It **sets international standards** that **aim** to **prevent these illegal activities and the harm they cause to society.**

❖ It leads **global action to tackle money laundering, terrorist and proliferation financing.**

❖ It **researches how money is laundered and terrorism is funded**, **promotes global standards** to mitigate the risks, and **assesses whether countries are taking effective action.**

❖ **About Lists**
  ✓ **Black List-High-Risk Jurisdictions subject to a Call for Action**
    ➢ It identifies **countries or jurisdictions with serious strategic deficiencies to counter money laundering**, **terrorist financing, and financing of proliferation**.
    ➢ Three nations are in black list-
      ▪ **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**
      ▪ **Iran**
      ▪ **Myanmar**
  ✓ **Grey List**
    ➢ It **identifies countries** that are **actively working with the FATF** to **address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing.**
    ➢ When the FATF places a jurisdiction under increased monitoring, **it means the country has committed to resolve swiftly the identified strategic deficiencies within agreed timeframes and is subject to increased monitoring.**

2.17   BHARAT TEX 2024

❖ Prime Minister **inaugurated Bharat Tex 2024**, one of the **largest-ever global textile events held in India, at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi.**

❖ Bharat Tex 2024 serves as a **platform to showcase** the **iconic handloom and handicraft traditions of various states.**

❖ **Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra** have been **designated as the 'Partner States' for the event.**

❖ **Gujarat, Telangana, and Madhya Pradesh have joined as 'Supporting Partner States**'.

2.18   INDIA'S LARGEST BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEM

❖ The **Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited** (SECI), under the **aegis of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**, has **successfully commissioned India's largest Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), which stores energy using solar energy.**

- The **40 megawatts (MW) / 120MWh BESS** with a **solar photovoltaic (PV) plant** which has an **installed capacity of 152.325 megawatt hour (MWh)** and **dispatchable capacity of 100MW AC (155.02 MW peak DC)** is **located in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh**.
- The **energy would be purchased by the state of Chhattisgarh**, thus contributing to meeting the peak energy demand of the state **using green electrons and also towards its renewable purchase obligations**.
- The project **utilizes battery storage for storing solar energy when the sun is shining** and **using it later during hours of peak demand in the evening.**

2.19   INVESTOR INFORMATION AND ANALYTICS PLATFORM'

- The **'Investor Information and Analytics Platform'** was launched recently.
- This platform **will act as a one-stop shop for startups** to **seamlessly access venture capitalists (VCs) and investors networks, government schemes and several other components** of the **startup landscape** for all stakeholders.
- This platform has **been developed** by the **researchers** at the **Centre for Research on Start-ups and Risk Financing (CREST) of IIT Madras.**
- An **important feature** of this unique platform is **"StartupGPT"** which is **an AI-based conversational platform** whose **function is to help ease information access for those who are navigating exhaustive data**.

3. GEOGRAPHY

3.1   ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

- The state of **California in USA** has been **battered by incessant rains** caused by the **atmospheric river storms.**

ABOUT ATMOSPHERIC RIVERS

- Atmospheric Rivers indicate **long narrow, elongated corridors of concentrated moisture transport** associated with **extratropical cyclones**.
- These are **largest transport mechanisms of freshwater on Earth**.
- Strong landfall results in **huge amounts of precipitation in short periods of time** leading to **flooding and mudslides.**
- The term **"Pineapple Express"** is sometimes used to **refer to atmospheric rivers that originate near Hawaii** and **travel eastwards towards the west coast of North America.**
- **Characteristics of Atmospheric Rivers**
    - ✓ Typically formed in **the tropics or subtropics** where **warm ocean surfaces evaporate water into the air.**
    - ✓ Develop **within the low-level jet stream, a fast-flowing, narrow air current.**
    - ✓ The structure of an AR is like **a narrow ribbon or corridor of moisture**, often **extending from the equator to higher latitudes.**
    - ✓ C**an transport vast amounts of water vapor**

3.2   CHAR AREAS

- **Assam CM** has said that his government would undertake **a mission to reclaim the 'chars' — sandbars or river 'islands'** — from encroachers to safeguard the **"ecological integrity" of the Brahmaputra Valley.**
- These are **locally known as "Char/ Chapori"** and **cover about 3.60 lakhs hectares of land.**

- ❖ They are subjected to **erosion on their upstream** and **deposition on the downstream**, due to which they migrate downstream.
- ❖ There are **more than 3,500 chars on a network of rivers dominated by the Brahmaputra in Assam**.
- ❖ **Most of these chars**, allegedly **without proper regulation**, are **inhabited and cultivated by Bengali Muslims, often viewed as "illegal immigrants" or "Bangladeshi".**
- ❖ **Initiative**
  - ✓ **Mission Basundhara 4.0** will be started to **reclaim land in the char areas.**
  - ✓ Under **Mission Basundhara 4.0**, **chars of permanent nature would be identified** for reclamation toward **limiting land acquisition and promoting sustainable land management practices**.

3.3   RIP TIDES OR RIP CURRENTS

- ❖ **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** and **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** have embarked on a **project** to **continuously monitor and issue operational forecast alerts of rip currents**.
- ❖ They intend to do this **through a coastal video surveillance system**, which will **also provide information on complex coastal and nearshore processes.**
- ❖ A preliminary research study for rip tides was done at **RK beach in Visakhapatnam, which** is known for the **highest recorded number of drownings.**

ABOUT RIP TIDES

- ❖ A **rip current**, sometimes incorrectly called a rip tide, is **a localized current that flows away** from **the shoreline** toward the **ocean**, **perpendicular or at an acute angle to the shoreline**.
- ❖ It **usually breaks up not far from shore** and is **generally not more than 25 meters (80 feet) wide.**
- ❖ Rip currents typically **reach speeds of 1 to 2 feet per second.**
  - ✓ However, **some rip currents have been measured at 8 feet per second.**
- ❖ If **wave activity is slight**, several **low rip currents can form, in various sizes and velocities**.
  - ✓ But **in heavier wave action, fewer, more concentrated rip currents can form.**
- ❖ **Rip currents** are one of the **most well-known coastal hazards on beaches around the world**.
- ❖ A rip current **cannot** pull a **person down and hold him/her under the water.**
- ❖ It **simply carries floating objects, including people**, **out to just beyond the zone of the breaking waves.**
- ❖ A person **caught in a rip can be swept away from shore very quickly**.
- ❖ The **best way to escape a rip current is by swimming parallel to the shore** instead of towards it, since **most rip currents are less than 80 feet wide.**

4.ART AND CULTURE

4.1   SHUMANG LEELA

❖ The **enduring ethnic violence in Manipur** is not **only claiming lives but also jeopardizing the vibrant cultural fabric of the state**.
❖ For e.g. the artists of **Shumang Leela**, are **bearing the brunt** as they have been compelled to abandon their craft for **alternative means of survival.**

ABOUT SHUMANG LEELA

❖ It is the **traditional Meitei courtyard theatre.**
❖ **The tradition is believed to be descended from Lai Haraoba, a ritual of the Meitei community of Manipur.**
❖ Shumang Leela involves a **unique portrayal of male artists in female roles** and **vice versa.**
    ✓ **Often, the female roles are taken up by transgender actors.**
❖ It started as a **comic genre for royalty** and has **evolved into a powerful medium for mass education, entertainment, and relaxation.**
❖ Shumang Leela translates to **"courtyard performance".**
❖ It is **performed in an open courtyard** surrounded by **spectators on all four sides.**
❖ The plays serve as a **medium to spread awareness** among people of **social, political and economic issues**.
    ✓ Shumang Leelas may **also discuss moral values, unity and integrity.**
❖ **Shumang Leela is of two types:**
    ✓ **Nupa Shumang Leela, performed only by men, and**
    ✓ **Nupi Shumang Leela, performed only by women.**

4.2   KUDAVOLAI SYSTEM

❖ **Tamil Nadu's tableau** in the **Republic Day parade** on the Kartavya Path highlighted the **historical significance of the Kudavolai electoral system.**
❖ It **emerged during the 10ᵗʰ century Chola era** and marked **an early stride towards democracy.**
❖ Used to **elect representatives to run the village administration**, it **voiced the collective will of the people to the empire.**
❖ Selection process-
    ✓ People from **a specific ward** would **line up to cast their voting tickets, inscribed the names of their preferred candidates on palm leaves(volai)**, which were then placed in **a mud pot called the 'kudam.'**
    ✓ To **announce the elected leader, a small boy would pick a ticket from the pot**, and the **result would be declared loudly** for everyone to hear.
    ✓ The **process was considered sacred**.
❖ **Village Development Plan**
    ✓ **Community members** gathered at a place like-under a **banyan tree,** for the **preparation of the Village Development Plan**, reflecting the **communal nature of decision-making.**
    ✓ In this context, a **drum played a significant role** in **conveying crucial information** to the villagers.

4.3   MARTAND SUN TEMPLE

❖ Some members of a Hindu religious group forced their way into the **Martand Sun Temple.**

ABOUT MARTAND SUN TEMPLE

- The **8th century temple** is attributed to **Lalitaditya Muktapida of the Karkota dynasty**.
- The temple is **located near the city of Anantnag in the Kashmir Valley of Jammu and Kashmir.**
- It was **dedicated to Surya**, the **chief solar deity in Hinduism**.
  - ✓ Surya is **also known by the Sanskrit-language synonym Martand.**
- The **ruins of temple have been protected** by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, including during the decade of militancy in the 1990s, as a **"monument of national importance".**
- The Martand Temple has **three distinct chambers—the mandapa, the garbhagriha, and the antralaya**—probably the **only three-chambered temple in Kashmir**.
- The temple is **built in a unique Kashmiri style**, though it has **definite Gandhar influences.**
- **This courtyard was enclosed by a colonnade, which seem to have consisted of 84 pillars.**
- The **central shrine, or vimana**, stands tall at **around 60 feet**.
  - ✓ It features **intricate carvings and sculptures that depict various Hindu gods and goddesses.**
- It is **believed to be the oldest Sun temple** and was **said to have been destroyed** during the **reign of Sikandar Shah Miri, who ruled from 1389 to 1413.**

4.4   SURAJKUND MELA

- **Surajkund International Crafts Mela**, the **annual fair organised by Haryana Tourism in Faridabad** to promote the **tradition of Indian handloom and handicrafts** commenced recently.

ABOUT THE FAIR

- The **37th edition of this mela** began on **February 2 and will wrap up by February 18**.
- **Theme state** for this year - **'Gujarat'**
- **Partner Nation- Tanzania**
- This crafts mela is **known as India's most renowned events that celebrates art, culture, and heritage.**
- The event will **see participation of over 20 countries including South Asia, Africa and Europe.**
- **Surajkund** meaning the **'Lake of the Sun,'** holds immense historical significance.
  - ✓ The mela **got its name from Surajkund lake** that was **an ancient reservoir constructed by King Suraj Pal of the Tomar dynasty** in the **10th century.**

4.5   MAA KAMAKHYA TEMPLE

- PM recently laid the **foundation stone for Maa Kamakhya Divya Lok Pariyojana** under **PM's Development Initiative for North Eastern Region (PM-DevINE) scheme.**
- **The Kamakhya Corridor** appears to be **a replica of the Kashi-Vishwanath Temple Corridor in Varanasi.**
- With a **budget allocation of Rs 498 crore**, the project **aims to upgrade the infrastructure surrounding the revered Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati.**

ABOUT THE TEMPLE

- The Kamakhya temple is **one of the biggest Shakti peethas in the country**.
- Situated on the **Nilachal hills**, this temple is **an important pilgrimage centre for tantric worshippers and Hindus.**
- The **former temple** was **destroyed by Kala Pahar**, which was **later reconstructed in 1565 by Chilarai**, who was the **reigning king of the Koch dynasty**.
- This temple is **dedicated to different forms of Mother Shakti**, namely **Sundari, Tripura, Tara, Bhuvaneshvari, Bagalamukhi and Chinnamasta.**
- Dedicated to **different forms of Lord Shiva**, there are **five temples within the complex of Kamakhya temple**.
- In addition, the **temple complex also houses three temples of Lord Vishnu**, present **in the form of Kedara, Gadadhara and Pandunath.**

- ❖ The **architecture of the temple** is a **combination of Nagara style and Saracenic style.**
- ❖ **Ambubachi Mela** is **one of the major festivals** of this temple.
  - ✓ It is **held every year to commemorate the yearly menstruation of Goddess Kamakhya**.

4.6   BHARAT RANG MAHOTSAV

- ❖ The **Bharat Rang Mahotsav (BRM 2024)**, recognized as the **world's largest theatre festival**, was inaugurated at **National Centre for the Performing Arts (NCPA) in Mumbai recently.**
- ❖ The **Bharat Rang Mahotsav** is a **21-day cultural event** featuring **over 150 plays, workshops, and discussions**.
- ❖ The festival **will be held in 15 cities across India**, showcasing the **country's vibrant performing arts and culture.**
- ❖ This edition holds special significance as it **commemorates the 25th anniversary of the Bharat Rang Mahotsav**, bringing together theatre enthusiasts, artists, and scholars in a testament to cultural richness and artistic exchange.
- ❖ The festival's **overarching theme, 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, Vande Bharangam,'** underscores the **importance of global unity, emphasizing social harmony through the powerful medium of performing arts.**
- ❖ This year, National School of Drama(NSD) has introduced **Rang Haat**, an **innovative initiative aiming to create Asia's first global theatre market.**
  - ✓ It brings together **theatre artists, programmers, patrons, and supporters to discover hidden talent, showcase international projects, and foster creative and financial partnerships.**

ABOUT NSD

- ❖ The **National School of Drama** is one of the **foremost theatre training institutions in the world and the only one of its kind in India**.
- ❖ It was **set up by the Sangeet Natak Akademi** as **one of its constituent units in 1959**.
- ❖ In **1975**, it became **an independent entity and was registered as an autonomous organization under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860.**
- ❖ It is **fully financed by the Ministry of Culture.**
- ❖ The School has two performing wings – **the Repertory Company and Theatre-in-Education Company.**

4.7   KOKBOROK LANGUAGE

- ❖ In the face of severe **protests from different student organizations, civil societies and political parties**, the **Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE)** has allowed **both Roman and Bengali scripts** as the **script of choice for writing answer scripts of Kokborok paper in the board examinations.**

ABOUT KOKBOROK LANGUAGE

- ❖ Kokborok is the **lingua franca of most of Tripura's 19 tribal communities.**
- ❖ It is **an oral language** like **most indigenous languages of the region**.
- ❖ Kokborok was **first recognised as an official state language of Tripura in 1979.**
- ❖ It **belongs to Tibeto-Burman family.**
- ❖ Tripura's primary Opposition **TIPRA Motha party** has been **demanding the Roman script to be declared as the official script for the indigenous language** and **as one of the scripts allowed for board exams.**

4.8   AADI MAHOTSAV 2024

❖ President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated the **Aadi Mahotsav 2024** on 10ᵀᴴ February at **Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi.**

❖ It is **an annual National Tribal Festival**.

❖ The **event**, **organized by TRIFED** under the **aegis of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs**, will showcase the **rich diversity of India's tribal heritage till the 18th** of February.

❖ The festival **will feature over 300 stalls**, offering a **varied display of Tribal art, handicrafts, natural produce, and delectable tribal cuisine**.

❖ About **1000 artisans from across the country will also participate and showcase their performances.**

❖ A **separate Food Court showcasing Tribal cuisines from different parts of the country has also been set up**.

❖ The **entry to the festival is free of cost.**

ABOUT TRIFED

❖ TRIFED was **established in August 1987** under the **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 1984** as a **National level Cooperative body under the administrative control of the then Ministry of Welfare of India.**

❖ It is under the **purview of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.**

❖ Mandate- **bringing about socio-economic development of tribals of the country** by **institutionalizing the trade of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) & Surplus Agricultural Produce (SAP) collected/ cultivated by them.**

❖ Headquarters- New Delhi

❖ TRIFED's **MSP for MFP** & **VanDhan program** is in line with the **"The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Forest Rights Act, 2006)".**

4.9   SATGURU RAM SINGH

❖ **MoS released a commemorative coin of Rs 200/- and a currency coin of Rs 10/- on the occasion of bicentennial birth anniversary of Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji.**

SATGURU RAM SINGH JI :

❖ **Namdhari Guru Ram Singh** (3 February 1816 – 1885) was the **second guru (religious leader)** of the **Namdhari sect of Sikhism**.

❖ He was a **great philanthropist, a thinker, seer and a great social reformer**.

❖ **Satguru** was the **first to use Non- cooperation** and **swadeshi** as a tool to liberate the country from the **yokes of British rulers**. He preached and practiced among the people to be Indian, remain Indian and buy Indian.

❖ He asked the people **not to kill** the **girl child in infancy** and raised a movement against **Sati Pratha**, to provide **equal rights of education** to the **girl child**. He fixed the age of marriage at **18 and 20** for **girls** and **boys respectively** in **1857**.

❖ He was exiled to **Myanmar in 1872**.

4.10   HORI HABBA

❖ A 19-year-old youth died after being hit by a bull **during a bull race at Kalmane in Shikaripur taluk of Karnataka.**

❖ The race **was organised as part of Hori Habba**.

ABOUT HORI HABBA

❖ It is **also known as Hatti Habba.**

❖ It is **held during the harvest season.**

- ❖ It is **an ancient folk game** and **played on the lines of Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu** and **Kambala in Dakshina Kannada district.**
- ❖ In Hori Habba competitions, held mostly in rural parts, **trained and decorated draught cattle and bulls are forced into running through huge cheering crowds**.
- ❖ **Copra, cash and gifts are tied to these bovines** and **people try to catch them and snatch these items from them.**

4.11   HASTSAL MINAR

- ❖ The Hastsal Minar a medieval tower is located in the **Hastsal village in West Delhi's Uttam Nagar.**
- ❖ In **2018**, the **minar was accorded a Grade A status** that is given to **buildings of regional or local importance possessing special architectural or aesthetic merit, or cultural or historical significance.**
- ❖ It is **also called Mini Qutab Minar**. Locals call it **Hastsal Ki Laat and Kaushal Minar.**
- ❖ The **construction of the minar (or tower) was finished in 1634 during the reign of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan.**
- ❖ **The minar is 17 metres (five storeys) tall, standing on a square platform and with an octagonal body.**
- ❖ The **structure's domed arches** and **use of red Lakhori bricks is a clear marker of Mughal architecture.**

4.12   16TH CENTURY QUTUB SHAHI TOMBS GET A DIGITAL TWIN

- ❖ The **historic Qutub Shahi tombs in Hyderabad** now has **a digital twin**.
- ❖ **Hexagon**, a reality technology solutions company, **has used drone scanners to capture over 10.7 billion data points, representing the 10,000- square metre area.**

ABOUT DIGITAL TWIN

- ❖ A digital twin is **a digital model of an object, system or a process** that acts the **same as its real world counterpart**.
- ❖ It **helps companies and organisations to understand a physical object or a process well**.
- ❖ It **helps in testing a solution or a design in simulation** using the **digital twin**, helping the developers save time and energy.

ABOUT QUTB SHAHI TOMBS

- ❖ These are **erected in the memory of the departed kings of Golconda.**
- ❖ They are **located one kilometer north of Golconda Fort's called Banjara Darwaza.**
- ❖ Built by the Qutub Shahis, these tombs are **considered to be among the oldest historical monuments of Hyderabad.**
- ❖ They resemble **Persian, Pathan and Hindu architectural styles** that makes use of **grey granite, with stucco ornamentation** and **is a one-of-its-kind place in the world where the whole dynasty is buried at a single spot.**
- ❖ **Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah's tomb**
    - ✓ **He was the 5th king in Qutb Shahi dynasty.**
    - ✓ It is **one the grandest monuments in the Qutb Shah's tombs complex** at the **foothill of Golconda, Hyderabad.**
    - ✓ The majestic tomb **built in 1602**, is one of the **largest tombs reaching a total height of 60 m**.

4.13   SOMINSAI FESTIVAL

- ❖ The **Sominsai festival**, an **ancient tradition deeply rooted in Japanese culture**, has recently concluded its **final celebration after a 1000 year legacy.**
- ❖ At the heart of the festival was a display of fervor and tradition as **hundreds of men engaged in spirited wrestling matches** over **wooden talismans.**
- ❖ The secluded **Kokuseki Temple** in **northern Japan's Iwate region** has **decided to end the popular annual rite.**
    - ✓ **The temple opened in 729 AD.**
- ❖ From next year, **Kokuseki Temple will replace the festival with prayer ceremonies** and **other ways to continue its spiritual practices.**
- ❖ The Sominsai festival, regarded as **one of the strangest festivals in Japan**, is the **latest tradition impacted by the country's ageing population crisis** that has **hit rural communities hard.**

4.14   PARUVETA UTSAVAM

- ❖ **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)** is making efforts to get the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** to declare the **annual 'Paruveta' (mock hunting festival)**, celebrated at the **Sri Narasimha Swamy temple in Ahobilam** in **Andhra Pradesh**, as an **'intangible cultural heritage'.**
- ❖ The **matter of UNESCO's recognition** of the centuries-old festival **is currently being reviewed by Sangeet Natak Academy, the nodal agency.**

ABOUT THE FESTIVAL

- ❖ According to **folklore**, **Lord Vishnu**, upon his **incarnation as a man-lion (Narasimha)** in Ahobilam, **married Maha Lakshmi**, born as **a tribal girl Chenchulakshmi**.
- ❖ The **Kurnool District Gazetteers, published by Government Press in 1881**, records **several beliefs** of the Chenchu tribes, including their **reverence to Ahobila Narasimha as their brother-in-law** and **inviting Him home for Makara Sankranti.**
- ❖ This festival **stands as a symbol of communal harmony** where the **deity from the temple's sanctum sanctorum** is taken to the **32 Chenchu tribal hamlets around Ahobilam for 40 days.**
    - ✓ While **Paruveta is commonly observed in many temples during Vijayadasami or Sankranti**, it is **only here that it is conducted for a 'mandala' (forty days)**.
- ❖ Chenchus take **'Narasimha Deeksha' by wearing yellow robes** and **'Tulasi Mala'** and observe **celibacy during this period.**

ABOUT

- ❖ The **intangible cultural heritages** are those **traditions, festivals, and skills inherited from ancestors and passed on through generations**.

LIST OF 15 INDIAN ELEMENTS -

- ❖ The tradition of Vedic chanting
- ❖ Ramlila, the traditional performance of the Ramayana
- ❖ Kutiyattam, Sanskrit theatre
- ❖ Ramman, religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas, India
- ❖ Mudiyettu, ritual theatre and dance drama of Kerala
- ❖ Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan
- ❖ Chhau dance
- ❖ Buddhist chanting of Ladakh: recitation of sacred Buddhist texts in the trans-Himalayan Ladakh region, Jammu and Kashmir, India
- ❖ Sankirtana, ritual singing, drumming, and dancing of Manipur
- ❖ Traditional brass and copper craft of utensil making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab, India
- ❖ Yoga
- ❖ Nawrouz, Novruz
- ❖ Kumbh Mela

- ❖ Durga Puja of Kolkata
- ❖ Garba of Gujarat

4.15   11TH INTERNATIONAL PUPPET FESTIVAL

- ❖ The **11th International Puppet Festival was kicked off** at **Tagore Theatre in Chandigarh.**
- ❖ The **festival started with a mesmerizing performance by the Novosibirsk Regional Puppet Theatre from Russia**, presenting the **renowned puppet show "Petrushka."**
- ❖ The exhibition has featured **live demonstrations of puppet making, offering a deeper understanding of the intricate craft behind these captivating creations.**

4.16   SHRI KALKI DHAM TEMPLE

- ❖ Prime Minister laid the **foundation stone of the Shri Kalki Dham Temple in Sambhal district**, Uttar Pradesh.
- ❖ The **Shri Kalki Dham Temple is being constructed by the Shri Kalki Dham Nirman Trust.**
    - ✓ **It will also have 10 sanctums, each to house the deities of the 10 incarnations of Vishnu.**
- ❖ According to Garuda Puran, both **Ram and Krishna are avatars (reincarnations) of Vishnu, in the Treta and the Dwapar yugas.**
- ❖ Like **Lord Ram was the seventh incarnation of Vishnu in treta yug**, **Kalki would be the tenth and the final one to arrive, riding a horse at the end of the Kaliyuga.**
- ❖ **Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh** is significant because, according to Hindu beliefs, **Kalki, Vishnu's avatar of Kaliyuga, will appear here.**
- ❖ Hindu mythology says the **descent of Kalki will end the dark, degenerating and chaotic kaliyuga and usher the next, Satya Yuga.**
- ❖ Sambhal had **a centuries-old temple dedicated to Kalki**, which was allegedly **destroyed on the orders of Babur in the 16th century.**

4.17   MEDARAM JATARA FESTIVAL

- ❖ The **four-day tribal fair Sammakka Saralamma Jatara**, popularly known as **Medaram Jatara**, commenced recently in **Medaram, Mulugu district, Telangana.**
- ❖ **The biennial Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara**, is **said to be Asia's biggest tribal congregation.**
- ❖ The tribal fair is **devoted to commemorate and revere the brave tribal women Sammakka and Saralamma**, the **mother-daughter duo who waged a valiant fight against the mighty Kakatiya rulers** for **levying taxes on tribals during the 12th century**, according to local legend.
- ❖ **Medaram Jatara** is the **second-largest fair of India, after the Kumbh Mela**, celebrated by the **second-largest Tribal Community of Telangana- the Koya tribe for four days.**
- ❖ People offer **bangaram/gold (jaggery)** of a **quantity equal to their weight to the goddesses and take holy bath in Jampanna Vagu, a tributary to River Godavari.**
- ❖ It was **declared a State Festival in 1996.**

4.18   KITTUR REVOLT AND RANI CHENNAMMA

- ❖ Commemorating **200th year of the victory of Rani Chennamma over the British in the first Kittur War of 1824**, several social groups across the country, including **Act Now for Harmony and Democracy (ANHAD) and the National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW)**, organised a national campaign, *Naanoo Rani Chennamma* (I am Rani Chennamma too) on February 21.
    - ✓ The campaign **begun from Kittur (Karnataka).**
- ❖ Rani Chennamma was **among the first women to lead a revolt against British rule**.

ABOUT RANI CHENNAMMA AND KITTUR REVOLT

❖ Chenamma was **born on October 23, 1778, in Kagati**, a small village in present-day **Belagavi district in Karnataka.**

❖ At the age of 15, **she married Raja Mallasarja of Kittur, who ruled the province until 1816.**

❖ After Mallasarja's death in 1816, his **eldest son, Shivalingarudra Sarja, ascended the throne**.

❖ Before **his death in 1824, Shivalingarudra adopted a child, Shivalingappa, as the successor**.

❖ However, the **British East India Company under Lord Elphinstone (Lieutenant-Governor of Bombay) refused to recognise Shivalingappa as the successor of the kingdom under the 'doctrine of lapse'.**

  ✓ Under the doctrine, **any princely state without a natural heir would collapse and would be annexed by the Company.**

  ✓ It was the **first instance of imposition Doctrine of Lapse, even before officially articulated by Lord Dalhousie in 1848.**

❖ **John Thackery**, the British official at **Dharwad, launched an attack on Kittur in October 1824.**

❖ The **Kittur army**, under the **leadership of Rani Chennamma**, **retaliated and opened tremendous fire. Thackeray was killed and Rani Chennamma emerged victorious.**

  ✓ However, this victory was short-lived.

❖ **On December 3, 1824**, the **British army attacked the Kittur Fort and captured it**.

❖ **Rani Chennamma and her family were imprisoned and jailed at the fort in Bailhongal, where she died in 1829.**

4.19   SANT RAVIDAS JI

❖ PM Modi inaugurated **a newly installed statue of Sant Ravidas** on his **647th birth anniversary,** in his **parliamentary constituency Varanasi.**

❖ Ravidas Jayanti is **celebrated every year on the full moon day of Magh month** to commemorate the birth anniversary of Guru Ravidas.

❖ A great **Saint, philosopher, poet, and social reformer of the 15th century**, Guru Ravidas is well-known for his contributions to the Bhakti Movement.

ABOUT SANT RAVIDAS

❖ Guru Ravidas is **popularly known by different names like Raidas, Rohidas, and Ruhidas**.

❖ He was **born in 1377 CE in Seer Govardhanpur in Uttar Pradesh**.

  ✓ His **place of birth is now known as Shri Guru Ravidass Janam Asthan.**

❖ He is one of the **most famous personalities of the nirguna sampradaya (sant parampara)** and was **one of the prominent leaders of the North Indian Bhakti movement**.

❖ He also **became a symbol of opposition to untouchability in society** by the higher caste people for lower caste people.

❖ His **compositions have also been included in Guru Granth Sahib Ji.**

❖ He is considered as **spiritual Guru of Meera Bai.**

4.20   INTERNATIONAL GITA MAHOTSAV

❖ International Gita Mahotsav will be held **in Colombo**.

❖ The **purpose** of the event is **to popularise the timeless teachings of the Shrimad Bhagwad Gita.**

❖ The **three day International Gita Mahotsav** will **commence from 1st of March.**

❖ The festival will be **held at the Nelum Pokuna Theatre** premises with the **financial sponsorship of Haryana's Kurukshetra Development Board**.

❖ **Thousands of delegates** from across the world are expected to attend the event.

❖ The festival will feature **Gita yagna, Gita chanting, shobha yatra, seminar on several topics of contemporary interest and several competitions**.

