

CivilsTap

Quality & Affordable Education



Current Affairs

Monthly Magazine

APRIL 2024



By CivilsTap Himachal

For HPAS & Other Competitive
Exam in Himachal Pradesh

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CivilsTap Himachal

1. POLITY

1.1 INDIA STOPS RAVI WATER FLOW TO PAKISTAN

- ❖ India has **stopped the flow of water from the Ravi river into Pakistan** by **building a dam** that was waiting for completion for **45 years**.
- ❖ The **Shahpur Kandi barrage** -- located in **Punjab's Pathankot district** -- was **held up by a domestic dispute between Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab**.
- ❖ But that **led to substantial chunk of water that belongs to India, going to Pakistan all these years**.
- ❖ Under the Indus water treaty **signed** under the **supervision of the World, India has full rights** over the water of **Ravi, Sutlej and Beas**, while **Pakistan has rights over the water of Indus, Jhelum and Chenab**.

ABOUT THE DAM

- ❖ The **55.5 meters high Shahpurkandi Dam** is part of a **multi-purpose river valley project** that includes **two hydel power projects with a total installed capacity of 206 MW**.
- ❖ It is **built on river Ravi, 11 km downstream of Ranjit Sagar Dam Project**.

TIMELINE

- ❖ In **1979, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir governments** signed an agreement to **build Ranjit Sagar Dam and downstream Shahpur Kandi barrage to stop water to Pakistan**.
- ❖ In **1982**, former Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi** laid **foundation for the project**, which was expected to be completed by 1998.
- ❖ While **construction of Ranjit Sagar Dam was completed in 2001, Shahpur Kandi barrage couldn't materialise and water from Ravi river continued flow into Pakistan**.
- ❖ In **2008, Shahpur Kandi project was declared national project** but construction work started in 2013.
- ❖ Ironically, the **project was again stalled due to disputes between Punjab and J&K in 2014**.
- ❖ Finally in **2018**, the **Centre mediated and brokered an agreement between the two states**.
- ❖ The **water which was going to Pakistan will now be used to irrigate two key districts of Jammu and Kashmir -- Kathua and Samba**.
 - ✓ **1150 cusecs of water will now irrigate 32,000 hectares of land in the Union Territory**.
 - ✓ **Jammu and Kashmir will also be able to get 20 per cent of the hydel power generated from dam**.
 - ✓ **Besides Jammu and Kashmir, the waters from the dam will also help Punjab and Rajasthan**.

1.2 MERA PEHLA VOTE DESH KE LIYE

- ❖ The **Education Ministry** and the **Information and Broadcasting Ministry** jointly launched a **nationwide awareness campaign "Mera pehla vote desh ke liye (my first vote for the country)"**
- ❖ Under this **various events will be organised in universities, colleges, and higher education institutions to encourage the first-time voters to participate in the upcoming election**.

1.3 ECI SCHEME FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

- ❖ The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** has notified a **scheme for internally displaced persons of Manipur to vote at the relief camps**.
 - ✓ **More than 60,000 people were displaced within weeks of the ethnic violence that broke out on May 3, 2023**.
 - ✓ **Most of them are lodged in relief camps**.

- ❖ After due consultations with the Central and State governments, it was decided that **these electors would “continue to be borne on the electoral rolls of the Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies concerned” in Manipur.**
- ❖ The **internally displaced electors** would be **provided with the facility to vote at “special polling stations”** to be set up in the relief camps.
- ❖ The election in the special polling stations will be **conducted by using separate EVMs and all rules, directions, and instructions applicable to the conduct of the poll at the original polling stations will also apply** at these special polling stations.
- ❖ The **maximum number of voters at each special polling station would be 1,200.**

1.4 KEYI PANYOR IS NEW DISTRICT IN AP

- ❖ Keyi Panyor has **become the 26th district of Arunachal Pradesh.**
- ❖ It has been carved out of **Lower Subansiri**
- ❖ The **new district**, which was **being demanded by the people of the Nyishi community for long**, will have its **headquarters at Ter Gapin-Sam Sarth.**
- ❖ The **27th district, Bichom**, is **scheduled to be inaugurated early next week.**

1.5 INDELIBLE INK

- ❖ **Mysore Paints and Varnish Ltd (MPVL)**, has received its **largest ever order from the Election Commission for 26.55 lakh vials of indelible ink worth ₹55 crore.**
 - ✓ MPVL is an **enterprise started by the Mysore Maharajas** and has been **supplying ink for every election in the country for over six decades.**
 - ✓ It is the **sole manufacturer of indelible ink.**
 - ✓ **MVPL also exports the ink to other nations.**
- ❖ **The country will need 26.55 lakh vials of the marker for upcoming general elections.**
- ❖ **Each 10 mg vial of indelible ink can mark approximately 700 voters**, ensuring a free and fair electoral process by preventing duplicate voting.

ABOUT THE INK

- ❖ The ink is **used under Rule 49K of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961** that provides **putting an indelible ink mark on the left forefinger of the elector as a safeguard against impersonation.**
- ❖ It was **developed by the National Physical Laboratory (NPL), New Delhi** – a constituent laboratory of CSIR – in **1961.**
- ❖ It was **patented by CSIR-National Research Development Corporation (NRDC), New Delhi.**
- ❖ The **NRDC issued the license and know-how to Mysore Paints and Varnish Limited (MPVL), a Government of Karnataka undertaking, in 1962.**
- ❖ Working
 - ✓ The ink **contains silver nitrate** that reacts with the chemicals on the skin and nail to leave a semi-permanent mark.
 - ✓ The ink **dries up on the skin and leaves the black/purple mark in less than one minute** and can stay for several weeks.
 - ✓ This ink is **skin safe and is resistant to water, detergents, soaps and other solvents.**
 - ✓ This **ensures that a voter cannot easily erase the mark and vote again within a short timeframe.**

1.6 SUDHA MURTY NOMINATED TO RAJYA SABHA

- ❖ **Author and philanthropist Sudha Murty** has been **nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President Droupadi Murmu.**

- ❖ At 73, **Sudha Murty** is a renowned philanthropist, author, and former chairperson of the **Infosys Foundation**.
- ❖ Her husband, **Narayana Murthy**, is the founder of the IT giant **Infosys**, while **UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak** is her son-in-law.
- ❖ Murty is also a **writer in English and Kannada**.
 - ✓ With **30 books and over 200 titles**, including novels, non-fiction, children's books, travelogues, technical books, and memoirs to her name. Her works have been **translated into major Indian languages, selling over 26 lakh copies across the country**.
- ❖ **Awards**
 - ✓ In 2006, **Sudha Murty was awarded the Padma Shri** – the fourth-highest civilian award in India.
 - ✓ In **2023**, she was awarded the **Padma Bhushan** – the third-highest civilian award.
 - ✓ Literary awards- **RK Narayan Award for Literature, the Attimabbe Award for Excellence in Kannada Literature in 2011, and the Lifetime Achievement by Crossword Book Awards in 2018** reflect her significant impact.

NOMINATION TO RAJYA SABHA

- ❖ Under **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**, the subject “Nominations to the Rajya Sabha” is **allocated to Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- ❖ The **President of India nominates 12 members** to the **Upper House of Parliament** for their **outstanding contributions to arts, literature, sciences, and social services. (Under Article 80 (3) of Constitution)**

1.7 NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT FESTIVAL, 2024

- ❖ The **National Youth Parliament 2024 concluded recently**.
- ❖ The National Youth Parliament is **being organised this year based on the theme of 'Young Voices: Engage and Empower for Nation's Transformation'**.
- ❖ The **National Youth Parliament Festival, 2024** was organised from **9th February 2024 to 6th March 2024** across the country at **three levels covering 785 Districts of the country**.
- ❖ **Winners**
 - ✓ **Yatin Bhaskar Duggal from Haryana** won the **first prize** in the National Youth Parliament Festival, 2024, while **Vaishna Pitchai from Tamil Nadu** won the **second prize** and **Kanishka Sharma from Rajasthan** the **third prize**.

ABOUT NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT FESTIVAL

- ❖ The **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports** through **Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)** and **National Service Scheme (NSS)** has been organizing **Youth Parliament viz. District Youth Parliament, State Youth Parliament and National Youth Parliament**.
- ❖ The **1st National Youth Parliament Festival** was **held in 2019**.
- ❖ These Youth Parliaments are **aimed at strengthening the roots of democracy; inculcate healthy habits of discipline, tolerance of the view of others** and to **enable youths to know about practices and procedures of the Parliament**.

1.8 CAA RULES 2024 NOTIFIED

- ❖ The government officially **notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024**, signalling a **significant development in India's citizenship framework**.

ABOUT CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

- ❖ The **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)** is a **legislative enactment that the Parliament of India passed on December 11, 2019 to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955**.

- ❖ This amendment **allowed for the grant of Indian citizenship to religious minorities**, including **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians**, who fled from **neighbouring Muslim-majority countries of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan** due to **religious persecution or fear thereof before December 2014**.
- ❖ Under the CAA 2019 amendment, **migrants who entered India by December 31, 2014, were eligible for fast-track Indian citizenship**.
- ❖ The amendment **reduced the residence requirement for naturalisation from eleven years to five**.

ABOUT CAA RULES 2024

- ❖ The **rules, in line with the 2019 amendment to The Citizenship Act, 1955**, aim to provide citizenship to migrants belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian communities who entered India before December 31, 2014, from Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Bangladesh.
- ❖ An **online system for application, processing, and grant of citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is being explored by the Home Ministry**.
- ❖ Eligible applicants **include individuals of Indian origin, spouses of Indian citizens, minor children of Indian citizens, individuals with registered Indian citizen parents, and Overseas Citizens of India Cardholders, among others**.
- ❖ Exemption
 - ✓ The **amendments introduced by CAA do not apply to areas covered by the Constitution's sixth schedule**.
 - These are the **autonomous tribal-dominated regions in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**.
 - This means migrants belonging to the identified communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan based on religion can't be given Indian citizenship if they are residents in these areas.
 - ✓ **CAA also does not apply to states with an inner-line permit (ILP) regime — primarily in North-East India**.

1.9 ONE NATION ONE ELECTION

- ❖ The **high-level committee on "One Nation, One Election"**, led by **former President Ram Nath Kovind**, **submitted its report to President Droupadi Murmu**.
- ❖ The high-level committee **includes Home Minister Amit Shah**, former leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha **Ghulam Nabi Azad**, former Finance Commission chairman **N.K Singh**, former Lok Sabha Secretary General **Subhash Kashyap** and senior advocate **Harish Salve**.
 - ✓ Law Minister **Arjun Ram Meghwal is a special invitee to the panel**.
- ❖ The panel reasoned that the **current system of having several elections every year, casts a huge burden on the government, businesses and the society at large**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Foremost, the panel recommended **simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state assemblies**.
 - ✓ This is **to be followed by synchronised local body polls within 100 days**.
- ❖ **Fresh elections** could be held to constitute a new Lok Sabha in the **event of a hung House or a no-confidence motion**.
- ❖ When **fresh elections are held for the Lok Sabha**, the **new Lok Sabha will only serve for the remaining time left in the term of the previous Lok Sabha**.
- ❖ When **fresh elections are held for state legislative assemblies**, the **newly elected assembly will continue to exist until the end of the full term of the Lok Sabha unless it's dissolved earlier**.
 - ✓ To put the system in place, **Article 83 and Article 172** that deal with the **duration of houses of Parliament and the duration of state assemblies need to be amended**.

- ❖ The **election commission can prepare a common electoral roll and voter ID cards** in consultation with the state authorities.
 - ✓ For this, **Article 325, which deals with voters, has to be amended.**
- ❖ The **election commission of India is responsible for Lok Sabha and assembly polls**, whereas **state election commissions conducts the local body polls.**

1.10 TAMILISAI SOUNDARARAJAN RESIGNS AS GOVERNOR

- ❖ Tamilisai Soundararajan resigned as the **Governor of Telangana and the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry.**
- ❖ Soundararajan, 62, is **expected to return to electoral politics and contest Lok Sabha elections 2024 from Tamil Nadu.**

1.11 ECI ALLOWS POSTAL BALLOT FOR ESSENTIAL SERVICE EMPLOYEES

- ❖ **The Election Commission of India (ECI)** has notified the category of electors mentioned for the purpose of facility of voting through postal ballot as absentee voters in the category of persons employed on essential services.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ This category specifically includes individuals employed in essential services, ensuring their participation in the **democratic process** even while fulfilling vital duties on polling day.
- ❖ The list of eligible voters encompasses a diverse range of professionals whose roles are indispensable for the smooth functioning of society.
- ❖ Those included in the list are employees from critical sectors such as **public transportation (Metro), Railways, telecommunications (BSNL), power (Electricity) and healthcare (Health Departments), Fire Services, Postal Services, Aviation, Disaster Management, state-run broadcasting services (Doordarshan and All India Radio), as well as media personnel** authorized by the Commission to cover the polling day proceedings, among others.
- ❖ This decision, made in accordance with the provisions outlined in the **Representation of the People Act, 1951**, underscores the ECI's commitment to inclusivity and accessibility in the electoral process.
- ❖ Acknowledging the difficulties essential service workers encounter on election day, the Commission's objective is to safeguard their **fundamental right to vote** without any hindrances or interruptions.
- ❖ The notification is specifically applicable to the ongoing General Elections and Legislative Assembly elections in the states of **Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim**. Furthermore, it encompasses bye-elections scheduled to be held in **26 Assembly Constituencies across 13 different states.**

ABOUT POSTAL VOTING

- ❖ Postal voting, also referred to as absentee voting, is a convenient method of voting where voters can cast their ballots via mail instead of physically visiting a polling station.
- ❖ This method is especially beneficial for individuals who are unable to vote in person due to certain circumstances, including being away from their home constituency, having a disability, or being engaged in essential services on election day.

ABOUT ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA:

- ❖ **The Election Commission of India (ECI)** is a permanent and independent established by the Constitution of India to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- ❖ **Article 324** of the Constitution of India deals with the provisions related to the **Election Commission of India (ECI).**
- ❖ It shall consist of the **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)** and such number of other **Election Commissioners (ECs) as the President** may from time to time fix.
- ❖ The appointment of **CEC and other ECs** shall be made by the **President.**

- ❖ According to the **Election Commission (Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991**, the **Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners** hold office for a term of **6 years** or until they attain the **age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.

1.12 MADRASA EDUCATION ACT 2004

- ❖ **The Allahabad High Court's Lucknow** bench has declared the **UP Board of Madarsa Education Act of 2004** as **unconstitutional**.
- ❖ The court ruled that the act violated the principle of secularism, as well as several articles of the Constitution, including **articles 14, 21, and 21-A**. Additionally, the court found that the act also contravened **section 22** of the University Grants Commission Act of 1956.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JUDGMENT

- ❖ A court in the **Indian state of Uttar Pradesh** has directed the state **government** to provide regular school education to students enrolled in **madarsas**.
- ❖ The court wants these students to be accommodated in primary, high school, and intermediate education boards of the state.
- ❖ The ruling came in response to a plea filed by a lawyer who had challenged the **constitutionality** of a law passed by the state government.
- ❖ The law allowed madrasas to provide education in **Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Islamic studies, Tibb Logic, philosophy** and other branches of learning without recognition by the **state's education boards**.
- ❖ The court found the law to be **unconstitutional** as it violated the principle of secularism, which is a part of the basic structure of the Constitution, as well as **articles 14, 15, and 21-A**. The ruling will **affect 16,513 madarsas** in the state, of which **560** receive grants from the government. The court has asked the state government to create additional seats in regular schools for these students and establish new schools if necessary.
- ❖ The state government is yet to decide whether to comply with the verdict or challenge it in the Supreme court. A survey conducted by the state in 2022 found an additional **8,449 madarsas** in the state to be running without recognition.
- ❖ Recently, a special investigative team recommended that the government close them down as their source of funds could not be established.

AGAINST THE SECULARISM

- ❖ To be recognized by the board, a **madarsa** must be established as a **Muslim minority institution** where every student studies Islam in every class to be promoted.
- ❖ Modern subjects are either not taught or are optional, and students are only permitted to choose one of the optional subjects.

ARTICLE 21, 21-A

- ❖ The court has found that the syllabus of **class 10 and 12** in madarsas is inconsistent with the Right to Education of the Constitution. This is because students have limited options to study modern subjects such as **maths and science**.
- ❖ They are required to study compulsory subjects such as **theology, Urdu, English, and Hindi**. The court has noted that students up to class 10 cannot choose to study **science, math, and social science** simultaneously.
- ❖ **The English** taught to **class 12 students** is of the level of **NCERT books** of **class 10**, while the optional science subject taught to **class 12 students** is of the level of **classes 8, 9, and 10**. In state boards, science is divided among physics, chemistry, and biology.
- ❖ The court has concluded that the education under the **Madarsa Act** is not equivalent to the education being imparted to the students of other regular educational institutions recognized by the state primary and high school and intermediate boards.
- ❖ Hence, the education being imparted in madarsas is neither of '**quality**' nor '**universal**' in nature.

NOT WITH NORMS OF UGC ACT

- ❖ The law in question was found to be in conflict with **the UGC Act**. The court noted that previous rulings had established that higher education is a domain reserved for the Centre, and that states lack the authority to create laws in this field.
- ❖ However, the Act granted the board the right to prescribe textbooks and other instructional material even for courses like '**alim,**' **undergraduate,** '**kamil,**' **post-graduate,** '**fazil,**' **junior research,** and other courses.

1.13 VOTE FROM HOME

- ❖ For the first time in **the Lok Sabha** election's history, **the Election Commission of India (ECI)** has allowed senior persons **85 years of age** and more and people with disabilities to use the "**vote-from-home**" option.
- ❖ **The 'vote-from-home'** facility is solely reserved for the Persons with **Disabilities (PwD)** and **senior citizens aged 85 and above.**
- ❖ This decision would allow more than **85 lakh senior** citizens and **88.4 lakh** persons with disabilities to cast their votes by **postal ballots.**

HISTORY

- ❖ The facility was previously attempted during Assembly elections in select areas, **allowing PwD, senior citizens and those affected by Covid-19 to vote from home.**
- ❖ In the past **11 Assembly elections,** the scheme has helped almost **3.30 lakh** persons with disabilities and electors above **80 years.**
- ❖ In the **Karnataka Assembly Elections** last year, nearly **one lakh PwD** and **older electors,** out of the total **18 lakhs,** had used the house balloting postal poll approach.

HOW CAN THE FACILITY BE AVAILED?

- ❖ Key to the system is Form 12D, that's a letter informing the **Assistant Returning Officer (ARO)** that the person might not be in a position to go to the polling station to vote.
- ❖ The form can be downloaded online from the ECI website or accumulated from the office of the representative district officer of a parliamentary constituency.
- ❖ Distribution of Form 12D has already started out in **Tamil Nadu districts,** as the State heads to the **national polls on April 19.**
- ❖ The form has to be filled and submitted within **5 days** of notification of the polling date.

1.14 ELECTION COMMISSION LAUNCHES SAKSHAM APP

- ❖ In a bid to provide accessibility to all and leave no voter behind, the Election Commission announced that the voters above **85 years** of age and Persons-with-Disabilities (pwd) with 40 percent benchmark disability can vote from home.
- ❖ Further, volunteers and wheelchairs will be available at every polling station. The poll body is also arranging transport facilities for the persons-with-disabilities and elderly.
- ❖ The Commission launched the **Saksham App** to facilitate easier voting for PwDs and to avail facilities at Polling Stations.
- ❖ Further, it is pushing for permanent **Assured Minimum Facilities (AMF)** in schools as a gift of election process to the students.
- ❖ Assured Minimum Facilities consist of **drinking water, toilets, signage, a ramp or wheelchair, helpdesk, voter facilitation centre, sufficient light and shed.**
- ❖ There will also be polling stations managed by persons-with-disabilities, and will exclusively be managed by women and Model Polling Stations.

2. ECONOMY

2.1 C4IR AT HYDERABAD

- ❖ **Hyderabad** witnessed the **inauguration of the World Economic Forum's (WEF) Centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution (C4IR)** during the **concluding day of BioAsia 2024**.
 - ✓ BioAsia is **premier life sciences and healthcare forum in Asia**.
- ❖ This will be the **world's first thematic centre** focussed on **healthcare and life sciences**.
- ❖ The centre **aims to create over 10,000 job opportunities in healthtech, foster 20-25 emerging companies and startups, and generate 10-25 novel ideas through its registry**.

ABOUT 4IR

- ❖ 4IR means the **digital transformation** of the **manufacturing industry by technologies** such as **Artificial Intelligence, Additive Manufacturing, Internet of Things (IoT), etc.**
- ❖ It also refers to **"smart factories"**—which are **fully connected cyber-physical systems that merges the physical and digital aspects**.

2.2 FINANCIAL LITERACY WEEK

- ❖ The **RBI's Financial Literacy Week in 2024** has been **observed from February 26 to March 1**.
- ❖ Starting in **2016**, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has **consistently allocated each year to the observance of Financial Literacy Week (FLW)**.
- ❖ The **primary goal** is to **convey messages regarding financial education to the general public, fostering the empowerment of individuals to adopt responsible financial behaviour and make informed financial decisions**.
- ❖ The **designated theme** for the **Financial Literacy Week 2024**, is **"Make a Right Start: Become Financially Smart"**, with emphasis on **"Saving and Power of Compounding", "Banking Essentials for Students" and "Digital and Cyber Hygiene"** which **aligns** with overall strategic objectives of the **National Strategy for Financial Education: 2020-2025**.
 - ✓ The theme for this year is targeted towards young adults, mainly students.
- ❖ The **theme** centres on **young adults and students, seeking to imbue prudent financial habits from an early age**.
- ❖ It **promotes the cultivation of a robust financial groundwork, fostering enhanced financial security and the attainment of future goals**.

2.3 INDIATEX LAUNCHED

- ❖ The project **'Innovative Business Practices and Economic Models in the Textile Value Chain in India' (IndiaTex)** is a **four-year UNEP funded project**.
- ❖ **IndiaTex** aims to **accelerate the transition of the Indian textile sector towards circularity**.
- ❖ It is **funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark** and **implemented in collaboration with the Government of India's Ministry of Textiles**.
- ❖ The project **will work with the industry at brand level** and **in two textile clusters** in India:
 - ✓ **Support SMEs in clusters** to calculate their **Product Environmental Footprint (PEF)**
 - ✓ Support SME brands to **implement and communicate about circular business models**
- ❖ With the India Government, the project will:
 - ✓ **Build capacity** and support the **development and implementation of circular textile policies**.
 - ✓ Create **convening opportunities for government, companies and organisations** to coordinate and align on circular textiles ambition at **national, regional and global level**.

2.4 INDIA'S 1ST GREEN HYDROGEN PLANT IN STAINLESS STEEL SECTOR

- ❖ India's 1st Green Hydrogen Plant in Stainless Steel Sector was virtually inaugurated recently.
- ❖ It is located at Jindal Stainless Limited, Hisar.
- ❖ It will be the world's first off-grid Green Hydrogen plant for the stainless steel industry and the world's first Green Hydrogen plant with rooftop & floating solar.
- ❖ This project is also a state-of-the-art green hydrogen facility with a target to reduce carbon emissions considerably by around 2,700 Metric Tonnes per annum and 54,000 tons of CO2 emissions over next two decades.

2.5 FIRST-EVER UNDERWATER METRO

- ❖ Prime Minister inaugurated the country's first-ever underwater metro, the Howrah Maidan-Esplanade Metro section in Kolkata.

ABOUT THE METRO

- ❖ Kolkata's new underwater metro is 16.6 km long.
- ❖ About 10.8 km runs underground from Howrah Maidan to Phoolbagan, including the tunnel under the Hooghly River, making it the deepest in the country. The rest is above ground.
- ❖ Stretching over 4.8 km, one section connects Howrah and Salt Lake, providing a vital link between these twin cities.
- ❖ The underwater metro has six stations, with three of them underground.
- ❖ The metro covers a 520 m river stretch in just 45 seconds, promising a quick and efficient mode of transportation.
- ❖ The train uses Automatic Train Operation (ATO), a cutting-edge system where the train advances to the next station when the motorman presses a button.

2.6 GEVRA SET TO BE ASIA'S LARGEST COALMINE

- ❖ The coal ministry announced that Gevra mine, operated by South Eastern Coalfields Ltd (SECL) in Chhattisgarh, has received environmental clearance to boost its production capacity to 70 million tonnes per annum.
- ❖ The expansion will position Gevra as the largest coal mine in Asia, overtaking Indonesia's Sangatta mine in coal production.
- ❖ Currently, Gevra's production capacity stands at 52.5 million tonnes a year, making it the largest in India.
- ❖ The Gevra mine stretches approximately 10 km in length and 4 km in width.
- ❖ SECL is a Coal India subsidiary and deploys environmentally friendly, blast-free mining technology, including surface miners and ripper mining equipment
- ❖ In FY23, SECL produced 167 million tonnes of coal and aims to increase this to 200 million tonnes this fiscal year (FY24), with a goal of reaching 260 million tonnes by FY26.

2.7 NEW GI TAGS

Serial number	GI Tag	Product state	Type
1	Majuli Mask	Assam	Handicrafts
2	Assama Majuli Manuscript Painiting	Assam	Handicrafts
3	Ambaji White Marble	Gujarat	Natural Goods

4	Kutch Rogan Craft	Gujarat	Textiles
5	Cuttack Silver Filigree	Odisha	Handicrafts
6	Narasapur Crochet Lace Products	Andhra Pradesh	Textiles
7	Ratlam Riyawan Lahsun	Madhya Pradesh	Agriculture
8	Hyderabad Lac Bangles	Telangana	Handicrafts
9	Tripura Risa Textile	Tripura	Textiles
10	Bengal Muslin	West Bengal	Textiles

2.8 MOODY'S UPGRADES INDIA'S FY24 GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 8%

- ❖ Moody's has **raised its forecast for India's GDP growth in FY24 to 8% from 6.6%** on the **back of strong government expenditure and domestic consumption.**
- ❖ The **upgrade** comes a **week after the rating agency raised its forecast for India's GDP growth in calendar 2024 to 6.8% from 6.1%.**
- ❖ Earlier, the **Indian economy soared ahead in the December quarter with a surprise growth of 8.4%**, belying fears of **tempering as manufacturing, electricity and construction put up a robust show.**
- ❖ The rating agency also **expects India to be the fastest-growing economy among the major G20 countries.**

2.9 WORLD'S LONGEST TWIN-LANE TUNNEL

- ❖ Prime Minister recently **inaugurated the Sela Tunnel, the world's longest twin-lane tunnel, in Arunachal Pradesh.**

ABOUT SELA TUNNEL

- ❖ Situated at **an altitude of 13,000 feet**, the strategically important Sela Tunnel **will ensure all-weather connectivity to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.**
- ❖ Constructed at a **cost of Rs 825 crore**, the project **consists of two tunnels and over 8 km of approach roads, with a total length of approximately 12 km.**
- ❖ The **first tunnel is a single-tube tunnel spanning 980 metres**, while the **second serves as an emergency escape route, measuring 1.5 km in length.**
- ❖ Situated near the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**, the **Sela Tunnel is strategically crucial, providing year-round access to Tawang and other forward areas bordering China.**
- ❖ The **escape tube, constructed parallel to the main one, is connected with cross passages every 500 m.**
- ❖ In case of emergency, this **escape tube can be used for the movement of rescue vehicles and evacuation of stranded people.**
- ❖ The tunnel has been **designed for a traffic density of 3,000 cars and 2,000 trucks per day with a maximum speed of 80 km per hour.**

2.10 SEMICONDUCTOR PROJECTS INAUGURATED

- ❖ Prime Minister virtually laid the **foundation stone of three semiconductor projects worth about Rs 1.25 trillion**, including the Rs 91,000 crore facility in Dholera, which will commence chip production by 2026.
- ❖ **Two of the three facilities are located in Gujarat, whereas one is based in Assam.**

- ❖ The **three projects** are the
 - ✓ **Semiconductor fabrication facility at the Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR) in Gujarat,**
 - ✓ **the Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Morigaon, Assam, and**
 - ✓ **an OSAT facility in Sanand in Gujarat.**
- ❖ **All three projects** are being **incentivised under the India Semiconductor Mission** which has an **outlay of Rs 76,000 crore.**

FACT

- ❖ The **semiconductor fabrication facility at the Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR)** will be established by **Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL) under the Modified Scheme for setting up semiconductor fabs** in India.
- ❖ With an **investment exceeding Rs. 91,000 crore,** this will mark the **inauguration of the country's first commercial semiconductor fab.**

ABOUT INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION

- ❖ **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** is a **specialized and independent Business Division within the Digital India Corporation** that aims to **build a vibrant semiconductor and display ecosystem to enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing and design.**
- ❖ **Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**

2.11 MAHARASHTRA TO BUY LAND IN J&K

- ❖ Maharashtra is **set to be the first state to purchase land in Jammu and Kashmir** to construct a **facility for tourists and officials who visit the Union Territory.**
- ❖ The **Maharashtra Bhawan – the first state Bhawan in the Valley – will come up at central Kashmir's Budgam on the outskirts of Srinagar city.**
 - ✓ The Maharashtra cabinet sanctioned the purchase of the land recently.
- ❖ The bhawan **will come up on a plot of land measuring 2.5 acres at Ichgam, close to Srinagar airport.**
- ❖ The J&K government **has approved the transfer of land to the state government, subject to a payment of Rs 8.16 crore.**

2.12 INTERNATIONAL FINTECH INSTITUTE TO BE SET UP

- ❖ The government and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** signed a **USD 23 million loan agreement to enhance access to quality fintech education, research, and innovation** at the **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City.**
 - ✓ **GIFT City** is an **initiative of the Centre and the Gujarat government** to foster **India's financial services and fintech ecosystem.**
- ❖ As per the loan agreement, **a fintech institute will be set up at GIFT City.**
- ❖ The project will establish **International Fintech Institute (IFI) to strengthen fintech education, boost startup success rates, and drive fintech research and innovation.**
- ❖ The IFI, to be established **in partnership with globally reputed institutes and universities,** will offer **industry-aligned fintech training programmes that meet international standards.**
- ❖ The institute **will strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship by supporting startups, especially women-led, through incubation and acceleration services.**
- ❖ It will **also collaborate with industry and venture capital funds to support the growth of fintech startups.**

2.13 SAGARMALA

- ❖ The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways** announced a **major investment of more than ₹645 crores to develop 10 waterway projects** under the **flagship Sagarmala programme**.
- ❖ The **projects will be implemented with 100% financial assistance from the central government to enhance terminals and riverine infrastructure** along the **river Brahmaputra (National Waterways 2)** to **boost connectivity and foster economic growth**.

ABOUT SAGARMALA PROJECT

- ❖ The Sagarmala Programme is **the flagship programme of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways to promote port-led development in the country**.
- ❖ The **programme envisages unlocking the potential of waterways and the coastline to minimize infrastructural investments required to meet these targets**.
- ❖ It aims to **harness India's 7,517 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes**.
- ❖ **Overall set of projects are divided into 5 pillars and 24 categories as below-**

2.14 MORD SIGNS MOU WITH J-PAL

- ❖ The **Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD)** has **signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** with **Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), South Asia** to **set-up a Gender Impact Lab for inclusive development of rural poor women**.
- ❖ The lab **will conduct new research and institutionalise data use** within **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)** for **driving women-led development**.
 - ✓ DAY-NRLM is **one of the largest community mobilisation efforts in the world**, organising **more than 10.04 crore women into over 90.76 lakh self-help groups**.
 - ✓ The programme **promotes financial inclusion, digital literacy, sustainable livelihoods and social development interventions**.
 - ✓ Above all, **it empowers these women to lead dignified lives**.

2.15 'ETHANOL 100' AUTOMOTIVE FUEL

- ❖ Ministry for Petroleum & Natural Gas launched **'Ethanol 100' automotive fuel**.
- ❖ The initiative marks **ready availability of Ethanol 100 at select 183 retail petrol outlets** across **five states – Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, New Delhi, and Tamil Nadu**.