4.21 ALGERIA INAUGURATES WORLD'S THIRD-LARGEST MOSQUE

- ❖ Algeria recently inaugurated the **"Africa's biggest mosque"** and the **third-biggest mosque in the world**, following over a **decade of construction and preparation.**
- ❖ The **Great Mosque of Algiers** is **situated in the capital**, with **a minaret towering 265 meters (869 feet) high** and **a large prayer room**.
- ❖ The **entire facility could host over 120,000 worshippers.**
- ❖ This follows the largest two mosques -**holy mosque 'Masjid al-Haram' in Mecca** and the **prophet's mosque 'Al-Masjid an-Nabawi' in Medina**, both **located in Saudi Arabia.**

4.22 WORLD'S FIRST VEDIC CLOCK

- ❖ The **world's inaugural Vedic clock**, designed to **display time according to the ancient Indian traditional panchang**, has **been crafted and positioned in Madhya Pradesh's Ujjain district.**
- ❖ The Vedic clock is **mounted on an 85-foot tower within Jantar** Mantar.
- ❖ This unique clock will **exhibit information** related to **Vedic Hindu Panchang, planetary positions, Muhurat, astrological calculations, predictions, and also indicate Indian Standard Time (IST)** and **Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).**
- ❖ The **time calculation** is **based** on the **duration from one sunrise to the next.**
- ❖ The clock **will showcase 30 Muhurats, tithi**, and **various other time calculations from the Vedic Hindu panchang.**

5. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

5.1 NEURALINK

- ❖ In a groundbreaking development in the field of neurotechnology, **Elon Musk**, the entrepreneur behind companies like Tesla and SpaceX, announced that the **first human recipient has received an implant** from his **brain-computer interface (BCI) venture, Neuralink**.
  - ✓ The US Food and Drug Administration had granted Neuralink an **"investigational device exemption,"** permitting the company to **commence clinical studies**.
- ❖ Neuralink's device is about the **size of a large coin** and is **designed to be implanted in the skull**, with **ultra-thin wires going directly into the brain**.
- ❖ The **initial goal** of the **so-called brain computer interface** is to give people **the ability to control a computer cursor** or **keyboard using their thoughts alone.**
- ❖ The company aims to target the brain region controlling movement intention, initially **enabling individuals to control computers using their thoughts alone.**

ALSO
- ❖ Elon Musk disclosed that the **first product from Neuralink** is named **"Telepathy."**
- ❖ According to him, **Telepathy will empower users**, particularly those who have lost limb functionality, **to control phones or computers through mere thoughts.**

5.2 KARNATAKA ANNOUNCES DIGITAL DETOX INITITATIVE

- ❖ The Karnataka government would launch **a 'Digital Detox' initiative** in **collaboration** with the **All India Game Developers Forum (AIGDF)**, with **special emphasis on gaming and social media.**
- ❖ The **aim** is to **spread awareness about the ills of spending too much time in the digital world and instead create an environment of responsible gaming.**

❖ The **Government of Karnataka** will work with **AIGDF** and **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)** to raise **awareness about mindful technology.**

❖ Through this initiative, **both online and offline Digital Detox Centres will be set up** across the state, which will **offer personalised guidance,** where **trained professionals will provide counselling and support to individuals** seeking to navigate their relationship with technology.

❖ **Practical tools and techniques** will help **individuals learn effective strategies for managing screen time, setting boundaries,** and **cultivating mindful and healthy technology habits.**

5.3   PRINCIPAL SCIENTIFIC ADVISER AND PMSTIAC

❖ **Ajay Kumar Sood**, **Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) to the government of India**, convened the **24th PM-STIAC meeting** recently.

❖ The meeting **brought together PM-STIAC members, key government officials, and experts** from the **medical and health industry** to discuss priority areas of the **health products ecosystem**, particularly the **current regulatory processes of medical products, challenges faced by stakeholders, and emerging opportunities in the regulatory space.**

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL SCIENTIFIC ADVISER

❖ The government established the **Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)** in **November 1999.**

❖ The PSA's office **aims to provide pragmatic and objective advice to the PM and Cabinet** on **matters related to science, technology and innovation** with a focus on application of science and technology in critical infrastructure, economic and social sectors in partnership with government departments, institutions and industry.

❖ The Office of PSA was placed **under the Cabinet Secretariat in August 2018.**

ABOUT PM-STIAC

❖ The **Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)** is an **overarching council** that **expedite the PSA's Office to appraise the status** in specific science and technology domains,comprehend challenges, formulate interventions, develop a futuristic roadmap and advise the Prime Minister accordingly.

❖ Established - **August 2018.**

❖ It **works under the office of PSA** and **PSA acts as its chairperson.**

❖ The council **oversees the implementation of these interventions by concerned S&T departments, agencies, and other government ministries.**

❖ PM-STIAC also mandates **formulation, convergence, collaboration, coordination, and implementation of multi-stakeholder policy initiatives, mechanisms, reforms, and programmes.**

❖ Several missions, aligned with the national interest, have been approved by the PM-STIAC to date including **the Deep Ocean Exploration Mission, AI (Artificial Intelligence) Mission, National Quantum Mission, Waste to Wealth Mission, National One Health Mission, Electric Vehicle Mission, and AGNIi Mission**.

5.4   IIT-K BUILDS FIRST HETTF

❖ The **Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT Kanpur)**, has **successfully developed and tested India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility**.

  ✓ **An expansion tunnel** is **an aerodynamic** (relating to the **properties of moving air, and the interaction between the air and solid bodies** moving through it) **facility capable of generating high-energy test conditions** with **negligible or no ionisation**.

  ✓ In these aerodynamic testing facilities, **achieving high speeds for an aircraft is the goal**.

❖ Hypervelocity means **very high velocity, say, over 3,000 metres per second.**

- **India** now **joins the small group of nations** that have **this advanced hypersonic (speed more than five times than that of sound) testing capability.**
- The facility, called **S2**, will **help the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) perform missions**.
- There are **four major sections** in the facility: **a free piston driver**, **a compression tube**, **a shock or acceleration tube**, and **a test section with a vacuum system to generate hypersonic speeds**.

5.5   SWATI PORTAL

- Principal Scientific Advisor to the Government of India launched **"Science for Women-A Technology & Innovation (SWATI)"** Portal, aimed at creating a single online portal representing Indian Women and Girls in **STEMM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics & Medicine)**
- The database of **SWATI Portal** will serve in policy making to address the challenges of Gender-gap.
- The Portal is a complete interactive database; and the first-of-its-kind in India which is developed, hosted and maintained by the **National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR), New Delhi.**
- The other objectives of **the SWATI Portal** include to scale up the effort exponentially to include each and every Indian woman in science, across all career stages and subjects, spanning both Academia and the Industry enabling reliable and statistically significant long term research on the issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in India; Enabling reliable and statistically significant long term research on the issues of equality, diversity and inclusivity in India, developing active search engine and searchable database (Name, Affiliation, Area of Interest).

5.6   BRUMATION:

- Brumation is a **period of dormancy** or **slowed activity in reptiles**, similar to **hibernation in mammals**, occurring during **colder months** when **temperatures drop** and **food becomes scarce**.
- **Reptiles** enter brumation to **conserve energy** and **survive adverse environmental conditions.**
- During brumation, **reptiles** may retreat to underground **burrows**, rock crevices, or other **sheltered areas** with **stable temperatures**.
- **Metabolism slows** significantly during **brumation**, allowing reptiles to go weeks or months **without eating**.
- Various reptilian species, including **turtles, snakes, and lizards**, exhibit **brumation** behavior by **burrowing**, **seeking refuge** in **underground dens** or **caves**, or **hiding** under **rocks or vegetation**.
- **Brumation** is crucial for **reptiles** to **survive cold climates** until they can reemerge to feed and **reproduce** in more **favorable conditions**.

5.7   SORA

- OpenAI, the company behind ChatGPT has unveiled Sora, a new AI model that creates realistic videos from text prompts.

ABOUT SORA

- Sora is an **AI model developed by OpenAI** — built on **past research in DALL·E and GPT models** — and is capable of **generating videos based on text instructions**
- It can **also animate a static image, transforming it into a dynamic video presentation**.
- Sora **can create full videos in one go or add more to already created videos** to make them longer.
- It **can produce videos up to one minute in duration**, ensuring **high visual quality and accuracy.**
- Sora is currently only accessible for **red team members** — experts in areas such as misinformation, hateful content, and bias — to examine critical areas for potential problems or risks.

- ✓ Additionally, **OpenAI is granting access to visual artists, designers, and filmmakers to collect feedback on enhancing the model.**

5.8	GARBHINI- GA 2 MODEL

- ❖ An **India-specific artificial intelligence model** to **precisely determine the gestational age (GA) of a foetus in the second and third trimester of pregnancy**, has been developed.
- ❖ The model **has been designed by researchers** at the **Indian Institute of Technology Madras** and the **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute, Faridabad**.
- ❖ It is **part of an interdisciplinary group for advanced research on birth outcomes** — the **DBT India initiative (GARBH-Ini) programme**.
- ❖ The **Garbhini-GA2** is the **first late-trimester GA estimation model to be developed** and **validated** using **Indian population data**.
  - ✓ **Currently**, **models used for the Western population are in use** which could prove **erroneous** when applied **in the later part of pregnancy due to variations in the growth of the foetus in the Indian population.**
- ❖ The **Garbhini-GA2 accurately estimates the foetus' age, reducing error by almost three times.**

5.9	INDRA RV25: 240N

- ❖ **Raghu Vamsi Machine Tools Pvt Ltd, a Hyderabad-based manufacturer** of high precision engineering components has **developed a fully indigenous micro turbojet engine – INDRA RV25: 240N.**
- ❖ Though the **engine**, developed in **academic partnership with IIT-Hyderabad**, has **primarily been developed for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or drones**, it **can also have applications** in **air taxis, jetpacks, auxiliary power units, range extenders and power generation in future.**

6.DEFENCE

6.1	INDIA'S FIRST FEMALE SUBEDAR

- ❖ Havildar **Preeti Rajak**, who is **a champion trap shooter**, has become the **first woman to hold the rank of Subedar** in the **Indian Army** after she was promoted on Sunday.
- ❖ Subedar Preeti Rajak **joined the Army in the Corps of Military Police on December 22, 2022.**
- ❖ She was the **first meritorious sportswomen in the shooting discipline enrolled in the Army as a Havildar**

6.2	MQ9B DRONE

- ❖ The United States has **approved the sale of 31 MQ9B drone to India.**
- ❖ The Defence Security Cooperation Agency has said that the **US State department gave the approval for the drones and related equipment worth $3.99 billion.**
- ❖ Under the **USD 3 billion deal**, India will get **31 High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs**, of which the **Navy will get 15 SeaGuardian drones**, while the **Army and the Indian Air Force will get eight each of the land version – SkyGuardian.**

ABOUT THE DRONE

- ❖ Also called **Reaper/Predator** drone.
- ❖ S**tealth feature** of the drone -The drone **can fly as close to 250 metres from the ground** and **operate with pin-drop silence.**

- ❖ The drone can **fly higher than a commercial aircraft**, around **50,000 feet** above the ground, and **has a top speed of 275 mph or 442 km/h.**
- ❖ A Predator drone **can carry around 1,700 kg of payload**, including **four missiles and around 450 kg of bombs**, and **travel 2,000 miles without refuelling.**
- ❖ The drone **can fly continuously or hover over targets for up to 35 hours**
- ❖ **Manufactured by** -General Atomics Aeronautical Systems
- ❖ Apart from air-to-air missiles, the drone **can also be equipped with air-to-ground missiles**
- ❖ It can be **used for surveillance, intelligence gathering and airstrikes**, made possible due to its **wide-range sensors, multi-mode communication system, and precision weaponry.**
- ❖ The MQ-9B can **match 80 per cent of the capability of a manned patrol aircraft** at about **20 per cent of its cost per hour. Hence its economic as well.**
- ❖ The **Sea Guardian, the Predator's naval variant**, has a **360-degree surface-search maritime radar**, and **sonobuoy monitoring system**, enabling it to be **deployed for anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.**

6.3   VOLT TYPHOON

- ❖ The FBI has shut **down a China-backed hacking group** called **Volt Typhoon.**
- ❖ The operation **weeded out malicious Chinese software** from a **network or "botnet" of hundreds of compromised U.S. routers.**
- ❖ **Microsoft** had earlier **warned of Volt Typhoon's hacking efforts**, advising customers to change their security details.
- ❖ It is a **state-sponsored hacking group based in China** that has been active since at least 2021.
- ❖ The hackers had been **targeting U.S. water treatment plants, the power grid, oil and natural gas pipelines, and transportation systems.**

6.4   INS SANDHAYAK

- ❖ INS Sandhayak, the **first Survey Vessel Large (SVL) ship**, was commissioned into the Indian Navy recently .
- ❖ The **primary role** of the ship is to **carry out full scale hydrographic surveys of ports, harbours, navigational channels/routes, coastal areas and deep seas**, towards **enabling safe marine navigation**.
- ❖ In its **secondary role**, the **ship w vcill be capable of undertaking a range of naval operations.**
- ❖ The commissioning ceremony marked the **formal induction of the first of the four ships** of the **SVL Project under construction** at **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata.**
- ❖ The project has been **steered by the Warship Design Bureau of the Indian Navy.**
- ❖ **Features**
  - ✓ **'Sandhayak'** means the **one who carries out a special search**.
  - ✓ It has a **displacement of 3,400 tons** and **an overall length of 110 meters.**
  - ✓ INS Sandhayak is **equipped with state-of-the-art hydrographic equipment** including Deep & Shallow Water Multi-Beam Echo-Sounders, Autonomous Underwater Vehicle, Remotely Operated Vehicle, Side scan sonars, Data Acquisition and Processing System, satellite-based positioning systems and terrestrial survey equipment.
  - ✓ The ship is **propelled by two Diesel Engines** and is **capable of achieving speeds in excess of 18 knots**.
  - ✓ It has **an indigenous content of over 80% by cost.**

6.5   ABHYAAS- HEAT

❖ The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** recently achieved a significant milestone with the **completion of the four flight trials of the HighSpeed Expendable Aerial Target-ABHYAS** at the **Integrated Test Range, Chandipur** in Odisha.

ABOUT ABHYAAS

❖ **ABHYAS, designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment of the DRDO**, represents a **cutting-edge innovation in aerial target systems**.

❖ It is **designed for autonomous flying** with the help of **an auto pilot indigenously made by the ADE.**

❖ It has **Radar Cross Section, Visual and Infrared augmentation system** required for weapon practice.

❖ It has **a laptop-based Ground Control System** with which the aircraft **can be integrated and pre-flight checks, data recording during the flight, replay after the flight and post-flight analysis** can be carried out.

❖ ABHYAS **requires minimum logistics** and is **cost effective compared to imported equivalents.**

❖ **Fully autonomous flight capability**- Programmed with **advanced algorithms and decision-making logic**, the vehicle can be **operated independently executing pre-defined mission profiles** with **precision and reliability**.

❖ It utilises **twin under slung booster** to **provide initial acceleration**.

❖ Powered by **a compact gas turbine**, ABHYAS demonstrates **remarkable endurance and sustains high subsonic speeds throughout its flight profile.**

❖ It is equipped with the **state-of-the-art MicroElectromechanical Systems** based **Inertial Navigation Systems.**

❖ The **systems tested recently** were realised through **Production Agencies – Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Defence.**

❖ The system has **export potential and can be offered to friendly countries.**

6.6   INS KARANJ

❖ Sri Lanka welcomed the **Indian Navy submarine INS Karanj** after shutting its ports to Chinese submarine and research vessel.

❖ The Sri Lankan Navy **accorded INS Karanj a ceremonial welcome on its arrival at the Colombo port.**

ABOUT INS KARANJ

❖ **INS Karanj** is the **third submarine of the first batch of six Kalvari-class submarines, Project 75** for the **Indian Navy**.

❖ It is **a diesel-electric attack submarine** based on the **Scorpène class**, **designed by French naval defence and energy group DCNS.**

❖ It is **manufactured by Mazagon Dock Limited.**

❖ The INS Karanj derives its name from **a Russian Foxtrot Class Submarine** that **India acquired from the Soviet Union in 1969** and **decommissioned in 2003.**

❖ It is a **part of the Western Naval Command's Submarine fleet.**

ABOUT PROJECT 75

❖ It is a programme by the Indian Navy that entails building **six Scorpene Class attack submarines**.

❖ These submarine come with **improved stealth features** such as **advanced acoustic absorption techniques, low radiated noise levels, long-range guided torpedoes, tube-launched anti-ship missiles, sonars and sensor suites.**

❖ These submarines can **undertake multifarious missions** such as **anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance, etc.**

❖ **Other Submarines** of the Ongoing Project-75-
  ✓ **Kalvari, Khanderi, Vela and Vagir**- have **been commissioned into the Indian Navy.**
  ✓ The sixth and last submarine, **Vagsheer, is under sea trials.**

6.7 IIT-M TO DEVELOP SMART AMMUNITION

❖ The **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** is partnering with **Munitions India Limited**, a Defence Public Sector Enterprise, to **develop India's first indigenously-designed 155 Smart Ammunition**.
❖ This initiative **will help achieve indigenization in a critical defence sector.**
❖ The objective is to **increase the accuracy of 155 mm shell** with a **Circular Error Probable(CEP) of 10 metres**.
❖ At present, **ammunitions developed in India have a CEP of 500 m.**
❖ **Another key goal** is to **increase the lethality at the terminal impact.**

ABOUT MIL

❖ **Munitions India Limited** comes under the **Ministry of Defence, Government of India**
❖ It is **India's biggest manufacturer and market leader** engaged in the **Production, Testing Research and Development and Marketing** of a comprehensive **range of ammunition and explosives for the Army, Navy, Air force and Paramilitary Forces.**

6.8 ZIRCON MISSILE

❖ In an **attempt to hit a target in Kyiv**, **Russian forces** launched a **3M22 Zircon missile**, according to a report published in Ukrainian media.
❖ The report noted that one of the images specifically depicts a piece of debris bearing the **"3M22" designation**, which, along with the **Kh-47 Kinzhal**, is associated with the **so-called "Putin's wunderwaffe," or the Russian military's most popular "hypersonic" long-range strike weapons.**
❖ If the use of Zircon is confirmed, it will be the first combat use of **Russia's newest hypersonic missile.**

ABOUT ZIRCON MISSILE

❖ **The missile** is reportedly **capable of flying with speeds up to Mach 9 and a range of 1000 km.**
❖ It's a **two-stage missile** that **uses solid fuel in the first stage and a scramjet motor in the second stage**.
❖ Zircon cruise missiles **use cooled supersonic combustion ramjet engines**, which **power combustion by compressing air flowing at supersonic speeds due to the missile's forward motion.**

6.9 WORLD DEFENCE SHOW 2024

❖ The **World Defence Show 2024** was organised in Riyadh, attracting significant participation from over 773 exhibitors across 75 countries.
❖ Government entities and leading local and international defence and security companies actively joined the event, highlighting the growing importance of the sector in the region.
❖ This five-day World Defence Show was organized in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia** from 4 to 8 February 2024.

INDIA'S PRESENCE:

❖ Minister of State for **Defence Ajay Bhatt** is on a visit to Riyadh as the head of the Indian delegation for the **World Defence Show (WDS) 2024.**
❖ The World Defence Show (WDS) 2024, witnessed **Tri-Service women representation**, a testament to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi-led Government's vision of leveraging **Nari Shakti** across domains. **Squadron Leader Bhawana Kanth, Colonel Ponung Doming and Lieutenant**

Commander Annu Prakash represented the Armed Forces in the various seminars of the WDS 2024 especially in the International Women in Defence themed events.

❖ India's **'Atmanirbhar Bharat'** and Saudi Arabia's **'Vision 2030'** are national programmes that can be mutually beneficial for both sides.

❖ Both these initiatives give priority to technological progress, indigenous capabilities and knowledge sharing.

6.10 HIGH-POWER MICROWAVE (HPM) WEAPON

❖ Chinese researchers have introduced **a novel high-power microwave (HPM) weapon**, powered by a **Stirling engine**, marking a **significant advancement in directed-energy warfare**.

❖ It **utilizes four compact Stirling engines** to **convert thermal energy into mechanical energy, driving powerful HPM waves capable of neutralizing drones, military aircraft, and satellites.**

❖ The **weapon's superconducting coil can generate a magnetic field up to four teslas**, significantly reducing energy consumption compared to existing technologies.
  - ✓ The **system can operate continuously for four hours**, consuming **only a fifth of the energy required by previous methods.**

❖ HPM weapons are **a type of Directed Energy Weapon (DEW) system**.
  - ✓ These are **electromagnetic systems capable** of converting **chemical or electrical energy to radiated energy** and **focusing it on a target, resulting in physical damage.**
  - ✓ **Directed-energy weapons**, including **lasers and HPMs, are considered the future of anti-drone and anti-satellite warfare**.

❖ However, HPMs have faced **challenges** such as **low efficiency and limited range**.

ABOUT STIRLING ENGINE

❖ It is **an external combustion engine** working on the **principle of compression and expansion** to **convert thermal energy into mechanical energy**.

6.11 MILAN 2024

❖ From 19th February onwards, **warships, military aircraft and delegations from Navies across the world** will congregate at **Visakhapatnam for MILAN 2024**.

❖ The **twelfth edition of this flagship event of the Indian Navy** is expected to witness **the participation of more than 50 nations**, with nearly 20 of them also sending their ships or aircraft to be a part of the marquee gathering.

❖ MILAN, which translates into **'meeting' or 'gathering' or 'confluence of people' in Hindi**, began **in 1995** as **a biennial multinational event under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar command** till its tenth edition.

❖ It **shifted to Visakhapatnam for the eleventh edition held in 2022**.

❖ **Vizag** will also be the **venue for MILAN 24 t**o be conducted under the **Eastern Naval Command**.

❖ The **theme** of the previous edition **'Camaraderie–Cohesion–Collaboration'** has also been **adopted for this one, thus making it an overarching vision of the MILAN.**

6.12 IIT JAMMU DEVELOPS ANTI-DRONE SYSTEM

❖ A **professor in the Electrical Engineering Department of IIT Jammu**, Dr. Karan Nathwani has developed **an anti-drone system that works mainly on sound technology**.

❖ The drone system is the **first of its kind which is developed based on an entirely new technology called 'sound-based detection'**.

❖ This system **detects the sound emitted by drones, producing a unique signature that helps in their identification**.

- ❖ This signature is **compared with the system's database, and if a match is found, the drone is detected.**
- ❖ The cost of this system is **about 4 lakh rupees**.
- ❖ The drone system is **not only cost effective but also user-friendly**, making it accessible to the general public.
- ❖ The system **is easy to operate, and there are no issues with cameras or radar and was designed considering various challenges, making it versatile**.
- ❖ With the help of this system, this device **will be able to easily detect drones, aircraft, multiple drones or birds flying up to 300 meters by their sound.**

6.13   EXERCISE VAYUSHAKTI

- ❖ IAF recently conducted **Exercise Vayushakti** at the **Pokhran air-to-ground range near Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.**
- ❖ **Exercise Vayu Shakti-24** is based on the **theme 'Lightning Strike from the Sky'**
- ❖ During the excercise, **over 120 aircraft displayed the lAF's offensive capabilities by day as well as by night.**
- ❖ Targets included **simulated enemy aircraft** and **targets on the ground**, including **runways, bridges, ammunition dumps, radar sites, terror camps, thermal power plants and ordnance factories**, to ensure superiority in the battlefield.
- ❖ Fighter aircraft of the Indian Air Force including the **Rafale, Su-30 MKI, MiG-29, Mirage-2000 and Hawk were used in the exercise.**
- ❖ The **Apache attack helicopter demonstrated its firepower in this event for the first time**, by engaging targets with **Air to Ground guided missiles, while Mi-17 helicopters engaged ground targets with rockets.**
- ❖ India-made **platforms** such as the light combat aircraft **Tejas, Prachand light combat helicopters**, and **Akash and Samar surface-to-air missile systems** were among the elements featured in the exercise.
- ❖ The **indigenous Air Defence Systems, Akash and SAMAR missile systems were also showcased, destroying multiple aerial targets.**

6.14   SAMAR AIR DEFENCE MISSILE SYSTEM

- ❖ The **Indian Air Force (IAF) carried out successful firing trials** of its **in-house designed and developed SAMAR air defence missile system** during **Astrashakti 2023 exercise at Suryalanka Air Force Station in Andhra Pradesh.**
- ❖ The SAMAR system was **part of the exercise for the first time**, and it successfully achieved firing trial objectives in different engagement scenarios.
- ❖ The **air defence system SAMAR (Surface to Air Missile for Assured Retaliation)**, has been developed by a **unit under IAF's Maintenance Command.**
- ❖ The system **can engage aerial threats with missiles operating at a speed range of 2 to 2.5 Mach.**
- ❖ The SAMAR system **consists of a twin turret launch platform** with the **capability of launching two missiles in single** and **salvo mode depending upon the threat scenario.**
- ❖ The system is credited with a **maximum range of 10–12 km** and is **used against low-flying aerial targets.**
- ❖ The SAMAR-1 system uses the **IAF's existing inventory** of **shelf-life-expired Russian Vympel R-73E infrared-guided air-to-air missiles** (AAMs) for the **surface-to-air role.**

6.15   INDIA'S FIRST MILITARY SPY SATELLITE

- India's **first military grade spy satellite manufactured** by the **domestic private sector player Tata Advanced Systems (TASL)**, is ready, and has been **shipped for launch on a SpaceX rocket.**
- Work is also in progress on a ground station that will **control the asset and process sub-metre resolution imagery** from it.
- The **unique aspect of the TASL programme** is that the **ground control will remain in India**, which will **enable secrecy of the coordinates that are required to be monitored by the armed forces**.
- In the past, **exact coordinates and timings for monitoring had to be shared with foreign vendors.**
- By the time the **satellite is in operational mode**, the **state-of-the-art ground control centre will be set up in Bengaluru.**
- The control centre **will direct the satellite's path and process imagery that can be used by the armed forces to monitor infrastructure and acquire military targets**.
- Capable of **providing imagery with 0.5-metre spatial resolution**, the satellite has been **built in partnership with Satellogic — a Latin American company.**
- With its **primary defence role**, the **satellite imagery can also be exported to friendly countries.**

6.16   SHANTI PRAYAS IV

- **Multinational military exercise - 'Shanti Prayas IV'** - kicked off in Nepal at the Army headquarters.
- The multinational military exercise is taking place at the **Birendra Peace Operation Training Centre** in the Kabhre district near Kathmandu.
- It will **see the participation of 1,125 army personnel from 19 countries**, including **India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand**.
- The exercise **has been organised with the assistance of the Global Peace Operation Initiative of the US government and with the joint efforts of the Nepal Army and the US Army.**
- The objective of the exercise is to **increase interoperability and peacekeeping skills** at various levels **before deployment to the UN missions and operational level staff training (STE).**

6.17   BRAHMOS MISSILE

- The **Cabinet Committee on Security** has cleared the **acquisition of 220 BrahMos extended-range supersonic cruise missiles** for deployment on **Indian Navy** warships.
  - The BrahMos is the **main weapon for anti-ship and attack operations for the Indian navy warships.**
  - The **extended-range BrahMos is speculated** to have **an extended range of around 800 km**.
- The deal worth **around ₹19,000 crore** will be **signed between the BrahMos Aerospace and Ministry of Defence.**

ABOUT BRAHMOS

- The **BrahMos Aerospace** is a **joint venture of India and Russia.**
- It **produces supersonic cruise missiles** that can be **launched from submarines, ships, aircraft, or land platforms.**
- BRAHMOS is a **two-stage missile** with-
  - a **solid propellant booster engine** as its **first stage which brings it to supersonic speed and then gets separated.**
  - The **liquid ramjet or the second stage** then **takes the missile closer to 3 Mach speed in cruise phase**.
- Its **cruising altitude could be up to 15 km** and **terminal altitude is as low as 10 meters.**
- The BrahMos missile is also set to be exported soon to the **Philippines which is its first global customer.**
- **Features**

- ✓ **Universal** for multiple platforms
- ✓ **"Fire and Forget" principle** of operation
- ✓ **High supersonic speed all through the flight**
- ✓ **Long flight range** with **varieties of flight trajectories**
- ✓ **Low radar signature**
- ✓ **Shorter flight times** leading to **lower target dispersion and quicker engagement**
- ✓ **Pin point accuracy** with **high lethal power aided by large kinetic energy on impact**

6.18   DOSTI-16 EXERCISE

- ❖ T**rilateral coast guard exercise 'Dosti 16'** kicked off **in Maldives** recently.
- ❖ The **biennial exercise Dosti was last conducted in 2021.**
- ❖ **Exercise Dosti** was **first conducted in 1991** between the **Indian and Maldives Coast Guards**.
  - ✓ Sri **Lanka joined the exercise for the first time in 2012**.
- ❖ The **exercises have focused on exercises and drills** on providing assistance in **sea accidents, eliminating sea pollution, and the coast guard's procedure and conduct during situations such as oil spills.**

6.19   DHARMA GUARDIAN EXERCISE

- ❖ 'Dharma Guardian' is an **annual exercise held alternately in India and Japan**.
- ❖ The **fifth edition** of the **joint military exercise 'Dharma Guardian'** between the **Indian Army and the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Forces** commenced recently at **Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.**
- ❖ The **objective** of the exercise is **to promote military cooperation and enhance joint capabilities to conduct joint operations in semi-urban environments under Chapter VII of the United Nations mandate.**
- ❖ The Japanese contingent is being represented by soldiers of the **34th Infantry Regiment**, and the **Indian Army contingent** is being represented by **a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles**
- ❖ Both sides have **40 military personnel each.**

7.SPACE

7.1   POEM- 3

- ❖ POEM-3, the **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3**, India's unique **inexpensive space platform using the spent PS4 stage of the PSLV-C58 vehicle** that launched XPoSat on January 1, 2024, has **successfully achieved all its objectives**.
- ❖ After deploying the satellite into its intended orbit at 650 km, the **vehicle was lowered to 350 km circular orbit** to **minimize the time of orbit decay after completion of the experiment**.
- ❖ It is **a three-axis-attitude controlled platform** with **power generation and telecommand & telemetry capabilities**, for supporting Payloads.
- ❖ POEM-3 flew with **nine Payloads from VSSC, PRL, Academia, and Space start-ups** inducted through **IN-SPACe.**
  - ✓ Payloads included **RUDRA, ARKA-200, Green Impulse TrAnsmitter (GITA), Dust Experiment (DEX), etc.**
- ❖ In missions **of POEM-1 to POEM-3, ISRO has flown a total of 21 payloads from various institutes and industries.**
- ❖ With the **orbital decay** and **reentry of POEM-3 in three months**, **PSLV-C58 XPoSat mission will be leaving zero debris in space.**

7.2   ASTEROID RYUGU

* **Two organic compounds** essential for **living organisms** have been **detected in the sample** of the asteroid Ryugu.
* The samples were brought back on **Japan's Hayabusa 2 space craft.**
* A study of samples claims to have discovered **evidence** that points to **organic matter from comets being** transported **from space to regions near Earth.**
* The sample surfaces contain **"melt splashes"** ranging from 5 to 20 micrometers.
* These splashes **could have been created when Ryugu got bombarded by micrometeoroids of cometary dust.**

ABOUT ASTEROID RYUGU

* It is **a diamond-shaped carbonaceous or C-type asteroid (**meaning it contains **a lot of carbon and water).**
* The name means **"dragon palace" in Japanese** and refers to **a magical underwater castle** in a Japanese folktale.
* It was **discovered in 1999** by the **Lincoln Near-Earth Asteroid Research (LINEAR) project**, a collaborative, U.S.-based project to catalogue and track space rocks.
* It is **about 900m in diameter.**
* It is **orbiting the sun between Earth and Mars** and **occasionally crosses Earth's orbit**
* It has been **classified as "potentially hazardous".**
* Ryugu **does not have a protective atmosphere** and its **surface is directly exposed to space**.
  * ✓ This means that **small interplanetary dust in space** can hit the **surface of the asteroid, making changes to its composition and even depositing surface materials.**

ABOUT HAYABUSA 2 MISSION

* Hayabusa2 is a **Japanese spacecraft** that **explored asteroid Ryugu** from June 2018 to November 2019.
* It **dispatched a series of landers and a penetrator**, and it **collected multiple samples from the asteroid.**
* Timeline- **Launched in 2014**, **arrived on Ryugu in 2018** and **brought back samples on earth in 2020.**
* Hayabusa2 **deployed the first rovers to operate on an asteroid.**
* The spacecraft is **now on an extended mission to the asteroid 1998KY26.**

7.3   WORLD RECORD FOR MOST TIME IN SPACE

* Russian cosmonaut **Oleg Kononenko** set a **world record** for the **most time spent in space**.
* He spent **over 878 days and 12 hours outside the Earth's atmosphere**, totalling **nearly two and a half years.**
  * ✓ He has **surpassed the milestone** of his **compatriot Gennady Padalka**, who was **in space for a total of 878 days, 11 hours, 29 minutes and 48 seconds across five space journeys** before retiring in 2017.