ABOUT ETHANOL 100

- ❖ It is a **blend of 92 to 94 percent ethanol, 4 to 5 percent motor spirit to provide colour to flame and 1.5 percent Co-solvent higher saturated alcohol**.
- ❖ **Ethanol 100 stands as a cleaner, greener alternative to gasoline, boasting lower emissions of greenhouse gases and pollutants**, thus aiding in combating climate change and enhancing air quality in our communities.
- ❖ With its **high-octane rating, typically between 100-105**, Ethanol 100 proves **ideal for high-performance engines, ensuring improved efficiency and power output** all while minimizing environmental impact.
- ❖ Moreover, Ethanol 100's versatility shines through, as it **can be used in a wide array of vehicles, including flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) designed to run on gasoline, ethanol, or any blend of the two**, showcasing its practicality and potential to become a mainstream fuel option with the right infrastructure in place.

2.16 INDIA'S FIRST INTEGRATED OIL PALM PROCESSING UNIT

- ❖ India's **first integrated Oil Palm Processing Unit** by **3F Oil Palm** started its **commercial operations**.
- ❖ This **integrated Oil Palm project** will include a **cutting-edge oil palm factory (Palm Oil Processing and Refinery)**, a **zero-discharge effluent plant**, a **palm waste-based power plant**, and **additional structures and go-downs for support purposes**.
- ❖ The factory located at **Roing in lower Dibang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh**, carries forward **Mission Palm Oil**, representing a **pivotal step in India's journey towards self-reliance in edible oils**, catalyzed by the **National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)**.
- ❖ This factory marks the **first Oil Palm factory in Arunachal Pradesh** and **India's first Oil Palm Factory** under **NMEO-OP**.

2.17 STARTUP MAHAKUMBH

- ❖ **Startup Mahakumbh**, a three-day long startup event was organised **at Bharat Mandapam in Delhi**.
- ❖ The first-of-its-kind event brings together **startups, investors, incubators, accelerators, and leaders** on a single platform.
- ❖ Over 1,000 startups, 500 incubators, 1,000 investors, 5,000 delegates, and over 40,000 visitors attended the event.
- ❖ The innovative initiative spearheaded by leading industry organizations including **ASSOCHAM, Nasscom, Bootstrap Incubation & Advisory Foundation, TiE, and Indian Venture and Alternate Capital Association**.

2.18 INDIA'S OUTLOOK FOR NEXT FISCAL POSITIVE

- ❖ **The Finance Department** is positive about the sliding growth rate beyond the **8%** which is the NSO estimate that generally implies continued economic growth in the future, and higher analyst reports as well. Notwithstanding the high retail inflation within the target region of 2%-6%, core inflation has been showing indications of recovery.

2.19 NIMMU-PADAM-DARCHA ROAD TO LADAKH

- ❖ **The Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** has connected the strategic **Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road in Ladakh**.
- ❖ This **298-km road** will connect **Manali to Leh** through **Darcha and Nimmu on Kargil – Leh Highway**.
- ❖ The road is now the third axis apart from Manali-Leh and Srinagar-Leh which connects Ladakh to the hinterland.
- ❖ The Nimmu-Padam-Darcha road derives its strategic importance from the fact that it is not only shorter vis-a-vis the other two axes, but crosses only one pass; **Shinkun La (16,558 feet)** on which tunnel work is about to commence by the BRO.
- ❖ This will result in the road having all weather connectivity to the Ladakh region.
- ❖ The connectivity will strengthen the defence preparedness and provide a boost to the economic development in the Zaskar valley.

2.20 LIC TOPS GLOBAL INSURANCE BRAND RANKINGS

- ❖ According to the **“Insurance 100 2024” report by Brand Finance**, independent brand valuation and strategy consultancy, **India's Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)** has emerged as the **world's strongest insurance brand**, with brand value up 0.04% to **USD 9.8 billion**. It has a Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 88.3 and an associated AAA brand strength rating.

- ❖ LIC is followed by **Taiwan based Cathay Life Insurance** (brand value up 9% to USD4.9 billion) and **Australia based NRMA Insurance** (brand value up 82% to USD1.3 billion) as 2nd and 3rd strongest insurance brands respectively.
- ❖ According to the report, **China's Ping An continues** its reign as **the world's most valuable insurance brand** for 6 consecutive years, showcasing a 4% increase in brand value to USD 33.6 billion.

2.21 S&P GLOBAL RAISES INDIA'S FY25 GDP GROWTH FORECAST TO 6.8%

- ❖ **S&P Global** has raised India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast for Financial Year 2024-25 (FY25) by 40 basis points to **6.8 per cent** or lower than the central bank and government's projection of 7 per cent.
- ❖ The Indian economy is estimated to have clocked a growth of **7.6% in the current fiscal**.
- ❖ In November, last year, the U.S.-based agency had projected India's growth to be 6.4% in 2024-25 fiscal on robust domestic momentum.

2.22 DOMESTIC SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT INSURERS (D-SIIS)

- ❖ **The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has identified **three Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)** for the **year 2023-24**.
- ❖ **Life Insurance Corporation of India**, General Insurance Corporation of India and New India Assurance Co Ltd continue to be identified in the **2022-23 list of D-SIIs**.

ABOUT DOMESTIC SYSTEMICALLY IMPORTANT INSURERS

- ❖ **D-SIIs** refer to insurers of such size, market importance, and domestic and global interconnectedness, whose distress or failure would cause a significant dislocation in the domestic financial system.
- ❖ D-SIIs are perceived as insurers that are **'too big or too important to fail' (TBTF)**. This perception and perceived expectation of government support may amplify risk-taking, reduce market discipline, create competitive distortions and increase the possibility of distress in the future.
- ❖ These considerations require that D-SIIs be subjected to additional regulatory measures to deal with systemic **risks and moral hazard issues**.
- ❖ Given the nature of their operations and the systemic importance of the D-SIIs, these insurers have to raise the level of corporate governance and are being subjected to enhanced regulatory supervision.

ABOUT INSURANCE REGULATORY AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OF INDIA (IRDAI)

- ❖ The Insurance Regulatory Development Authority is a statutory agency established by **the Insurance Regulatory Development Authority Act of 1999**.
- ❖ It was established on the recommendations of the **Malhotra Committee Report, in 1999**.
- ❖ **IRDAI** was founded as an independent body with its headquarters in **New Delhi**. In **2001**, its headquarters were relocated to **Hyderabad, Telangana**.
- ❖ IRDAI is a **10-member body**- a Chairman, five full-time members, and four part-time members appointed by **the Government of India**.

3. GEOGRAPHY

3.1 CAVUM CLOUD

- ❖ Scientists have **long speculated about Cavum clouds**, also called **hole-punch clouds or fallstreak holes**, but it's **now well understood that these odd cloud formations are caused by airplanes**.
- ❖ **Formation**
 - ✓ Cavum clouds **form when planes fly through banks of altocumulus clouds, mid-level clouds** that have **supercooled (below the freezing point of water but still liquid) water droplets**.
 - ✓ As **air moves around the plane**, a process called **adiabatic expansion** can make the **droplets freeze into ice crystals**.
 - ✓ The **ice crystals eventually grow heavy and fall out of the sky, leaving a hole in the cloud layer**.
 - ✓ The **falling ice crystals are visible in the center of the holes as wispy trails of precipitation that never reach the ground** – features called **virga**.

3.2 PANDAVULA GUTTA IS GEO-HERITAGE SITE

- ❖ **Pandavula Gutta**, a **geological marvel older than the Himalayan hills**, has been **officially recognised as the sole Geo-heritage site in Telangana**.
- ❖ **Pandavula Guhalu** is a **prehistoric habitation site situated atop Pandavulakonda or Pandavula Gutta**.
- ❖ The site was **first discovered in the year 1990**.
- ❖ **Paleolithic cave paintings** have been **found here which offer a rare glimpse into the prehistoric man's rock art** identified on **walls and ceilings of caves, rock shelters, and isolated boulders**.
- ❖ Experts say these **cave paintings date back to at least the 7th Century**.

4. ART AND CULTURE

4.1 CHAPCHAR KUT FESTIVAL

- ❖ The Chapchar Kut is a **festival of Mizoram**.
- ❖ It is **celebrated during March after completion of their most arduous task of jhum operation i.e., jungle-clearing (clearing of the remnants of burning)**.
- ❖ It is a **spring festival celebrated with great favour and gaiety**.
- ❖ Chapchar Kut is a celebration **held in anticipation of a golden harvest**.
- ❖ All the people gather for a huge community fest to sing and dance to the tune of flute, cymbals, drums and gongs.
- ❖ One of the **greatest highlights of Chapchar Kut** is the **popular bamboo dance called Cheraw**, which features **men tapping the bamboo sticks according to the rhythm of the dance and women adjust their dance moves with moving sticks**.

4.2 GORSAM KORA FESTIVAL

- ❖ **Gorsam Kora festival** was celebrated recently in **Tawang district Arunachal Pradesh**.
- ❖ The **four-day annual event featured chanting of sacred mantras and carrying out of traditional Buddhist rituals at the Gorsam chorten by monks**.

- ✓ **Gorsam Chorten, a 93 feet tall Stupa, was built during 13th century AD by a local monk- Lama Pradhar.**
- ❖ Organised by the **local Zemithang community**, in collaboration with **civil authorities and the Indian Army**, the festival began with **an invocation led by Thengtse Rinpoche**, which was **followed by prayers at the Khinzemane holy tree**, which is **believed to have been planted by the 14th Dalai Lama.**
 - ✓ **Zemithang Valley holds historical significance as 14th Dalai Lama found refuge upon his escape from Tibet in 1959.**
- ❖ The festival **attracts pilgrims and lamas from Bhutan, Tawang, and neighbouring regions.**
- ❖ This year the **festival was celebrated with the theme 'Zero waste festival'.**

4.3 KOCHRAB ASHRAM

- ❖ Prime Minister recently inaugurated the **redeveloped Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat** to mark the **94th anniversary of the Dandi March.**
 - ✓ On **12th March 1930**, Gandhiji started **Salt Satyagraha March or Dandi March from Sabarmati Ashram to the coastal town of Dandi.**
- ❖ The Prime Minister **also revealed the master plan for the Rs 1,200 crore Gandhi Ashram Memorial and Precinct Development Project.**

ABOUT THE ASHRAM

- ❖ Kochrab Ashram holds significant historical importance as the **first ashram established by Mahatma Gandhi upon his return to India from South Africa in 1915.**
- ❖ **On 20 May, 1915, Gandhi took residence in a dwelling located in the Kochrab hamlet, near Paldi, situated on the outskirts of Ahmedabad.**
- ❖ The bungalow, **generously provided by Jeevanlal Desai, a fellow lawyer and colleague**, later **became the Satyagraha Ashram under Gandhi.**
- ❖ It is **still preserved as a memorial and tourist place by deemed university Gujarat Vidyapith.**
- ❖ Kochrab Ashram, where **Gandhi stayed for two years**, served as a **communal living space promoting self-improvement, self-sufficiency, and community service.**
- ❖ Gandhi drafted a **set of rules and observances for the ashramites**, later adopted as **ashram observances.**
 - ✓ About **25 men and women, associates of Gandhi in South Africa, including Maganlal Gandhi**, became the **initial members of the Ashram Community.**
- ❖ The ashram also served as the **starting point for Gandhi's advocacy of khadi, equality for the poor, Hindi as the national language, self-reliance, and independence.**

4.4 WORLD'S FIRST-EVER OM-SHAPED TEMPLE

- ❖ **The World's first-ever Om-shaped temple Inaugurated in the village of Jadan in Rajasthan's Pali district.**

ABOUT THE TEMPLE

- ❖ This temple became the **world's first temple** designed in this iconic form. This architectural masterpiece will not only attract tourists, but will also boast of an impressive visual presence that will be visible from space too.
- ❖ This groundbreaking endeavor marks a significant milestone as it pioneers the creation of such a distinctive temple globally.
- ❖ The **'Om Aakar'** temple spans across a vast expanse of **250 acres in Jadan Village.**

FEATURES OF TEMPLE

- ❖ **This temple** is shaped like the **Om symbol** and follows the **Nagara style** commonly seen in **North India**. It has an extensive layout covering an area of around half a kilometre. This intricate design pays tribute to the region's rich cultural and architectural heritage.
- ❖ One notable aspect of this temple is that it can hold **1,008 idols of Lord Mahadev and 12 Jyotirlingas** within its sacred boundaries.
- ❖ The temple stands at a towering height of **135 ft and is supported by 2,000 pillars**. It also has **108 rooms on its premises**, with the tomb of Guru Madhavanand ji as the central feature of the temple complex.
- ❖ The topmost section of the temple has a sanctum that houses a shivling made of rhinestone sourced from the **Bansi hill of Dholpur**.
- ❖ Additionally, there is an enormous tank underneath the temple complex with a capacity of 2 lakh tonnes, which adds to the **temple's grandeur**.

ORIGINS AND EVOLUTION OF NAGARA STYLE TEMPLES

- ❖ It is believed that the **Nagara style of temple architecture originated in the 5th century AD**. Its influence is in parts of **Northern India, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh**.
- ❖ The Nagara style is not limited to a specific time period and has evolved and adapted over centuries, showing the dynamic nature of Indian temple architecture.
- ❖ Nagara style got its fame from the Gupta dynasty and continued to flourish through various regional kingdoms and empires that ruled over the northern parts of India.
- ❖ The word "**Nagara**" means "**city**," which highlights the temple style's close association with urban architectural principles.
- ❖ Nagara style temples have a unique blend of indigenous elements and influences from **Central Asia**.
- ❖ They are characterized by their tower-like peaks, known as "**shikharas**", which rise vertically and symbolize the sacred mountain, Meru. This temple style of architecture is closely associated with the Shaiva and Vaishnava sects of Hinduism, reflecting their spiritual aspirations.

5. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

5.1 JUICE JACKING

- ❖ The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has issued a **cautionary message to mobile phone users, advising them against charging their devices via public chargers**.
- ❖ The **warning is issued in the wake of rising worries** about the **security threats presented by the "juice jacking" cyberattack**.
- ❖ The term "**juice jacking**" was **first coined in 2011 by cybersecurity expert Brian Krebs**.
- ❖ It is a **type of cyberattack** where **hackers manipulate public USB charging stations by installing malware on them or altering their hardware**, which **enables them to steal data from linked devices**.
- ❖ **Hackers use this attack**, often referred to as port jacking, to obtain **sensitive information** from the **targeted device, including addresses, bank and credit card details, and passwords**.

5.2 WORLD'S FIRST AI SOFTWARE ENGINEER- DEVIN

- ❖ Devin is a **super-smart computer program** created by a company called **Cognition, a US based applied Artificial Intelligence Lab**.
- ❖ **Devin, an AI tool**, can **write code, debugging, create websites and software, and learn from its mistakes**.
- ❖ It's **designed to assist human engineers, not replace them**, and has been successful in real-world jobs.

- ❖ Devin's **functionality includes thinking ahead, planning complex tasks, learning new technologies.**
- ❖ When given a **prompt or instruction**, Devin **analyzes the request** and **uses its vast database of knowledge and problem-solving techniques** to **generate code, design websites, or develop software.**

5.3 YOGA MAHOTSAV 2024

- ❖ Ministry of AYUSH inaugurated the **Yoga Mahotsav 2024**, celebrating the **100-day countdown to this year's International Day of Yoga.**
- ❖ International Day of Yoga IDY is **observed every year on 21st June.**
- ❖ The **theme of the 10th edition** of IDY this year is – **Yoga for Women Empowerment.**
- ❖ The one-day Yoga Mahotsav-2024 organised covered a **range of activities after the inaugural session, including theme-based technical sessions on Empowering Women's Health through Yoga and Transforming Life through Yoga.**

5.4 NEW VARIETIES OF COCONUT AND COCOA

- ❖ A **new dwarf coconut variety** named '**Kalpa Suvarna**' and **two new hybrid varieties of cocoa developed by the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI)**, were released.

'KALPA SUVARNA' VARIETY IS IDEAL FOR TENDER COCONUT AND COPRA PRODUCTION.

- ❖ The variety **starts flower 30-36 months after planting.**
- ❖ Its **fruits are large-sized, oblong, and green in colour.**
- ❖ Its tender nut **water content is 431 ml and the copra content is around 186 grams with an oil content of 64.5%.**
- ❖ The **variety yields 108 to 130 nuts per palm every year under good management.**
- ❖ It is **recommended for cultivation in Karnataka and Kerala.**

COCA VARIETIES

- ❖ The coca varieties – **VTL CH I and VTL CH II** – released have **high fat and nutrient contents.**
- ❖ The **VTL CH I is a high yielder and can be cultivated as an inter-crop both in arecanut and coconut plantations.**
- ❖ It is **suitable for traditional Karnataka and Kerala belts and Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh also.**
- ❖ The **VTL CH II is also a high yielder.** It is **tolerant to black pod rot which is high in high rainfall region.** It is suitable for Karnataka and Kerala.
- ❖ The **yield of both the varieties is 1.5 kg to 2.5 kg dry bean per tree per year.**

5.5 SAKHI APP

- ❖ **The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** facility at **Thumba in Thiruvananthapuram**, has developed a multi-purpose app '**SAKHI**' that will help astronauts on the **Gaganyaan space** flight mission carry out a range of tasks such as looking up vital technical information or communicating with one another.

ABOUT SAKHI

- ❖ **The Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction (SAKHI)** is equipped to monitor astronauts' health, maintain communication with Earth, and manage dietary schedules.
- ❖ It serves as an essential tool for the crew, offering real-time assistance and access to necessary data.
- ❖ It would assist astronauts during the **Gaganyaan** space flight mission, facilitating tasks such as accessing vital technical information and communication.

- ❖ Strapped to astronauts' space suits, it allows for easy access and facilitates the maintenance of mission logs in various formats.

BENEFITS OF SAKHI APP:

HEALTH MONITORING:

- ❖ It will provide information on key parameters like blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen saturation & invaluable insights into the crew's physical condition throughout the mission.
- ❖ It will also remind them about their hydration and dietary schedules and sleep patterns.

CONNECTIVITY:

- ❖ Astronauts can use the **app** to maintain a log on the mission in multiple formats including **voice records, texts and images**.
- ❖ It will keep the crew connected with the onboard computer and ground-based stations, guaranteeing a seamless communication link.

ABOUT GAGANYAAN MISSION:

- ❖ **ISRO** aims to launch the **Gaganyaan human spaceflight mission in 2025**.
- ❖ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** revealed the names of the four astronaut-candidates for **the first human spaceflight mission**.
- ❖ They are group **captains Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Ajit Krishnan, and Angad Pratap, and wing commander Shubanshu Shukla**.

5.6 PUSHPAK 'VIMAN'

- ❖ **The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** successfully completed its **third mission** with the **Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV)** dubbed "**Pushpak**" on **March 22, 2024**.
- ❖ The major goal of the **Pushpak mission** is to develop essential technologies for a fully reusable launch vehicle, allowing for low-cost access to space.
- ❖ The launch vehicle was airlifted to an altitude of about **4.5 km** by an Indian Air Force helicopter and released after meeting predetermined pillbox parameters.

ABOUT THE MISSION:

- ❖ **ISRO** had successfully completed previous RLV missions in 2016 and April of the previous year. The company intends to scale up the RLV-TD to become **the first stage of India's reusable two-stage orbital launch vehicle**.
- ❖ **The Pushpak RLV** is a rocket-powered, fully reusable **single-stage-to-orbit (SSTO)** vehicle. It combines several key components from advanced technology demonstrations such as the X-33, X-34 testbed, and modified DC-XA flying demonstrator.
- ❖ The vehicle has a fuselage, a nose cap, double delta wings, twin vertical tails, and active control surfaces known as **Elevons and Rudder**.
- ❖ **The Pushpak project**, named after the fabled spaceship from the **Ramayana**, is expected to cost more than **Rs 100 crore (approx. \$13.5 million)**.
- ❖ **The Pushpak** expedition is named after the fabled spaceship from the ancient Indian **epic Ramayana**.
- ❖ **The Indian Air Force** played an important role in the mission by deploying a **Chinook chopper** to hoist the **Pushpak RLV** to the required height.
- ❖ **Pushpak RLV** combines improved elements from many technology demonstrations, such as **the X-33, X-34, and the enhanced DC-XA**.

5.7 START PROGRAMME

- ❖ **ISRO** has unveiled a new introductory-level online training programme called '**Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START)**'.

- ❖ ISRO will commence registrations for the START 2024 program from **April 8** and conclude on **April 12**.
- ❖ The theme of **ISRO** START Programme 2024 is '**Exploration of Solar System**'.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ **The START programme** is part of the ISRO's efforts to enable Indian students to become professionals in Space Science and Technology, as the organisation's Space Science exploration programme continues to expand into new domains.
- ❖ **START** is aimed at postgraduate and final-year undergraduate students of Physical Sciences and Technology.
- ❖ The programme will cover various domains of Space Science, including **Astronomy and Astrophysics, Heliophysics and Sun-Earth interaction, Instrumentation, and Aeronomy**. It will be delivered by scientists from Indian academia and ISRO centres.
- ❖ The programme is intended to provide students with an introductory-level training in Space Science and Technology, giving them an overview of different facets of the field, research opportunities, and career options.
- ❖ The training will also emphasize the cross-disciplinary nature of Space Science, giving students insights into how the individual aptitudes can be applied to the field.
- ❖ The lectures will also cover topics on the Indian Space Science exploration program and research opportunities in Space Science and technologies.

ABOUT ISRO

- ❖ **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** is the space agency of India which is a major constituent of the **Department of Space (DOS), Government of India**.
- ❖ **ISRO** was previously the **Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)**, set up by the Government of India **in 1962**.
- ❖ **ISRO** was formed on **August 15, 1969** and superseded INCOSPAR with an expanded role to harness space technology.
- ❖ **ISRO** has its headquarters in **Bengaluru**.
- ❖ Chairman of ISRO- **S. Somanath**

5.8 CVIGIL: ECI KEEPS CLOSE EYE ON ELECTION PROCESS

- ❖ **The Election Commission** is keeping a close eye on the election process through **the cVIGIL app**.
- ❖ It is a single app for recording, reporting, and resolving violations of the model code of conduct. Through this app, online complaints regarding violations of the model code of conduct can be made by capturing photos, videos etc.
- ❖ **The cVIGIL app** of Election Commission has become an effective tool in the hands of people to flag election code violations.
- ❖ The citizens can report Model Code of Conduct and expenditure violations through this app.
- ❖ **Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv kumar** said that the cVIGIL empowers citizens to report model code of conduct violations and assured action within 100 minutes.

5.9 KALAM-250

- ❖ **Skyroot Aerospace**, a space-tech company, has successfully test-fired the Stage-2 of Vikram-1 space launch vehicle, called **Kalam-250**, at the propulsion testbed of the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, at its **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC)** in **Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh**.

ABOUT VIKRAM-1:

- ❖ **Vikram-1** is a small-lift launch vehicle being developed by Skyroot Aerospace, an Indian private space company.
- ❖ This launch vehicle has a capacity to place **300 kg payloads** in the **Low Earth Orbit**.

- ❖ The rocket is an all-carbon-bodied vehicle capable of placing multiple satellites into orbit; it also features **3D-printed liquid engines**.
- ❖ Globally, Vikram-1 is among '**elite few**' rockets with the capability to deploy orbital satellites.
- ❖ The 'Vikram' in the launch vehicles' name is a tribute to **Vikram Sarabhai**, the father of India's space programme.

ABOUT KALAM-250:

- ❖ The Kalam-250 rocket motor, which powers the second stage of the Vikram-1 rocket, is made of high-strength carbon composite material, which uses solid fuel and a high-performance Ethylene-Propylene-Diene terpolymers (EPDM) Thermal Protection System (TPS).
- ❖ This lightweight yet robust material helps to reduce the overall weight of the rocket while maintaining structural integrity.
- ❖ Additionally, the Kalam-250 uses solid fuel propellant, which is a type of rocket fuel that is stable, easy to store, and provides high thrust.
- ❖ The combination of carbon composite material and solid fuel propellant makes the Kalam-250 an efficient and reliable rocket motor.

6. DEFENCE

6.1 VSHORAD TESTED

- ❖ India has **recently conducted two successful flight tests** of the **Very Short-Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) missile system off the coast of Odisha**.
- ❖ The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted these tests from a **ground-based portable launcher** at the **integrated test range in Chandipur**.
- ❖ These missiles **were designed and developed domestically** by the **Research Centre Imarat, in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories and Indian industry partners**.
- ❖ The VSHORADS system **incorporates advanced technologies**, including a **miniaturised reaction control system and integrated avionics**, which were successfully validated during the trials.
- ❖ The missile is **powered by a dual-thrust solid motor**.
- ❖ It is **specifically designed to neutralise low-altitude aerial threats at short ranges**.
- ❖ Additionally, **both the missile and its launcher have been optimised for easy portability**.
- ❖ The missile system, **being man-portable and specifically optimised for lightweight** compared to other missile systems, **can be deployed quickly in the mountains close** to the Line of Actual Control, with China in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

6.2 SAMUDRA LAKSAMANA

- ❖ Maritime Exercise **Samudra Lakshman** was **conducted off Visakhapatnam** coast recently.
- ❖ The **exercise aims to strengthen relations and enhance mutual understanding between the Indian and Royal Malaysian Navies**.
- ❖ Indian Naval Ship **Kiltan** and **Royal Malaysian Ship KD Lakir** participated in the **third edition of the exercise**.
- ❖ The exercise is **aimed at harbouring professional interactions between the two navies** followed by the **operational phase at sea during which both the contingents will jointly hone their skills while conducting various naval operations at sea**.

6.3 ADITI SCHEME LAUNCHED

- ❖ Defence Minister launched the **Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme** to **promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies**.
- ❖ Under the scheme, **start-ups are eligible to receive grant-in-aid of up to Rs 25 crore for their research development and innovation endeavours in defence technology**.
- ❖ The scheme was launched during **DefConnect 2024 event**.
- ❖ The **ADITI scheme** worth **Rs 750 crore for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26** falls under the **iDEX framework of the department of defence production under the ministry of defence**.
- ❖ It aims to **develop about 30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies in the proposed timeframe**.

ABOUT IDEX

- ❖ The **iDEX (Innovations For Defence Excellence)** is a well-conceived scheme of the ministry's **department of defence**.
- ❖ The **iDEX initiative was launched in April 2018**.
- ❖ It aims to **achieve self-reliance and foster innovation and technology development in defence and aerospace** by engaging industries **including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes and academia**.

6.4 OCEAN GRACE

- ❖ **Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways** inaugurated the **60T bollard pull tug named 'Ocean Grace'**.
- ❖ The **Ocean Grace** is the **first make in India ASTDS Tug** developed by the **Cochin Shipyard Limited under MoPSW**.
- ❖ The **first ASTDS tug** is **powered by NIGATA main engines and a Power Z-Peller ZP Propulsion engine**.
- ❖ This tug is **meticulously designed for optimal efficiency and reliability**, guaranteeing **seamless navigation and proficient vessel assistance, especially for large vessels like VLCCs and ULCCs**.

ABOUT GTTP

- ❖ The **Green Tug Transition Programme** will start with **'Green Hybrid Tugs' powered by Green Hybrid Propulsion systems and subsequently adopting non-fossil fuel solutions like Methanol, Ammonia, and Hydrogen**.
- ❖ The **goal** of the **Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP)** is to **convert at least 50 per cent of all tugs into Green Tugs by 2030** and to have **Green Tugs operating at all major port**.

6.5 PROJECT SEABIRD

- ❖ Defence Minister recently inaugurated **two big piers and seven towers with 320 homes** for **Navy officers and Defence civilians** as part of **Project Seabird** in **Naval Base Karwar in Karnataka**.
- ❖ **Phase IIA** of **Project Seabird** will **accommodate 32 ships/submarines, 23 yardcraft, a dual-use Naval Air Station, a complete Naval Dockyard, four covered dry berths and logistics for ships/aircraft**.
- ❖ It will **house around 10,000 uniformed and civilian personnel with families**, significantly boosting the local economy and industrial growth.
- ❖ **Phase IIA of Project Seabird** will **progress over the next seven to eight years**.
- ❖ **Phase I of Project Seabird** was designed to **accommodate 10 ships and was successfully finished in 2011**.
 - ✓ Project Seabird is the **largest naval infrastructure building project in the country**.
 - ✓ Once **fully operational**, it will have an **estimated 50,000 individuals residing in the Naval Facilities** spread over the **25-kilometre expanse**.

6.6 BSFS FIRST WOMEN SNIPER

- ❖ In a first, **Border Security Force (BSF)** welcomed woman sniper, **sub-inspector Suman Kumari**.
- ❖ She has **recently completed an eight-week sniper course at Indore's Central School of Weapons and Tactics (CSWT)** to become the **first woman sniper of the BSF**.
- ❖ Suman has **achieved 'instructor grade' at the course**.
- ❖ **In the sniper course, Suman was the only female among 56 men**.
- ❖ **The course is considered to be among the toughest trainings of the force, after the commando training.**

6.7 INS JATAYU

- ❖ **Naval Detachment Minicoy** has been commissioned as **INS Jatayu, an upgraded naval base**
- ❖ While India has had a naval detachment in **Minicoy, the southernmost atoll of the Lakshadweep archipelago**, since the 1980s, **INS Jatayu will effectively be the country's second naval base in Lakshadweep**.
- ❖ The **Navy's first base on the islands, INS Dweeprakshak in Kavaratti, was commissioned in 2012**.
- ❖ It marks an important **milestone in the Indian Navy's resolve to incrementally augment security infrastructure at the strategic Lakshadweep Islands**.

ABOUT THE ISLANDS

- ❖ **Lakshadweep, 'a hundred thousand islands'** in Sanskrit and Malayalam, is **an archipelago of 36 islands**.
- ❖ The islands, only **11 of which are inhabited**, have a **total area of only 32 sq km**.
- ❖ The Lakshadweep are **part of a chain of coralline islands in the Indian Ocean that includes Maldives to the south, and the Chagos archipelago** farther beyond, to the south of the equator.
- ❖ Given their location in the Indian Ocean, the **Lakshadweep are of huge strategic importance to India**.
- ❖ **Minicoy** straddles **vital Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs)** — the world's main maritime highways — including the **Eight Degree Channel** (between Minicoy and Maldives) and the **Nine Degree Channel** (between Minicoy and the main cluster of Lakshadweep islands).

ABOUT INS JATAYU

- ❖ The **existing Naval Detachment Minicoy, which is under the operational command of the Naval Officer-in-Charge (Lakshadweep)**, will be commissioned as **INS Jatayu**.
- ❖ A **naval detachment has administrative, logistics, and medical facilities**.
- ❖ **INS Jatayu will be upgraded to a naval base with additional infrastructure such as an airfield, housing, and personnel**, after obtaining the requisite environmental and other clearances.
- ❖ The **establishment of the base is in line with the government's focus on comprehensive development of the islands**.
- ❖ The Naval base will enhance **operational reach, facilitate its anti-piracy and anti-narcotics operations in the western Arabian Sea**, and augment Indian Navy's capability as the **first responder in the region**.

6.8 55TH CISF RAISING DAY

- ❖ The **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) Raising Day** is **celebrated every year on 10 March**.
- ❖ The day is **dedicated to honoring the sacrifices and contributions of CISF personnel** in safeguarding the **nation's critical assets and ensuring the safety and security of the people**.