MORE ABOUT OLEG KONONENKO

* **Oleg Kononenko**, who is the **commander of the Russian space agency Roscosmos cosmonaut corps**, is on **his fifth space mission**.
* Alongside **fellow Russian Nikolai Chub** and **NASA astronaut Loral O'Hara**, he **began his current mission** to the **International Space Station on September 15, 2023**.
* He will **complete 1000 days in space on June 5, this year**, making him the **first person to achieve this feat.** Further, he **will have spent 1,110 days in space** when his **current expedition trip**, which is **planned to end on September 23, is completed.**

7.4   GRAPES-3 EXPERIMENT

- ❖ Researchers at GRAPES-3 have **identified a distinctive characteristic in the cosmic-ray proton spectrum**, particularly at **an energy level of approximately 166 tera-electron-volt (TeV)**.
- ❖ This revelation spans a **measurement range from 50 TeV to slightly over one peta-electron-volt (PeV),** sparking **potential shifts in our comprehension of cosmic ray origins**, their acceleration processes, and their **movement within the Milky Way**.

ABOUT COSMIC RAYS

- ❖ **Cosmic rays**, first discovered over a century ago, **constitute the most energetic particles in the universe**.
- ❖ These particles **uniformly bombard Earth from all directions**, penetrating the atmosphere and **generating a cascade of secondary particles** such as **electrons, photons, muons, protons, and neutrons, which reach the ground at nearly light speed**.

ABOUT GRAPES-3 EXPERIMENT

- ❖ The GRAPES-3 experiment is **located at Ooty, Tamil Nadu.**
- ❖ It started as a **collaboration of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, India** and **the Osaka City University, Osaka, Japan**.
- ❖ At present **many institutions from India and Japan are in collaboration.**
- ❖ **GRAPES-3 (Gamma Ray Astronomy PeV EnergieS phase-3)** is designed to study cosmic rays with an array of air shower detectors and a large area muon detector.
- ❖ It aims to probe **acceleration of cosmic rays in the following four astrophysical settings**. These include acceleration of particles to,
    - ✓ **~100 MeV in atmospheric electric fields through muons,**
    - ✓ **~10 GeV in Solar system through muons,**
    - ✓ **~1 PeV in our galaxy through nuclear composition of cosmic rays,**
    - ✓ **~100 EeV in nearby universe through measurement of diffuse γ-ray flux.**
- ❖ Objectives of the GRAPES-3 Experiment- Study of
    - ✓ The **origin, acceleration and propagation of >10¹⁴ eV cosmic rays in the galaxy** and beyond.
    - ✓ Existence of **"Knee" in the energy spectrum of cosmic rays.**
    - ✓ **Production and/or acceleration of highest energy** (~10²⁰ eV) cosmic rays in the universe.
    - ✓ Astronomy of **multi-TeV γ-rays from neutron stars and other compact object.**
    - ✓ Sun the closest astrophysical object, accelerator of energetic particles and its effects on the Earth.

7.5   PACE MISSION

- ❖ NASA's **PACE (Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, ocean Ecosystem) satellite** was recently launched on **a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.**

ABOUT PACE

- ❖ PACE, NASA's **newest Earth-observing satellite**, will help **scientists better understand how climate change is affecting blooms of ocean phytoplankton**.
    - ✓ Phytoplankton, also known as **microalgae**, is the **foundation of the ocean's food web**.
    - ✓ They are the **primary producers of energy**, feeding everything from tiny zooplankton to whales that weigh multiple tons.
    - ✓ The **smaller fish and ocean creatures that feed on phytoplankton are then eaten by bigger fish.**
- ❖ PACE will also **help understand the influence of particles in the air, like dust and smoke, on cloud formation as well as the warming and cooling of the planet.**

- ❖ PACE was **injected directed into its final orbit**.
- ❖ PACE was **placed in a sun-synchronous orbit**, which means that **it will always be synced to the same position relative to the Sun**.
  - ✓ This also means that **it will cross the planet's equator at the same local time for each orbit**.
  - ✓ This will be **useful because the angle at which the sun illuminates the planet will remain constant throughout each image it takes.**
- ❖ PACE has two fundamental science goals-
  - ✓ To **extend key systematic ocean colour, aerosol, and cloud data records** for Earth system and climate studies.
  - ✓ To **address new and emerging science questions** using its advanced instruments, surpassing the capabilities of previous and current missions.

7.6   CARTOSAT-2

- ❖ **Cartosat-2**, the **first of ISRO's second generation of high-resolution imaging satellites primarily used in urban planning,** has been **deorbited**, 17 years after launch.
- ❖ The satellite, launched on **January 10, 2007** and **weighing 680 kg**, operated in **a sun-synchronous polar orbit at an altitude of 635 km**.
- ❖ It **performed 14.78 orbits around Earth in a day.**
- ❖ Until 2019, the satellite equipped with over **12,000 coupled charged devices used its "panchromatic and multi-spectral cameras"** to generate **high-resolution images** that were **extensively used for urban planning, monitoring of road networks and water distribution, creation of land use maps, among others.**
- ❖ ISRO had **expected the satellite to take about 30 years to de-orbit naturally**.
  - ✓ The **agency**, however, **chose to lower the satellite's perigee using leftover fuel in view of new guidelines on space debris.**

7.7   INSAT-3DS

- ❖ The **GSLV-F14 carrying INSAT-3D meteorological satellite** was **successfully launched** from the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.**
- ❖ The **GSLV-F14 deployed the INSAT-3DS** into the **intended geosynchronous transfer orbit.**
- ❖ **Subsequent orbit-raising maneuvers** will be **performed to position the satellite in a geo-stationary orbit.**
- ❖ The satellite is **an exclusive mission designed for enhanced meteorological observations**, monitoring of **land and ocean surfaces for weather forecasting, and disaster warning.**
- ❖ The **INSAT-3DS satellite** is a **follow-on mission of the third generation meteorological satellite** from **geostationary orbit**.
- ❖ The INSAT-3DS satellite **will augment meteorological services** along with the **presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR in-orbit satellites.**
- ❖ The **primary objectives** of the mission are to-
  - ✓ **monitor Earth's surface**,
  - ✓ carry out **oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels** of meteorological importance,
  - ✓ provide the **vertical profile of various meteorological parameters** of the atmosphere,
  - ✓ provide **data collection and dissemination capabilities** from **data collection platforms**, and
  - ✓ provide **satellite-aided search and rescue services.**
- ❖ **Boost to NASA-ISRO mission-**

- ✓ The **success of the GSLV-F14/INSAT-3DS mission is a big boost for ISRO** ahead of the **launch of the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite**, which is **scheduled in the coming months**.
- ✓ The NISAR **will be launched by the GSLV Mark-II launch vehicle.**
- ✓ GSLV is a **three-stage launch vehicle** having a **liftoff mass of 420 tonnes.**
  - ➢ **First stage** comprises a **solid propellant motor.**
  - ➢ **Second stage** comprises **earth-storable propellants.**
  - ➢ **Third stage** is a **cryogenic stage.**

7.8   WATER FOUND ON ASTEROIDS

- ❖ In a **monumental discovery reshaping our understanding of celestial bodies**, scientists have **uncovered traces of water on the surface of two asteroids.**
- ❖ The study **sheds light on the distribution of water molecules throughout the solar system**
- ❖ It also offers tantalizing **clues about the origins of water on Earth.**
- ❖ It utilized data from the **retired NASA mission**, the **Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA).**
- ❖ The analysis of **SOFIA's observations unveiled distinctive spectral signatures indicative** of **water molecules** on the <u>**asteroids Iris and Massalia**</u>.
  - ✓ Both asteroids are **more than half a million kilometres away from our planet.**
  - ✓ With **diameters measuring 124 miles and 84 miles respectively**, these asteroids **serve as reservoirs of liquid water**, potentially stored **within silicate glass beads or bound to mineral surfaces.**

7.9   WORLD'S FIRST WOODEN SATELLITE

- ❖ **Japanese scientists** have developed one of the **world's most unique spacecraft- a wooden satellite.**
- ❖ The **LignoSat probe is made of magnolia wood**, which has been **shown in studies on the International Space Station (ISS) to be highly robust and crack-resistant.**
- ❖ Plans are currently being finished for its **launch on a US rocket.**
- ❖ The satellite is being **developed in an effort to test the viability of using biodegradable materials, like wood, as environmentally friendly substitutes for the metals** that are currently used to **construct all satellites.**
- ❖ One of the **missions of the satellite is to measure the deformation of the wooden structure in space**.
- ❖ It has been **built by researchers from Kyoto University** and the **logging company Sumitomo Forestry.**
- ❖ The **probe**, which is about the **size of a coffee cup**, is **anticipated to stay in orbit for at least six months before being permitted to enter the upper atmosphere.**
- ❖ LignoSat will **only emit a fine spray of biodegradable ash when it burns up and re-enters the atmosphere after finishing its mission.**

7.10   FIRST COMMERCIAL MOON LANDING

- ❖ An **American moon lander named 'Odysseus'** touched down on **the lunar surface for the first time in over 50 years.**
- ❖ This is **NASA's first return to the lunar surface since the last Apollo mission in 1972.**
- ❖ The **uncrewed Odysseus lander**, was made by the **Houston-based company Intuitive Machines** in **collaboration with NASA.**

- ❖ It is the **first commercial spacecraft to ever land on the moon without crashing.**
- ❖ Odysseus launched **atop a SpaceX rocket** on February 14, **carrying 12 payloads — six of them belonging to private companies and six of them science experiments for NASA.**
- ❖ The **spacecraft traveled 620,000 miles to aim for its destination: a crater in the moon's south pole.**

7.11   100% FDI IN SPACE

- ❖ Union Cabinet approved for **amendments to the existing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy on space sector.**
- ❖ Under the amended FDI policy, **100% FDI is allowed in space sector**.
- ❖ Now, the **satellite sub-sector has been divided into three different activities** with **defined limits for FDI in each such sector.**

DETAILS

- ❖ The amended policy **extends the facility of up to 74% FDI under the automatic route** for **satellite manufacturing and operation, satellite data products** and **ground/user segment.**
    - ✓ **Beyond 74%, these activities are under government route.**
- ❖ Up to **49% FDI under the automatic route** will be **allowed for launch vehicles and associated systems or subsystems**, and **creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecraft**.
    - ✓ Beyond **49%, these activities will be under government route.**
- ❖ Up to **100% FDI under the automatic route** would be **permitted** for **manufacturing of components and systems/sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment.**

7.12   HUNGER MOON

- ❖ **Full moon on February 24** was called as **Hunger moon or Snow Moon or Storm Moon**.
- ❖ It missed **Earth's shadow**, because **moon's orbit is tilted by five degrees to the plane of the Earth's orbit**, and therefore **Earth won't be directly between the sun and the moon.**
- ❖ It has been named by **Native American tribes** as the **'Snow Moon' or the 'Hunger Moon'**.
- ❖ This lunar event **carries a history woven with the challenges of midwinter.**
- ❖ NASA has explained that **heavy snowfall, making hunting difficult, led to it being called the 'Snow Moon'**. The added title of the **'Hunger Moon' reflects the scarcity of resources during this wintry period.**

7.13   GAGANYAAN CREW

- ❖ The names of four astronauts, part of the **country's human space flight mission Gaganyaan, were revealed recently.**
- ❖ The PM presented **astronaut wings** to the **four selected for the space flight during an event at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre in Thiruvananthapuram**.
- ❖ The **four astronaut-designates selected for the Gaganyaan mission are**-
    - ✓ Group Captain Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Group Captain Ajit Krishnan, Group Captain Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla.
- ❖ The **astronauts chosen** for the mission **have been trained in technical knowledge as well as physical fitness to ensure they stay well during the mission.**

ABOUT GAGANYAAN MISSION

- ❖ **Gaganyaan project** envisages **demonstration of human spaceflight capability** by **launching crew of 3 members** to **an orbit of 400 km for a 3 days mission** and **bring them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters.**
- ❖ **LVM3 rocket** is **identified as the launch vehicle for Gaganyaan mission**.

- ✓ It **consists of solid stage, liquid stage and cryogenic stage**.
- ✓ All **systems in LVM3 launch vehicle** are **re-configured to meet human rating requirements and christened Human Rated LVM3.**
- ❖ The **Gaganyaan mission** is the **most expensive scientific mission ever undertaken by India** and is **going to cost about ₹ 10,000 crore**.
- ❖ The mission **is expected to help develop several game-changing technologies.**

8.ENVIRONMENT

8.1 STATUS OF SNOW LEOPARDS IN INDIA REPORT

- ❖ The **Status of Snow leopards in India** report was released recently by **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change (MoEFCC).**
- ❖ The **Snow Leopard Population Assessment in India (SPAI) Program** is the **first-ever scientific exercise** that **reports Snow leopard population of 718 individuals in India.**
- ❖ The **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** is the **National Coordinator** for this exercise that was carried out with support the support of **all snow leopard range states** and **two conservation partners, the Nature Conservation Foundation, Mysuru and WWF-India.**
- ❖ The SPAI systematically **covered over 70% of the potential snow leopard range** in the country, involving forest & wildlife staff, researchers, volunteers, and contributions from knowledge partners.
- ❖ Covering approximately **120,000km² of crucial Snow leopard habitat** across the **trans-Himalayan region**, including **UTs of Ladakh and J &** K, and states such as **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh.**
- ❖ Based on data analysis, the **estimated population** in different states are as follows-
    - ✓ **Ladakh** (477), **Uttarakhand** (124), **Himachal Pradesh** (51), **Arunachal Pradesh** (36), **Sikkim** (21), and **Jammu and Kashmir** (9).

ABOUT SNOW LEOPARD (PANTHERA UNCIA)

- ❖ The Snow Leopard is **an apex predator in Himalayan ecosystem.**
- ❖ **Also** known as **Ghost of Mountain.**
- ❖ **Habitat** includes **12 snow leopard range countries -Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.**
- ❖ **It is also the State animal of Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.**
- ❖ They play a key role of **an indicator species** of the health of their high-altitude habitat
- ❖ **Threats include-** poaching, habitat loss, declining prey, Human-wildlife conflict and warming in the mountains.
- ❖ **Protection Status**
    - ✓ IUCN Red List -**Vulnerable**
    - ✓ WPA 1972- **Schedule-I**
    - ✓ CITES- **Appendix I**

8.2 NEW RAMSAR SITES

- ❖ **Five more Indian wetlands** have been added to the **global list of wetlands of international importance** under the **Ramsar Convention.**
- ❖ This takes the total number of **recognised waterlogged ecosystems in the country to 80.**

Sl. No.	Name of Ramsar Site	State	Details	Total area in ha
1	Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve	Karnataka	Humanmade Village Irrigation Tank built centuries back. Home to Painted Stork and Black-headed Ibis.	98.76
2	Aghanashini Estuary	Karnataka	Formed at the confluence of **Aghanashini River with Arabian sea.** Traditional fish farming in the estuarine rice fields (locally known as **Gazni rice fields**).	4801
3	Magadi Kere Conservation Reserve	Karnataka	Human-made wetland constructed to store rainwater for irrigation purposes. One of the largest wintering grounds for the Bar-headed goose in Southern India	54.38
4	Karaivetti Bird sanctuary	Tamil Nadu	one of the largest inland wetlands of Tamil Nadu About 198 species of birds have been recorded here; some of the important visitors being the Bar headed Goose, Pin-tailed duck, Garganey, Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard, Eurasian Wigeon, Common teal and Cotton teal.	453.72
5	Longwood Shola Reserve Forest	Tamil Nadu	Tropical Rain forests (Shola) Habitats for the globally endangered Black-chinned Nilgiri Laughing thrush, Nilgiri Blue Robin, and vulnerable Nilgiri Wood-pigeon. As many as 14 out of 26 endemic birds species of the Western Ghats are found in these wetlands.	116.007

- ❖ With the **addition of these five wetlands** to List of Wetlands of International Importance, the **total area covered under Ramsar sites is now 1.33 million ha** which is an increase of 5,523.87 ha from existing area (of 1.327 million ha.
- ❖ **Tamil Nadu** continues to have **maximum number of Ramsar Sites (16 sites)** followed by **Uttar Pradesh (10 sites).**
- ❖ Due to a significant policy push from the Government of India, the **number of Ramsar sites has increased from 26 to 80 in the last ten years**, of which 38 have been added in the last three years alone.

ABOUT RAMSAR CONVENTION

- ❖ The **Ramsar Convention** is an **international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands**.
- ❖ It is named after the **Iranian city of Ramsar**, on the **Caspian Sea**, where the **treaty was signed on February 2, 1971.**

- The **aim** of the Ramsar list is **"to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands, which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life, through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits"**.
- India **ratified this Convention on 1st February 1982.**

8.3   WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT (WSDS)

- The **23ʳᵈ edition of World Sustainable Development Summit** was held recently in **New Delhi**.
- The **theme of this year's summit** is **"Leadership for Sustainable Development and Climate Justice"**.

ABOUT WSDS

- The World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) is the **annual flagship Track II initiative of The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**.
- It was **instituted in 2001.**
- It is the **only independently convened international summit** on **sustainable development and environment, based in the Global South.**

ABOUT TERI

- TERI is **a leading think tank** dedicated **to conducting research for sustainable development of India** and **the Global South**.
- TERI is **an independent, multi-dimensional organization**, with **expertise in research, policy, consultancy and implementation.**
- Established- **1974**
- The institution believes that **resource efficiency and waste management** are the **keys to smart, sustainable, and inclusive development.**
- TERI's **work across sectors is focused on-**
    - ✓ **Promoting efficient use of resources**
    - ✓ **Increasing access and uptake of sustainable inputs and practices**
    - ✓ **Reducing negative impact on environment and climate**
- **Headquartered** in **New Delhi**, TERI has **regional centres and campuses** in **Gurugram, Bengaluru, Guwahati, Mumbai, Panaji, and Nainital.**

8.4   GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD (GIB)

- **The Great Indian Bustard (GIB)** has not put in its annual appearance this year too at the **Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Nandyal district of Andhra Pradesh** and its **surrounding areas**.

ROLLAPADU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY:

- **Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary** is a **wildlife sanctuary** in the **Nandyal district of Andhra Pradesh, India**. Known primarily as a habitat of the **great Indian bustard**, the species has suffered a drastic fall in its numbers in the sanctuary in recent years.
- **Established** as an **ideal site for the protection of the bustard** in the 1980s.

KEY POINTS ABOUT GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD (GIB) ?

About:

- The **Great Indian Bustard (Ardeotis nigriceps)** , the **State bird of Rajasthan**, is considered **India's most critically endangered bird**.
- It is considered the **flagship grassland species**, representing the **health of the grassland ecology.**
- Its population is confined **mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat**. Small populations occur in **Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.**

Threat:

❖ The bird is **under constant threats** due to **collision/electrocution** with power transmission lines, hunting (still prevalent in Pakistan), **habitat loss** and alteration as a **result of widespread agricultural expansion**, etc.

PROTECTION STATUS:

❖ International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List (IUCN): **Critically Endangered.**
❖ Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): **Appendix 1.**
❖ Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): **Appendix 1.**
❖ Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: **Schedule 1.**

8.5   MEGA PORTS

❖ In a recent update by the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways**, significant plans have been outlined for the development of **Mega Ports** in India by **2047**.
❖ **Six port clusters** identified for development as **Mega Ports by 2047**.
  ✓ **Four port clusters** with a capacity exceeding **300 Million Tonnes** Per Annum (MTPA):
    ➢ Cochin –Vizhinjam Port cluster
    ➢ Galathea South Bay Port
    ➢ Chennai – Kamarajar– Cuddalore Port cluster
    ➢ Paradip and Other Non-Major Ports Cluster.
  ✓ **Two port clusters** with Capacity **Exceeding 500 MTPA**:
    ➢ Deendayal and Tuna Tekra
    ➢ Jawaharlal Nehru – Wadhawan.

8.6   GUPTESWAR FOREST IS NOW BIODIVERSITY-HERITAGE SITE

❖ The **pristine Gupteswar Forest**, adjacent to **Gupteswar Shiva temple in Odisha's Koraput district** has been **declared as the fourth Biodiversity-Heritage Site (BHS) of the state.**
  ✓ The **other three are Mandasaru BHS in Kandhamala district**, **Mahendragiri BHS in Gajpati district**, and **Gandhamardan BHS in Bargarh and Bolangir districts.**
❖ The **site is spread over 350 hectares of demarcated area**.
❖ Along with its **sacred grooves traditionally worshipped by the local community**, the site is bestowed with a wide range of flora and fauna-
  ✓ **floral diversity** includes **182 species of trees, 76 species of shrubs, 177 species of herbs, 69 species of climbers, 14 species of orchids and threatened medicinal plants** like Indian trumpet tree, Indian snakeroot, Cumbi gum tree, Garlic pear tree, Chinese fever vine, Rohituka tree, Jodpakli, Indian jointfir, a number of wild crop relatives of ginger and turmeric.
  ✓ **faunal species** found here include **mugger crocodile, kanger valley rock gecko, sacred Grove Bush Frog, and avifauna like black baza, Jerdon's baza, Malaber trogon, common hill myna, white-bellied woodpecker, and banded bay cuckoo**

WHAT ARE BIODIVERSITY-HERITAGE SITES?

❖ The **'Biodiversity Heritage Sites' (BHS)** are **unique ecosystems having rich biodiversity** comprising of any one or more of the following components-
  ✓ **Richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories**.
  ✓ **High endemism**.

- ✓ **Presence of rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance.**
- ✓ **Wild ancestors of domestic/cultivated species or their varieties.**
- ✓ **Past pre-eminence of biological components** represented by **fossil beds** and having significant **cultural, ethical or aesthetic values** and are important for the maintenance of cultural diversity, with or without a long history of human association with them.
- ❖ Under Section-37 of **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** the **State Government in consultation with local bodies may notify areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS).**
- ❖ Creation of BHS may **not put any restriction on prevailing practices and usages by local communities**, other than those decided by them.

8.7   STATE OF THE WORLD'S MIGRATORY SPECIES – 2024

- ❖ **UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) report** on **"State of the World's Migratory Species"** was **launched recently**.
- ❖ The inaugural **State of the World's Migratory Species – 2024 report** was **launched by the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS).**
- ❖ It provides the **first comprehensive global assessment on the conservation status and threats facing migratory animals.**

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ Nearly **half of CMS-listed species are showing population declines**
- ❖ More than **one-in-five species are threatened with extinction**
- ❖ **97% of CMS-listed fish** are **threatened**
- ❖ **Extinction risk** is **growing for both CMS listed species and all migratory species.**
- ❖ Around **400 global migratory species** (threatened or near TwE) **are not currently listed under CMS**.
- ❖ The **2 major threats to migratory species** are –
  - ✓ **Habitat loss,degradation and fragmentation;**
  - ✓ **overexploitation**

OTHER DETAILS

- ❖ The Fourteenth Session of the **Conference of the Parties (COP14)** to the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.**
- ❖ **Theme/slogan- Nature Knows No Borders**

ABOUT CMS

- ❖ Signed in **1979**, the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention; CMS)** is **an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme.**
- ❖ It **provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.**
- ❖ **CMS Appendices**
  - ✓ **Appendix I: Migratory species that have been assessed as being in danger of extinction.**
  - ✓ **Appendix II: Migratory species which require international agreements for their conservation.**

8.8   TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE

- The **UN Environment Programme (UNEP)** and the **Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO)** have named **seven initiatives as UN World Restoration Flagships**.
- These initiatives **will receive technical and financial UN support.**
- The World Restoration Flagships are-
    - ✓ the Restoring **Mediterranean Forest Initiative**(Mediterranean basin is the world's second-largest biodiversity hotspot;
    - ✓ Living **Indus Initiative** in Pakistan;
    - ✓ the **Accion Andina social movement** led by Peruvian conservation non-profit organisation ECOAN (Asociacion Ecosistemas Andinos);
    - ✓ the **Sri Lanka Mangrove Regeneration Initiative**;
    - ✓ the **Regreening Africa initiative**; and
    - ✓ the **Forest Garden Program, launched in 2015**, which includes **multiple Forest Garden projects in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Gambia, Kenya, Mali, Senegal, Uganda, and Tanzania;**
    - ✓ **Terai Arc landscape**

ABOUT TERAI ARC LANDSCAPE

- ❖ It is a t**rans-boundary biodiversity hotspot**, **launched in 2001 shared by India and Nepal.**
- ❖ It **extends from the Bagmati River (Nepal) in the east to the Yamuna River (India) in the west stretching over 900 km.**
- ❖ The **Terai Arc Landscape**, stretching across **5.10 million hectares, is home to over seven million people** and one of the **world's most critical habitats for tigers**.
    - ✓ However, the **tiger population has sharply declined, along with those of other species such as rhinos and elephants**, due to **poaching, habitat loss, degradation, and human-wildlife conflict.**
- ❖ The **Terai Arc Landscape Initiative focuses** on restoring the **forests of critical corridors of the Terai Arc Landscape and collaborates with local communities** working as **citizen scientists, community-based anti-poaching units, forest guards, and social mobilisers.**

ABOUT WORLD RESTORATION FLAGSHIP AWARDS

- ❖ The **World Restoration Flagship awards** are part of the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**.
- ❖ UNEP and FAO lead this initiative, which **aims to prevent, halt, and reverse the degradation of ecosystems on every continent and in every ocean.**
- ❖ The awards celebrate notable initiatives that **support global commitments to restore one billion hectares.**

8.9   CUSCUTA DODDER

- ❖ **Cuscuta dodder**, an **invasive weed**, native to North America, is **slowly choking the Chengalpet forests and Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary**, threatening the **local vegetation, ecology and habitat of migratory birds.**

ABOUT CUSCUTA DODDER

- ❖ Cuscuta dodder is a **parasitic vine without roots**.
- ❖ It is also **known as Akashbel or Amarbel**.
- ❖ This **holoparasitic plant builds a canopy on the host plant** and **casts thousands of tendrils to form a dense spectacle before it strangles and eventually kills it.**
- ❖ The **seeds of Cuscuta** are **spheroid and have a hard, coat, which aids them to survive up to 50 years in dry storage** and **at least 10 years in the field.**
- ❖ **Legislation in 25 countries** has listed the **dodder** as a **'declared noxious weed' with seeds and plant material denied entrance**.
    - ✓ In United States, it is **the only weed seed whose movement is prohibited in every state.**
- ❖ Unlike root parasites, **Cuscuta seeds do not require a specific stimulant to induce germination.**

- ❖ In India, **Cuscuta poses a serious problem** in **oilseeds, pulses and fodder crops** in the states of **Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Orissa, West Bengal and parts of Madhya Pradesh** under rain fed as well as irrigated conditions.

ABOUT VEDANTHANGAL BIRD SANCTUARY

- ❖ **Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary**, located at **Chengalpattu District of Tamil Nadu.**
- ❖ **It is a 74 acre protected area, established in 1796 as the first ever bird sanctuary in India.**
- ❖ This site is recognized internationally as an **Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA).**

8.10   VAN MITRA SCHEME

- ❖ Haryana Chief Minister recently launched the **'Van Mitra' scheme and its portal to encourage community participation in tree planting activities in non-forest areas**.
- ❖ The members of families with **an annual income of less than Rs 1.80 lakh can register** to become 'Van Mitras'.
- ❖ The **objective** of this scheme is to **directly involve the local public** in increasing **forest areas across the state**, ensuring an **increase in the survival rate of afforestation, and promoting tree planting in non-forest areas.**
- ❖ **Each van mitra** will receive **an incentive based on the maintenance of the plant** and they **can plant a maximum of 1,000 saplings**.
- ❖ **Any individual aged between 18 and 60 can become a van mitra.**
- ❖ In the first phase of the scheme, the **selection of 7500 van mitra will be done through the portal.**
- ❖ A **van mitra can choose non-forest land for tree planting** in their **village, town, or city.**
  - ✓ If the **planted tree grows** on the **van mitra's own land**, they will be **considered the owner of the tree.**
- ❖ **Incentives**
  - ✓ According to the scheme, in the **first year**, **van mitras will be registered and they will be trained and tree planting will be done by them.**
  - ✓ In the **first year**, **van mitras will receive Rs 20 for each dug pit** upon uploading geo-tagging and photograph of the pit on the mobile app.
  - ✓ After geo-tagging, **van mitras will receive Rs 30 for each planted tree**.
  - ✓ They will **receive Rs 10 per living plant for the maintenance and security of trees planted**.
  - ✓ Meanwhile, in the **second year, van mitras will receive Rs 8 per living plant each month**. In the **third year, they will receive Rs 5 per living plant each month**, and in the **fourth year, this amount will be Rs 3 per living plant.**

8.11   FLOOD MANAGEMENT AND BORDER AREAS PROGRAMME (FMBAP)

- ❖ The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister **approved the proposal of Department of Water Resources, RD & GR** for **continuation of centrally sponsored Scheme, viz., "Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP)"**
- ❖ It has a **total outlay of Rs. 4,100 crore** and has been continued **for a period of 5 years from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (15th Finance Commission period).**

THE SCHEME HAS TWO COMPONENTS-

- ❖ Under the **Flood Management Programme (FMP) component of FMBAP** with **an outlay of Rs. 2940 crore**
  - ✓ **central assistance** will be provided to **State Governments for taking up critical works** related to **flood control, anti-erosion, drainage development and anti-sea erosion, etc.**
  - ✓ The pattern of funding to be followed is
    - ✓ **90% (Centre): 10% (State) for Special Category States** (8 North-Easter States and Hilly States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and UT of Jammu & Kashmir) and

✓ **60% (Centre):40% (State) for General/ Non-Special Category States.**
❖ Under **River Management and Border Areas (RMBA) component** of FMBAP with an outlay of Rs. 1160 crore,
   ✓ **flood control and anti-erosion works on common border rivers** with **neighbouring countries including hydrological observations and flood forecasting**, and **investigation & pre-construction activities of joint water resources projects** (with neighbouring countries) on common border rivers will be taken up with **100% central assistance.**
❖ **The Primary responsibility of flood management rests with the State Governments.**
❖ The Scheme has the **provision of incentivizing the States which implement flood plain zoning, recognized as an effective non-structural measure for flood management.**

8.12 INDIAN GHARIAL

❖ After **a gap of 75 years**, an **endangered female Indian Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus)** was spotted in the **Bishwanath stretch of the Brahmaputra under Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.**

ABOUT GHARIAL

❖ Indian gharial is one of the largest river-dwelling crocodile species of the world that **grows up to 8 metres in total length and weight around 160 kg.**
❖ Habitat
   ✓ It is also the **most aquatic of all crocodilians for it never moves far from the water**.
   ✓ **Females** lay their **eggs in steep, sandy river banks.**
❖ Their **major population** occurs in **three tributaries of the Ganga River**: the **Chambal and the Girwa Rivers in India** and the **Rapti-Naryani River in Nepal**.
❖ The **Gharial reserves** of India are located in three States – **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.**
❖ Adult gharials exhibit a **strong association with river systems**, often **displaying seasonal migratory patterns.**
❖ Although **primarily fish eaters**, some **individuals have been known to scavenge dead animals.**
❖ **Threats** include **habitat fragmentation and degradation, poaching etc.**
❖ It has been placed under the IUCN Red Data list as **critically endangered** and **listed under Schedule I** of the **Wildlife Protection Act 1972** due to **massive decline in its population.**

8.13 HOMOSEP ATOM BY SOLINAS

❖ India's **first septic tank/manhole cleaning robot**, offering **an end-to-end solution to eliminate manual scavenging**, is strengthening the **swachhata abhiyan in different corners of the country.**
❖ The technology called **Homosep Atom** developed by the **startup Solinas, incubated in the Department of Science and Technology (DST)-Technology Business Incubator (TBI) of IIT Madras**, solves manual cleaning methods and transforms it to robotic cleaning methods.
❖ It has **integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) to inspect, clean, and manage confined space for sanitation purposes.**
❖ It has **reached 16 cities in different parts of India** and **empowers extensive blade cleanings, solid waste desilting, suction and storage at one device**; thereby **reducing the cost of owning multiple assets and promotes robotic cleaning in sewers.**

ABOUT SOLINAS

❖ **Solinas** is **a deep-tech and climate tech startup born out of IIT Madras**, founded with the **intent to solve the challenges that revolutionizes the water and sanitation sector** and **improves the climatic conditions**.
❖ **DST-Technology Business Incubators (TBIs)** are **established in Academic /Technical /R&D Institutions** as part of **NIDHI programme** to **support and nurture knowledge driven innovative start-ups into successful enterprises.**

❖ The startup specialises in **developing miniature robots**, including **India's 1st 90mm water robot and 120mm sewer robot**, capable of **navigating through pipelines below 100mm to address contamination challenges in water-sewer pipelines.**

8.14   ECOCIDE

❖ Belgium has **become the first country in the European Continent** to **recognise 'ecocide' as a crime.**
❖ The **Federal Parliament of Belgium** voted **in favour of a new penal code which makes ecocide a national and international crime.**
❖ Nationally, the new crime, which is **aimed at preventing and punishing the most severe cases of environmental degradation** (such as extensive oil spills), will **apply to individuals in the highest positions of decision-making power and to corporations.**
❖ The **punishment** for individuals may **include up to 20 years in prison**, while **corporations could face fines of up to €1.6 million**.
❖ In addition, **Belgium now recognises ecocide as a fifth 'international crime'** after **war crimes, crimes of aggression, crimes against humanity and genocide.**

DEFINITION

❖ Ecocide means **unlawful or wanton acts** committed with **knowledge** that **there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage** to the **environment being caused by those acts.**

8.15   NATURE RESTORATION LAW

❖ **European Union lawmakers** approved the bloc's **Nature Restoration Law.**
❖ The **new law** sets **a target for the EU to restore at least 20% of the EU's land and sea areas by 2030** and **all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050**.
   ✓ It aims to **reverse the decline of Europe's natural habitats**, **81% of which are classed as being in poor health.**
❖ The law **also sets specific targets such as peatlands** that can **soak up CO2 emissions and help curb climate change**.
   ✓ **Other ecosystems explicitly covered** by the law include **forests, grasslands, and wetlands**, as well as **rivers, lakes, and coral beds.**
❖ Member states **must restore at least 30% of habitats** specifically covered by the new law **from a poor to a good condition by 2030. That target** would **increase to 60% by 2040, and 90% by 2050.**

9.POLICY AND PROGRAMME

9.1   STARTUPSHALA

- ❖ **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has** launched **'StartupShala'** flagship accelerator program for startups to encourage investments, networking and mentorship.
- ❖ **'StartupShala'** - Startup India's **Accelerator Program**, is a **3-month long accelerator program** for **early-stage startups** to provide them **access to knowledge, network, funds, and guidance required to scale up.**
- ❖ Each cohort of the program will be **focused on a particular sector**, the **first one being CleanTech** and **20 startups per cohort will be handpicked by experts** through **an open call for application.**
- ❖ **Interested startups can apply through the Start-Up India Hub.**
- ❖ Eligibility
  - ✓ It should be **a DPIIT-recognised startup.**
  - ✓ It is important for the **startup to work in the sustainability sector.**
  - ✓ The startup should be **a growth stage startup which is ready to scale.**
  - ✓ The startup should be **generating revenue** with **market ready solutions in the form of its products and services.**

9.2   "UNGALAI THEDI, UNGAL OORIL" SCHEME

- ❖ The **Tamil Nadu government** has released guidelines for the **'Ungalai Thedi, Ungal Ooril' scheme** to **improve the delivery of various services and expedite implementation of schemes.**
- ❖ It is **designed to enhance the efficiency and transparency of service delivery** in the state.
- ❖ According to the guidelines, **Collectors and senior district-level officials** will spend **24 hours (9 a.m. to 9 a.m.) in one taluk on the fourth Wednesday** of **every month** to review the **functioning of various projects, inspect infrastructure and receive representations from the public.**

9.3   ONE STOP CENTRES SCHEME

- ❖ As per MoWCD, One Stop Centres have been **established in over 700 districts across the country** and **around 8.3 lakh women have received help through them.**
- ❖ This was declared at the **32nd foundation day of the National Commission for Women (NCW).**

ABOUT ONE STOP CENTRE SCHEME

- ❖ The One Stop Centre is **a scheme of the Women and Child Development Ministry** set up under the **Nirbhaya Fund.**
- ❖ It **aims to support and assist women facing violence in public and private spaces**, including **domestic violence**.
- ❖ These **centres** have **an administrator, case workers, medical personnel, police facilitation officer, psycho-social counsellor, legal counsellor, security guard, IT staff and multi-purpose workers.**

ABOUT NCW

- ❖ The **National Commission for Women** was set up as **a statutory body in January 1992** under the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990.**
- ❖ It aims to
  - ✓ **review the Constitutional and Legal safeguards** for women,
  - ✓ **recommend remedial legislative measures,**

- ✓ **facilitate redressal of grievances** and
- ✓ **advise the government on all policy matters affecting women.**
- ❖ The commission was **working towards creating favourable conditions** for **women to participate more** in **social, economic and political activities.**

ABOUT NIRBHAYA FUND

- ❖ **Nirbhaya Fund** can be **utilized for projects specifically designed to improve the safety and security of women**.
- ❖ It is **a non-lapsable corpus fund**, being administered by **Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.**

9.4   TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FUND (TDF) SCHEME

- ❖ A **green propulsion system**, developed under the **Technology Development Fund (TDF) scheme**, has successfully **demonstrated in-orbit functionality on a payload launched by PSLV C-58 mission.**
- ❖ The project — **1N Class Green Monopropellant thruster for altitude control and orbit keeping of micro satellite** — was sanctioned to a **Bengaluru-based start-up Bellatrix Aerospace Pvt Ltd**, which was the development agency.

ABOUT TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FUND (TDF) SCHEME

- ❖ The TDF is a **flagship programme of Ministry of Defence.**
- ❖ It is **executed by Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO)** under the **'Make in India' initiative.**
- ❖ The **scheme encourages participation of public/private industries** especially MSMEs to create an eco-system for **enhancing cutting edge technology capability** for **defence application**.
- ❖ It **provides Grant-in-Aid to industries** as well as **academic and scientific institutions** for **development of Defence and dualuse technologies in India.**
- ❖ It aims to **create a bridge amongst the Armed Forces, research organizations, etc.,** with **private sector entities.**

9.5   TRACK CHILD PORTAL AND GHAR PORTAL

- ❖ The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has developed the **"Track Child Portal"**, which enables **tracking of the missing** and **found children in all States/UTs.**
- ❖ The **Track Child portal** is **implemented** with support and involvement of various **stakeholders** namely **Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Railways, State Governments/ UT Administrations, Child Welfare Committees, Juvenile Justice Boards, National Legal Services Authority, etc.**
- ❖ The **TrackChild portal** is **also integrated with the CCTNS** or **Crime and Criminal Tracking & Network Systems of the Ministry of Home Affairs**, which allows **interoperability in terms of matching of F.I.Rs of missing children with database of TrackChild** to trace and match missing children by the concerned State/UT police.
- ❖ One component of TrackChild Portal has **"Khoya-Paya"** where any **citizen can report for any missing or sighted children.**

GHAR PORTAL

- ❖ **GHAR - GO Home and Re-Unite** (**Portal for Restoration and Repatriation of Child**) has been **developed and launched by National Commission for Protection of Child Rights** (**NCPCR) to digitally monitor and track the restoration and repatriation of children as per the protocols under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Rules thereof.**
- ❖ The following are the **salient features of the portal-**
  - ✓ **Digital tracking** and **monitoring of children** who **are in the Juvenile Justice system.**

- ✓ **Digital transfer of cases of children** to the **concerned Juvenile Justice Board/Child Welfare Committee** of the State for speedy repatriation of children.
- ✓ Where there is a **requirement of a translator/interpreter/expert**, request to be made to the concerned State Government.
- ✓ **Child Welfare Committees** and **District Child Protection Officers** can ensure proper **restoration and rehabilitation of children** by **digitally monitoring the progress of the case of the child.**
- ✓ **List** of **Government implemented schemes** is also provided
- ❖ As informed by NCPCR, a total **5175 children have been registered on the Go Home and Re-Unite (GHAR) Portal for repatriation.**

ABOUT NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS (NCPCR)

- ❖ NCPCR is a **statutory body set up in March 2007** under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.**
- ❖ The Commission is further **mandated to monitor the proper and effective implementation** of-
  - ✓ **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.**
  - ✓ **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.**
  - ✓ **Right to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009.**
- ❖ It is the **apex body for safeguarding children's rights.**
- ❖ **Works under the purview of Ministry of Women & Child Development.**
- ❖ Members include- **1 chairperson and 6 members**, at least two of the **members should be women**.

9.6   CHENNAI METRO JOINS ONDC NETWORK

- ❖ **Chennai Metro Rail** has become the **first metro service to be included in the ONDC Network**, marking a significant **step forward in digital commerce for metro services.**
- ❖ The **Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)**, an **initiative by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, has **introduced ticketing services for passengers using the Chennai Metro Rail Ltd.**

ABOUT ONDC

- ❖ Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) is **a network based on open protocol** and **will enable local commerce across segments**, such as mobility, grocery, food order and delivery, hotel booking and travel, among others, **to be discovered and engaged by any network-enabled application.**
- ❖ The platform **aims to create new opportunities**, **curb digital monopolies** and **by supporting micro, small and medium enterprises and small traders** and help them get on online platforms.

9.7   SAFE CITY PROJECT

- ❖ **U.N. Women** will work closely with the **Kerala State's gender parks** and **provide technical assistance for the Safe City project and gender data hub.**

ABOUT SAFE CITY PROJECT

- ❖ The **Safe City project** aims to **create a safe, secure and empowering environment for women in public places**, to enable them to **pursue all opportunities without the threat of gender-based violence and/or harassment.**
- ❖ It, further, aims to **prevent and curb all forms of crimes against women and girl children in public places** by providing **safer urban infrastructure and efficient access to law enforcement agencies**.
- ❖ It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme and an initiative of Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- ❖ The **Empowered Committee under Nirbhaya fund** has **approved Safe City projects** in **8 selected cities (Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Lucknow).**

9.8 PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA KISAN SAMRIDHI SAH-YOJANA (PM-MKSSY)

❖ The Centre recently approved the **"Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)".**
❖ The **Cabinet also approved extension of Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)** for another three years up to 2025-26.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI MATSYA KISAN SAMRIDHI SAH YOJANA

❖ The PM-MKSSY is **a central sector sub-scheme** under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada** for formalisation of the **fisheries sector** and **supporting fisheries micro and small enterprises**.
❖ Under **PM-MKSSY**, an **investment of over Rs 6,000 crore will be done** over a period of **next four years** from **financial year 2023-24 to 2026-27** in **all States/Union Territories.**
❖ Under this initiative, a **National Fisheries Digital Platform** will be **created to provide 40 lakh small and micro-enterprises work-based identities.**
❖ **Aims and objectives of PM-MKSSY**
   ✓ **Gradual Formalization of the unorganized fisheries sector** through **self registration of fishers, fish farmers and supportive workers** under a **National Fisheries Sector Digital Platform** including creation of work based digital identifies of fish workers for improved service delivery.
   ✓ Facilitating **access to institutional financing fisheries sector micro and small enterprises.**
   ✓ Providing **one-time incentive to beneficiaries** for purchasing aquaculture insurance.
   ✓ **Incentivizing fisheries and aquaculture microenterprises** through **performance grants for improving fisheries sector value-chain efficiencies** including creation and maintenance of jobs.
   ✓ **Incentivising micro and small enterprises** through performance grants for adoption and expansion of fish and fishery product safety and quality assurance systems including creation and maintenance of jobs.

9.9 SIKKIM ANNOUNCES OPS

❖ **Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang** has **announced the restoration of the Old Pension System (OPS) for state government employees** appointed **on or after April 1, 2006.**
❖ Sikkim **now stands as the first state in the Northeast to implement** OPS.
❖ As per **Sikkim services pension rules, 1990**, employees appointed **on or before March 31, 1990 will get benefit of this revival.**

9.10 GOI AND ADB SIGNED $200 MILLION LOAN FOR BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER MANAGEMENT

❖ The Government of India and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** signed a **$200 million loan** to strengthen flood and riverbank erosion risk management along the **650 kilometres (km)** long main stem of the **Brahmaputra river** in the state of **Assam.**
❖ The project builds on the success and lessons from the **ADB-financed Assam Integrated Flood and Riverbank Erosion Risk Management Investment Programme** implemented during 2010–2020, and similar investments in Bangladesh and will continue to tackle recurrent flooding and continual riverbank erosion of the **Brahmaputra river.**

ABOUT ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

- **The Asian Development Bank (ADB)** was founded in **1966** with the primary mission of fostering growth and cooperation among countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- It is headquartered in **Manila, Philippines.**
- At present, ADB comprises **68 members** (including India) – of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- The ADB was modeled closely on the World Bank, and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- ADB's five largest shareholders are **Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%).**
- ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
- ADB is an official United Nations Observer.

9.11 FUND INCREASED UNDER FAME SCHEME

- ❖ The Centre has said subsidies under the second phase of FAME Scheme will be eligible for e-vehicles sold till March 31, 2024, or till the time funds are made available. The Ministry of Heavy Industries has announced that the outlay of the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles in India (FAME-II) programme has been enhanced from Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 11,500 crore in a bid to push clean mobility in the country.

ABOUT THE FAME SCHEME

- ❖ **The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020** is a National Mission document providing the vision and the roadmap for the faster adoption of electric vehicles and their manufacturing in the country.
- ❖ As part of the NEMMP 2020, the Department of **Heavy Industry** (under the Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises) formulated a Scheme viz. **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme in 2015.**
- ❖ The objective of the FAME India scheme is to promote manufacturing of **electric and hybrid vehicle** technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same.
- ❖ The scheme encourages adoption of **Electric and hybrid vehicles** by offering upfront incentives on purchase of Electric vehicles and establishing a necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles.
- ❖ The scheme aims at addressing the issue of **environmental pollution and fuel security.**

PHASE-I

- ❖ The **Phase-I** of this Scheme was initially launched for a period of 2 years, commencing from 1st April 2015, which was subsequently extended up to **31st March 2019**.
- ❖ The 1st Phase of FAME India Scheme was implemented through four focus areas namely **(i) Demand Creation, (ii) Technology Platform, (iii) Pilot Project and (iv) Charging Infrastructure.**

PHASE-II

- ❖ Phase-II of **FAME India Scheme** is being implemented for a period of 3 years from 2019.
- ❖ This phase focuses on supporting electrification of **public & shared transportation.**
- ❖ In addition, the creation of charging infrastructure is also supported for **electric vehicles.**

9.12 MISSION LIFE

- ❖ A two-day national exhibition and programme of environment friendly activities on the **LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** themes was organized on 9th and 10th February at India Gate, Delhi.

❖ **Over 2,500 school** and college students from over **60 institutions** participated at the event, and brought their energy and creativity to the LiFE actions; **more than 3,000 people** overall visited the exhibitions over the two days.

ABOUT LIFE MISSION:

❖ **Mission LiFE, or Lifestyle for Environment**, is an India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.

❖ It was launched by the Indian Prime Minister at the **26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow** in November 2021.

❖ The program hopes to **"mobilize one billion Indians** as well as people in other countries to become individuals who practice sustainable lifestyles.

❖ The global movement will showcase sustainable goals and climate actions taken by countries and individuals around the world.

❖ It makes the fight against climate change democratic, in which everyone can contribute with their respective capacities.

❖ It emboldens the spirit of the **P3 model, i.e. Pro Planet People.**

❖ It functions on the basic principles of '**Lifestyle of the planet, for the planet and by the planet**'.

❖ It aims at following a three-pronged strategy for changing people's collective approach towards sustainability.

❖ This includes **nudging individuals** to practice simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives (demand), **enabling industries** and markets to respond swiftly to the changing demand (supply), and to **influence government** and industrial policy to support both sustainable consumption and production (policy).

9.13 PM SURYA GHAR: MUFT BIJLI YOJANA

❖ Prime Minister recently launched **PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana** to provide **free electricity to its beneficiaries**.

❖ As per the scheme, the **central government will provide 300 units of free electricity per month to its beneficiaries** by **investing worth ₹75,000 crores.**
  ✓ The **free electricity scheme** was **earlier announced by Finance Minister** in the interim budget speech.

❖ It aims to **light up 1 crore households by providing up to 300 units of free electricity every month.**

❖ This scheme **aims to incentivise the adoption of solar energy** among **residential consumers, promoting sustainability and reducing reliance** on conventional energy sources.

❖ It is **a Grid Connected Rooftop Solar PV System**.
  ✓ In the **grid connected rooftop or small solar photovoltaic (SPV) system**, the **DC power generated from solar panel is converted to AC power** using **power conditioning unit/Inverter** and **is fed to the grid.**

❖ **Urban Local Bodies and Panchayats** shall be **incentivised to promote rooftop solar systems in their jurisdictions**, under the scheme.

❖ **Subsidy-**
  ✓ Under this initiative, households can **avail a subsidy of Rs. 30,000 per kilowatt (kW) for systems up to 2 kW in capacity**.
  ✓ For **additional capacity beyond 2 kW**, the **subsidy reduces to Rs. 18,000 per kW**, applicable up to 3 kW.
  ✓ However, **for systems larger than 3 kW, the total subsidy is capped at Rs. 78,000.**

❖ According to the government, the **solar panel scheme is expected to generate savings of up to ₹15,000-18,000 annually** for **households from free solar electricity.**

9.14 SMART GRAM PANCHAYAT PILOT PROJECT

❖ The pilot project titled **'Smart Gram Panchayat: Revolution towards Digitization of Gram Panchayat'** was launched recently.
❖ It **aims to extend PM-WANI (Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) Service** in **all Gram Panchayats across Begusarai District in Bihar**.
  ✓ Begusarai has **now become the first District in Bihar to equip all Gram Panchayats with Wi-Fi services under the PM-WANI Scheme.**

ABOUT PM-WANI SCHEME

❖ PM- WANI Scheme was **launched by Department of Telecommunication in 2020.**
❖ It aims to **enhance proliferation of public WiFi hotspots** to **create robust digital communications infrastructure in country, especially in rural areas.**
❖ The scheme **encourages local shops and establishments to provide Wi-Fi for last-mile internet delivery** which **does not require a licence** or **charge a registration fee.**
❖ PM-WANI **ecosystem consists of four parts**: Public Data Office (PDO), Public Data Office Aggregator (PDOA), App Provider, and Central Registry.
  ✓ **PDO** establishes the Wi-Fi Hotspots and provides internet access to users.
  ✓ **PDOA** provides authorisation and accounting services to PDOs.
  ✓ The **app provider** displays the available hotspots in the phone's proximity.
  ✓ The **central registry** overseen by the Centre for Development of Telematics maintains details of App Providers, PDOs, and PDOAs.

9.15 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND (AHIDF)

❖ The government **recently launched the realigned AHIDF Scheme.**
❖ Under the realigned scheme, the following will be the benefit-
  ✓ **Interest Subvention of 3% payable up to 8 years**
  ✓ **Individuals, FPO, Dairy Cooperatives, Private Companies, Section 8 companies, MSME**
  ✓ **Credit guarantee** cover unto **25% of the term loan.**
  ✓ **No ceiling on the loan amount**
  ✓ Loan up to **90% of the estimated/actual project cost**
  ✓ **Dovetailing with capital subsidy schemes** of other ministries or state level schemes
  ✓ **Ease of application process through online portal www.ahidf.udaymimitra.in.**

ABOUT ANIMAL HUSBANDRY INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND (AHIDF) SCHEME

❖ It is **a Central Sector Scheme**.
❖ It is aimed at **incentivizing investments by individual entrepreneurs, private companies, MSME, Farmers Producers Organizations (FPOs) and Section 8 companies to establish-**
  ✓ **the dairy processing and value addition infrastructure**
  ✓ **meat processing and value addition infrastructure and**
  ✓ **Animal Feed Plant.**

9.16 E-JAGRITI PORTAL

❖ Consumer Affairs Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh recently asserted that **integration of artificial intelligence in 'e-Jagriti' portal will help reduce the number of pending cases in consumer courts.**

ABOUT E-JAGRITI PORTAL

❖ It is an **initiative of the Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution.**

❖ It is **a unified platform** that caters to the **needs of all stakeholders in Consumer Grievance redressal mechanism.**

❖ It is **envisaged to integrate consumer grievance platforms**, namely, the **Online Case Monitoring System (OCMS), E-Daakhil, the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission (NCDRC) Case Monitoring System, CONFONET website, mediation application, on a single platform.**

❖ The e-Jagriti platform has **case filing, online fee payment, case monitoring modules for seamless disposal of cases** by all the Commissions.

❖ The portal will integrate **a Virtual court facility** for a convenient and accessible resolution of consumer complaints.

❖ It is designed to **optimise the existing procedures by minimising redundancy, reducing human interventions, and automating end-to-end workflows.**

❖ It provides **a simple, fast, and cost-effective consumer dispute redressal software solution at all levels.**

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTE REDRESSAL COMMISSION (NCDRC)

❖ A **quasi-judicial body established in 1988** under the **Consumer Protection Act 1986.**

❖ Headquarters- **New Delhi**

❖ It is **headed by a sitting or retired Judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of a High Court**.

❖ **Section 21 of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986**, posits that the National Commission shall have **jurisdiction to entertain a complaint valued at more than two crores** and **also have appellate and revisional jurisdiction from the orders of State Commissions or the District**, as the case may be.

❖ **Appeals** against NCDRC orders can be made to the **Supreme Court within 30 days.**

9.17   SIKKIM INSPRIRES

❖ Chief Minister of Sikkim recently launched **Sikkim INSPIRES**, a **collaborative effort between the Government of Sikkim and the World Bank**.

❖ It is **aimed at fostering economic growth and inclusion**.

❖ The programme **focuses on providing better economic opportunities for women and youth through training and employment initiatives**.

❖ It marks the **first direct partnership between the State government and the World Bank**.

❖ The initiative will **engage nine government departments over the next five years to create an ecosystem for economic prosperity, emphasizing collaboration and capacity-building** across various sectors.

9.18   HAR GHAR JAL SCHEME

❖ **Arunachal Pradesh has become the first northeastern state to achieve 100% coverage** under the **Har Ghar Jal scheme** providing **functional household tap connection in every rural home.**

❖ **Arunachal** now has **joined** the elite club of **Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Haryana,Telengana, Puducherry, Gujarat, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh** which have attained **100% coverage**.

❖ The **national average of the coverage is over 74%.**

ABOUT HAR GHAR JAL SCHEME

❖ **Har Ghar Jal Scheme** is part of the **Jal Jeevan Mission** undertaken by the **Ministry of Jal Shakti**.

❖ The **Jal Jeevan Mission** is envisioned to **provide safe and adequate drinking water** through **individual household tap connections by 2024** to **all households in rural India.**

- ✓ Under JJM, a **functional household tap connection** is defined as **having service levels of adequate quantity (55 liters per capita per day)**, of **prescribed quality (as per BIS:10500 norms)** on **regular basis as per the schedule decided by the Panchayat/ Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC).**
- ✓ The **programme** will also **implement source sustainability measures** as **mandatory elements** such **as recharge and reuse** through **grey water management, water conservation and rainwater harvesting.**

9.19 FIRST HELICOPTER EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE

- ❖ **India** is set to launch its **first Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS) in Uttarakhand.**
- ❖ The **HEMS will be stationed at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh** and **will be able to airlift accident victims within a radius of 150 km** to the medical facility.
- ❖ The HEMS is **part of the government's initiative to expand medical outreach** and **trauma care services** using helicopters.
- ❖ This service **aims to provide timely transportation** for **accident victims and patients from hilly terrains** to **AIIMS**, ensuring they **receive critical care during the 'golden hour' after an accident.**

9.20 WOMEN SAFETY SCHEME

- ❖ The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister has approved the proposal of **Ministry of Home Affairs of continuation of implementation of Umbrella Scheme** on **'Safety of Women' at a total cost of Rs.1179.72 crore during the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.**
- ❖ Out of the total project outlay, **Rs.885.49 crore will be provided by MHA from its own budget** and **Rs.294.23 crore will be funded from Nirbhaya Fund.**
- ❖ In its efforts towards Women Safety, **Government of India in collaboration with States and Union Territories has launched several projects.**
- ❖ The objectives of these projects include-
  - ✓ strengthening **mechanisms in States/Union Territories for ensuring timely intervention and investigation in case of crime** against women and
  - ✓ **higher efficiency in investigation and crime prevention in such matters.**
- ❖ The Government of India has **proposed to continue the following projects under the Umbrella Scheme for "Safety of Women"-**
  - ✓ **112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) 2.0**;
  - ✓ **Upgradation of Central Forensic Sciences laboratories**, including setting up of National Forensic Data Centre;
  - ✓ Strengthening of **DNA Analysis, Cyber Forensic capacities** in State Forensic Science Laboratories (FSLs);
  - ✓ **Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children;**
  - ✓ **Capacity building and training of investigators and prosecutors** in handling sexual assault cases against women and children; and
  - ✓ **Women Help Desk & Anti-human Trafficking Units.**

9.21 RASHTRIYA UDYAMITA VIKAS PARIYOJANA

- ❖ The **Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana** was inaugurated in **Sambalpur, Odisha**.
- ❖ The initiative was **also launched virtually across 9 cities** - **Bhopal, Kanpur, Indore, Varanasi, Bharatpur, Shillong, Silchar, Dibrugarh and Guwahati.**

ABOUT THE SCHEME

- ❖ Tailored **specifically** for **beneficiaries of the PM SVANidhi scheme**, this **unique National Entrepreneurship Development Project underscores** the government's commitment to **nurturing job providers across the nation.**
- ❖ The **Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana** aims to **equip individuals with comprehensive entrepreneurship training**, aligning with the vision of **creating job providers rather than job seekers**.
- ❖ The **Rashtriya Udyamita Vikas Pariyojana** will offer comprehensive entrepreneurship training over a **period of 22 weeks**, combining **theoretical knowledge with practical exposure** through experiential learning.
  - ✓ The training will be conducted **through offline, online and hybrid modes**, with **certificates awarded upon completion, enhancing the course's credibility and value.**
- ❖ This initiative **focuses on reskilling and upskilling employees** to **enhance their competitiveness and adaptability** in an era of disruptive technology.
- ❖ The project will be **piloted initially in selected districts**, with **a focus on ensuring 40% participation by women.**

9.22   KALIA SCHEME EXTENDED

- ❖ The Odisha state extended the **cash assistance scheme**, **Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA)** for **farmers to overcome distress**, by **three more years with a proposed expenditure of ₹6,029 crore.**
- ❖ The scheme **exclusively meant for small and marginal farmers as well as sharecroppers** will be **operational till 2026-27.**
- ❖ The state has been implementing the KALIA scheme **since 2018-19** as a **majority of the population of the state is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.**
- ❖ It has been **synchronized with PM-KISAN** to provide **annual benefit of ₹10000 to small and marginal farmers** (₹6,000 from PM-KISAN and ₹4,000, from KALIA).
- ❖ In addition to the **financial assistance component and interest subvention**, KALIA offers **subsidies for insurance coverage.**
  - ✓ **Life insurance coverage of ₹2,00,000 at a premium of ₹330 per annum** (of which the state government will bear ₹165) to all savings bank account holders aged between 18-50 years.
  - ✓ **Personal accident cover** of **₹2,00,000 at a nominal premium of ₹12 per annum** (half borne by the state government) targeted at all savings bank account holders **aged between 18-50 years**.
- ❖ For beneficiaries in the **age group of 51-70 years, the entire annual premium of ₹12 is borne by the state.**

9.23   AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME

- ❖ Under the **ambitious Amrit Bharat Station Scheme**, PM Modi **laid down the foundation stones for redevelopment of 553 railway stations.**

ABOUT THE SCHEME

- ❖ Indian Railways has initiated the **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme**, aimed at **redeveloping 1309 stations nationwide**.
- ❖ Prime Minister laid the **foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 railway stations on August 6 last year.**
- ❖ The scheme's **primary objective** is to **enhance station facilities** with **modern infrastructure**, including **roof plazas and city centers**, fostering a **more convenient and comfortable experience for passengers**.
- ❖ Their design will **draw inspiration from local culture, heritage, and architecture.**

❖ Furthermore, these stations are **envisioned to be environmentally friendly and accessible to Divyang individuals.**

OTHER FACTS

❖ **Indian Railways**, renowned as **one of the world's busiest and oldest railway systems**, served a staggering **3.52 billion passengers and transported 1512 MT of freight in 2023**.