ABOUT CISF

- ❖ CISF was **established under the CISF Act, 1968 on March 10, 1969.**
- ❖ **CISF'S Motto- "Protection and Security"**
- ❖ The force **started with just three battalions and 2,800 personnel.**
- ❖ Now, it has **grown to become one of the largest security forces in the country with over 1,65,000 personnel.**
- ❖ CISF comes **under the Ministry of Home Affairs** and is **headquartered in New Delhi.**
- ❖ The force was **created to provide security to various industrial installations, government infrastructure projects, and public sector undertakings in India.**
- ❖ Presently, **CISF is also providing security to the protected persons classified as Z Plus, Z, X, Y.**
- ❖ **CISF is the only force with a customized and dedicated fire wing.**

6.9 EXERCISE- BHARAT SHAKTI

- ❖ A **fire power demonstration 'Exercise Bharat Shakti'** will be **held on March 12 at the Pokhran firing range in Rajasthan.**
- ❖ It aims to demonstrate the **"prowess" of indigenously manufactured defence equipment of the three Services, the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, with particular focus on "jointness" and synergy.**
- ❖ The **live demonstration will be followed by a static equipment display.**
- ❖ **LCA Tejas, ALH Mk-IV, mobile anti-drone system, T90 tanks, Dhanush, K9 Vajra and Pinaka** are among the **platforms that will be demonstrated.**
- ❖ **Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to witness the demonstration.**

6.10 EXERCISE SEA DEFENDERS

- ❖ The **comprehensive maritime security exercise 'Sea Defenders-2024'** between the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG) & United States Coast Guard (USCG)** culminated at **Port Blair** recently.
- ❖ The exercise was **aimed at enhancing maritime cooperation and interoperability between the two forces.**
- ❖ The Exercise **included a variety of scenarios** including a **Pollution Response Demonstration**, in which Indian Coast Guard ships and aircraft showcased their expertise in responding to oil spills and other environmental hazards at sea. It also **simulated Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS) Operations for inspecting vessels suspected of illegal activity.**

6.11 VAJRA SENTINEL SYSTEM

- ❖ The **Ministry of Defence** has signed a **₹200 crore contract for anti-drone systems for the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF)** with **Big Bang Boom Solutions Private Limited (BBBS).**
- ❖ BBBS's **Vajra Sentinel System** is a **state-of-the-art solution** designed to **detect, track and neutralise drones at extraordinary ranges.**
- ❖ It **utilises passive RF sensor technology** to **eliminate false alarms, and its sensor and jammer combination meets stringent military standard specifications for durability and reliability.**
- ❖ It offers **soft kill by jamming, and hard kill by interceptor drones.**
- ❖ The **range of operation can be up to 10 km, with the option of hard kill getting activated at a distance of 5 to 6 km.**
- ❖ The anti-drone technology **has the potential to neutralise swarm UAVs as well.**
- ❖ The **system's core sensor, built around Artificial Intelligence and computer vision algorithms, enables precise identification, classification and location identification of drones.**
- ❖ Its **sophisticated decision-making matrix** enables **autonomous decision-making for countermeasures, including signal jamming.**

6.12 MISSION DIVYASTRA

- ❖ **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** conducted **first successful flight test of indigenously developed Agni-5 missile** with **Multiple Independently Targetable Re-Entry Vehicle (MIRV)** technology.
- ❖ The flight test named **Mission Divyastra** was carried out from **Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island in Odisha**.
- ❖ The project was **led by a woman scientist from the country's missile complex in Hyderabad, Sheena Rani**, who has been **working on the Agni missile systems since 1999**.

ABOUT MIRV TECHNOLOGY

- ❖ The **first country to develop MIRV technology** was **USA** which deployed a **MIRVed Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)** in 1970.
- ❖ MIRV technology ensures that **a single missile can deploy multiple war heads and hit targets at different locations simultaneously**.
- ❖ It can **help evade enemy anti-ballistic missile system capabilities**.
- ❖ The **warheads on MIRVs** can be **launched at different speeds and in different directions**.
- ❖ India has become **sixth country to have MIRV-capable missiles** after **US, UK, Russia, France and China**.

6.13 EXERCISE CUTLASS EXPRESS

- ❖ **INS Tir**, the lead ship of First Training Squadron (1TS) of the Indian Navy, **participated in Exercise Cutlass Express 2024 in Seychelles**.
- ❖ As part of **Exercise Cutlass Express**, the **Indian Navy actively engaged with participants from 16 friendly foreign countries**.
- ❖ **About the exercise**
 - ✓ Cutlass Express is **an exercise conducted in East African coastal regions and the West Indian Ocean** to counter **malign influence, aggression and activity along overlapping command seams and maritime regions**.
 - ✓ Cutlass Express is a **premier multinational maritime exercise sponsored by U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM)** and led by **U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. Sixth Fleet**.

6.14 HAL TO UPGRADE DORNIER AIRCRAFT

- ❖ The **Defence ministry** inked a **contract worth over Rs 2,890 crore** with **state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL)** for **mid-life upgrade (MLU) of 25 Dornier aircraft of the Indian Navy**.
- ❖ Under the project, the **HAL will incorporate state-of-the-art avionics systems and sensors onboard the aircraft**.
- ❖ The upgrade will **significantly enhance the operational capability of the Dornier aircraft** of the Indian Navy to **perform primary roles of maritime surveillance, electronic intelligence and boosting maritime domain awareness**.
- ❖ The project **will generate employment of 180,000 man-days over a span of six and a half years**.

6.15 EXERCISE LAMITIYE

- ❖ A **contingent from the Indian Army** departed to **Seychelles** to participate in the **Tenth edition of the Joint Military Exercise "LAMITIYE-2024"** alongside the **Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF)**.

- ❖ The **biennial training event** holds **significant importance in fostering cooperation between the two nations**.
- ❖ The term **'LAMITIYE'**, translating to **'Friendship' in the Creole language**, encapsulates the **spirit of camaraderie underlying this exercise, which has been a tradition since its inception in 2001**.
- ❖ With **45 personnel each** from the **renowned GORKHA RIFLES of the Indian Army and the Seychelles Defence Forces**, the exercise aims to **bolster interoperability in Sub-conventional Operations within Semi-Urban environments**, aligning with **Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter on Peacekeeping Operations**.

6.16 EXERCISE TIGER TRIUMPH 2024

- ❖ The Opening Ceremony of the **Bilateral Tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Amphibious Exercise between India and US, Tiger Triumph**, was held onboard INS Jalashwa.
- ❖ The **Harbour Phase of the exercise** is being **conducted at Visakhapatnam** and would **include pre-sail discussions, Subject Matter Expert Exchange on professional subjects and deliberations on planning and execution procedures of various tasks**.
 - ✓ **Sports engagements** are also scheduled to further enhance camaraderie between the participating armed forces personnel of both nations.
- ❖ The Sea phase would include **units of both countries setting up a joint Command and Control Centre and a Joint Relief and Medical Camp**.
- ❖ The participating units from the **Indian Navy** include a **Landing Platform Dock, Landing Ship Tanks (Large) including their integral Landing Crafts and helicopters, guided missile Frigate and Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance Aircraft**.
- ❖ The **Indian Army** would be represented by **one infantry battalion group including mechanised forces**.
- ❖ The **Indian Air Force** would deploy **medium lift aircraft, transport helicopters and a Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT)**.
- ❖ Additionally, the **Special Ops Forces** from all the three services will also participate in the **exercise**.
- ❖ The US Task Force would comprise of a **US Navy Landing Platform Dock** including its **integral Landing Craft Air Cushions and helicopters, a Destroyer, maritime reconnaissance and medium lift aircraft, and also, US Marines**.

6.17 TRINETRA 2.0 AND CRIME GPT

- ❖ UP police will now use **Trinetra app 2.0, a cutting-edge digital platform, that promises to transform the landscape of crime prevention and investigation**.
- ❖ With **over 9.32 lakh criminal records now digitized within Trinetra's database**, frontline officers will **possess the capability to swiftly identify suspects during security checks**.
- ❖ Trinetra app 2.0 can **be used by all police personnel of Inspector and above rank as per requirement**.
- ❖ The app offers **seamless accessibility via Android and iOS mobile applications**.
- ❖ Police personnel **can input and access comprehensive crime-related information, including crime histories, FIR details, interrogation reports, audio recordings, photographs, rewards, incarceration details, and seizure records**.

ABOUT CRIME GPT

- ❖ Artificial Intelligence (AI) solutions company **Staqu Technologies** has launched its **latest AI-powered offering, Crime GPT**.

- ❖ This tool is **claimed to be result of the company's ongoing collaboration with the UP Government and Special Task Force** in strengthening and expanding the horizons of the region's security landscape.
- ❖ Crime GPT **uses state's criminal database and delivers results based on written and audio inputs.**
- ❖ It comes with **features** such as **facial recognition, speaker identification, voice recognition, and criminal gang analysis among others.**
- ❖ Crime GPT is an **extension of the company's Trinetra application.**

6.18 STEAG- SIGNALS TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION AND ADAPTATION GROUP

- ❖ Getting ready for futuristic warfare, the **Indian Army** has **established the first of its kind, the Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group (STEAG).**
- ❖ It is **part of the Army's efforts to develop technologies, considering the future battlefield.**
- ❖ The Signals Technology Evaluation and Adaptation Group or STEAG **will undertake research and evaluation of futuristic communication technologies, like electronic exchanges, mobile communications, software-defined radios, electronic warfare systems, 5G and 6G networks, quantum technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, quantum computing, etc.** for military use in view of the changing nature of the field.
- ❖ The hi-tech unit **will carry out technical scouting, evaluation, development, and management of core ICT solutions and provide user interface support** through the **maintenance and upgrade of contemporary technologies available in the environment.**
- ❖ It would be **under Corps of Signals** which is a **combat support arm handling military communications.**

6.19 IIT KHARAGPUR, NAVY JOIN FORCES FOR TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ **Indian Navy and Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur**, signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, at **Naval Headquarters, New Delhi**, symbolising their commitment to promote technology development, innovative solutions and joint R&D.
- ❖ The strategic collaboration focuses on joint research and development initiatives involving teams from **Indian Navy and IIT Kharagpur.**
- ❖ The MoU will be co-ordinated by **INS Shivaji, Lonavala.**
- ❖ This alignment signifies a move towards a symbolic relationship between the Academia and the Military, fostering an environment conducive to innovation and knowledge exchange.

6.20 ARMY COMMANDERS' CONFERENCE 2024

- ❖ The Army Commanders' Conference for the year **2024** will be held in hybrid mode, with the virtual conference scheduled for **28th March 2024** and the physical conference in New Delhi on **01st and 02nd April 2024.**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ❖ The conference will be chaired by the **Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Manoj Pande**, in New Delhi, with Army Commanders participating virtually from their respective Command Headquarters.
- ❖ During the conference, **Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh** will also introduce and interact with senior military leadership.

- ❖ The discussion will focus on critical agendas impacting the welfare of the region's military and veterans, and include specific subject matter expert interactions on the emerging geopolitical landscape and its impact on national security.
- ❖ During the physical conference on 01st April 2024, the Army's top leadership will engage in intensive brainstorming sessions to enhance operational effectiveness, foster a culture of innovation and adaptability, and invest in training and development programs to ensure readiness for future challenges.
- ❖ The brainstorming session will also include discussion on issues related to the welfare of service personnel, with the aim of enhancing the quality of life for soldiers and their families.
- ❖ This will be followed by a meeting of the Investment Advisory Committee of Army Group Insurance under the chairmanship of COAS and attended by many experts in financial management.
- ❖ The Committee will deliberate on various welfare measures and schemes for the financial security of serving soldiers, ex-servicemen and their families.

COMMANDS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

- ❖ The Indian Army is a powerful and vast military force with over 1.2 million active members. It is divided into seven commands, each in charge of a specific region or operational area.
 - ✓ Northern Command (Headquarters – Udhampur, J&K)
 - ✓ Western Command (Headquarters – Chandigarh)
 - ✓ Eastern Command (Headquarters – Kolkata)
 - ✓ Southern Command (Headquarters – Pune)
 - ✓ South-Western Command (Headquarters – Jaipur)
 - ✓ Central Command (Headquarters – Lucknow)
 - ✓ Training Command (Headquarters – Shimla)

6.21 'MEGHAYAN 2024'

- ❖ **The School of Naval Oceanology & Meteorology (SNOM)** and Indian Naval Meteorological Analysis Centre (INMAC) has conducted a **METOC (Meteorological and Oceanographic)** seminar '**Meghayan-24**' at Southern Naval Command on 28 Mar 24.
- ❖ The seminar was based on the theme "At the Frontline of Climate Action".
- ❖ The inaugural address was delivered by Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff through virtual mode.
- ❖ An indigenous mobile application **INDRA (Indian Naval Dynamic Resource for Weather Analysis)** to disseminate weather related information and forecasts empowering optimal & quick decision making was also launched.
- ❖ The **INDRA (Indian Naval Dynamic Resource for Weather Analysis)** application has been developed by **BISAG (Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics)** in coordination with **Directorate of Naval Oceanology and Meteorology, Indian Navy**.

7. ENVIRONMENT

7.1 STATUS OF LEOPARDS IN INDIA REPORT 2022

- ❖ 'Status of Leopards in India Report 2022' was recently released.
- ❖ The Leopard population estimation (5th cycle) was carried out by the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India.
- ❖ It was in collaboration with State Forest Departments, as part of the quadrennial "Monitoring of Tiger, Co-predators, prey and their Habitat-2022".

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ India's leopard numbers rose by 8% from 12,852 in 2018 to 13,874 in 2022.
- ❖ While the highest number of leopards were reported in Madhya Pradesh (3,907), only three other States reported over a 1,000 animals each — Maharashtra (1,985), Karnataka (1,879) and Tamil Nadu (1,070).
- ❖ The survey covered 20 States of India, and focussed on about 70% of the animals' expected habitat, which are India's tiger reserves and protected forest areas.

ABOUT INDIAN LEOPARDS

- ❖ Scientific Name- *Panthera pardus fusca*
- ❖ Geographical spread- India, Nepal, Bhutan, and parts of Pakistan
- ❖ It is solitary and nocturnal in nature.
- ❖ Indian Leopards are good climbers and rely on trees for cover, so are found in various forested habitats, including rainforest, dry deciduous forest, temperate forest and northern coniferous forest (excluding mangrove forests and deserts).
- ❖ Unlike tigers, which are largely confined to forest reserves, leopards are far more adaptable and tend to be found in significant numbers, in villages and, sometimes, even in cities.
 - ✓ They are also known to prey on cattle and thus be involved in conflict.
- ❖ Other Threats- Habitat loss, illegal trade of skins and body parts, and persecution due to human-leopard conflict and livestock depredation.
- ❖ Protection Status-
 - ✓ IUCN Red list status- Vulnerable
 - ✓ CITES- Appendix I
 - ✓ WPA 1972- Schedule 1

7.2 SLUG NAMED AFTER THE PRESIDENT

- ❖ The Zoological Survey of India named a new marine species of head-shield sea slug with ruby red spot after President of India Droupadi Murmu.
- ❖ This species belonging to *Melanochlamys* genus was discovered from Digha of West Bengal coast and Udaipur of Odisha coast.
- ❖ The new species of head-shield sea slug, which is found nowhere in the world, is named as *Melanochlamys droupadi*.

7.3 INDIA'S RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT UNEA

- ❖ The United Nations Environment Assembly adopted India's resolution on sustainable lifestyles at its sixth session held in Nairobi, Kenya.
- ❖ All participating member states adopted the resolution which was co-sponsored by Sri Lanka and Bolivia.

ABOUT THE RESOLUTION

- ❖ It recognizes **potential of behavioural changes toward sustainable lifestyles** in achieving **sustainable development**.
- ❖ It recognizes work of **10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Patterns, adopted at Rio+20 in 2012**.
- ❖ It recognizes and underscores the **role of the private sector and industry, local authorities, local communities, and Indigenous Peoples** in supporting more sustainable lifestyles
- ❖ It recognizes that **each country is best positioned to understand its national circumstances and priorities to encourage more sustainable lifestyles**.

ABOUT UNEA

- ❖ United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was **established in 2012** as a **result of Rio+20**.
- ❖ It is **world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment**.
- ❖ It also **serves as the governing body of the UN Environment Programme**.
- ❖ It **meets every two years at Nairobi, Kenya**.

ABOUT MISSION LIFE (LIFESTYLE FOR ENVIRONMENT)

- ❖ Envisioned by Prime Minister of India at the **World Leaders' Summit in Glasgow at COP26**
- ❖ Launched on **20 October 2022**, in the **presence of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres** at Statue of Unity
- ❖ Mission LiFE aims to follow a **three-pronged strategy for changing our collective approach towards sustainability**-
 - ✓ **Demand**- by nudging individuals to practise simple yet effective environment-friendly actions in their daily lives;
 - ✓ **Supply**- by enabling industries and markets to respond swiftly to the changing demand and;
 - ✓ **Policy**- to influence government and industrial policy to support both sustainable consumption and production.

7.4 VANTARA

- ❖ Anant Ambani, the youngest son of Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani has revealed plans for his **ambitious wildlife conservation initiative in Gujarat**.
- ❖ The wildlife conservation initiative is **all set to become the largest zoo and rehabilitation centre globally**.
- ❖ The vast project has been named '**Vantara, translating to 'Star Of The Forest'**'.
- ❖ It **covers 3,000 acres within Reliance's Jamnagar Refinery Complex, which is renowned as the Green Belt Of Gujarat**.
- ❖ The initiative by Anant Ambani, the Director at Reliance Industries is **backed by Reliance Industries and Reliance Foundation** and plans to **serve as a refuge for mistreated, harmed, and at-risk animals**.
- ❖ Their vision is to **make it more than just a zoo and rather turn it into a holistic rehabilitation centre for the wild animals**.
- ❖ The plan **also includes creating a habitat for these animals that resembles the verdant environment that they come from**.

7.5 L&T COMMISSIONS FIRST INDIGENOUSLY MANUFACTURED HYDROGEN ELECTROLYSER

- ❖ **Larsen and Toubro** has commissioned its **first indigenously manufactured hydrogen electrolyser** at the **green hydrogen plant in Hazira, Gujarat**.
- ❖ Featuring a **rated power capacity of 1 MW** (expandable to 2 MW), this **electrolyser can produce 200 Nm³/Hr of hydrogen**.
- ❖ It is **equipped with two stacks and an electrolyser processing unit ML-400**, and offers **exceptional flexibility and thermal stability**.

❖ **Process**

- ✓ Hydrogen is **made by splitting H₂O (water) into two molecules -- hydrogen and oxygen** — via **electrolysis**, which is an electrical process.
- ✓ The method **requires electrolysers**, and **if the same is powered by renewable energy**, then the **product formed is green hydrogen** — a fuel that is free of greenhouse emissions.

7.6 INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE- IBCA

- ❖ The **Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister approved the establishment of International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) with headquarters in India** with a **one-time budgetary support of Rs.150 crore for a period of five years from 2023-24 to 2027-28.**
- ❖ IBCA's **Framework of Agreement** has been **substantially modelled** after the **International Solar Alliance.**

Seven big cats include Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Puma, Jaguar and the Cheetah.

Out of these five big cats viz. Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard and Cheetah are found in India.

BACKGROUND

- ❖ Prime Minister of India during his speech on the occasion of **Global Tiger Day, 2019** called for an **Alliance of Global Leaders to curb poaching in Asia.**
- ❖ He reiterated this on the **occasion of Commemorating 50 years of India's Project Tiger on April 9, 2023** and **formally announced launch of an International Big Cat Alliance** aiming at **securing the future of big cats and landscapes they thrive.**

ABOUT IBCA

- ❖ The **International Big Cat Alliance** has been conceived as a **multi-country, multi-agency coalition of**
 - ✓ **96 big cat range countries,**
 - ✓ **non-range countries interested in big cat conservation,**
 - ✓ **conservation partners and scientific organizations** working in the field of big cat conservation besides
 - ✓ **business groups and corporates willing** to contribute to the cause of big cats
- ❖ It aims to **establish networks and develop synergies** in a focused manner so as to **bring to a common platform a centralized repository of successful practices and personnel**, backed by **financial support** which can be leveraged to **strengthen the conservation agenda in the field to arrest decline in big cat population and reverse the trend.**
- ❖ **IBCA governance** consists of **Assembly of Members, Standing Committee and a Secretariat with its Head Quarter in India.**

7.7 NATIONAL DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTRE (NDRC)

- ❖ India's **first centre for research on conserving the endangered Gangetic river dolphin, National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC), is now operational and aims to assist scientists and researchers in studying Gangetic dolphins comprehensively.**
- ❖ The NDRC, spanning a **4,400 square metre plot on the premises of Patna University near the Ganga**, offers a **strategic location for researchers to closely observe dolphins in their natural habitat.**

ABOUT GANGETIC DOLPHIN

- ❖ The **Gangetic river dolphin** is **India's national aquatic animal.**

- ❖ The Gangetic river dolphin is **one of four freshwater dolphin species in the world.**
 - ✓ The other three are found in the **Yangtze river in China (now extinct), the Indus river in Pakistan and the Amazon river in South America.**
- ❖ The dolphin is **found in India, Bangladesh and Nepal.**
- ❖ It is **blind and finds its way and prey in river waters through echolocation.**
- ❖ **Bihar** is home to **around half of the estimated 3,000 Gangetic dolphins in India.**
- ❖ Dolphins prefer water that is **at least five to eight feet deep.**
- ❖ They are **usually found in turbulent waters, where there are enough fish for them to feed on.**
- ❖ Gangetic dolphins **live in a zone where there is little or no current**, helping them save energy.
- ❖ If they sense danger, **they can dive into deep waters.**
- ❖ The dolphins swim from the **no-current zone to the edges to hunt for fish and return.**
- ❖ **Protection status**
 - ✓ It is a **Schedule I animal under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
 - ✓ It has been **declared an 'endangered' species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and added in Appendix I of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).**

7.8 DAY ZERO IN MEXICO CITY

- ❖ In Mexico City, the **water crisis is nearing 'day zero'.**
- ❖ **Mexico City, home to nearly 22 million people**, could be very close **running out of water** because of **prolonged drought and higher than usual temperatures.**
- ❖ **"Day zero"** refers to a **scenario** where the **city's water reserves are depleted to the extent that taps run dry for large portions of the population.**

7.9 ZERO CARBON BUILDING ACTION PLAN (ZCBAP)

- ❖ India's **first city-specific Zero Carbon Building Action Plan (ZCBAP) has been launched in Nagpur.**
- ❖ With this, **Nagpur becomes one of the six cities globally to get a Zero Carbon Building Accelerator (ZCBA) project.**
 - ✓ **Other 5 cities are in 4 countries- Colombia, Turkey, Kenya and Costa Rica.**
 - ✓ **ZCBA was launched by the World Resources Institute (WRI) in 2021, and was supported by Global Environment Facility (GEF), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), World Green Building Council (WGBC) and other global partners.**
- ❖ The **Action Plan, released by the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI-South Asia)** states the **goal to make new buildings within Nagpur city Net Zero by 2030, and also convert all existing buildings into Net Zero by 2050.**
- ❖ The Action Plan for Nagpur has been **developed jointly by Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) and Nagpur Smart and Sustainable City Development Corporation Ltd (NSSCDCL).**
- ❖ **ICLEI South Asia is the implementing partner for the ZCBA project in Nagpur.**
- ❖ The ZCBAP road map **covers various types of buildings**, including public buildings, affordable housing, commercial buildings, and private homes.
- ❖ It **also includes strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions** through the **choice of building materials and improved design, construction, management, and deconstruction practices.**

7.10 MASS BLEACHING IN GREAT BARRIER REEF

- ❖ A **"mass bleaching event"** is unfolding on **Australia's famed Great Barrier Reef**, authorities said recently, as **warming seas threaten the spectacular home to thousands of marine species.**

- ❖ The **damaging mass bleaching event** — the seventh since 1998 — was confirmed by **government scientists following aerial surveys of 300 shallow reefs**.
- ❖ Before this event, **Australia's Great Barrier Reef suffered mass coral bleaching** in 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2022.
- ❖ The **World Heritage Committee** has considered to **put the reef on a list of "in danger" global heritage sites**

ABOUT GBR

- ❖ Often dubbed as the **world's largest living structure**, the **Great Barrier Reef is a 2,300 km (1,400 mile) expanse of tropical corals that house a stunning array of biodiversity**.
- ❖ **It is made up of around 3,000 individual reefs and reef structure is composed of and built by billions of tiny organisms, known as coral polyps**.
- ❖ It was **declared a World Heritage Site in 1981**.

ABOUT CORAL BLEACHING

- ❖ **Coral bleaching** occurs when **underwater temperatures are more than one degree warmer than the long-term average**.
- ❖ As **corals come under heat stress**, they **expel algae living within their tissues** — **draining them of their vibrant colours**.
- ❖ **Corals** have the **ability to recover**, depending on the **intensity of heat stress and its duration**. However, **prolonged or intense heat can prove fatal to corals**.

7.11 GOLDEN LANGUR

- ❖ There are **an estimated 7,396 golden langurs in India**, the **latest survey of the primate has revealed**.
- ❖ The **comprehensive population estimation** of the endangered primate was **carried out in two phases by the Primate Research Centre NE India (PRCNE), Assam Forest Department, Bodoland Territorial Council, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), and Conservation Himalayas**.
- ❖ The **entire distribution range** of the **golden langur (Trachypithecus geei)** covers the **Manas Biosphere Reserve and all fragmented forests in the western part of Assam**.

ABOUT GOLDEN LANGUR (TRACHYPITHECUS GEEI)

- ❖ Gee's golden langur is also known as **golden leaf monkeys, or more simply as golden langurs**.
- ❖ Golden langurs are **easy to identify by their golden fur**.
- ❖ Golden langurs' **coats change color with the seasons**, darkening to a golden chestnut hue in the winter and lightening to a creamy tone in the summer.
- ❖ The color of the **young differs from adults**, as **they are almost pure white**.
- ❖ **Habitat**
 - ✓ It is **limited to Assam, India and neighboring Bhutan** where they live year-round.
 - ✓ The area they **inhabit is restricted to the region surrounded by four geographical landmarks**: the **foothills of Bhutan (north), Manas river (east), Sankosh river (west), and Brahmaputra river (south)**.
 - ✓ A **single, isolated population of golden langurs even lives in the Abhaya Rubber Plantation**, in the **Kokrajhar district in Assam, India**.
- ❖ Protection Status-
 - ✓ IUCN red list: **Endangered**
 - ✓ CITES: **Appendix I**
 - ✓ WPA 1972: **Schedule-I**

7.12 JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN: CATCH THE RAIN CAMPAIGN 2024

- ❖ The Union Minister for Jal Shakti **launched the fifth edition of "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain-2024" campaign.**
- ❖ The campaign, **themed "Nari Shakti se Jal Shakti,"** emphasises the **integral role of women in water conservation and management.**
- ❖ The campaign **comes under the National Water Mission, Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation** in collaboration with **Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation.**
 - ✓ **National Water Mission** is one of **eight National Missions under National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC).**
- ❖ **Focused interventions of the campaign** includes-
 - ✓ water conservation and rainwater harvesting,
 - ✓ enumerating, geo-tagging & making inventory of all water bodies; preparation of scientific plans for water conservation,
 - ✓ Setting up of Jal Shakti Kendras in all districts,
 - ✓ intensive afforestation and
 - ✓ awareness generation.
- ❖ **Brief History**
 - ✓ **Ministry of Jal Shakti launched Jal Shakti Abhiyan in 2019** as a **"Jan Andolan"** to initiate water conservation at the grass-root level through citizen participation to accelerate water conservation across the country.
 - ✓ **JSA could not be implemented in 2020** due to restrictions imposed by **Covid 19 pandemic** and **Ministry of Jal Shakti implemented 'Catch the Rain' (CTR) campaign.**
 - ✓ Ever since it was launched as **"Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch The Rain" Campaign in 2021,** it has become **an annual feature covering all the blocks of all districts (rural as well as urban areas) across the country.**

7.13 GLOBAL SEED VAULT

- ❖ The Svalbard Global Seed Vault, in Norway, saw its **largest number of new contributors in one day** and **now holds over 1.2 million seed varieties from 111 seed banks in 77 countries.**
- ❖ The vault has been **stockpiling most of the world's crop seeds in below-freezing conditions,** in an effort **to maintain food diversity and protect plant species from extinction.**
- ❖ The Svalbard Global Seed Vault **is situated in permafrost caverns on an island located within the European mainland and the North Pole.**
- ❖ **The facility was established 16 years ago in 2008,** through a partnership between the **Nordic Genetic Resource Center, the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Crop Trust.**
- ❖ It was **designed to store over 2 billion seeds and guarantee their availability for future generations.**
- ❖ The Global Seed Vault **houses over 930,000 varieties of food crops.**
- ❖ Acting as a massive safety deposit box, it **contains the world's largest collection of agricultural biodiversity.**
- ❖ The **chambers are opened only three times a year to minimize the seeds' exposure to the outside world.** Inside, the **temperatures are kept around -18 degrees Celsius (-0.4 degrees Fahrenheit).**

7.14 SAMUDRAYAAN

- ❖ The **Samudrayaan mission** is scheduled to **explore the bed of the ocean by 2025 end.**
- ❖ So far, countries such as the **U.S., Russia, China, France and Japan** have carried out **successful deep-ocean crewed missions.**

ABOUT SAMUDRAYAAN MISSION

- ❖ **Samudrayaan, or the deep ocean mission, was initiated in 2021.**
- ❖ The mission entails undertaking a crewed expedition to reach a depth of 6,000 metres to the ocean bed in the central Indian Ocean using **Matsya6000**, designed to accommodate a crew of three members.
 - ✓ **Matsya-6000** has been developed by National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai.
- ❖ The submersible will be equipped with a suite of scientific sensors and tools, and have an operational endurance of 12 hours, which is extendable up to 96 hours in the event of an emergency.
- ❖ **Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Earth Sciences**

7.15 ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH TESTBED IN CENTRAL INDIA (ART-CI)

- ❖ The first phase of the **Atmospheric Research Testbed in Central India (ART-CI)** was inaugurated in **Sehore district**, located about **50km northwest of Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh**.
- ❖ The testbed, works of which began in early 2018, is equipped with high-end instruments to record several vital parameters that will be fed into improving the weather models besides facilitating advanced studies on the Indian monsoons.
- ❖ **Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM)** is spearheading the research activities at this first-of-its-kind testbed facility built at a cost of Rs 125 crore.
- ❖ Nearly **25 high-end instruments** like the aethalometer for aerosol studies, cloud condensation nuclei counter, laser ceilometer to measure cloud sizes, micro rain radar to calculate raindrop size and its distribution have been installed.
- ❖ A **Ka-band cloud radar and a C-band doppler weather radar** will also help track the movement of rain-bearing systems over this zone.

7.16 POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- ❖ The Supreme Court froze the **Assam government's move to withdraw a nearly 26-year-old notification** constituting the **Pobitora wildlife sanctuary**.
- ❖ The Assam Cabinet had recently withdrawn the notification issued by the State Forest Department in 1998.
 - ✓ The government reasoned that declaration of the sanctuary was made without settling the rights of the people living in villages in the area, including Thengabhang, Murkata and Mayong.
 - ✓ The Assam government has established a committee to redraw the boundary of the **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**

ABOUT POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- ❖ Covering an area of **38.81 sq km**, the **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary** was notified by the Assam forest department in **March 1998**.
- ❖ Located in the suburbs of the capital city of **Guwahati, on the southern bank of Brahmaputra River**.
- ❖ **The Sanctuary consists of the Rajamayong Reserve Forest and Pobitora Reserve Forest.**
- ❖ According to a census carried out in **2022**, the sanctuary has a **population of 107 rhinos**, which is the **highest density of the species in the world**.
 - ✓ **Other species include Asiatic Wild Water Buffaloes, leopards, jungle fowls, Civet cats, Wild boars, Wild Bears** and the many species of the bird life both resident and migratory.

7.17 INDIA'S 1ST BATTERY GIGAFACTORY

- ❖ **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) manufacturer - GoodEnough Energy** is set to inaugurate the country's largest BESS Gigafactory for grid stability in **Jammu & Kashmir**.
- ❖ The main goal of the factory is to ensure stability of the power grid. Initially, the factory will have a capacity of **7GWh, which will increase to 20 GWh by 2027**.