❖ Aptly dubbed the **lifeline of India**, it **operates over 13,000 trains daily, connecting 7,325 stations across the nation.**

10. INDEX AND REPORTS

10.1 ANNUAL SURVEY OF INDUSTRIES

❖ **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) for the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22 was recently released.**

MAJOR FINDINGS

❖ At the aggregate level, **gross value added grew by 8.8 per cent in 2020-21.**

❖ **Gujarat** led in GVA in 2020-21 and ranked second in 2021-22, while **Maharashtra topped in 2021-22**, **followed by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh.**

❖ The **industries** that drove growth during 2021-22 were **manufacture of basic metal, coke and refined petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, motor vehicles, and chemicals.**

❖ **Total employment in the sector** rebounded in 2021-22, **growing by 7.0% year-on-year and exceeding pre-pandemic levels.**

❖ The **share of workers** that were **self-employed rose from 52.2 per cent** in 2017-18 to **57.3 per cent in 2022-23.**

ABOUT THE SURVEY

❖ The **Annual Survey of Industries (ASI)** is the **principal source of industrial statistics in India**.

❖ **ASI is being conducted since 1959.**

❖ From **ASI 2010-11**, the **Survey is being conducted under the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008.**

❖ Ministry- M**inistry of Statistics and Program Implementation.**

❖ It covers **all factories registered under the Factories Act, 1948. I t also covers unit under the Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966 etc.**
   ✓ These surveys **cover factories employing 10 or more workers using power** and **those employing 20 or more workers without power.**
   ✓ **Defence establishments, oil storage and distribution depots, etc. are <u>not covered</u>.**

10.2 ELECTRICITY 2024 REPORT

❖ **THE Electricity 2024 report** was recently **released by International Energy Agency.**

MAJOR INDIA SPECIFIC FINDINGS

❖ India's **electricity demand will outpace China's** and have the **world's fastest growth rate by 2026.**

❖ **India's annual average electricity demand growth** is pegged at **6.5% over 2024-2026.**

❖ **Coal** will meet **68% of India's electricity needs in 2026.**

❖ With **China and India leading new nuclear reactor construction**, **Asia's nuclear generation** will **exceed North America's by 2026.**

❖ The **contribution of renewable energy (RE) generation** remained **relatively steady**, constituting **21% of electricity generation in 2023.**

10.3	TOMTOM TRAFFIC INDEX 2023

- ❖ The **Tomtom Traffic Index 2023** was released by **company called TomTom**, which **specialises in location technology.**
- ❖ The report looked at **387 cities in 55 countries**, measuring how **traffic affected travel time, fuel costs, and carbon emissions using data from over 600 million car navigation systems.**
- ❖ It showed that **London had the slowest traffic in 2023**.
- ❖ Two cities in India, **Bengaluru and Pune**, were **among the ten worst for traffic in 2023**, according to the TomTom report.
- ❖ **Bengaluru was in 6th place**, taking an average of 28 minutes and 10 seconds for a 10-kilometre journey, and **Pune was in 7th place**, taking 27 minutes and 50 seconds.
- ❖ **Bengaluru**, known as the IT capital of India, **was also named the second most congested city in 2023**, with **Dublin, Ireland being the only city worse.**

10.4	HENLEY PASSPORT INDEX 2024

- ❖ The **Henley Passport Index for 2024 has been released.**
- ❖ The **Henley Passport Index ranks nations** based on the **strength of their passports.**
- ❖ The Henley Passport Index derives its rankings from data spanning the past 19 years, based on the **International Air Transport Association's (IATA) specialized data**, covering **199 different passports and 227 travel destinations worldwide.**
- ❖ **Rankings**
  - ✓ **France secured the top spot** with its **passport granting visa-free access to 194 countries**.
  - ✓ **Germany, Italy, Japan, Singapore, and Spain** are the **other countries that are standing alongside France on the top.**
  - ✓ **India's** passport ranking has **slipped one place from last year, moving from 84th to 85th position.**
  - ✓ Indian passport holders **can travel visa-free to 62 countries.**

10.5	INTERNATIONAL IP INDEX 2024

- ❖ The **US Chamber of Commerce** released the **12th edition of its International IP (intellectual property) Index**.
- ❖ The **United States emerged at the top of the list** followed by the **United Kingdom and France.**
- ❖ The index **evaluates the IP framework of the world's top 55 economies** and **found 20 economies significantly improving.**
- ❖ India maintained its **42nd position on the International IP Index 2024**, with **a score of 38.64%, unchanged since 2022.**
- ❖ **Issues**
  - ✓ The report **highlighted concerns over India's intellectual property (IP) regime**, citing the **dissolution of the Intellectual Property Appellate Board in 2021** and an **under-resourced judiciary**.

11. INTERNATIONAL, SUMMITS

11.1   SULTAN IBRAHIM INSTALLED KING OF MALYASIA

❖ Malaysia's **Sultan Ibrahim** from the **southern state of Johor** was **installed as the country's 17th king** recently
❖ He took the **oath of office in a ceremony at the national palace in Kuala Lumpur.**
❖ The **monarchy plays a mostly ceremonial role** in **Malaysia.**
❖ Under a unique system of monarchy, the **heads of Malaysia's nine royal families** take **turns to be the King**, known as the **"Yang di-Pertuan Agong" every five years.**

11.2   SAARCFINANCE MEET

❖ RBI Deputy Governor, at the **SAARCFINANCE seminar**, has remarked that although **society harnesses the benefits of emerging technologies in the financial sector**, **regulators** should pay **careful attention to the underlying risks.**
❖ Central banks should focus on **responsible use, data security and privacy, legal compliance, and ethical questions** when it comes to these technologies.

ABOUT SAARCFINANCE

❖ The **10th SAARC Summit of the Head of the States of the SAARC Region** which was held in Colombo on July 29, 1998 agreed, in principle, to **establish a "Network of Central Bank Governors and Finance Secretaries of the SAARC Region (SAARCFINANCE)"** with a view to **opening dialogues on macroeconomic policies of the region and sharing mutual experiences and ideas.**
❖ Accordingly, the **SAARCFINANCE was established** on **September 9, 1998** as a **regional network of the SAARC Central Bank Governors and Finance Secretaries**.
❖ It is **a permanent body**, which got **formal recognition of SAARC at the 11th SAARC Summit**, held in **Kathmandu, Nepal in January 2002**.
❖ As per the decision of the Summit, **Chairperson of SAARCFINANCE** is **invited to the sessions of the SAARC Council of Ministers** to make a presentation on SAARCFINANCE activities.
❖ The **Chair of the SAARCFINANCE** moved to the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) from Bangladesh Bank** during the Asian Clearing Union (ACU) Meeting held in Dhaka on May 15, 2007.
❖ The SAARCFINANCE Group **meets twice a year concurrently with the IMF/WB annual and spring meetings.**

11.3   BRICS EXPANSION

❖ As per reports, **Saudi Arabia** and **four other countries have accepted the invitation to join the BRICS club of nations** that was extended during a summit last year.
   ✓ **Saudi Arabia, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates** are **now full members**
   ✓ **Argentina** has **decided to not join BRICS**
   ✓ The **last expansion of the BRICS occurred in 2010 when South Africa joined** the group.
❖ Also, BRICS foreign ministers are **developing a so-called BRICS partner country model to accommodate 17 nations** who were not accepted as full members.
❖ The bloc is also **devising a framework to allow members to use their local currencies for inter-BRICS trade.**
❖ Russia will take over as **chair of the bloc this year from South Africa.**

11.4	CODEX STANDARDS

- The **Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH)** has **finalised and recommended,   quality standards for five spices** -- allspice, juniper berries, star anise, turmeric, and cardamom recently,** to the **Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)** for adoption as full -fledged Codex standards.
- The **Committee is chaired by India** and **Spices Board India functions as its Secretariat**.
- **M.R. Sudharshan is the current Chairman of the Committee.**
- The **seventh plenary session** of the **CCSCH,** held in **Kochi**, **was the first physical meeting after a gap of five years**.
- As many as **109 delegates from 31 countries attended the five-day long meeting**.

ABOUT CODEX STANDARDS

- These are **international food texts**, including- **standards, codes of practice, codes of hygienic practice**, **guidelines** and **other recommendations.**
- Codex texts **are voluntary** and **not binding on national food laws.**
- **Codex standards** are **globally important** because they are **prepared by intergovernmental committees**, are **referred to resolve international trade disputes** and **also form the basis of aligning national standards by Codex member countries.**
- **Standards in Codex** are **finalized through an 8-step process**, with reviews at several stages, using working groups chaired by member countries.

ABOUT CAC

- The **Codex Alimentarius Commission(CAC)** is **an international food standards body** established **jointly by the Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO)in May 1963** with the **objective** of **protecting consumer's health and ensuring fair practices in food trade.**
- **Headquarters- Rome, Italy**
- It **conducts its work** through **various Codex committees**, including CCSCH, hosted by different member countries.
- The commission has **189 Codex Members including India.**

11.5	IRAN OFFERS VISA FREE TRAVEL TO INDIANS

- Iran announced the **initiation of a 15-day visa-free policy** for **Indian tourists visiting the country (through air border).**
- Under the new order, **Indian citizens would be allowed to enter Iran** with **ordinary passports once every six months** and **with a maximum stay of 15 days which will not be extended.**
- The visa abolition **only applies to individuals entering Iran for tourism purposes**
  - ✓ If Indian nationals **wish to stay for a longer period** or **make multiple entries within a six-month period require other types of visas**, they **must obtain the necessary visas through the respective representations of Iran in India.**

11.6	NAYIB BUKELE IS EL SALVADOR PRESIDENT

- **Nayib Bukele**, the **incumbent President of El Salvador**, secured a **thumping victory for a second consecutive term in elections** in the Central American country.
- The electorate roundly voted for **a continuation of the security plan "the state of exception"** which has brought such a radical change to the nation.
- More than **75,000 people have been arrested under the policy** in just under two years, but entire communities have been **freed from an asphyxiating degree of gang control.**

11.7	SASEC

❖ PM laid the **foundation stone of multiple road upgradation projects** worth over **Rs 3400 crore**, under which **43 roads including 38 bridges will be upgraded** as part of the **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Corridor Connectivity.**

ABOUT SASEC

❖ Established- **2001**
❖ The **South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)** program brings together **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka** in **a project-based partnership** that aims to **promote regional prosperity, improve economic opportunities, and build a better quality of life** for the people of the subregion.
❖ The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** serves as **Secretariat to the SASEC Program.**
❖ As of **December 2023, SASEC countries have implemented 86 regional projects** worth **over $20.54 billion** in the **energy, economic corridor development, transport, trade facilitation, health, and information and communications technology sectors.**

11.8	TELANGANA ANNOUNCES HELP DESK ABROAD FOR STUDENTS

❖ **Telangana Chief Minister** Revanth Reddy today said that his **government would set up a dedicated help desk for all young people living in the USA**, and **other countries, especially students**, to ensure all their needs are met.
❖ The move was **announced as the Chief Minister expressed concern over the recent deaths of four students in the United States this year.**

11.9	UAE GOLDEN VISA TO ANAND KUMAR

❖ **Super 30 founder Anand Kumar** has joined the **elite list of Indian celebrities** who **have been granted the 'Golden Visa' by the United Arab Emirates government.**
❖ Kumar **was nominated for the Golden Visa by the UAE Embassy in India.**
❖ The **coveted Golden Visa**, **introduced by the UAE in 2019**, grants **long-term residency, permitting independent living, working, and studying.**
❖ Individuals in the fields of **science, knowledge, culture, and art are granted the Golden Visa.**
❖ **Kumar getting the coveted visa** represents a **noteworthy inclusion from the academic sector, traditionally dominated by Bollywood and sports icons.**
❖ Kumar, a **Mathematics educator**, started his **Super 30 programme in Patna in 2002**, known for **coaching underprivileged students for JEE-Main & JEE-Advanced**, the entrance examination for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).
❖ He was **named in Time magazine's list of Best of Asia 2010**.
❖ In 2023, he **was awarded the Padma Shri, fourth highest civilian award by the Government of India.**

11.10	FORMER CHILE PRESIDENT DIES IN HELICOPTER CRASH

❖ **Chilean ex-President Sebastián Piñera**, who **served two terms** and was **also a billionaire businessman**, has **died in a helicopter crash at the age of 74.**
❖ **Three other people aboard the aircraft survived** when it came down in **a lake near the southern town of Lago Ranco.**
❖ **National mourning has been declared and tributes have poured in.**
❖ Piñera **came to power in 2010**, the **first conservative politician to be elected president** after the **end of military rule 20 years earlier.**

11.11 AHMED AWAD BIN MUBARAK IS YEMEN PM

- ❖ **Yemen's internationally recognised government** has named Foreign Minister **Ahmed Awad bin Mubarak as** the new **prime minister.**
- ❖ **Bin Mubarak replaces Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed** at a time of **rising tensions in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country** after a spate of **Red Sea attacks by Houthi rebels on ships** that have **prompted retaliatory strikes by the United States and the UK.**

11.12 7TH INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE 2024

- ❖ External Affairs Minister will address the inaugural session of the **7th Indian Ocean Conference in Perth, Australia** recently.
- ❖ The Conference is a flagship consultative forum for countries in the **Indian Ocean Region**, organized annually by the Ministry of External Affairs since 2016, in association with India Foundation.
- ❖ The Indian Ocean Conference commences theme for 2024 - **"Towards a Stable and Sustainable Indian Ocean".**

11.13 INDIA-SRI LANKA - MAURITIUS

- ❖ The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi along with the President of Sri Lanka, Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe and the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr Pravind Jugnauth jointly inaugurated the launch of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, and also RuPay card services in Mauritius via video conferencing.

BENEFITS:

- ❖ **Digital transformation** will get a **boost**, **local economies** will witness **positive change** and **tourism** will be promoted.
- ❖ Its **launch symbolizes** the **success** of **Global South cooperation.**
- ❖ The launch will **enable the availability** of **UPI settlement services** for **Indian nationals** travelling to **Sri Lanka** and **Mauritius** as well as for **Mauritian nationals travelling to India**.
- ❖ The extension of **RuPay card services** in **Mauritius** will enable **Mauritian banks** to issue cards based on **RuPay mechanism** in **Mauritius** and **facilitate usage** of **RuPay Card** for settlements in **India** and **Mauritius**.
- ❖ It aligns with India's policy of **'Neighborhood First'** and our **maritime vision -SAGAR** i.e. **Security and growth for all in the region**. India does not see its **development separately** from its **neighbors**.

ABOUT UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE (UPI):

- ❖ It is an advanced version of **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)-** round–the-clock funds transfer service to make cashless payments faster, easier and smoother.
- ❖ **UPI** is a system that **powers multiple bank accounts** into a **single mobile application** (of any participating bank), merging several banking features, seamless fund routing & merchant payments into one hood.
- ❖ **UPI** is **currently the biggest among** the **National Payments Corporation of India** (NPCI) operated systems including National Automated Clearing House **(NACH)**, Immediate Payment Service **(IMPS)**, Aadhaar enabled Payment System **(AePS)**, Bharat Bill Payment System **(BBPS)**, RuPay etc.
- ❖ The top UPI apps today include **PhonePe**, **Paytm**, **Google Pay**, **Amazon Pay** and **BHIM**, the latter being the Government offering.

ABOUT RUPAY:

- ❖ **RuPay** (portmanteau of Rupee and Payment) is an **Indian multinational financial** services and **Payment Service System**, conceived and launched by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** in **2014**.
- ❖ **NPCI** conceived **RuPay** as an **alternative** to **Mastercard** and **Visa**, while consolidating and integrating various payment systems in India. **RuPay** was launched with an objective of a less cash economy.
- ❖ It was created to fulfil the **Reserve Bank of India's (RBI)** vision of establishing a domestic, open and **multilateral system of payments**. **RuPay** facilitates electronic payment at **all Indian banks** and **financial institutions**.

11.14 WORLD GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2024

- ❖ The **11ᵗʰ edition of the World Government Summit (WGS)** took place recently in **Dubai, United Arab Emirates.**
  - ✓ It had earlier designated **India, Türkiye, and Qatar as guests of honor.**
- ❖ The **Indian Prime Minister** participated in the **World Government Summit 2024 as a guest of honour.**
- ❖ In 2024, the **World Governments Summit** took place **under the theme** of **'Shaping Future Governments'.**
  - ✓ **It will involve governments, international organizations, thought leaders, and private sector leaders** from around the globe to **international cooperation and enable governments** to identify **innovative solutions for future challenges.**
- ❖ The World Governments Summit is a global knowledge exchange platform for governments that was **established in 2013** under the **leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum**, **Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai.**

11.15 ABU DHABI'S FIRST HINDU TEMPLE

- ❖ Prime Minister recently **inaugurated Abu Dhabi's first Hindu stone temple.**
- ❖ The temple has been **built by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS).**
- ❖ The **UAE has three other Hindu temples that are located in Dubai.**

ABOUT THE TEMPLE

- ❖ The BAPS temple **is built on a 27-acre site in Abu Mreikhah**, near Al Rahba off the Dubai-Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed Highway, at a cost of around ₹700 crore.
- ❖ Constructed with **18 lakh bricks, seven lakh man hours and 1.8 lakh cubic metres of sandstone sourced directly from Rajasthan**, Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple **has been made in the Nagara style of architecture.**
- ❖ Over **300 high-tech sensors have been installed at every level of the temple to measure temperature, pressure and movement (seismic activity)**.
- ❖ **No metal has been used in the construction of the temple** and **fly ash has been used to fill up the foundation**, replacing 55 per cent of cement in the concrete mix, **reducing the carbon footprint** of the temple.
- ❖ **Heat-resistant nano tiles and heavy glass panels** have been used considering the extreme temperatures in the UAE.
- ❖ The **work for the structure has been going on since 2019.**
- ❖ The **land for the temple was donated by the UAE government.**
- ❖ The **BAPS temple**, spread **over a large area with stone architecture, will be the largest of all in the Gulf region.**

11.16 WEIMAR TRIANGLE

- ❖ The **governments of Poland, France and Germany vowed** to make **Europe a security and defence power with a greater ability to back Ukraine.**
- ❖ They **discussed reviving the so-called Weimar Triangle.**

ABOUT WEIMAR TRIANGLE

- ❖ **It is** a long-dormant regional grouping that was **designed to promote cooperation between France, Germany and Poland.**
- ❖ The **Weimar Triangle was created in 1991** as **Poland was emerging from decades of communism as a platform for political cooperation among the three nations.**

11.17 JAPAN SLIDES TO 4TH LARGEST ECONOMY

- ❖ **Japan's economy** is now the **world's fourth-largest after it contracted in the last quarter of 2023 and fell behind Germany.**
- ❖ The government reported the **economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4% in October to December**
  - ✓ It contracted 2.9% in July-September.
  - ✓ **Two straight quarters of contraction** are **considered an indicator an economy is in a technical recession.**
- ❖ **USA, China, Germany are the top 3 largest economies in the world**, while **India is ranked at 5th spot.**
- ❖ The **comparison among nations' economies is based on nominal GDP and is in dollar terms.**

11.18 INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

- ❖ The **International Court of Justice** recently elected **Judge Nawaf Salam (Lebanon) as President** and **Judge Julia Sebutinde (Uganda) as Vice-President.**
- ❖ **Election Process**
  - ✓ The **President and Vice-President** are **elected by the Members of the Court every three years** by secret ballot.
  - ✓ The election is **held on the date on which Members of the Court elected at a triennial election begin** their terms of office or shortly thereafter.
  - ✓ An **absolute majority is required** and there are **no conditions of nationality**.
  - ✓ The **President and Vice-President may be re-elected.**

ABOUT ICJ

- ❖ The **International Court of Justice (ICJ) is the principal judicial organ** of the **United Nations (UN)**.
- ❖ It was **established in June 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations and began work in April 1946.**
- ❖ The **seat** of the Court is at **the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands)**.
- ❖ Of the **six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (United States of America).**
- ❖ The Court's **role** is to **settle**, in accordance with international law, **legal disputes submitted to it by States and to give advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it** by **authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.**
- ❖ The Court **is composed of 15 judges**, who are **elected for terms of office of nine years** by the **United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council.**
- ❖ It is **assisted by a Registry, its administrative organ**.
- ❖ Its **official languages are English and French.**

11.19 REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON AFGHANISATAN

- ❖ **Deputy national security adviser Vikram Misri** represented India at the **6th regional dialogue of officials of security councils and national security advisers on Afghanistan recently.**
- ❖ It was **held in the Kyrgyzstan capital of Bishkek**.
- ❖ **Iran, India, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, China, Turkmenistan and Pakistan** are **members of this regional security mechanism.**

11.20 INDIA CHAIRS SESSION OF COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ India's **Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ruchira Kamboj**, chaired the **62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development**.
- ❖ With the **priority theme** of **"Fostering Social Development and Social Justice through Social Policies to Accelerate Progress on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to Achieve the Overarching Goal of Poverty Eradication**," the session delved into critical global social challenges.
- ❖ Under **India's stewardship**, **four resolutions were successfully adopted**. These included resolutions on
    - ✓ **promoting care and support systems for social development**,
    - ✓ **the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development**, and
    - ✓ **resolutions outlining priority themes for the 62nd and 63rd sessions of the Commission for Social Development.**
- ❖ **India's appointment as Chair** marked a **significant milestone**, marking the **country's first time holding this esteemed position within the Commission for Social Development since 1975.**
- ❖ India welcomed **Poland as the incoming Chair**, entrusted with **presiding over the 63rd session of the Commission for Social Development in 2025.**

ABOUT THE COMMISSION

- ❖ The Commission is **a functional body of the Economic and Social Council** that serves as a **vital intergovernmental platform** to **discuss and enhance international cooperation on social development matters.**

11.21 MISSION ASPIDES

- ❖ The **European Union** has launched **'Mission Aspides',** a **naval mission to protect cargo ships in the Red Sea** from attacks from **Yemen's Houthi rebels**.
- ❖ The naval mission will **send European warships and airborne early warning systems** to the **Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters.**
- ❖ The **operational command centre will be in the Greek city of Larissa.**
- ❖ **Aspides vessels** will have **orders to fire on the Houthis only if they attack first** and **will not be authorised to shoot pre-emptively.**

11.22 RAISINA DIALOGUE

- ❖ Prime Minister inaugurated the **9th edition of Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi.**
- ❖ **Greece Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis joined the inaugural session as the Chief Guest.**
- ❖ The **three-day India's flagship conference** will address the **most challenging issues facing the international community, including geopolitics and geo-economics.**
- ❖ The **theme** of the 2024 edition is **"Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create".**

- ❖ The 9th Raisina Dialogue will witness the **participation of representatives from over 100 countries** including **Ministers, former Heads of State and Heads of Government, Military Commanders, Captains of Industry, and Technology Leaders.**
- ❖ Over **2500 participants from about 115 countries will be joining the Dialogue in-person.**

ABOUT RAISINA DIALOGUE

- ❖ The Raisina Dialogue is an **annual conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics**, which **aims to address the most challenging issues faced by the world.**
- ❖ **Delhi-based think tank Observer Research Foundation**, in partnership with the **Ministry of External Affairs**, **hosts the conference.**

11.23   POVERTY AND HUNGER ALLEVIATION FUND

- ❖ India has **pledged $1 million** to the **Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund** established by **India, Brazil, and South Africa (IBSA)**.
- ❖ The contribution **underscores India's commitment to fostering cooperation and development among nations of the Global South.**
- ❖ Established **jointly in March 2004** and **operational since 2006**, the **IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation (IBSA Fund)** aims to **identify and implement replicable and scalable projects** in developing countries.
- ❖ **IBSA Fund-supported projects** help **partner countries in the Global South** to **achieve their national priorities, as well as all other internationally agreed development goals.**

ABOUT IBSA FORUM

- ❖ It comprises **India, Brazil and South Africa.**
- ❖ It was **formalised and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum in 2003.**

11.24   ALBANIA TO OPEN EMBASSY IN INDIA

- ❖ Albania is **all set to open up its Embassy in New Delhi soon** in **reciprocation to India's plans to establish a mission in Tirana.**

ABOUT ALBANIA

- ❖ Albania shares a **border with Greece** (South and South East) along with **Montenegro** (North West), **Kosovo** (North East) and **North Macedonia** (East)
- ❖ Albania is **strategically positioned to contribute to and benefit from emerging connectivity projects bridging India and Europe.**
- ❖ Approximately **500 kilometers of coastline touching Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea.**

11.25   MOBILE WORLD CONGRESS 2024

- ❖ **Mobile World Congress 2024** (MWC) 2024 started recently.
- ❖ The connectivity event is **being hosted by GSMA** and was **organised at Barcelona, Spain.**
- ❖ The event is **hosted every year and brings people from companies that deal in mobile and wireless technologies.**
- ❖ The **theme** of this year's MWC is **"Future First"** and most of the discussion will revolve around the same.
  - ✓ The event is **also divided into six sub themes**, which includes **Humanising AI, 5G and Beyond, Connecting Everything, Manufacturing DX, Game Changers, and Our Digital DNA.**

ABOUT GSMA

- The **GSM Association** is a **lobby organisation** that **represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide**.
- More than **750 mobile operators are full GSMA members** and **a further 400 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem are associate members.**
- Headquarters- **London, UK**
- **GSM (Global System for Mobile communication)** is a **digital mobile network** that is **widely used by mobile phone users in Europe and other parts of the world**.
  - ✓ GSM **digitizes and compresses data**, then **sends it down a channel with two other streams of user data, each in its own time slot.**
  - ✓ It **operates at either the 900 megahertz (MHz) or 1,800 MHz frequency band.**

11.26 PHILIPPINES RATIFIES ILO CONVENTION 190

- Philippines has **become the first Asian country** to **ratify a convention to end workplace violence and harassment.**
- The International Labor Organisation said that the **Philippines deposited the instrument of ratification of the Violence and Harassment Convention 2019 (No. 190)** recently.
- Convention No. 190 serves as the **inaugural international labor standard** to **comprehensively address violence and harassment in the realm of work.**
- It **mandates members** to **develop inclusive and gender-responsive strategies**, in consultation with **representative employers' and workers' organizations**, aimed at **preventing and eliminating workplace violence and harassment.**

11.27 ARMENIA WITHDRAWS FROM CSTO

- **Armenia** has **suspended its participation** in the **Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).**
- This was announced by the **Armenian Prime Minister, Nikol Pashinyan recently.**

ABOUT CSTO

- **Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)** is an **intergovernmental military alliance** between **Russia and other former Soviet republics**.
- **Origin**
  - ✓ The **Collective Security Treaty Organization** originates from the **conclusion of the Collective Security Treaty**, which was **signed in Tashkent (Uzbekistan) on May 15, 1992** by the **heads of Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.**
  - ✓ Later, it was **joined by Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia (1993)**.
  - ✓ The treaty **entered into force upon completion of the national ratification procedures on April 20, 1994.**
- The **CSTO** presently includes **six states**: **Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan.**
- **CSTO Secretariat – Moscow, Russia**
- The **Collective Security Council** (CSC) is the **highest body of the Organization** and **consists of heads of the member States**.
  - ✓ **Sessions of the CSC** are **held alternately in the member States** as necessary, but **at least once a year**.
  - ✓ The **chairmanship** of the Council is **transferred in the order of the Russian alphabet**, unless the Council decides otherwise.