IMPORTANCE OF GIGAFACTORY

- ❖ **GoodEnough Energy** aims to support India's goal of achieving **Net-Zero emissions**.
- ❖ It plans on achieving this by providing their services to various industries that have high CO2 emissions, such as **Molding Industries, automation, mining, hospitals, refineries, Malls, and shopping complexes**.
- ❖ With their technology, they can store **7GWH** of annual storage capacity, leading to a reduction of over **5 million tonnes of CO2 emissions in a year**.
- ❖ GoodEnough Energy's Gigafactory is India's largest **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)** factory. It will create job opportunities for over **100 SMEs as vendors** and suppliers and will boost job generation in the J&K region.
- ❖ The factory has an initial capacity of **7GWH** annual storage, which aims to reduce over **5 million tonnes of CO2** in a year, with **2 cycles every day**. This is equivalent to the Indian Railway's annual carbon reduction target of **4 million tonnes**.

7.18 NETRAVATI RIVERFRONT PROJECT

- ❖ The principal bench of **the National Green Tribunal (NGT)** in **New Delhi** has initiated action on the **Netravati Waterfront Promenade Development Project in Mangalore**.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ **The National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has acknowledged the importance of the environmental and social issues related to the project and has taken action by forming a committee to investigate and provide a thorough report.
- ❖ The concerns raised by the local chapter of the **National Environmental Conservation Foundation (NECF)** regarding the impact of the project on the community have been taken into consideration.
- ❖ The project has been criticised for its potential negative effects on the environment and the livelihoods of the local population.

ABOUT

- ❖ **The Netravati Riverfront Project** is a remarkable urban development project which to a great extent is not solely focused on developing the ecological and the recreational aspects of the river but on enhancing the entire surrounding.
- ❖ The implementation of this project mostly involves the execution of different components including beautification of the river banks, construction of pedestrian and cycling trails, establishment of recreational centres, expense on improvement of leisure infrastructure to boost tourism and water activities.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- ❖ It has been established under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**.
- ❖ It is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within **6 months** of the filing of the same.
- ❖ **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the **Tribunal** and **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai** shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.

8. POLICY AND PROGRAMME

8.1 FIRST HYDROGEN FUEL CELL FERRY

- ❖ India's first indigenously developed **hydrogen fuel cell ferry** was launched recently.
- ❖ The vessel, **manufactured by Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**, will be **deployed for service at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh**.
- ❖ The Hydrogen fuel cell vessel is a **24-meter-long catamaran**, which **can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area**.
- ❖ This boat has **five hydrogen cylinders** that **can carry 40kg of hydrogen and support eight hours of operations**.
- ❖ This vessel **uses a 50-kW PEM (proton-exchange membrane) fuel cell**, with **Lithium-Ion Phosphate batteries**.
 - ✓ The **advantage** is that the **cells can quickly change their output depending upon the power demand**.
 - ✓ **PEM fuel cells are popular** in automotive applications because they **operate at a lower temperature**, and are **lighter and more compact**.
- ❖ The vessel is **also fitted with a 3-kW solar panel**.
- ❖ The hydrogen fuel cell-powered vessel **has zero emission, zero noise and is energy-efficient**, which makes it **more environment-friendly**.

ABOUT HYDROGEN FUEL CELL

- ❖ Hydrogen fuel cell vessels **do not use conventional batteries as the primary storage house of electrical energy**.
- ❖ A **hydrogen fuel cell** generates electricity by **utilising the chemical energy contained in hydrogen**.
- ❖ It **releases only pure water, not discharging pollutants**.
 - ✓ Hydrogen is **loaded into cells**.
 - ✓ The **energy within the hydrogen is converted into electricity and heat**, which is **then used to power the vessel's propulsion mechanism**.

HARIT NAUKA GUIDELINES

- ❖ The 'Harit Nauka'(green boat) initiative of the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** envisages a **green transition of inland vessels**.
- ❖ In **January 2024**, the **shipping ministry unveiled the Harit Nauka guidelines for inland vessels**.
- ❖ As per the guidelines, **all states have to make efforts to use green fuels for 50 per cent of inland waterways-based passenger fleets in the next one decade, and 100 per cent by 2045**.
- ❖ This is to **reduce greenhouse gas emissions as per the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047**.

8.2 PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHUYDAY YOJANA (PM-AJAY)

- ❖ **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for **34 residential hostels** across **various states and central institutes**.
- ❖ Among these, **28 hostels cater to SC students, providing accommodation for 3150 girls and 750 boys** and **6 hostels are dedicated to OBC students, offering facilities for 396 girls**.
- ❖ The **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing schemes for Construction/Repair of Educational Hostels for SC students (Under PM-AJAY) and Construction of Educational Hostels for OBC boys and girls**.

ABOUT PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHUYDAY YOJANA (PM-AJAY)

- ❖ It is a **comprehensive scheme** amalgamating **three Centrally Sponsored Schemes**, including **Pradhan Mantri Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAGY)**, **Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP)**, and **Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana (BJRCY)**.
- ❖ This initiative was **launched in the fiscal year 2021-22**.
- ❖ **Nodal ministry- Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment**
- ❖ **Objectives** of the Scheme-
 - ✓ The main objective of the scheme is **to increase the income of the target population by way of various income generating schemes, skill development and infrastructure development.**
 - ✓ To **reduce the poverty among the target population and bring them above the poverty lines.**
- ❖ It is a **100% Centrally Sponsored Scheme** implemented since 2021-22 as three components, which are as under:-
 - ✓ **Development of SC dominated villages into an ‘Adarsh Gram’ component.**
 - ✓ **‘Grants-in-aid for District/State-level Projects for socio-economic betterment of SCs’ component.**
 - ✓ **‘Construction of Hostels in Higher Educational Institutions’ component.**

8.3 ANNUAL SHAKTI INTERNATIONAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS SUMMIT

- ❖ The **9th Annual Shakti International Women Entrepreneurs Summit** was held in **New Delhi recently**.
- ❖ The **annual Shakti International Women Entrepreneurs Summit** is held each year in **observance of International Women's Day** with an aim to **empower aspiring and established women entrepreneurs** while also **celebrating achievements of emerging women entrepreneurs from varied industry sectors**.
- ❖ The Summit saw **launch of three new initiatives**-
 - ✓ Launch of a **joint integrated national campaign** by **Ministry of MSME and Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) ‘Panjikan Se Pragati.’** This national campaign is a **clarion call to women entrepreneurs across the nation to get Udyam registered and unlock a world of opportunities.**
 - ✓ Joint program of the **Ministry of MSME and the Women’s Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) ‘WEP Unnati _ Udyamita se Pragati tak.’** This MSME – WEP **Award-to-Reward (ATR) programme** is a ground-breaking initiative to **take Women MSME’s to the next level of growth** by providing comprehensive capacity building support through WEP.
 - ✓ The **‘mentorship platform’** of Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP).

8.4 E-KISAN UPAJ NIDHI

- ❖ **‘e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi’ (Digital Gateway)** of **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)** was launched recently.
- ❖ The **‘e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi’** initiative with the **help of technology** will **ease the farmers’ warehousing logistics and aid the farmers in receiving fair prices for their produce.**
- ❖ It aims to **facilitate farmers in obtaining post-harvest loans from banks** against **their stocks stored in the WDRA registered warehouses.**
 - ✓ Warehouses under WDRA are **well monitored, highly rated and are equipped with infrastructure that protect the farm produce and lead to farmers’ welfare.**
- ❖ **‘e-Kisan Upaj Nidhi’** with its **no collateral, extra security deposit policy** can **prevent distress sale by farmers.**

ABOUT WDRA

- ❖ The **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)** was constituted on 26.10.2010 under the **Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act, 2007**.
 - ✓ The Act provides for the **establishment of the WDRA** to exercise the **powers conferred on it and to perform the functions assigned to it under the Act, Rules and Regulations for the**
 - **development and regulation of warehouses,**
 - **negotiability of warehouse receipts and**
 - **promote orderly growth of the warehousing business in the country.**
- ❖ The WDRA is a **Statutory Authority under the Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution.**
- ❖ The Authority **consists of a Chairperson and two Members** appointed by the **Central Government.**

8.5 PM UJJWALA YOJANA

- ❖ The Union Cabinet decided to **extend the subsidy of ₹300 per LPG cylinder for up to 12 refills per year till the end of next financial year.**
- ❖ About **10.27 crore beneficiaries** under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) will get the **benefit** of the scheme with its **continuation set to incur ₹12,000 crore.**
 - ✓ The Centre had **started a targeted subsidy of ₹200 per cylinder for up to 12 refills per annum to the PMUY consumers in May 2022.**
 - ✓ In **October 2023**, the **Centre increased the subsidy to ₹300 per cylinder for up to 12 refills per year.**

ABOUT PMUY

- ❖ **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** was **launched in 2016**, with the **aim to provide Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) connections to five crore women members of below poverty line (BPL) households** in the first phase.
 - ✓ The **scheme was expanded in April 2018** to include **women beneficiaries from seven more categories (SC/ST, PMAY, AAY, Most backward classes, tea garden, forest dwellers, Islands).**
 - ✓ In the second phase the **target was expanded to eight crore LPG connections.**
- ❖ Objective- to provide **clean cooking fuel to rural and deprived households which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels.**
- ❖ Nodal Ministry- **Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas**
- ❖ Government **provides financial support of Rs. 1600 for each LPG connection.**

8.6 REMISSION OF DUTIES AND TAXES ON EXPORTED PRODUCTS (RODTEP) SCHEME

- ❖ The government has approved **extension of Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme support to additional export sectors i.e. Advance Authorisation (AA) holders, Export Oriented Units (EOU) and Special Economic Zones (SEZ) export units.**
- ❖ These 3 sectors **constitute approximately 25% of India's exports.**

ABOUT RODTEP SCHEME

- ❖ The Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme is a **key initiative** aimed at **refunding various embedded taxes and duties on exported products.**
- ❖ **Launched in 2021**
- ❖ Nodal Ministry- **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**
- ❖ Key sectors such as **Engineering, Textiles, Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals & Food Processing and many others stand to benefit from the measure.**

8.7 NITI FOR STATES

- ❖ **Niti Aayog** has launched a **digital cross-sectoral knowledge platform** called **Niti for States**, which will **create a digital public infrastructure (DPI)** for policy and governance.

ABOUT NITI FOR STATES

- ❖ **Niti for States** will have a **multi-sectoral live repository** of **7,500 best practices**, **5,000 policy documents**, **over 900 datasets**, **1,400 data profiles** of states, districts, blocks etc. broken down by **demography** and **socioeconomic indicators**, and **350 NITI publications**.
- ❖ The **primary goal is to enable better policymaking** as a **‘one stop shop’** for officials down to **local levels** to access **robust, contextually relevant and actionable knowledge and insights for quality decision making**.
- ❖ The platform will be **accessible online to all** to help **think-tanks, academia** etc. as well.
- ❖ It will **also have knowledge products spanning 10 sectors** including **agriculture, education, energy, health, livelihoods and skilling, manufacturing, MSME, tourism, urban, water resources and sanitation and hygiene**, across **two cross-cutting themes—gender and climate**.
- ❖ The platform is **integrated with Niti Aayog’s National Data Analytics Platform** as the **main data source**.
- ❖ **Multilingual Accessibility-** In the near future **the platform will be available in 22 major Indian languages** and **7 foreign languages**, ensuring **inclusivity for diverse user groups**.

8.8 NEENGAL NALAMA SCHEME

- ❖ The **Tamil Nadu State government** launched the **Neengal Nalama Scheme** with the **aim of improving the health index and social well-being of all citizens and making them aware of the Tamil Nadu government schemes**.
- ❖ This scheme **involves government officials reaching out to beneficiaries** across the state to inquire about any challenges or difficulties they may have faced while availing themselves of various Tamil Nadu government schemes.
- ❖ This scheme **will be monitored by the welfare department of Tamil Nadu**, which will ensure that it solves the problems of Tamil Nadu citizens regarding various schemes.

8.9 MAHATARI VANDAN YOJANA

- ❖ PM recently launched the **Mahatari Vandan Yojana** – a financial assistance scheme for **eligible married women in Chhattisgarh**.
- ❖ Under the scheme, **₹1,000 per month is given to eligible married women** in the State as a **monthly direct benefit transfer**.
- ❖ The scheme **will provide benefits to all eligible married women of the state** who are **above 21 years of age as of January 1, 2024**.
- ❖ **Widows, divorced and deserted women** will also be **eligible** for this scheme.
- ❖ So far, **there have been 70 lakh beneficiaries**, and **₹655 crore was transferred recently**, as the **first payment installment under the scheme**.
- ❖ The scheme has been **envisioned to ensure economic empowerment of women**, provide them **financial security**, **promote gender equality** and **strengthen the decisive role of women in the family**.

8.10 PM-SURAJ PORTAL

- ❖ Prime Minister inaugurated the **‘Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan’ (PM-SURAJ) national portal**.

- ❖ It is a national portal launched to **provide credit support to small entrepreneurs from marginalised communities.**
- ❖ **Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**
- ❖ **Small entrepreneurs from marginalised communities, including Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes, and sanitation workers, can benefit** from the PM-SURAJ Portal.
- ❖ The **objective** of PM-SURAJ Portal is to **provide financial assistance directly to beneficiaries, eliminate middlemen and commissions, and empower marginalised communities economically and socially.**
 - ✓ **Credit support** will be **provided to eligible persons** across country, facilitated through **banks, Non-Banking Financial Company-Micro Finance Institutions' (NBFC-MFIs), and other organisations.**
- ❖ PM-SURAJ Portal **aims to uplift marginalised communities and integrate them into the mainstream economy, which is essential for achieving the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.**

9. INDEX AND REPORTS

9.1 STATE ENERGY EFFICIENCY INDEX (SEEI) 2023 RELEASED BY BEE

- ❖ The **State Energy Efficiency Index (SEEI) 2023** has been **developed by Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** in collaboration with **Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (AEEE)** to track **EE initiatives in the states and UTs.**
- ❖ It **provides insights about sub-national energy efficiency policies, programmes, and investments.**
- ❖ SEEI 2023 is the **fifth edition of the index.**
- ❖ SEEI 2023 **assesses the EE progress of the 36 states and UTs for FY 2022-23** using **65 qualitative, quantitative, and outcome-based indicators** distributed across **7 demand sectors**, namely: Buildings, Industries, Municipal Services, Transport, Agriculture, DISCOMs, and Cross-Sector.
- ❖ The **maximum score for the index is 100.**
- ❖ In SEEI 2023, the **states and UTs** are categorized as **'Front runner' (>=60), 'Achiever' (50-59.75), 'Contender' (30-49.75), and 'Aspirant' (<30)** based on their total scores.
 - ✓ **With an overall score of 86.5 out of 100, Karnataka is the top-performing state in SEEI 2023.**
 - ✓ **The second-highest performer is, Andhra Pradesh, with a score of 83.25 out of 100.**

ABOUT BEE

- ❖ It is a **statutory body established in 2002, under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.**
- ❖ The **22nd Foundation Day of The Bureau of Energy Efficiency** was celebrated on **March 1, 2024**, under the theme **"Energy Transition through Electrification and Decarbonization in India".**
- ❖ **Nodal Ministry- Ministry of Power**
- ❖ BEE **co-ordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies and other organizations and recognize, identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.**

9.2 GLOBAL RESOURCES OUTLOOK 2024

- ❖ **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** released **Global Resources Outlook 2024** report titled, **'Bend the trend: Pathways to a liveable planet as resource use spikes'.**
- ❖ It is the **flagship report of the International Resource Panel of the United Nations Environment Programme.**
- ❖ Report sheds light on how resources are essential to effective implementation of Agenda 2030 and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) to tackle the triple planetary crisis (TPC).