11.28 WOMEN EXPORTERS IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY (WEIDE) FUND

- ❖ The **World Trade Organisation** and the **International Trade Centre (ITC)** launched a **USD 50 million global fund** to **help women tap into opportunities in international trade and the digital economy.**
- ❖ The **Women Exporters in the Digital Economy (WEIDE) Fund** will **help women-led businesses and women entrepreneurs** in **developing economies and least-developed countries** adopt digital technologies and expand the online presence of their enterprises.
- ❖ **The UAE is allocating USD 5 million to the Fund as its first donor.**

WTO SESSION

- ❖ The **World Trade Organisation's (WTO's) 13th ministerial conference (MC13)** was held **in Abu Dhabi**, **United Arab Emirates**.
- ❖ The WTO is hoping for **progress, particularly on fishing, agriculture and electronic commerce.**

ABOUT WTO

- ❖ WTO is **an international organization set up in 1995** by **replacing the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT)** under the **Marrakesh Agreement.**
- ❖ **World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only international organization dealing with the global rules of trade.**
- ❖ Headquarters- **Geneva, Switzerland**
- ❖ **Members**
  - ✓ Currently, the **WTO has 166 members and 23 observer governments.**
  - ✓ **India is a founding member of WTO.**
  - ✓ On 26th February 2024, at the 13th Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi, **Comoros and Timor Leste became the 165th and 166th members.**
- ❖ The **overall objective** of the WTO is to **help its members use trade as a means to raise living standards**, **create jobs** and **improve people's lives**.
- ❖ The **WTO is run by its member governments.**
- ❖ All **major decisions are made by the membership as a whole**, either by **ministers** (who usually meet at least once every two years) or **by their ambassadors or delegates** (who meet regularly in Geneva).

ABOUT ITC

- ❖ The **International Trade Centre** is a **multilateral agency** which has **a joint mandate with the World Trade Organization** and the **United Nations** through the **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.**
- ❖ It is **fully dedicated to supporting small businesses of developing countries to trade.**
- ❖ It was **originally created by General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)** in **1964**.

12. DAYS TO REMEMBER

12.1   INDIAN COAST GUARD DAY- FEBRUARY 1ST

❖ The **Indian Coast Guard Day** or ICG Day is **celebrated on 1 February every year.**
❖ This year marks the **48th anniversary of the Coast Guard's establishment.**
❖ The history of ICG Day dates back to **1 February 1977**, when the **interim Indian Coast Guard was established** to prevent the sea-borne smuggling of goods.
    ✓ ICG was established in **August 1978 by the Coast Guard Act, 1978** as an **independent Armed force of India.**
❖ It is the **fourth largest Coast Guard in the world.**
❖ On 18 August 1978, the **Indian Parliament officially declared the ICG Day** to be **celebrated on 1 February of every year.**
❖ **It works under the purview of Ministry of Defence.**
❖ **The Maritime Zones of India are divided into five Coast Guard Regions, namely,**

Coast Guard Regions	Regional headquarters
North-West	Gandhinagar
West	Mumbai
East	Chennai
North-East	Kolkata
Andaman & Nicobar	Port Blair

❖ **Functions**
    ✓ They conduct **search and rescue operations, safeguard against maritime smuggling, and diligently patrol our borders.**
    ✓ They work closely with various agencies like the Navy, Customs, Fisheries department, and state police to ensure comprehensive maritime security.

12.2   WORLD CANCER DAY FEBRUARY 4TH

❖ On the 4th of February every year, the world observes **World Cancer Day** and **unites to raise awareness on fundamental cancer issues.**
❖ It is the **global uniting initiative** led by the **Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).**
❖ Between 2022 and 2024, the **theme/focus** of World Cancer Day is to help **"Close the cancer gap."**
❖ Created in **2000**, World Cancer Day has **grown into a positive movement for everyone, everywhere to unite under one voice to face one of the greatest challenges in history.**

12.3   INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HUMAN FRATERNITY- FEBRUARY 4TH

❖ Every year, **International Day of Human Fraternity** is observed on **February 4th**.
❖ History
    ✓ On February 4, 2019, the **historic document** - **Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together** – was **signed by the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb**, and **Pope Francis.**

- ✓ **On December 21, 2020**, **International Day of Human Fraternity** was established by the **United Nations General Assembly.**
- ✓ Since then, International Day of Human Fraternity is observed on February 4 every year

12.4   WORLD WETLANDS DAY

- ❖ World Wetlands Day (WWD) is **celebrated across the globe on February 2ⁿᵈ.**
- ❖ **It is observed to commemorate the adoption** of **Ramsar Treaty** on wetlands on **2ⁿᵈ February 1971.**
- ❖ The **theme of WWD-2024 is 'Wetlands and Human Wellbeing'** which **underscores the critical role wetlands play in enhancing our lives**.
- ❖ It **highlights** how **wetlands contribute to flood protection, clean water, biodiversity and recreational opportunities,** all of which are essential for human health and prosperity.
- ❖ This year, the **Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC),** in collaboration with the Government of Madhya Pradesh, is **organizing the national World Wetlands Day event** at **Sirpur Lake, Indore**, a Ramsar site designated in 2022.

12.5   WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK FEBRUARY 1-7

- ❖ **World Interfaith Harmony Week** is an **annual event** observed **during the first week of February**, since the **General Assembly designation in 2010**.
- ❖ **World Interfaith Harmony Week (WIHW)**, conceived to promote a culture peace and nonviolence, was **first proposed by King Abdullah II of Jordan** at the **United Nations in 2010**.
- ❖ This was **adopted by the UN General Assembly** (resolution A/RES/65/5), declaring the **first week of February each year as World Interfaith Harmony week.**
- ❖ The General Assembly pointed out that **mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue constitute important dimensions of a culture of peace** and established **World Interfaith Harmony Week as a way to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith.**

12.6   INDIAN NAVY DECLARES 2024 AS 'YEAR OF NAVAL CIVILIANS'

- ❖ The Indian Navy has declared 2024 as 'Year of Naval Civilians' **to improve administration, efficiency and well-being of Naval Civilians** by **addressing all facets of Civilian HR Management** in a time bound manner.
  - ✓ **Major focus areas** towards **maximising administrative efficiency, digital initiatives, generic and specific training programmes** and **welfare activities,** have been **identified for implementation in 2024.**
- ❖ **Naval Civilian Personnel** constitute about a **third of Indian Navy's total workforce** and contribute significantly to its **operational effectiveness across all domains**.
- ❖ Civilian personnel impact the overall **performance of Naval formations** such as **Command Headquarters, Dockyards, Material Organisations, NADs, Naval Armament Inspectorates, Training Establishments and several other types of support units.**

12.7   INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO TOLERANCE FOR FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION- FEBRUARY 6TH

- ❖ The **International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation** is held annually on **February 6ᵗʰ**.
- ❖ **The theme for this year is "Her Voice. Her Future"**

ABOUT FGM

- ❖ Female genital mutilation (FGM) comprises **all procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia** for **non-medical reasons** and is **recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights**, the **health and the integrity of girls and women.**
- ❖ United Nations strives for its **full elimination by 2030**, following the spirit of **Sustainable Development Goal 5.**
- ❖ Since **2008**, **UNFPA**, **jointly with UNICEF**, leads the **largest global programme to accelerate the elimination** of female genital mutilation.
- ❖ The **Joint Programme currently focuses** on **17 countries in Africa and the Middle East** and also supports regional and global initiatives.

12.8   WORLD PULSES DAY- FEBRUARY 10TH

- ❖ World Pulses Day is celebrated on **10 February every year**.
- ❖ The **UN General Assembly recognised the value of pulses in 2013** and initiated the process of **adopting the year 2016** as the **International Year of Pulses (IYP).**
- ❖ **In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly declared February 10 as World Pulses Day.**
- ❖ This year, **the theme** for **World Pulses Day is '#Pulses: nourishing soils and people'.**
- ❖ The theme **emphasises the importance of pulses in improving soil health** and **nutrient cycling**, which can lead to **increased crop productivity and food security.**

12.9   INTERNATIONAL DAY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SCIENCE 2024

- ❖ The **International Day of Women and Girls in Science** is celebrated on **11th February** every year to promote full and equal access to and participation in science for women and girls.
- ❖ This day serves as a crucial reminder of the immense contributions women and girls have made, and continue to make, in the fields of **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).**
- ❖ The UN General Assembly designated the Day in **2015.**
- ❖ It is implemented by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UN-Women**, in collaboration with institutions and civil society partners.
- ❖ Theme - **"Closing the Gender Gap in Science: Accelerating Action"**

12.10   NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY DAY 2024

- ❖ The **National Productivity Day 2024** is observed every year in India on February 12, 2024. The formation of **National Productivity Council** is being celebrated every year all over the country by commemorating 12th February as Productivity Day.
- ❖ The theme of 2024 is **Artificial Intelligence (AI)- Productivity Engine for Economic Growth**.
- ❖ This theme highlights the significant role that **artificial intelligence (AI)** plays in enhancing productivity across various sectors of the economy.

NATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL (NPC)

- ❖ The National Productivity Council was established in the year **1958.**
- ❖ NPC is national level organization to promote productivity culture in India.
- ❖ National Productivity Council is an autonomous registered society under **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- ❖ The headquarter of National Productivity Council is **New Delhi.**
- ❖ The current director general of NPC is **Sh. Arun Kumar Jha, IES.**

12.11   WORLD UNANI DAY- FEBRUARY 11TH

❖ **World Unani day** is celebrated **on February 11ᵗʰ** in the honour of a **famous Indian Unani scholar Hakim Ajmal Khan marking his birth anniversary.**
❖ The **theme** of **Unani Day 2024** is **"Unani Medicine for One Earth, One Health,"** underscoring the **shared responsibility for the planet's welfare and the importance of collaboration in addressing global health challenges.**

ABOUT UNANI SYSTEM

❖ The **Unani System of Medicine** is **one of the oldest healthcare systems of the world**.
❖ This system of medicine originated in **Greece (Yünän)**
❖ **Hippocrates** is known as the **father of this system of medicine.**
❖ The basic theory of Unani system is based upon the well- known **four - humour theory of Hippocrates**.
❖ This presupposes the **presence, in the body**, of **four humours** viz., **blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.**

12.12 INTERNATIONAL EPILEPSY DAY

❖ According to the World Health Organisation's official website, **International Epilepsy Day has been observed on the second Monday of February every year since 2015**.
❖ In **2024**, International Epilepsy Day will be **observed on February 12.**
❖ The **theme for International Epilepsy Day 2024** is **"Milestones on My Epilepsy Journey".**

ABOUT EPILEPSY

❖ Epilepsy is **a non-communicable neurological disease.**
❖ In epilepsy, the **affected individual gets recurrent seizures, sometimes in a brief episode that consists of involuntary movement.**
  ✓ It **sometimes gets critical when people get unconscious and lose control of bowel and bladder functions.**
❖ **Different factors** lead to or cause epilepsy. These categories include structural, genetic, infectious, metabolic, immune, and unknown.
  ✓ Some of the **most common causes are brain damage** from **prenatal or perinatal reasons**; **congenital abnormalities or genetic conditions** with **associated brain malformations; a severe head injury; a stroke; certain genetic syndromes; and a brain tumour.**
❖ Symptoms - **loss of awareness or consciousness, and disturbances of movement, sensation (including vision, hearing, and taste), mood, or other cognitive functions.**

12.13 INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY- FEBRUARY 21ST

❖ **International Mother Language Day is observed on 21ˢᵗ February, every year.**
❖ On **February 21, 1952**, **four students got killed** as they **started the movement to make Bengali as the official language in Bangladesh.**
  ✓ The **day was first proposed in Bangladesh in 1952.**
❖ In **1999**, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation **(UNESCO) designated International Mother Language Day.**
❖ The **theme** for **International Mother Language Day 2024** is **"Multilingual education – a pillar of learning and intergenerational learning."**

12.14 WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE FEBRUARY 20TH

❖ Every year on **20ᵗʰ February** the **World Day of Social Justice is observed worldwide.**
❖ The **theme** of World Day of Social Justice 2024 is **"Bridging Gaps, Building Alliances".**
  ✓ The United Nations chose this theme **to emphasise the importance of collaboration and partnership in addressing the world's challenges.**

❖ On **26th November 2007**, the **United Nations General Assembly declared that starting** from the **sixty-third session of the General Assembly**, **20th February will be celebrated annually as the World Day of Social Justice.**

12.15   WORLD NGO DAY – FEBRUARY 27TH

❖ **World NGO Day** is **observed every year on February 27th.**
❖ The day is **dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the crucial role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in making a positive impact on society.**
❖ The **theme** for World NGO Day 2024 is **'Building a Sustainable Future: The Role of NGOs in Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).'**
❖ **World NGO Day** was **first observed in 2014**.
  ✓ The day was **founded by social entrepreneur Marcis Liors Skadmanis**.
  ✓ It was **originally observed by 12 nations** that make up the **Baltic Sea NGO Forum**.
  ✓ In **2014**, the **European Union, the UN, and other international organizations gave it official recognition on a global scale.**

12.16   WORLD WHALE DAY

❖ **World Whale Day, WWD** was **created in 1980** by **Greg Kaufman founder of the nonprofit organization, Pacific Whale Foundation**, and is **celebrated the third Sunday of February.**
❖ World Whale Day began in **Maui, Hawaii**, to honor the **humpback whales, which used to swim off the coast of the tropical island.**
❖ This year, **falling on February 18**, the day sheds light on the **significance of protecting these marine giants and their vital role in maintaining ecological balance.**

BRIEF ABOUT WHALES

❖ Whales are classified into **baleen (e.g., humpbacks and blue whales)** and **toothed (e.g., orcas and sperm whales) categories based on their feeding methods.**
❖ The **blue whale grows to 98 feet in length and is the largest whale on Earth.**
❖ The **smallest whale**, the **toothed dwarf sperm whale**, grows between six feet, seven inches and eight feet, 10 inches.

12.17   WORLD PEACE AND UNDERSTANDING DAY- FEBRUARY 23RD

❖ Every year, people across the globe celebrate **World Peace and Understanding Day** on **23rd February.**
❖ The **World Peace and Understanding Day** also termed as **Special Day**, has its **own importance** as it **encourages harmony, compassion, and collaboration among individuals hailing from different religions, cultures and geography.**
❖ The day commemorates the first meeting of **Rotary International** —an **NGO dedicated to humanitarian service, peace, and goodwill across the world** —that **took place in Chicago, US**.

12.18   NATIONAL SCIENCE DAY- FEBRUARY 28TH

❖ National Science Day is **celebrated every year on February 28th**.
❖ It is **celebrated to commemorate the day**, Sir CV Raman discovered the **Raman Effect.**
❖ The **theme** for this year is **'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'.**
❖ The **theme 'Indigenous Technologies for Viksit Bharat'** aims to **reflect a strategic focus on promoting public appreciation** for **Science, Technology and Innovation and the**

accomplishments of Indian scientists to address challenges through **home-grown technologies for overall well-being.**
- The **'Raman Effect'** was **discovered by physicist Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman**, also **known as CV Raman**.
- For his **contributions to science**, he was **awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1930.**
  - ✓ **He was the first time an Asian received this prize.**
- In **1986**, the **Government of India designated February 28** as **National Science Day**, to **commemorate the announcement of the discovery of the "Raman effect".**

ABOUT RAMAN EFFECT

- The **Raman Effect** refers to the **phenomenon** in which **when a stream of light passes through a liquid, a fraction of the light scattered by the liquid is of a different colour**.
  - ✓ In general, when **light interacts with an object**, it **can either be reflected, refracted or transmitted**.
  - ✓ One of the things that scientists look at **when light is scattered is if the particle it interacts with is able to change its energy**.
  - ✓ The Raman Effect is **when the change in the energy of the light is affected by the vibrations of the molecule or material under observation**, leading to **a change in its wavelength.**
- The discovery found its use in chemistry, **giving birth to a new field known as Raman spectroscopy.**
- It is a **basic analytical tool to conduct non-destructive chemical analysis** for **both organic and inorganic compounds**.
- It is used in **disease diagnosis, monitoring cellular processes, studying art**, analysis of air and water pollutants, and **detecting drugs, fibres, and chemicals, among various other things.**

13. APPOINTMENTS

13.1   FINANCE COMMISSION MEMBERS

- The Centre has **notified the appointment of four full-time members for the panel** of 16th Finance Commission.
- It is **chaired by the first NITI Aayog vice-chairman and Columbia University professor Arvind Panagariya**.
- **October 2025** is the **deadline set** for the **commission to submit its recommendations**, so that they can be **incorporated in the Budget exercise for 2026-27.**
- The new panel has been tasked **with recommending the tax-revenue sharing formula between the Centre and the States for the five-year period beginning April 2026.**
- The **Sixteenth Finance Commission's terms of reference** include a **review of the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives** and **mooting measures to augment States' consolidated funds** to supplement **resources available with panchayats and municipalities.**
- Now the **following members are appointed to the Commission with the approval of the President of India-**
  - ✓ **Shri. Ajay Narayan Jha**, former member, 15th Finance Commission and former Secretary, Expenditure
  - ✓ **Smt. Annie George Mathew**, former Special Secretary, Expenditure
  - ✓ **Dr. Niranjan Rajadhyaksha**, Executive Director, Artha Global
  - ✓ **Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh**, Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India (Part time member)

BRIEF ABOUT FINANCE COMMISSION

- ❖ The Finance Commission is **constituted** under **Article 280 of the Constitution**, **mainly** to give its **recommendations on distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the states and among the states themselves.**
- ❖ The **President of India** constitutes a **Finance Commission every fifth year** or **at such a time that is considered necessary.**
- ❖ **Composition – Chairman + 4 members**

13.2   ANIL KUMAR LAHOTI IS TRAI CHAIRMAN

- ❖ Former Railway Board Chief **Anil Kumar Lahoti** has been **appointed as the chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).**
- ❖ He has been appointed for a **period of three years from the date of assumption of charge of the post** or **until he attains the age of 65 years or until further orders**, whichever is earlier.

ABOUT TRAI

- ❖ The **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established** with effect from **20th February 1997** by **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.**
- ❖ TRAI's **mission** is to **create and nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications in the country** in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in emerging global information society.
- ❖ Objective- to provide **a fair and transparent policy environment** which **promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition**
- ❖ TRAI consists of **a chairperson** and **not more than two whole-time Members** and **not more than two part-time Members.**
- ❖ Functions-
  - ✓ To regulate telecom services, including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
  - ✓ Ensure quality of service and transparency in tariff
  - ✓ Advise the government on policy matters and licensing issues
- ❖ The **recommendations of the TRAI** are **not binding** upon the **Central Government.**
- ❖ The **TRAI Act was amended by an ordinance, effective from 24 January 2000**, establishing a **Telecommunications Dispute Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** to take over the adjudicatory and disputes functions from TRAI

13.3   RADHA RATURI IS UK CHIEF SECRETARY

- ❖ Senior IAS officer **Radha Raturi** was **appointed as the first woman chief secretary of Uttarakhand**.
- ❖ Raturi, an **Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the 1988 batch**, **replaces Sukhbir Singh Sandhu**
- ❖ She is the **first woman to hold the top administrative post in Uttarakhand.**

13.4   A S RAJEEV IS VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER

- ❖ **President Droupadi Murmu** has **appointed A S Rajeev** as **Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).**
- ❖ Prior to this appointment, **A S Rajeev was Managing Director & CEO of Bank of Maharashtra**, a public sector bank.
- ❖ **Praveen Kumar Srivastava** has been **Central Vigilance Commissioner since May 2023**, **Arvinda Kumar has been a Vigilance Commissioner since August 2022.**

ABOUT CVC

❖ The CVC was **set up through the Resolution of the Government of India** on the recommendations of the **Committee on Prevention of Corruption formed under Shri K. Santhanam in 1964.**

❖ It was **given statutory status through CVC Act 2003.**

❖ Under the **CVC Act**, the **Central Vigilance Commission became a three-member body**, with the **Central Vigilance Commissioner and two Vigilance Commissioners.**

❖ The **chairperson and the members** are **appointed by the President** on the **recommendations of a Committee** consisting of-
   ✓ **Prime Minister (Chairperson),**
   ✓ **Minister of Home Affairs, and**
   ✓ **Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha.**

13.5   GEETA BATRA- DIRECTOR OF WORLD BANK'S GEF

❖ **Geeta Batra**, an Indian economist, has been **named as the new Director** at the **Independent Evaluation Office** of the **World Bank's Global Environment Facility.**

❖ This makes her the **first-ever woman from a developing country to hold the coveted post.**

ABOUT GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

❖ The Global Environment Facility (GEF) was **established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.**

❖ The GEF is a **unique partnership of 18 agencies** — including **United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, national entities and international NGOs** — working with **183 countries to address the world's most challenging environmental issues.**

❖ It has **a unique governing structure** organized around an **Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat, 18 agencies, a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel, and the Evaluation Office.**

❖ It is a **financial mechanism** for **five major international environmental conventions**:
   ✓ the Minamata Convention on Mercury,
   ✓ the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs),
   ✓ the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD),
   ✓ the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and
   ✓ the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

❖ Secretariat- **Washington DC**

❖ GEF Council is **main governing body**, comprises **32 members appointed by constituencies of GEF member countries** (14 from developed countries, 16 from developing countries, and two from economies in transition).
   ✓ The Council **meets twice annually.**
   ✓ The Council **develops, adopts and evaluates the operational policies and programs for GEF-financed activities.**

13.6   DR SAMIR SHAH IS NEW BBC CHAIRMAN

❖ **India-born media executive Dr Samir Shah** was **confirmed as the new BBC chairman** after his **selection cleared the stages of scrutiny to be approved by King Charles III**.

❖ Shah, who **has worked in UK broadcasting for over 40 years**, was **picked as the government's preferred candidate in December last year** and **went on to be quizzed by cross-party MPs of the House of Commons Media Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee for his pre-appointment scrutiny.**

❖ The **72-year-old has now been confirmed** for **four-year term role** to take **charge as the public broadcaster's first Indian-origin Chair** from March 4 until **March 2028.**

14. PLACES IN NEWS

14.1   CATALONIA

- ❖ The **Spanish region of Catalonia** has declared a **state of emergency** as it **faces its worst drought on record.**
- ❖ More than **six million Catalans** will be **affected across 200 towns and cities**, including the capital Barcelona.
- ❖ Catalonia is **one of Spain's richest** and **most highly industrialised regions.**
- ❖ It is located in **north east of Iberian peninsula.**

14.2   AVDIIVKA

- ❖ Ukraine has **withdrawn from the settlement of Lastochkyne in eastern Ukraine.**
- ❖ As the war enters its third year, **Russian troops have mounted heavy attacks and taken Avdiivka** — a key **eastern town** — while **Ukrainian troops are struggling with a lack of ammunition.**
- ❖ The battle for Avdiivka was **one of the bloodiest of the two-year war.**

15. AWARDS AND HONOURS

15.1   BLAVATNIK AWARDS

- ❖ **Three Indian scientists** are among the **nine recipients** of this year's **Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists in the UK** for their **pioneering work** in the **fields of chemical, physical, and life sciences**.
- ❖ Professors **Rahul R. Nair, Mehul Malik, Dr Tanmay Bharat**, and others will be **honoured and receive grants totaling 480,000 pounds.**
- ❖ The **2024 Awards received 84 nominations** from **40 academic and research institutions** and this year's laureates **were selected by an independent jury of expert scientists** across the UK.
- ❖ Now in its seventh year, **the awards have been instituted by the Blavatnik Family Foundation and The New York Academy of Sciences.**

ABOUT BLAVATNIK AWARDS

- ❖ Considered the **largest unrestricted prize** ever **created for early-career scientists**, the Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists **were established in 2007 by the Blavatnik Family Foundation** and **are independently administered by the New York Academy of Sciences.**
- ❖ The Blavatnik Awards seek to **identify and honor exceptional young scientists and engineers 42 years of age and younger.**
- ❖ Honorees are **selected** based on the **quality, novelty, and impact of their research and their potential** for further significant contributions to science.
- ❖ Blavatnik Awards honorees are recognized in **three disciplinary categories-**
  - ✓ **Chemical Sciences**
  - ✓ **Physical Sciences & Engineering**
  - ✓ **Life Sciences**

15.2   FILMFARE AWARDS 2024

❖ The **69th edition of the Filmfare Awards 2024** took place in **GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**

AWARDS ACROSS CATEGORIES

❖ Best Film: **12th Fail**
❖ Best Director: **Vidhu Vinod Chopra** for 12th Fail
❖ Best Actor in a Leading Role (Male): **Ranbir Kapoor for Animal**
❖ Best Actor in a Leading Role (Female): **Alia Bhatt** for **Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani**
❖ Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Male): **Vicky Kaushal for Dunki**
❖ Best Actor in a Supporting Role (Female): **Shabana Azmi for Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani**
❖ Best Music Album: **Animal**
❖ Best Playback Singer (Male): **Bhupinder Babbal for "Arjan Vailly" from Animal**
❖ Best Playback Singer (Female): **Shilpa Rao for "Besharam Rang" from Pathaan**
❖ Best Story: Amit Rai for **OMG 2**, Devashish Makhija for **Joram**
❖ Best Screenplay: **Vidhu Vinod Chopra for 12th Fail**
❖ Best Dialogue: Ishita Moitra for Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani
❖ Best Background Score: Harshavardhan Rameshwar for Animal
❖ Best Cinematography: **Avinash Arun Dhaware for Three of Us**
❖ Best Sound Design: **Kunal Sharma (MPSE) for Sam Bahadur**, **Sync Cinema for Animal**
❖ Best Debut Director: Tarun Dudeja for Dhak Dhak
❖ Best Debut Male: Aditya Rawal for Faraaz
❖ Best Debut Female: Alizeh Agnihotri for Farrey
❖ Lifetime Achievement Award: **David Dhawan**

15.3   OUTSTANDING BUSINESS WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2023

❖ **Dr. Bina Modi**, Chairperson of Modi Enterprises, was honoured with the **'Outstanding Business Woman of the Year - 2023' Award** by Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India.
❖ The award was **presented to her at a prestigious conference** by the **Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC)** on **'Strengthening Indo-US Relationship in Amritkal-Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.**
❖ It recognizes **her remarkable contributions to the industry** that place her **among the distinguished few women chairpersons of Fortune500 and ET500 India companies.**
❖ Dr. Bina Modi, **the Chairperson of Modi Enterprises - KK Modi Group**, also **heads the Group's FMCG giant Godfrey Phillips India** and **one of India's agro-chemical leaders, Indofil**, as the Chairperson and Managing Director.

15.4   GRAMMY AWARDS

❖ Indian musicians **Shankar Mahadevan** and **Zakir Hussain's fusion band 'Shakti'** bagged the **Grammy's award for 'Best Global Music Album'**.
   ✓ The **award was for their latest album 'This Moment'.**
❖ Zakir Hussain, the **tabla maestro and composer**, won the **Grammy in the Best Global Music Performance category** for **Pashto.**
❖ **'As We Speak'**, on which Zakir Hussain collaborated with **Bela Fleck, Edgar Meyer and Rakesh Chaurasia**, **won the Grammy for Best Contemporary Instrumental Album.**
   ✓ Veteran flautist and composer **Rakesh Chaurasia**, the nephew of the legendary maestro Pandit Hariparasad Chaurasia, **won two Grammys.**

MORE ON AWARDS

❖ The **66th annual Grammy Awards 2024** are being **held in Los Angeles**.
❖ **Taylor Swift** won **album of the year at the Grammy Awards for "Midnights".**
❖ **Record of the year**, went to **Miley Cyrus for "Flowers".**
❖ **Victoria Monét** won **best new artist.**

❖ **Billie Eilish** won **song of the year** for writing the "Barbie" hit, **"What Was I Made For?"**

15.5 PYARELAL SHARMA HONOURED WITH THE LAKSHMINARAYANA INTERNATIONAL AWARD

❖ **Pyarelal Sharma**, the **one-half of the iconic music composer duo Laxmikant-Pyarelal**, has been **honoured with the Lakshminarayana International Award** for his contribution to art.

❖ Pyarelal, 83, **was also announced as a recipient of the Padma Bhushan, India's third highest civilian honour**, on the eve of Republic Day.

❖ The **Lakshminarayana International Award** was **presented to the industry veteran by musicians L Subramaniam and Kavita Krishnamurti Subramaniam** as part of the **Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival**, which they have been **conducting for 33 years.**

15.6 INDIA WINS 9TH GOVTECH PRIZE

❖ **India** has secured the **prestigious 9th GovTech Prize for its pioneering endeavors in AI-powered government services**, at the **World Government Summit 2024**.

❖ India was awarded **iRASTE,** a transformative project under **Ministry for Road Transport & Highways**

❖ iRASTE, a **collaborative initiative involving the government, industry, and academia**, is revolutionizing road safety through the integration of AI technology.
  - ✓ By harnessing **predictive insights generated by AI algorithms, iRASTE endeavors to prevent accidents before they occur**, thus mitigating the risk of fatalities and injuries on Indian roads.
  - ✓ It aims at **a targeted 50% reduction in road accidents anticipated in urban areas.**
  - ✓ Additionally, **iRASTE aims to significantly diminish black spots within the city's road network**, further enhancing safety and efficiency in transportation systems.

ABOUT THE AWARD

❖ **The annual award** is **instituted by the government of the UAE** and is **presented to government entities, central or local, worldwide**, to recognize creative and innovative solutions.

❖ India won **under the category of 'AI-Powered Government Services'.**

15.7 JNANPITH AWARD

❖ **Renowned Urdu poet and lyricist Gulzar** and **Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya** have been named the **recipients of the 58th Jnanpith Award**, the selection committee of **India's highest literary award** announced recently.

❖ This is the **second time the award is being given for the Sanskrit language** and **for the fifth time for the Urdu language.**

❖ The **recipients** for the award were **decided by a selection committee chaired by Jnanpith awardee Pratibha Rai.**

ABOUT GULZAR

❖ **Sampooran Singh Kalra**, popularly known as **Gulzar**, 89, is **celebrated for his works in Hindi cinema and is considered one of the finest Urdu poets of this era.**

❖ Gulzar is **also the recipient of the Sahitya Akademi Award for Urdu in 2002**, the **Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2013**, the **Padma Bhushan in 2004**, and at least five **National Film awards for his works.**

ABOUT JAGADGURU RAMBHADRACHARYA

❖ Rambhadracharya, 74, the **founder and head of Tulsi Peeth in Chitrakoot**, is a **renowned Hindu spiritual leader, educator**, and **writer of more than 240 books and texts, including four epics.**

- Rambhadracharya is **one of the four Jagadguru Ramanandacharyas of the Ramananda sect** and **has been holding this position since 1982.**
- A **polyglot**, who **speaks 22 languages**, **Rambhadracharya is a poet and writer in several Indian languages including Sanskrit, Hindi, Awadhi, and Maithili.**
- In **2015**, he received the **Padma Vibhushan award.**

ABOUT THE AWARD

- Established in **1944**, the **Jnanpith Award is given annually** for **outstanding contributions to Indian literature** and is **considered the highest literary honour in the country**.
- The award **carries a prize money of ₹21 lakh**, a statue of Vagdevi, and a citation.
- **Goan writer Damodar Mauzo had received the prestigious award for 2022.**

15.8 SHASHI THAROOR GETS FRANCE'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD

- **Shashi Tharoor** has received **France's highest civilian award, "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur".**
- French **Senate President Gerard Larcher** honoured the **Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram.**
- The **accolade was announced in August 2022** but awarded recently on February 20.
- France **recognised Tharoor for his efforts to strengthen the bond between India and France**, his dedication to **global peace and his friendship with France.**

ABOUT THE AWARD

- The **Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur (Knight of the Legion of Honour)** was **established by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1802**.
- It is **France's highest civilian award** that acknowledges extraordinary accomplishments and services rendered to France.
- It **covers contributions** in **arts, literature, science and public service, among others.**
- **Indian winners**
  - ✓ **Durga Charan Rakshit** was the **first Indian to receive the honour** in 1896.
  - ✓ **Mohamed Haniff - the Deputy Mayor of Pondicherry in French India - got it in 1937**.
  - ✓ In independent India, **Elattuvalapil Sreedharan** "Metroman of India" **received the honour in 2005**.
  - ✓ Other winners-
    - ➢ **Cedric Prakash, Anjali Gopalan , Shah Rukh Khan , Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Sivaji Ganesan , Kamal Haasan , Soumitra Chatterjee , industrialist Nadir Godrej , fashion designer Manish Arora and Wipro founder Azim Premji.**

15.9 ADITI SEN DE WINS GD BIRLA AWARD

- **Dr Aditi Sen De**, a **physicist with the Harish Chandra Research Institute, Prayagraj**, has **won the 2023 GD Birla Award for Scientific Excellence**, for her outstanding **contribution to the development of quantum technologies.**
- De is the **33rd scientist, and the first woman to receive this award.**
- The award is **given annually by the KK Birla Foundation since 1991**.
- It **recognises outstanding contributions by Indian scientists** who are **under the age of 50 and living and working in India.**

16. SPORTS

16.1   KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES 2024

❖ The **Khelo India Winter Games 2024**, a debut for Ladakh, started at the **Nawang Dorjay Stobdan Stadium**.
❖ **Fifteen states** and **two public institutions** are taking part **in ice hockey and ice-skating events over five days.**

A KHELO INDIA COE

❖ **Union Territory of Ladakh** will now have **a Khelo India Centre of Excellence**.
❖ A MoU was **signed between the Sports Authority of India** and **the sports department, Union Territory of Ladakh.**
❖ The centre will **serve three sports – athletics, archery and boxing**.

ABOUT KHELO INDIA WINTER GAMES 2024

❖ The Khelo India Winter Games 2024 is the **fourth edition of the annual event** in the Khelo India calendar.
  ✓ The **Union Territory of Ladakh** is making its **debut as hosts** this year **alongside the UT of Jammu & Kashmir**, which has organised the Games from 2020.
❖ **Leh** will be the **venue for the first part of the Games** from February 2-6.
❖ The Games are **scheduled to move to Gulmarg** between February 21-25.
❖ While **Ladakh will be conducting games -- ice hockey and speed skating -- Jammu and Kashmir will conduct ski mountaineering, Alpine skiing, snowboarding, Nordic ski and gandola**.
❖ A total of **705 athletes from 24 States & UTs** will showcase their prowess **across 6 sporting disciplines** in Leh and Gulmarg starting from February 2nd, 2024.
❖ The **mascot** of the **Khelo India Winter Games 2024** is the **'Sheen-e She'** or **Shan**-- the **snow leopard that is native to the Ladakh region.**
❖ The **Games' logo**, resembling the **Indian tricolour**, captures the **essence of the picturesque land and the diverse sports scheduled** for the event.
  ✓ The **emblem features a Dharmachakra**, the turning wheel of Dharma, positioned **atop a hill in Chanspa, Leh, the chosen venue for the Games.**

16.2   DAVIS CUP

❖ **India secured their spot** in **World Group I of the Davis Cup**, after wrapping up **a one-sided 4-0 win against Pakistan in Islamabad.**
❖ It was **after 60 years** that **an India Davis Cup team had travelled to Pakistan.**

ABOUT DAVIS CUP

❖ The **Davis Cup**, the **tennis equivalent of the football World Cup**, was named after **American collegian Dwight Filley Davis**, who came up with the **idea to start a challenge tennis match between the USA and Great Britain**.
❖ Davis came up with a **three-day format for the event that is still in practice**:
  ✓ **two singles matches on the first and third days**, and **a doubles match on the second day**.
❖ First played in **1900**, it was **originally called the International Lawn Tennis Trophy**.
❖ Now, it **is a team knock-out tournament played over the course of a year.**
❖ The **competition has grown from just two competing nations to 155 (in 2023).**
❖ It is **world's largest annual team sporting competition.**
❖ But **only the top 16 nations - known as the World Group - can actually win the Davis Cup.**

❖ **India first participated in the tournament in 1921** and **has been involved in 191 fixtures winning 114 and losing 77.**
❖ India has **reached Davis Cup finals on three occasions - 1966, 1974 and 1987.**

16.3   FIFA WORLD CUP 2026 SCHEDULE

❖ The **FIFA World Cup 2026 has** revealed its **complete match schedule**, delineating the **blueprint for a 104-game tournament showcasing 48 teams**.
❖ Spread **across 16 host cities in three nations**—**Canada, Mexico, and the United States**—the event promises a riveting spectacle.
    ✓ **Canada**, as co-host, **will oversee 13 games**, managing **ten group-stage matches split between Toronto and Vancouver.**
    ✓ **Mexico** is **slated to host three games**, featuring **ten group-stage clashes in Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey.**
    ✓ The **remaining matches of the World Cup 2026 are designated for 11 cities** throughout the **United States**.
❖ **Final**
    ✓ The **final on July 19** will be **held at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey**, a renowned multipurpose venue with a history of hosting major events.

16.4   OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY

Former shooter **Abhinav Bindra, India's first Olympic gold medallist**, will take part as **Torchbearer for the Paris 2024 Olympic Torch Relay.**

❖ As of May 2024, **11,000 torch bearers, including Bindra**, have been chosen to form a relay to celebrate the arrival of the Games in France.
❖ The Olympic Torch Relay is **an ancient tradition that precedes the Summer Games.**
    ✓ The **modern iteration** of the relay has been in practice **since Berlin 1936.**
❖ **For Paris 2024**, the sacred **Olympic flame will be lit in Olympia, Greece - the birthplace of the Olympics** - on April 16 before travelling to Athens.
❖ The flame will cross the Mediterranean on board the **Belem, a three masted ship**, to Marseille.
❖ After landing in Marseille on May 8, the **Olympic torch will set off for a 68-day-long Olympic Torch Relay across France**, traversing 65 territories before arriving in the French capital **Paris, the host city,** to officially flag off the Paris 2024 Olympics, which will conclude on August 11.

16.5   BIMSTEC AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

❖ The **1st BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships** was held at Delhi's **Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Swimming Pool Complex** from 6th February to 9th February 2024 with competitions being held for Under 20 age category in **Swimming, Water Polo and Diving events.**
❖ The organization for the very first time in history is hosting a sports competition which is being hosted in India.
❖ The announcement for the same was made by **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi** during the 4th BIMSTEC Summit in 2018, where he announced the organising of the **BIMSTEC Youth Water Sports competition in India.**
❖ The event was initially proposed for the year **2021**, however, it was later postponed to 2024 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic across the world.
❖ India finished atop the **BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships 2024** medal tally with 54 medals at the end of the tournament.
❖ India added 18 medals to their tally on the final day and finished their campaign with **19 gold, 27 silver, and eight bronze medals.**

- ❖ The hosts won **11 gold, 16 silver, and a bronze** medal from the **men's** events, while clinching **eight gold, 11 silver, and seven bronze medals** from the **women's** events.
- ❖ **Thailand** finished second in the medal tally with 40 medals, including 16 gold, nine silver, and 15 bronze medals.
- ❖ **Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar** are the three other nations who competed in the BIMSTEC Aquatics Championships 2024. However, they failed to register a single medal in the tournament and will return home empty-handed.

BIMSTEC AQUATICS CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024: BEST PERFORMERS

- ❖ Best Team - India
- ❖ Best Swimmer (Men) - Harsh Saroha (India)
- ❖ Best Swimmer (Women) - Mario Andelelko (Thailand)
- ❖ Best Swimming Team (Men) - India
- ❖ Best Swimming Team (Women) - India
- ❖ Best Diving Team (Men) - India
- ❖ Best Diving Team (Women) - India
- ❖ Best Water Polo Team (Men) - Thailand
- ❖ Best Water Polo Team (Women) - Thailand

16.6   U19 WORLD CUP 2024

- ❖ **Australia Dominates U19 World Cup 2024 Final, Secures 4th Title with a 79-Run Victory Over India.**

2024 ICC UNDER-19 MEN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP:

- ❖ The **2024 ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup** was an international limited-overs cricket tournament organized by the International Cricket Council (ICC), that was held in **South Africa** from 19 January to 11 February 2024.
- ❖ It was the **fifteenth edition** of the **Under-19 Cricket World Cup**. **India** were the **defending champions**.

U19 WORLD CUP:

- ❖ The **ICC Under-19 Men's Cricket World Cup** is an international cricket tournament organised by the **International Cricket Council (ICC)** contested by national **under-19 teams**.
- ❖ **First contested in 1988**, as the **Youth Cricket World Cup**, it was not staged again until 1998. Since then, the **World Cup** has been held as a **biennial event**, organised by the **ICC**.
- ❖ Among the full members, **India** have won the **World Cup** on a **record five occasions**, while **Australia** have won **four times**.

16.7   KELVIN KIPTUM PASSES AWAY

- ❖ Reigning **marathon world record holder Kelvin Kiptum** and **his coach Gervais Hakizimana was killed** in a road accident in Kenya.
- ❖ The **24-year-old set the world record at the Chicago Marathon in October** with a time of **two hours and 35 seconds to** surpass the **mark of 2:01:09 run by compatriot Eliud Kipchoge in Berlin in 2022.**
- ❖ Kiptum **started his international career on the half-marathon circuit in 2019.**

16.8   ATHLETES SUSPENDED OR DOPING

❖ The **Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU)** has **suspended hammer thrower Rachna Kumari for 12 years** for a **second anti-doping rule violation**.
  ✓ Rachna returned positive results for **multiple anabolic androgenic steroids in samples collected out of competition at Patiala on September 24 and on November 1 at the National Games last year.**
  ✓ She had **earlier served a four-year suspension from 2015 to 2019**.
❖ In another doping case, **quarter-miler Nirmala Sheoran** has been **handed an eight-year suspension by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA)** for a **second doping violation**.
  ✓ She **reportedly tested positive for anabolic androgenic steroids and testosterone**.
  ✓ She was **earlier suspended for four years in 2018.**

16.9 NIRANJAN SHAH CRICKET STADIUM

❖ The **Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Rajkot** will now be **known as the Niranjan Shah Cricket Stadium.**
❖ **Niranjan Shah** played **first-class cricket for Saurashtra in a career spanning from the 1965/66 to 1974/75.**
❖ He played an **instrumental role in turning around the fortunes of Saurashtra, who have two Ranji Trophy titles to their credit.**
❖ In addition to being the **honorary secretary of the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA)**, a position he continues to serve, he has had **administrative experience in different capacity, including being the honorary secretary of the BCCI**, a position where he was elected four times.

16.10 KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES

❖ **Khelo India University Games (KIUG)**, which is **being hosted by northeastern states this year**, started on February 17, 2024.
❖ The **Games** have begun formally in **Guwahati**.
❖ As many as **4,500 athletes are participating in the 11-day KIUG**.
❖ A total of **213 universities from across the country will participate in the event**.
❖ **Mascot- Ashtalakshmi in the shape of a butterfly, symbolizing the Northeast's aspirations taking flight.**
❖ KIUG is a **part of the Centre's Khelo India initiative** to promote **grassroots sports and identify young talents from across the country**.
❖ The **participants will vie for a total of 262 gold, 263 silver and 297 bronze medals** across **20 sports disciplines,** ranging **from athletics, rugby, swimming, and badminton to hockey and football, among others.**

16.11 BADMINTON ASIA TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024

❖ The **Indian women's badminton team**, led by PV Sindhu and Anmol Kharb, won a **historic gold medal at the Badminton Asia Team Championships 2024 with a 3-2 victory against Thailand.**
❖ It was held in **Shah Alam, Malaysia**
❖ This was **India's first-ever gold medal at the Badminton Asia Team Championships.**
  ✓ India had won **two medals in the past** with the **men's team claiming bronze medals in the 2016 and 2020 editions respectively.**

16.12 INDIA'S FIRST FEMALE PITCH CURATOR

❖ **Jacintha Kalyan** has **become the country's first woman curator.**

❖ Over 30 years with the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) has seen her **switch roles; from receptionist, to administration to accounts to preparing pitches for the second season** of the **Women's Premier League.**

16.13 SHAMI RULED OUT OF IPL

❖ India pacer **Mohammed Shami** has been **ruled out of IPL 2024 due to a left ankle injury** which would **require surgery in the UK**, a BCCI source said.
❖ Shami was the **leader of the pace attack of the Gujarat Titans**.
❖ **Gujarat Titans** will **take the field under new captain Shubman Gill's leadership.**

16.14 CARLSON WINS FREESTYLE CHESS GOAT CHALLENGE

❖ **World number-one Magnus Carlsen** from Norway defeated **GM Fabiano Caruana** in the **final classical game** to win the **inaugural 2024 Freestyle Chess G.O.A.T. Challenge and the $60,000 top prize.**
❖ **GM Levon Aronian** took **third place** with a powerful win over GM **Nodirbek Abdusattorov**.
❖ **"Freestyle chess"** is a **new name for the variant where the back rank pieces** are **placed randomly**, so as to **make the game more a test of skill and imagination than memory of book openings.**

17. PERSON IN NEWS

17.1 KALPANA CHAWLA

❖ The **death anniversary of Kalpana Chawla** was observed recently **on February 1ˢᵗ.**
❖ She was **an Indian-American astronaut** who made history as the **first Indian-origin woman to go to space**.

ABOUT KALPANA CHAWLA

❖ Kalpana Chawla was **born on 17 March 1962, in Karnal, Haryana**.
❖ After completing her undergraduate degree in **aeronautical engineering from Punjab Engineering College in Chandigarh in 1982**, she moved to **the United States to pursue her Master's degree**.
❖ In **1988, Chawla joined NASA's Ames Research Center**, where she **worked on various projects related to space exploration**.
❖ Chawla's **first journey into space came in 1997 aboard** the **Space Shuttle Columbia STS-87**.
❖ During this historic mission, she served as **a mission specialist and primary robotic arm operator.**
   ✓ Her **second and final space mission, STS-107**, took place **in 2003 and was dedicated to science and research.**
❖ On 1ˢᵗ February 2003, **Chawla and six fellow astronauts were just 16 minutes away from landing** on Earth after 15 days in space.
   ✓ Then, at **an altitude of 200,000 feet**, Space Shuttle Columbia disintegrated into little bits, killing all on board.**
❖ She was honoured with numerous awards and recognitions including the **NASA Space Flight Medal, the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, and the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.**

17.2 SATYENDRA NATH BOSE

❖ The **death anniversary of Indian mathematician and physicist, Satyendra Nath Bose was observed on 4ᵗʰ February.**

ABOUT S N BOSE

- ❖ Born- **January 1ˢᵗ, 1894 in Calcutta**
- ❖ He **started his career in 1916** as a **lecturer in physics at Calcutta University.**
- ❖ Along with **Meghnad Saha**, he **established modern theoretical physics in India.**
- ❖ Bose wrote **a brief article** titled **"Planck's Law and the Hypothesis of Light Quanta".**
  - ✓ In agreement with him, his article was **translated by Einstein into German** and **published in Zeitschrift für Physik in 1924 under Bose's name.**
- ❖ Satyendra Nath Bose collaborated with Einstein to develop **the Bose-Einstein statistics** and **developing the theory of Bose-Einstein condensates.**
  - ✓ Einstein applied Bose's method to give **theory of ideal quantum gas**, and **predicted phenomenon of Bose-Einstein Condensation (BEC).**
  - ✓ BEC is a **state of matter** in which **separate atoms or subatomic particles**, **cooled to near absolute zero (0 Kelvin/ -273.15 ⁰C)**, coalesce **into a single quantum mechanical entity.**
  - ✓ This **single quantum entity** can be **described by a wave function**, on **a near-macroscopic scale.**
- ❖ **Awards and accolades**
  - ✓ **Rabindranath Tagore's sole work of science**, **Visva-Parichay**, was **dedicated to Satyendra Nath Bose**
  - ✓ He also received the **Padma Vibhushan** in1954.
  - ✓ In **1958**, he was made a **Fellow of the Royal Society, London.**
  - ✓ Satyendra Nath Bose **received the nation's highest honour for a scholar in 1959** when he was named the **National Professor**, a position he held for 15 years.
  - ✓ The **SN Bose National Centre for Basic Sciences** was **named after him in Calcutta in 1986.**
- ❖ He **died in Kolkata on February 4, 1974.**

ABOUT BOSONS

- ❖ In particle physics, **a boson is a subatomic particle** whose **spin quantum number has an integer value**.
- ❖ Bosons **form one of the two fundamental classes of subatomic particle**, the **other being fermions**, which have **odd half-integer spin**.
- ❖ **Every observed subatomic particle** is **either a boson or a fermion.**

17.3   SAROJINI NAIDU

- ❖ **Sarojini Naidu's birth anniversary** is celebrated by the nation **every year on February 13**.
- ❖ This year marks the **145th birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu**.

ABOUT SAROJINI NAIDU

- ❖ **Born in Hyderabad on 13 February 1879**
- ❖ She was **a poet and political activist**.
- ❖ Her poetry earned her the **nickname 'Nightingale of India'.**
- ❖ A **disciple of Mahatma Gandhi**, she was **instrumental in the Indian National Movement**, which fought for the country's independence.
- ❖ In **1925, she was elected as the INC President at Kanpur session**.
  - ✓ She was the **first Indian woman president of the Indian National Congress (second overall, after Annie Besant).**
- ❖ When Sarojini Naidu's **collection of poems, Golden Threshold, was released in 1905**, the world first recognized her for her literary abilities and **dubbed her the "Bul Bule Hind."**
- ❖ In India, **February 13 is recognized as the National Women's Day in her honor.**
  - ✓ **International Women's Day** is celebrated **globally and annually on 8 March.**

17.4   U TIROT SING

- ❖ A statue of **U Tirot Sing** was unveiled at **Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, Dhaka.**
- ❖ He was a **freedom fighter from Khasi Hills** who **rebelled against British Colonialism some 200 years ago**.

ABOUT TIROT SINGH

- ❖ Tirot Sing was a tribal chief known as **'the Hero of the Khasi Hills'** of Meghalaya.
- ❖ Also known as **U Tirot Sing Syiem**, he drew lineage from **Syiemlieh clan.**
- ❖ Tirot Sing led **an attack on the colonial forces on April 8, 1829**.
- ❖ He **sensed the attempts of Britishers to take over control of the Khasi Hills** under the pretext of road construction **connecting Guwahati to Sylhet through Khasi Hills**.
- ❖ In **Anglo-Khasi war (1829-33)**, he used **guerilla tactics to evade and strike the militarily superior colonial forces.**
- ❖ Tirot Sing **was captured four years later after the Anglo-Khasi War** and **died in Dhaka as a political prisoner on July 17, 1835.**

17.5   VASUDEV BALWANT PHADKE

- ❖ The Home Minister recently paid tribute to **freedom fighter Vasudev Balwant Phadke on his death anniversary.**

ABOUT VASUDEV BALWANT PHADKE

- ❖ Born on **November 4, 1845** in **Shirdon (dist. Thane)**, his **family hailed from Kelshi**, a hamlet in Konkan.
- ❖ In **1862**, he was **amongst the early graduates of Bombay University**.
- ❖ Also called the **modern India's first revolutionary**, he is regarded as the **"Father of the Armed Struggle for India's Freedom".**
- ❖ Young Phadke, who **considered Shivaji as his role model**, is said to have been the **inspiration for Bankimchandra's Anandamath.**
- ❖ Phadke **took a vow to use Khadi and Swadeshi**.
- ❖ He founded the **Aikyavardhini Sabha in order to ventilate popular grievances**.
- ❖ In 1874, he **also established the first school of national education in Pune.**
- ❖ **He was arrested in July 1879.**
- ❖ **The trial in Pune court awarded him transportation for life sentence.**
- ❖ In prison he was **detected with tuberculosis** and **died on February 17, 1883** in Aden.

17.6   FALI S NARIMAN

- ❖ **Eminent jurist and Senior Advocate Fali S Nariman** passed away recently at the age of 95.
- ❖ His career as a **lawyer spanned over 75 years.**
- ❖ **Born in Rangoon January 10, 1929** — then British India — Nariman was **enrolled as an advocate of the Bombay high court in November 1950.**
- ❖ He was **designated a senior advocate in 1961**.
- ❖ In May **1972, Nariman was appointed as additional solicitor general of India.**
- ❖ He was **also a Padma Vibhushan recipient.**
- ❖ Some of the **key cases** that Nariman was a part of as a lawyer included
    - ✓ the **Golak Nath case** (even constitutional amendments are amenable to judicial review),
    - ✓ the **TMA Pai case** (right of minorities to establish institutions of their choice) and
    - ✓ the **SP Gupta and NJAC cases** (where he stood for the independence of judiciary in the appointment of judges)etc.

| 17.7 | PANKAJ UDHAS IS NO MORE |

- ❖ **Renowned ghazal singer** and **Padma Shri awardee Pankaj Udhas, died recently** due to prolonged illness**.**
- ❖ He was 72.
- ❖ He was best **known for hits like- "Chitthi Ayee Hai" and "Aur Ahista Kijiye Baatein".**
- ❖ He launched **his career with a ghazal album 'Aahat' (1980)** and **followed it up** with **three other successful albums — 'Mukarar', 'Tarrannum' and 'Mehfil'.**

18. SOCIAL ISSUES, HEALTH, EDUCATION

| 18.1 | ASSAM WELCOMES NORTHEAST'S FIRST NATUROPATHY HOSPITAL |

- ❖ The AYUSH Minister recently laid the **foundation of the first yoga and naturopathy hospital in the northeast.**
- ❖ **About ₹100 crore** would be invested in the **Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy (CRIYN)** at **Dihing Khamtighat in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh district**.
- ❖ The institute, **along with a 100-bed hospital, would be spread across 15 acres.**
- ❖ The institute is **being built to bring a scientifically valid and useful synergy** between **traditional knowledge of yoga and naturopathy and modern tools of technology**.
- ❖ It will **establish benchmark standards in education, preventive healthcare and research in yoga and naturopathy.**

| 18.2 | THIP JOINS VSN |

- ❖ **The Healthy Indian Project (THIP)**, a health **information platform** in India, is **included as a member of the World Health Organization's Vaccine Safety Net (VSN).**

ABOUT VSN

- ❖ VSN, **established by** the **World Health Organization (WHO) in 2003**, serves as **a global network of websites** that **provide trustworthy and verified vaccine safety information.**
- ❖ **Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS)**, established **in 1999**, **supports the VSN** by providing **advice and criteria for website quality and content.**
- ❖ VSN is **continuously expanding.** To date, **110 websites from 45 countries provide vaccine safety information in 43 languages.**

ABOUT THIP

- ❖ **The Healthy Indian Project (THIP)** is **a prominent health information platform** in India, dedicated to **providing credible and verified health information**, with a **focus on verified vaccine safety information, to the diverse population of the country.**
- ❖ Its goal is to **improve health literacy among Indians.**
- ❖ The Healthy Indian Project (THIP) is **privately funded by its directors.**
- ❖ The company is **not affiliated to any political institution.**

| 18.3 | RIO DECLARES DENGUE EMERGENCY |

- ❖ Rio de Janeiro has **declared a public health emergency** because of an outbreak of **dengue fever.**
- ❖ The **Brazilian city declared the emergency**, just **days before Carnival celebrations kick off across Brazil**.

ABOUT DENGUE FEVER

- ❖ **Dengue (DENG-gey) fever occurs in tropical and subtropical areas of the world**.
- ❖ **Vector- an infected Aedes species (Ae. aegypti or Ae. albopictus) mosquito.**
- ❖ Dengue is **caused by one of any of four related viruses: dengue virus 1, 2, 3, and 4.**
- ❖ A **person can be infected with dengue multiple times in their life.**
- ❖ **Mild dengue fever causes a high fever and flu-like symptoms**.
- ❖ The **severe form of dengue fever, also called dengue hemorrhagic fever**, can cause **serious bleeding, a sudden drop in blood pressure (shock) and death.**
- ❖ Dengue fever is **most common in Southeast Asia, the western Pacific islands, Latin America and Africa**.
  - ✓ But the **disease has been spreading to new areas, including local outbreaks in Europe and southern parts of the United States.**
- ❖ The symptoms **usually begin four to 10 days** after **being bitten by an infected mosquito.**
- ❖ Dengue fever **causes a high fever — 104 F (40 C)** — and any of the **following signs and symptoms-**
  - ✓ Headache, Muscle, bone or joint pain, Nausea, Vomiting, Pain behind the eyes, Swollen glands, Rash etc.
- ❖ There is **no specific treatment for dengue**. The **focus is on treating pain symptoms.**

18.4   KILKARI AND MOBILE ACADEMY INITIATIVES

- ❖ **Ministry for Health and Family Welfare launched two new initiatives recently.**

ABOUT KILKARI

- ❖ 'Kilkari' (meaning 'a baby's gurgle'), is a **centralized interactive voice response (IVR) based mobile health service** which **delivers free, weekly, time-appropriate 72 audio messages** about **pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare** directly to **families' mobile phones** from the **second trimester of pregnancy until the child is one year old.**
- ❖ **Women** who are **registered in Reproductive Child Health (RCH) portal**) based on the **woman's LMP (last menstrual period)** or the **child's DoB (Date of Birth),** receive **a weekly call** with **pre-recorded audio content directly to the mobile phones** of pregnant women and mothers with children under the age of one year.
- ❖ Kilkari audio messages **are present in the form of voice of a fictitious doctor character called Dr. Anita.**
- ❖ Kilkari Programme is **centrally hosted by MoHFW** for **all the States/UTs** and **no further investment in the technology, telephony infrastructure or operational costs is required** to be borne by States/UTs.
- ❖ This service is **FREE of cost for States/UTs and beneficiaries**.
- ❖ The programme is **a service integrated** with **centralized Reproductive Child Health (RCH) portal** of **MoHFW's** and is the **single source of information for this mHealth service.**
- ❖ Currently **Kilkari is under implementation in 18 States / UTs**

ABOUT MOBILE ACADEMY

- ❖ **Mobile Academy** is a **free audio training course** designed to **expand and refresh the knowledge of Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs)** and **improve their communication skills** via their **mobile phones**, which is both **cost-effective and efficient**.
- ❖ It is **an anytime**, **anywhere training course** that can **train thousands of ASHAs simultaneously via mobile phone.**
- ❖ Mobile Academy is **operational in 17 States/UTs except Chandigarh** with **six languages viz. Hindi, Bhojpuri, Oriya, Assamese, Bengali & Telugu version.**

18.5 TATA TRUSTS TO OPEN INDIA'S 1ST STATE-OF-THE-ART SMALL ANIMAL HOSPITAL IN MUMBAI

❖ **Tata Trusts** is set to launch **India's first state-of-the-art Small Animal Hospital** in Mahalaxmi**, Mumbai.**
❖ The hospital is a first-of-its-kind and spans over **98,000-square-foot, across 5 floors with a capacity of over 200 beds.**
❖ Inspired by philanthropist and former **Tata Group Chairman Ratan Tata's** vision for a super speciality hospital for pets, the facility will provide round the clock services through pet-sensitised veterinarians, nurses and technicians trained to deliver quality care with a mission to save lives.
❖ The hospital will be launched in **March 2024.**
❖ The hospital will have facilities like: **Emergency & Critical Care - 24x7 triage and treatment services; Inpatient and ICU units (including isolation units); Surgical Services (Soft Tissue Surgery, Orthopedics etc.); Pharmacy Services; Support Functions such as Diagnostics - Radiology & Imaging (MRI, X-Ray, CT Scan & USG), Laboratory - Hematology, Microbiology, Cytology, Clinical Pathology, Biochemistry, Histo-pathology and Anesthesia.**

18.6 KYASANUR FOREST DISEASE (KFD)

Two individuals have died from Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) in Karnataka since the start of 2024.

WHAT IS KYASANUR FOREST DISEASE (KFD)?

About:

❖ Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), a zoonotic illness, is colloquially referred to as "monkey disease" due to its link with monkey fatalities.
❖ It is caused by the Kyasanur Forest disease Virus (KFDV), which primarily affects humans and monkeys.
❖ It was first identified in 1957 in a sick monkey from the Kyasanur Forest in Karnataka. Since then, between 400-500 human cases per year have been reported.
❖ Eventually, KFD emerged as a grave public health problem spreading through the entire Western Ghats.

Transmission:

❖ In nature, the virus is maintained mainly in hard ticks (Haemaphysalis spinigera), monkeys, rodents, and birds.
❖ To humans, it may occur after a tick bite or contact with an infected animal (a sick or recently dead monkey).

Symptoms:

❖ Characterized by chills, frontal headache, body ache, and high fever for five to 12 days with a case fatality rate of 3 to 5%.

18.7 APPAR INITIATIVE

❖ Union Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship recently attended the **National Conference on APAAR: One Nation One Student ID Card.**
❖ Around **25 crore APAAR IDs have already been created till date.**

ABOUT APAAR

❖ The aim of APAAR is **to establish a unified student identity system called 'One Nation, One Student ID'.**
❖ The **Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry initiative** aims to provide **a unique and permanent 12-digit ID to every student.**

- ❖ The APAAR ID **connects a student's academic bank of credits (ABC)**, which stores **all of his or her academic learnings, certificates, credentials, formal or informal credits** earned from various sources, to **granular levels of credits, such as skilling credits, sports, or social work, which are digitally verified by the agency awarding the credits.**
- ❖ It is **being introduced in line** with the **National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020** and the **National Credit and Qualifications Framework (NCrF).**
- ❖ APAAR **helps in tracking the vast pool of 260 million students in the country.**

18.8 ALASKA POX

- ❖ **Alaska health officials** have confirmed the **first death from a recently discovered viral disease** – **Alaskapox**.
- ❖ The **double-stranded-DNA virus** comes from the **same genus as smallpox, monkeypox and cowpox.**
- ❖ It was **first identified in an adult in Fairbanks, Alaska in 2015.**
- ❖ It is **most common in small mammals**.
- ❖ To date, **no human-to-human transmission of Alaskapox virus has been documented.**
- ❖ **Symptoms of Alaskapox** may include **one or more skin lesions (bumps or pustules)** and **other symptoms like swollen lymph nodes and joint and/or muscle pain.**
- ❖ **Immunocompromised people** might be **at increased risk for more severe illness.**

18.9 EAT RIGHT INDIA

- ❖ Over **500 hospitals in India** have been **certified as 'Eat Right Campus'** by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).**
- ❖ Among the certified hospitals, **about 100 are government hospitals**.
- ❖ **More than 2,900 workplaces across the country** are now **recognized as Eat Right Campus**, transforming lives of thousands of people working in these campuses.
- ❖ FSSAI has **established rigorous criteria** and **a comprehensive evaluation process for the Eat Right Campus certification**.

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

- ❖ **Eat Right India** movement was **started in 2019.**
- ❖ The initiative **aims to promote safe, healthy, and sustainable food environments within institutions and workplaces**.
- ❖ Eat Right India **adopts an integrative or 'whole of the government' approach** since the movement **brings together food-related mandates of the agriculture, health, environment and other ministries.**
- ❖ Eat Right India **is aligned to the National Health Policy 2017** with its **focus on preventive and promotive healthcare and flagship programmes** like **Ayushman Bharat, POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukt Bharat and Swacch Bharat Mission.**

ABOUT FSSAI

- ❖ **Established** under **Food Safety and Standards Act 2006.**
  - ✓ The act **consolidates various laws** related to food, such as the **Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, 1954, the Fruit Products Order, 1955, the Meat Food Products Order, 1973 etc.**
- ❖ FSSAI has been **created for laying down science based standards** for **articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import to ensure availability of safe and wholesome food** for human consumption.
- ❖ **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** is the **Administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.**

- ❖ The **Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** are appointed by government.
- ❖ Headquarters- **New Delhi**
- ❖ FSSAI has been mandated by the FSS Act, 2006 for performing the following functions-
  - ✓ **Framing of Regulations** to lay down the **Standards and guidelines**
  - ✓ Laying down **mechanisms and guidelines for accreditation** of **certification bodies and laboratories**
  - ✓ To **provide scientific advice and technical support to Central Government and State Governments** in the matters of framing the **policy and rules regarding food safety and nutrition.**
  - ✓ **Conducting risk assessment** and **scientific research on food safety issues**.
  - ✓ Providing **training and awareness on food safety and hygiene.**
  - ✓ Promoting **food fortification and organic food.**
  - ✓ **Coordinating with other agencies and stakeholders** on food safety matters.

18.10 DIPHTHERIA

- ❖ The World Health Organization (WHO) **published the guidelines on the clinical management of diphtheria.**

ABOUT DIPHTHERIA

- ❖ Diphtheria is **a serious contagious bacterial infection** of the **nose and throat**.
- ❖ According to WHO, **Respiratory diphtheria is caused by strains of Corynebacterium diphtheriae**, which have an **affinity for the upper respiratory tract** (nose and throat) and **produce a toxin that causes local disease** and, in severe cases, **airway compromise and systemic complications**.
- ❖ Diphtheria **spreads from person to person mostly through the air**, and less frequently by direct contact. The **incubation period is usually from 2 to 5 days.**
- ❖ Although diphtheria **can be treated with medications**, in advanced stages, the bacterial infection **can damage the heart, kidneys and nervous system**.
- ❖ Even **with treatment, diphtheria can be deadly, especially in children.**
- ❖ It is **a vaccine-preventable disease**, but **multiple doses and booster doses are needed** to produce and sustain immunity.
  - ✓ People who are **not immunised or under-immunised are at risk of the disease.**
- ❖ Diphtheria is **fatal in 5-10 per cent of cases**, with **a higher mortality rate in young children.**

18.11 RHODAMINE-B

- ❖ The **Tamil Nadu government** banned the **sale and production of cotton candy in the state** after it was found that the **chemical Rhodamine-B was being used for making it**, which is **harmful for health.**
- ❖ Samples of cotton candy were sent for testing by the food safety department, which found the **presence of 'cancer-causing' Rhodamine-B in it.**
- ❖ As per the **Food Safety Standards Act, 2006**, **preparation, packaging, importing, selling and serving food items with Rhodamine-B in wedding ceremonies and other public events is a punishable offence.**

ABOUT RHODAMINE-B

- ❖ Rhodamine-B or RhB is a **water-soluble chemical compound** commonly **used for dyeing in the textile, paper, leather, and paints industry** as a **colouring agent** that helps in **attaining the red and pink spectrum**.
- ❖ Although **in powdered form the chemical is green in colour**, upon **being added to water, it turns pink**.

❖ According to studies, **even if consumed in small quantities**, the chemical is **highly toxic and carcinogenic**.

❖ If **consumed regularly**, Rhodamine-B **can cause severe damage to the cerebellum tissue in the brain and to the brainstem that connects the brain to the spinal cord**.

❖ **It can also lead to cancer and tumour over time.**

18.12 ISRO ANNOUNCES YUVIKA 2024

❖ To address the **staunch curiosity of young minds**, **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is organising a special programme for School Children** called **"Young Scientist Programme" or "YUva VIgyani KAryakram" (YUVIKA)**.

❖ ISRO has chalked out **this programme to "Catch them young"**.

❖ **YUVIKA programme** is also **expected to encourage more students** to **pursue in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) based research and aligned career.**

❖ **Young Scientist Programme - YUVIKA** was conceived to **impart basic knowledge on Space Science, Space Technology and Space Applications** to the **younger students** with a **preference** to **rural areas of the country.**

❖ The programme **envisages two weeks' class room training**, **practical demonstration of experiments**, **hands on CANSAT, Robotic kit, Model rocketry interactions with ISRO scientists and field visits.**

❖ The **programme was conducted successfully in 2019, 2022 and 2023.**

❖ The students **were divided into five batches based on the geographical locations** and **imparted training at various institutions like Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), U R Rao Satellite Centre, Space Applications Centre etc.**

❖ More than **1.25 lakhs students had registered for YUVIKA - 2023 from all corners of India.**

❖ The **students are selected from all states and union territories** based on **marks scored in their last examination, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.**

❖ The **course covers class room lectures**, hands on activity like **robotics challenge**, **DIY assembly of rocket/satellite, sky gazing, etc., technical facility visits, and interaction with space scientists.**

❖ **Students studying in Class 9 as on January 1, 2024, within India are eligible to apply for the ISRO Young Scientist Programme (YUVIKA).**

18.13 GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DIGITAL HEALTH (GIDH)

❖ Achieving **one of the three priority areas agreed** upon during **India's G20 presidency in 2023**, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** launched the **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH) virtually.**

ABOUT GIDH

❖ The **Global Initiative on Digital Health (GIDH)** is a **WHO Managed Network** aiming to **amplify and align resources toward country-led digital health transformation** through **strengthened collaboration and knowledge exchange**.

❖ It acts as **a vehicle to facilitate the implementation of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025.**

❖ The Initiative aims to achieve the **following objectives through collaborative efforts:**

   ✓ **Assess and prioritize country** needs for sustainable digital health transformation.

   ✓ **Increase the alignment of country-level digital health resources** and **unfunded priorities.**

   ✓ Support the accelerated achievement of the **strategic objectives of the Global Strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025.**

   ✓ **Build capacity and converge efforts** to encourage local **development, maintenance, and adaptation** of digital health technologies to continuously changing needs.

❖ It will be **a network of networks with four main components** —
   ✓ **country needs tracker,**
   ✓ **country resource portal** (a map of resources available in a country),
   ✓ **transformation toolbox that will share quality-assured digital tools**, and
   ✓ **knowledge exchange.**
❖ Membership- Membership is **open to all institutions engaged in digital health.**

18.14 BAG LESS SCHOOL INITIATIVE

❖ The **Madhya Pradesh government** has made a **significant decision** to introduce **'bag less school' once a week for students in classes 1 to 12** starting from the **upcoming academic session of 2024-25**.
❖ This initiative **aims to alleviate the stress faced by students** and will be **implemented in both government and private schools across the state.**
❖ The state government has also **issued a notice outlining the weight limits** for **students' school bags based on their respective classes.**
❖ **Students in-**
   ✓ **classes 1 and 2 - bags weighing between 1.6 to 2.2 kg,**
   ✓ **classes 3 to 5 - bags weighing between 1.7 to 2.5 kg.**
   ✓ **classes 6 and 7 - bags weighing between 2 to 3 kg, and**
   ✓ **classes 8 - bags weighing between 2.5 to 4 kg**
   ✓ **classes 9 and 10- bags weighing between 2.5 to 4.5 kg**

18.15 FIRST SKILL INDIA CENTRE

❖ The inaugurated the first Skill India Centre (SIC) of the country in Sambalpur, Odisha was inaugurated in **Sambalpur, Odisha.**
❖ The centre is equipped with **best-in-class infrastructure, cutting-edge technologies and modern facilities** that will **catalyse demand for formal skills and will serve as a catalyst in enabling youth to acquire the skills needed to succeed in their respective fields.**
❖ The SIC will **play a pivotal role in designing curriculum** along with **industry experts** which will be **aligned with the changing industry needs, promote standardization, and create employment opportunities** that meet the demand for skilled talent across industries.

18.16 GUINEA WORM DISEASE (GWD)

❖ The world is **closing in on eradicating Guinea worm disease**.
❖ There were **more than 3.5 million cases of this disease in the 1980s**, but according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) weekly epidemiological report, **they dwindled to 14 cases in 2021, 13 in 2022, and just six in 2023.**
❖ **India** received **Guinea worm disease-free certification status** from the **WHO in 2000**.

ABOUT GWD

❖ **Guinea worm disease**, also called **dracunculiasis**, is the **work of the Guinea worm (Dracunculus medinensis).**
❖ It is **one of the Neglected Tropical Diseases.**
❖ **Symptoms**
   ✓ The disease **causes intense pain, swelling, and ulcers, making it hard for people to go about their daily lives.**
   ✓ **Mostly affecting the legs and feet**, Guinea worm disease **worsens poverty and illness in areas where clean water and healthcare are scarce.**
❖ **Spread by drinking water** containing Guinea worm larvae.

- ❖ **Infection cycle**
  - ✓ Individuals whose **bodies the worm has entered first experience a painful blister**, usually on a **lower limb**.
  - ✓ When **seeking relief**, they may **immerse the affected area in water**, which prompts the **worm to emerge and release hundreds of thousands of larvae**, potentially **contaminating communal water sources and perpetuating the infection cycle.**
- ❖ **Infections in animals**, particularly in dogs, **have also been reported.**
- ❖ There is **no vaccine and drug to prevent the disease and treat patients.**

18.17 INDIA'S "LARGEST" REMOTE PILOT TRAINING ORGANISATION

- ❖ **IIT Guwahati** has launched **India's "largest" Remote Pilot Training Organisation (RPTO).**
- ❖ The initiative was launched **in collaboration with EduRade, a brand under RC HobbyTech Solutions Pvt. Ltd (RCH).**
- ❖ Spanning across **18 acres**, this **facility at the IITG**, can **simultaneously operate nine medium-class drones**, thus earning the **distinction of being India's largest RPTO.**
  - ✓ **An RTPO is a school** where **aspiring drone pilots are trained** and **once they complete their training** they are **provided with RPC (Remote Pilot Certificate) approved by the DGCA**, allowing them to **embark on a career as certified drone pilots.**
- ❖ It aligns with the vision of establishing **India as a global drone hub by 2030**, thereby **contributing to the 'Namo Drone Didi' initiative.**
  - ✓ Announced on November 30, 2023, the **Namo Drone Didi initiative is aimed at revitalising farming practices** and **empowering rural women by providing 15,000 women-led SHGs with drones** between **2024 and 2026.**

18.18 KALA AZAR

- ❖ In a significant step forward towards **eliminating Kala Azar**, India has achieved the **target of reporting less than one case per 10,000 population across all blocks in 2023.**
- ❖ It is the **second deadliest parasitic disease after malaria in the country**.
- ❖ In India, the **disease is endemic** in **Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.**
  - ✓ In October 2023**, Bangladesh became the first country in the world to be officially validated** by the WHO for **eliminating Kala Azar as a public health problem.**

ABOUT KALA AZAR (OR VISCERAL LEISHMANIASIS)

- ❖ It is a **protozoan parasitic disease**, spread by **sandfly bites**.
  - ✓ Sandflies are **brown in colour and have hairs on their bodies**. The flies **are infected with the parasite called 'leishmania donovani'.**
  - ✓ The **vector sandfly is known to live in cracks and crevices of muddy houses**, especially in **dark and humid corners**.
- ❖ According to the WHO, there are **3 main forms of leishmaniases** of which **kala-azar is the most serious form.**
- ❖ Symptoms- It causes **fever, weight loss, spleen and liver enlargement**.
- ❖ Left **untreated**, it **can be fatal in 95% of cases.**
- ❖ **PKDL or Post Kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis**, is a **well-recognised complication** which causes **scaly skin patches** and **nodular lesions in people** who have been **apparently cured of Kala Azar up to two years of the initial infection.**

18.19 ANAEMIA CONTROL PROJECT UNDER MISSION UTKARSH

- ❖ The Centre launched **an initiative to improve nutrition in adolescent girls using Ayurveda.**

- The project for **anaemia control under Mission Utkarsh** will be **a joint public health initiative by the Ministries of Ayush** and **Women and Child Development**.
- It would be **launched in five aspirational districts first as a pilot project.**
- In the **first phase**, the **focus may be on improving the anaemic status of adolescent girls (14-18 years)** in **five aspirational districts of five states** –
  - ✓ **Assam (Dhubri), Chhattisgarh (Bastar), Jharkhand (Paschimi Singhbhum), Maharashtra (Gadchiroli), and Rajasthan (Dhaulpur).**
- Under **Mission Utkarsh**, **15 central ministries or departments** will work to **elevate districts at the bottom, to state and national averages.**
- This project **will cover approximately 10,000 Anganwadi Centres** in the five districts.
- The **aim** is **nutritional improvement among approximately 95,000 adolescent girls in anaemia prone districts.**

18.20 OPERATION AMRITH

- **Kerala** recently initiated **Operation AMRITH** (Antimicrobial Resistance Intervention for Total Health).
- This programme **enforces the original H1 rule**, **mandating a doctor's prescription for acquiring any class of antibiotics.**

BACKGROUND

- In **2011**, the **Indian government introduced the H1 rule** to **prohibit the over-the-counter (OTC) sales of antibiotics without a prescription**, responding to the growing concern over antimicrobial resistance (AMR).
  - ✓ Major objective of Schedule H1 drug is to **control the un-restricted use of antibiotics**.
  - ✓ This **specified list of drugs** should be **sold by chemists only after retaining a copy of the prescription by them**.
  - ✓ The **supply of a drug specified in Schedule H1** shall be **recorded in a separate register.**
  - ✓ The **packs** of these drugs should have **a warning in a box with a red border on the label**.
- In **2013**, following the **Chennai Declaration document and initiative by medical societies in India**, the government **modified the rule to limit the OTC restriction to second- and third-line antibiotics**, allowing the **sale of first-line antibiotics without a prescription.**

RELATED

- MoHFW had launched **Red Line awareness campaign** on **Antimicrobials Resistance**, urging **people not to use medicines marked with a red vertical line**, including **antibiotics**, **without a doctor's prescription.**

18.21 SWAYAM-PLUS

- Ministry of Education (MoE) recently launched the **SWAYAM Plus platform**.
- The **SWAYAM Plus** is aimed at **enhancing the employability of both college students and professionals** by **offering learning programs across multiple sectors**.
- The platform is **designed to offer employability and professional development-focused courses developed collaboratively** with **industry experts from players such as L&T, Microsoft, CISCO, and more**.
- The **Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras**, which is **among the founder institutions of Swayam-NPTEL**, will be **operating the 'SWAYAM Plus' Platform**.
- It will **offer programs in sectors** like **Manufacturing, Energy, Computer Science and Engineering/IT/ITES, Management Studies, Healthcare, Hospitality, and Tourism besides Indian Knowledge Systems, and more**.
- **It is funded** by **Department of Higher Education** of **Ministry of Higher Education**.

ABOUT SWAYAM

❖ The **Swayam-NPTEL** is **a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) platform** providing **educational opportunities** for a vast number of learners.

❖ The **e-learning platform has the largest enrolment base**, with the **total enrolment increasing from 31 lakh in 2017 to more than 72 lakh by the end of 2023**.

19. MISCELLANEOUS

19.1 'WHAT IF THERE WAS NO CONGRESS: THE UNCENSORED HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT INDIA' BOOK RELEASED

❖ **Priyam Gandhi-Mody** released her latest book **"What If There Was No Congress: The Uncensored History of Independent India"** recently.

❖ The **book**, published by **Rupa**, revisits some of the **key events that shaped India's political history** over the last 80 years - **Partition, Kashmir, governance, scams, democracy and its interruptions, economic policy, intellectual colonisation and foreign policy** - and also seeks to **provide a roadmap to the India of tomorrow.**

❖ The author says the Congress had **"played a crucial role in the Indian freedom struggle; however, its leadership also made some missteps that resulted in the Balkanization of undivided India".**

19.2 DUBAI ANNOUNCES WORLD'S FIRST AIR TAXI SERVICE

❖ **Dubai** has recently **inked agreements to launch the world's first air taxi service.**

❖ At the heart of the initiative lies the **Joby Aviation S4**, an **innovative aircraft designed to comfortably accommodate four passengers along with a pilot**.

❖ Sporting **six propellers and powered by four battery packs**, the **S4 boasts a maximum range of 161 km and a top speed of 321 km per hour**.

❖ Its **Vertical take-off and landing capabilities render it ideal for urban settings**, **minimizing the space requirements** typical of conventional stations and **reducing noise pollution compared to helicopters.**

❖ The electric-powered aircraft **can be swiftly recharged between flights.**

❖ Leveraging **cutting-edge technology**, these aerial vehicles **aim to seamlessly integrate into Dubai's urban landscape, offering swift and eco-friendly transportation solutions.**

❖ The air-taxi network **will commence its operations in 2026.**

19.3 DIGITAL INDIA FUTURE SKILLS SUMMIT

❖ The **first-ever Digital India future SKILLS Summit** was held at the **Birinchi Kumar Baruah Auditorium, Guwahati University, Assam.**

❖ The **Digital India futureSKILLS Summit hosted** by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** through the **National Institute of Electronics and IT (NIELIT)** witnessed the convergence of esteemed **dignitaries, industry leaders, academia, policymakers and technology enthusiasts** to deliberate on strategies for **'Catalyzing future-ready talent for India & the World.'**

❖ It focused on the **impact of rapid digitization globally**, emphasizing new opportunities for young Indians **in cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), Semiconductors, Robotics, and Cybersecurity.**

19.4	**DABBLING IN DIPLOMACY-BOOK RELEASED**

- ❖ **Dabbling in Diplomacy: Authorised & Otherwise, Recollections of a Non-Career Diplomat**, written by **Professor S.D. Muni was released recently.**
- ❖ Professor Muni's book **details the role of diplomacy during the Vajpayee government**, and the **subsequent Manmohan Singh government**, in bringing **democracy to our neighbouring country, Nepal.**

19.5	**BOOK 'BASIC STRUCTURE AND REPUBLIC' RELEASED**

- ❖ A book written by **Goa Governor P S Sreedharan Pillai** was released by **Archbishop of Changanacherry, Kerala, H G Mar Joseph Perumthottam.**
- ❖ This book is titled **"Basic Structure and Republic"** and **was released in Panaji.**

20. HIMACHAL NEWS

20.1	**VARIOUS INITIATIVES OF GOVERNMENT**

- ❖ State transport has become the **first department in the country to adopt e-vehicles**.
  - ✓ Along with this, **3,000 diesel buses of HRTC are being replaced with e-buses in a phased manner.**
- ❖ Under the **Rs 680 crore Rajiv Gandhi Self-Employment Start-up Scheme**, **50 per cent subsidy for the purchase of e-taxis is being provided.**
- ❖ The **state government** is also giving **priority to exploit solar energy** and **a 32 MW capacity solar power project is being set up in Pekhubela of Una district.**

20.2	**SANJAY KUNDU REINSTATED AS DGP**

- ❖ The **state government has withdrawn the transfer orders of Sanjay Kundu, Director General of Police**, as Principal Secretary Ayush, thus **reinstating him as the Director General of Police.**
- ❖ Kundu was **removed as Himachal DGP** and shifted as Secretary, Ayush Department, following Himachal Pradesh High Court order over **allegations of interference in an ongoing criminal probe** and attempting to pressurise a businessman who claimed to have received a threat to his life from his partners.
- ❖ The **transfer order has been withdrawn in compliance of the Supreme Court order**, which set aside the Himachal Pradesh High Court order to remove him as DGP.

20.3	**NGT ORDERS INSPECTION AT KASAULI SITE**

- ❖ **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has constituted a joint committee to inspect **Mohan Meakin Private Limited**, Kasauli-based plant, that had **allegedly dumped effluents into a natural source** (Kasauli Kund) as a result of which water got polluted.
- ❖ A **joint committee** comprising **representative of the Central Pollution Control Board, Regional Officer, Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change, Himachal Pradesh, the Member Secretary, HP State Pollution Control Board and District Magistrate, Solan** has been constituted.

20.4	**NEW WETLANDS IN STATE**

- ❖ **Rewalsar in Mandi** and **Khajjiar in Chamba** have been declared **'National Importance Wetlands'** by the **environment ministry for promoting their conservation.**
- ❖ Himachal Pradesh State Wetlands Authority (HPSWA) said the **state currently has three Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance)** –
  - ✓ **Pong Dam in Kangra,**
  - ✓ **Renuka in Sirmaur** and
  - ✓ **Chandrataal in Lahaul and Spiti.**

20.5 SOM DUTT BAATU

- ❖ In recognition of **his distinguished contributions to the realm of arts**, **music maestro Som Dutt Battu**, **aged 86 and hailing from Shimla**, has been **selected for the prestigious Padma Shri Award**.

DETAILS ABOUT THE MAESTRO

- ❖ Among the **110 individuals chosen** for the Padma Shri Award for this year, Som Dutt Battu **stands as the sole representative from Himachal Pradesh.**
- ❖ His **notable work** in the **realms of Himachali folk music and classical music** has left an **indelible mark on the cultural landscape.**
- ❖ He is a **Hindustani classical vocalist** of the **Patiala Gharana.**
- ❖ He was **born on July 5, 1937, in Jasur, Kangra district.**
- ❖ He is a resident of **Hori (Byoliya) village in Shimla** .
- ❖ His **father, Pt. Ram Lal Battu**, was **an artist associated with the renowned Shyam Chaurasi Gharana.**
- ❖ He has **previously been recognized** with the **'Sangeet Natak Akademi Award'** for his significant contributions to drama, dance, music, and singing.
- ❖ Other accolades include-
  - ✓ the **'Himachal Gaurav,' 'Punjab Sangeet Ratna Award,' 'Life Time Achievement Award,'** and the **Dr. Jaswant Singh Award,** highlighting the profound impact of his artistry in the field of music.

20.6 FIRST HIMACHAL WOMAN COMMANDING OFFICER IN ARMY

- ❖ **Colonel Sapna Rana** has become the **first woman from Himachal Pradesh** to **command a battalion in the Indian Army**.
- ❖ She joined the **Officers Training Academy in Chennai in 2003** and was **commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Indian Army in 2004.**
- ❖ The 41-year-old officer is **currently commanding an Army Service Corps (ASC) battalion in the Northeast.**

20.7 150 YEAR OLD WATER SUPPLY SCHEME TO BE REJUVENATED

- ❖ **Shimla Jal Prabandhan Nigam Limited** (SJPNL) **has decided to** rejuvenate the 150-year-old Seog water supply scheme **before monsoon winds hit the region this year.**
- ❖ **It's the** first water scheme of the city, laid by the British around 1875**.**
- ❖ A line from this scheme **supplied water to the residence of the Viceroy of India.**
- ❖ In view of the **scheme's historical and heritage value**, the **SJNPL has roped in the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).**

20.8 NATIONAL HIGHWAY EXCELLENCE AWARD' FOR PALAMPUR MAN

- **Bovin Kumar**, **Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Cube Highways and Transportation Assets Advisors**, a **subsidiary of the National Highways Authority of India** (NHAI), has been awarded **prestigious 'National Highway Excellence Awards 2022'**.
- Bovin Kumar **hails from Dhauladhar Colony in Palampur.**
- The **award was presented by Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport & Highways.**
- This special recognition is a testament to **Kumar's exceptional leadership role in Ghaziabad Aligarh Expressway Private Limited (GAEPL)**, which achieved **a groundbreaking feat and created a World Record**.
- **Under his guidance**, GAEPL successfully **laid an astounding 112.5 lane km of bituminous concrete road within an unprecedented time frame of 100 hours.**

20.9   ADARSH SWASTHYA SANSTHANS

- The state government is **setting up Adarsh Swasthya Sansthans in all 68 Assembly constituencies** of the state, with **at least six specialist doctors in each constituency**.
- Around **134 types of laboratory test facilities**, **specialists and medical staff and state of the art' MRI, CT scan, Ultrasound and digital X-ray facilities would be provided in such centres.**
- To **address the shortage of doctors and paramedical staff** in health institutions, the **government is recruiting new medical officers and supporting staff**.
- Furthermore, **plans are underway to improve working conditions in health institutions and introduce fixed eight-hour shift for medical personnel.**

20.10   VANSHIKA PARMAR IS STATE TOURISM AMBASSADOR

- Miss Earth India 2022, **Vanshika Parmar**, said that she **had been made the ambassador of tourism for Himachal Pradesh**.
- She would **represent the state at the international level** and present to the world a window on its **unexplored scenic treasures, picturesque landscapes, rich cultural heritage and festivals.**
- Vanshika was **born at Tunhi village in Nadaun tehsil of Hamirpur district**. Her father **SK Parmar is an officer in the Indian Air Force**.
- She is **an Indian beauty pageant titleholder and was crowned Miss Earth India 2022 at the age of 19.**

20.11   STUPAS IN DEPLORABLE STATE

- **Symbols of Buddhist belief and faith**, over 750 stupas, dotting the **mountain landscape of Lahaul-Spiti district, are in a state of neglect with no agency or funds available to restore their lost glory.**
- While some of these stupas, called **'chortin' in local language**, are **almost crumbling**, others need a major refurbish as these religious symbols are an integral part of practically **every village in Lahaul Spiti, where a majority of the population holds deep faith in Buddhism**.
- The **stupas, mostly white**, are **made of stone and mud** and are **adorned with colourful fluttering prayer flags and Mani stones with mantras carved on them.**
- The locals take **a 'parikrama' of the stupas for long life, well-being and prosperity of the area in general.**
- **The purpose** of erecting a stupa could vary as it **could be in memory of a spiritual guru or a lama (Buddhist monk), dead family members or dedicated to Lord Buddha, Trilokinath, Goddess Tara or some other deity.**
- The stupas normally have **gold, silver, precious stones like emeralds and corals inside them**.
- The **top is adorned with a sun and moon and could have religious writings inside it.**

20.12	HP- MOST WELCOMING REGION IN INDIA

- ❖ Online travel agency **Booking.com** has revealed the **list of Most Welcoming Regions and Cities in India** according to its **12th Annual Traveller Review Awards 2024.**
- ❖ According to the ranking, **Himachal Pradesh** secured the **top spot**, jumping from **5th place in 2023**, in the **category of the 'Most Welcoming Region in India.'**
   - ✓ On the **second rank is Goa followed by Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttarakhand.**
- ❖ **Kerala's Mararikulam** which is known for its serene backwaters, coconut trees, peaceful beaches coupled with excellent hospitality has been **ranked as number 1 in the 'Most Welcoming Indian cities list**.
   - ✓ **Rajasthan's desert city of Jaisalmer** is at second spot.

20.13	PENSION SCHEME FOR WOMEN

- ❖ Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched the **Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Samman Nidhi Yojana** at **Keylong in Lahaul and Spiti district**.
- ❖ Under the **first phase of the scheme, Rs 1,500 per month** would be **paid to all women of Lahaul and Spit aged between 18 and 60 years.**
- ❖ The CM, while **inaugurating the Lahaul Sharad Utsav**, announced that from February 1, **Rs 1,500 would be provided to 2.37 lakh women in the state**, who **were receiving a pension of Rs 1,100**.
- ❖ This way, **2.42 lakh women of the state would now receive a pension of Rs 1,500 per month.**

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