- ✓ **TPC** refers to the **three interlinked crises- climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.**

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ **Low-income countries consume six times less materials** compared to wealthy countries, despite generating **10 times less climate impacts.**
- ❖ The **consumption and use of resources** is largely **driven by demand in upper income countries.**
- ❖ The extraction and processing of **material resources** — including fossil fuels, minerals, non-metallic minerals and biomass — accounts for **over 55 per cent of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and 40 per cent of particulate matter poisoning the environment.**
- ❖ The **extraction and processing of agricultural crops and forestry products** accounts for **90 per cent of land-related biodiversity loss and water stress and a third of GHG emissions.**
- ❖ The **extraction and processing** of fossil fuels, **metals and non-metallic minerals including sand, gravel and clay** account for **35 per cent of global emissions.**

9.3 WOMEN, BUSINESS AND THE LAW 2024 REPORT

- ❖ **‘Women, Business and the Law 2024 report’** was released recently by the **World Bank Group.**
- ❖ The report **assesses the gap between legal reforms and actual outcomes for women in 190 economies.**

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ **No country**, including the **most affluent economies, ensures equal opportunities for women.**
- ❖ When considering legal distinctions related to violence and childcare, **women are found to have less than two-thirds or 64 per cent of the rights enjoyed by men.**
 - ✓ **Earlier estimates** projected women had **77 per cent of the rights.**
- ❖ Although **laws on the books imply that women enjoy roughly two-thirds the rights of men**, countries on average have **established less than 40% of the systems needed for full implementation.**
- ❖ Women earn **just 77 cents for every dollar paid to men.**
- ❖ **Eliminating discriminatory laws and practices** hindering women from **working or initiating businesses** could result in a **more than 20 per cent increase in global gross domestic product.**
- ❖ **About India**
 - ✓ India’s rank has **marginally improved to 113**, with a **score of 74.4 per cent.**
 - ✓ While the **country’s score has remained constant** since 2021, its ranking witnessed a decline from 122 in 2021 to 125 in 2022 and further to **126 in the 2023 index.**
 - ✓ **Indian women** have just **60 per cent of the legal rights compared to men**, slightly below the **global average of 64.2 per cent.**

9.4 TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS, 2023

- ❖ **The Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2023 report** has been released by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).**

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ The **volume of international transfers of major arms** in 2019–23 was **3.3 per cent lower** than in 2014–18 and **3.3 per cent higher** than in 2009–13.
- ❖ The **five largest exporters** were the **United States, France, Russia, China and Germany.**
 - ✓ Arms exports by the USA went up by **17 per cent** between 2014–18 and 2019–23, while those by Russia went down by **53 per cent.**
 - ✓ **France’s exports rose by 47 per cent** and it **moved just ahead of Russia to become the world’s second largest arms exporter.**

- ❖ The **five largest arms importers** in 2019–23 were **India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine and Pakistan**.
 - ✓ **India's arms imports increased** by 4.7 per cent between 2014–18 and 2019–23, making it the **world's biggest arms importer in 2019–23 with a 9.8 per cent share of all arms imports**.
 - ✓ **Russia remained India's main supplier**.
- ❖ The **largest importer in Europe was Ukraine**, which **received 23 per cent of the region's total arms imports in 2019–23**.

ABOUT SIPRI

- ❖ SIPRI is **an independent international institute** dedicated to **research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament**.
- ❖ Established in **1966 and based in Stockholm (Sweden)**, SIPRI **provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public**.

9.5 GLOBAL HDI

- ❖ **India has moved up a rank** on the **global Human Development Index (HDI)**, according to the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** report '**Breaking the gridlock: Reimagining cooperation in a polarised world**'.
 - ✓ **Switzerland** has been **ranked number one**.
- ❖ The report stated that while **India ranked 135 in 2021**, it **had moved up to 134 in 2022**.
 - ✓ A total of **193 countries were ranked in 2022** and **191 countries in 2021**.
 - ✓ **India's HDI value increases from 0.633 to 0.644 in 2022**
- ❖ **India's Neighbors**
 - ✓ **Sri Lanka** has been ranked much ahead **at 78**, while **China is ranked 75**, both **categorised under the High Human Development category**.
 - ✓ India also ranks below **Bhutan stands at 125 and Bangladesh is in the 129th position**.
 - **India, Bhutan and Bangladesh** are all in the **Medium Human Development category**.
 - ✓ **Nepal (146) and Pakistan (164)** have been **ranked lower than India**.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

- ❖ India's **life expectancy at birth has slightly improved** from 67.2 years in 2021 to **67.7 years in 2022**.
- ❖ There is **an overall increase (5.88%) in expected years of schooling (EYS) from 11.9 years to 12.6 years**, leading to an improvement of 18 places when the EYS aspect was considered.
- ❖ The **Gross National Income (GNI) per capita also improved from \$6,542 to \$6,951**.
- ❖ India demonstrated **progress in reducing gender inequality**. **India's GII value of 0.437** is better than the global and South Asian averages.

9.6 DEMOCRACY REPORT 2024

- ❖ V-Dem Institute has released the **Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot** that **tracks democratic freedoms worldwide**.
- ❖ The report **classifies countries into four regime types** based on their score in the **Liberal Democratic Index (LDI): Liberal Democracy, Electoral Democracy, Electoral Autocracy, and Closed Autocracy**.
- ❖ The report is published every year in March.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

- ❖ The V-Dem Institute, led by **Professor Staffan I. Lindberg**, is **an independent research institute and the Headquarters of the V-Dem project**.

- ✓ Staffan Lindberg is a **Swedish political scientist**.
- ❖ The institute is **based at the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden**.

FINDINGS ABOUT INDIA

- ❖ The **V-Dem (or Varieties of Democracy) report** finds **India to be in the bottom 40-50% of the 179 countries reviewed, and now situated between Niger (better) and Ivory Coast (worse)**.
- ❖ It calls out the **sharp autocratisation in India from 2013, putting it at one of the top ten autocratisers in recent times, with pulling down democracy at levels as it was in 1975**.
- ❖ India also accounts for **“about half of the population living in autocratising countries.”**
- ❖ It notes that **India is no longer termed a democracy, but “dropped down to electoral autocracy in 2018” and remains there at the end of 2023**.

9.7 GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX 2022

- ❖ The **Gender Inequality Index 2022** has been released by **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** in their **Human Development Report 2023/2024**.
- ❖ On the **Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022**, India stands at **rank 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437**.
- ❖ India **stood at rank 122 out of 191 countries with a score of 0.490 in the Gender Inequality Index 2021**.
 - ✓ This shows a **significant jump of 14 ranks on GII 2022 vis-à-vis GII 2021**.

ABOUT THE INDEX

- ❖ The **Gender Inequality Index** presents a **composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions**: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.
 - ✓ The **reproductive health indicators** are **maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rate**.
 - ✓ The **empowerment indicators** are the **percentage of parliamentary seats held by women and the percentage of the population with at least some secondary education by gender**.
 - ✓ Further, the **labour market indicator** is **participation in the labour force by gender**.

9.8 WORLD AIR QUALITY REPORT 2023

- ❖ **World Air Quality Report 2023** was released by **Swiss organisation IQAir**.
- ❖ The report looked at data from **more than 30,000 air quality monitoring stations** across **7,812 locations in 134 countries, territories, and regions** and tracked **PM2.5 concentrations – fine particulate aerosol particles measuring up to 2.5 microgrammes per cubic metre – to understand the exposure to the people living in the specific area and determine a population-weighted exposure level**.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- ❖ India has emerged as the **world’s third most polluted country**.
- ❖ In **2023, India’s air quality**, with an average annual PM2.5 concentration of 54.4 micrograms per cubic metre, was **better than only two countries – Bangladesh (most polluted) and Pakistan (2nd most polluted)**.
- ❖ Meanwhile, **Bihar's Begusarai** was termed the **world's most polluted metropolitan area with an average PM2.5 concentration of 118.9 micrograms per cubic metre**.
 - ✓ It was **followed by Guwahati and Union territory of Delhi**.
- ❖ **Delhi**, on the other hand, became the **capital city with the poorest air quality**, according to the IQAir report. **Delhi's PM2.5 levels worsened to 92.7 micrograms per cubic metre in 2023**.

- ✓ This is the **fourth consecutive time Delhi has emerged as the world's most polluted capital city.**
- ❖ **Ten out of the top 11 most polluted cities in the world are from India, the other being Lahore in Pakistan.**
 - ✓ Of the **50 most polluted cities in the world, 42 were Indian.**
- ❖ About **96% of the Indian population face PM2.5 levels** that are **seven times higher than the recommended levels.**
- ❖ The WHO has **set the annual guideline level at 5 micrograms per cubic metre.**

9.9 WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2024

- ❖ **India was ranked 126th out of 143 nations** in a global happiness index released recently, which noted that older age is associated with higher life satisfaction in the world's most populous country.

KEY-FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

- ❖ **Finland** with a score of **7.741**, remained the world's happiest country for a **seventh straight year.**
- ❖ The other top 10 countries are **Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Australia.**
- ❖ **Afghanistan**, plagued by a humanitarian catastrophe since the **Taliban** regained control in 2020, stayed at the bottom of the 143 countries surveyed.
- ❖ The ranking is based on **six** factors—
 - ✓ **GDP per capita**
 - ✓ **Social Support**
 - ✓ **Healthy life expectancy**
 - ✓ **Freedom**
 - ✓ **Generosity**
 - ✓ **Freedom of corruption**
- ❖ Since 2012, the **World Happiness Report** has been released annually around March 20th as part of the **International Day of Happiness** celebration.
- ❖ The World Happiness Report is a partnership of **Gallup, the Oxford Wellbeing Research Centre, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.**

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK

- ❖ The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) has been operating since **2012** under the **UN Secretary-General.**
- ❖ **SDSN** mobilizes global scientific and technological expertise to promote practical solutions for sustainable development, including the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement.**

9.10 UNITAR GLOBAL E-WASTE MONITOR REPORT 2024

- ❖ **The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)** has released the **Global E-waste Monitor 2024**, which states that the **world's generation of electronic waste** is rising **five times** faster than documented **e-waste recycling.**

KEY FINDINGS:

- ❖ **The world's generation of electronic waste** is rising five times faster than documented e-waste recycling.
- ❖ The 62 million tonnes of e-waste generated in 2022 would fill **1.55 million 40-tonne** trucks, roughly enough trucks to form a bumper-to bumper line encircling the equator.
- ❖ Meanwhile, less than **one quarter (22.3%)** of the year's e-waste mass was documented as having been properly collected and recycled in 2022, leaving US \$62 billion worth of recoverable natural resources unaccounted for and increasing pollution risks to communities worldwide.

- ❖ Worldwide, the annual generation of e-waste is rising by **2.6 million tonnes annually**, on track to reach **82 million tonnes by 2030**, a further **33%** increase from the **2022** figure.
- ❖ The report also highlighted the composition of the **62 billion kg of e-waste**.
- ❖ It contained **31 billion kg** of metals, **17 billion kg** of plastics and **14 billion kg** of other materials (minerals, glass, composite materials, etc.)
- ❖ **Countries in Asia generate almost half of the world's e-waste (30 billion kg)** but have made limited advances in e-waste management; moreover, relatively few of them have enacted legislation or established clear e-waste collection targets.
- ❖ **Recycled waste:** Less than one quarter (**22.3%**) of the year's e-waste mass was documented as having been properly collected and recycled in 2022.
- ❖ Among regions, Europe has the highest rate of documented formal collection and recycling of e-waste at 42.8% while Africa generates the lowest rates of e-waste but struggles to recycle it.
- ❖ **Per-capita e-waste: Europe (17.6 kg), Oceania (16.1 kg) and the Americas (14.1 kg)** generated the highest amount of e-waste per capita in 2022.
- ❖ E-waste poses health and environmental risks due to toxic substances like mercury.
- ❖ Europe leads in per capita e-waste generation, while Asia generates half of the world's e-waste.
- ❖ Despite the increase in e-waste, the growth rate of countries implementing e-waste policies is slowing down.
- ❖ Recycling rates for small equipment, comprising **one-third of total e-waste, remain low at 12%**.
- ❖ Urgent attention needed to address the e-waste crisis, especially amidst climate and digital progress initiatives.

STATUS IN INDIA

- ❖ **The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has comprehensively revised the **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2016** and notified the **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022** in November, 2022 and the same is in force since **1st April, 2023**.
- ❖ These new rules intend to manage e-waste in an environmentally sound manner and put in place an improved **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** regime for e-waste recycling wherein all the manufacturer, producer, refurbisher and recycler are required to register on a portal developed by the CPCB.
- ❖ The new provisions would facilitate and channelize the informal sector to the formal sector for doing business and ensure recycling of E-waste in an environmentally sound manner.

ABOUT E-WASTE

- ❖ E-Waste is an abbreviation for Electronic-Waste, and it refers to old, obsolete, or abandoned electronic appliances. It comprises their parts, consumables, and spares.
- ❖ It is divided into 21 types, which are divided into two basic categories: information technology and communication equipment.

UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

- ❖ **The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)** provides innovative learning solutions to individuals, organizations and institutions to enhance global decision-making and support country-level action for shaping a better future.
- ❖ **UNITAR** was created in **1963** to train and equip young diplomats from newly-independent UN Member States with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate through the diplomatic environment.

9.11 HURUN RESEARCH'S 2024 GLOBAL RICH LIST

- ❖ **The Hurun Research Institute** has released the "**Hurun Global Rich List 2024**".
- ❖ Among **global billionaires, Tesla CEO, Elon Musk**, has re-emerged as **the richest man**, boasting a fortune of **\$231 billion**.
- ❖ **The 2024 Hurun Global Rich List** is the **13th edition** of the ranking of billionaires. Wealth calculations in the report are a snapshot of **15th January 2024**.

- ❖ The 2024 list features a total of **3279 billionaires** which includes **167** new billionaires. The number of billionaires globally increased by **5% compared to 2023**.

TOP 3 COUNTRIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF BILLIONAIRES:

Rank	Country	Number of Billionaires
1	China	814
2	The United States of America (USA)	800
3	India	217

TOP 5 CITIES WITH HIGHEST NUMBER OF BILLIONAIRES:

Rank	Cities	Number of billionaires
1	New York (USA)	119
2	London (the United Kingdom)	97
3	Mumbai (India)	92
4	Beijing (China)	91
5	Shanghai (China)	87

Rank	Name	Total Net Worth (USD billion)
1	Elon Musk	231
2	Jeff Bezos	185
3	Bernard Arnault	175
4	Mark Zuckerberg	158
5	Warren Buffett	144
6	Larry Ellison	144
7	Steve Ballmer	143
8	Bill Gates	138
9	Larry Page	123
10	Mukesh Ambani	115

KEY HIGHLIGHTS: INDIAN BILLIONAIRES:

- ❖ **Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man**, is the only Indian featured on the top **10 of the list**.
- ❖ **Gautam Adani, Chairperson of Adani Group**, is ranked **15th** with a total net worth of **USD 86 billion**.
- ❖ The cumulative wealth of Indian billionaires' amounts to **USD 1 trillion**, which accounts to **7%** of the global billionaire wealth.
- ❖ India's addition of 94 new billionaires in a single year consolidates India's position as the **2nd largest** contributor to the world billionaire list.

- ❖ Industries that contributed India's growth are, Pharmaceutical sector (**39 billionaire**) followed by Automobile and Auto components industry (**27 billionaire**) and Chemical sector (**24 billionaire**).

9.12 INDIA EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2024

- ❖ **The International Labour Organisation (ILO)** and the **Institute of Human Development (IHD)** have jointly published a report titled "**India Employment Report 2024**".

KEY FINDINGS

- ❖ India's youth account for almost **83%** of the unemployed workforce.
- ❖ The Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio and the Unemployment Rate showed a long-term deterioration between **2000 and 2018**, but witnessed an improvement after **2019**.
- ❖ The youth unemployment rate increased with the level of education, with the highest among graduates and higher among women than men.
- ❖ Most of the workers remain engaged in informal work and the share of regular work declined after 2018.
- ❖ India's large young workforce don't appear to have the necessary skills with **75%** of youth unable to send emails with attachments.
- ❖ Among the educated unemployed youths, women accounted for a larger share (76.7%) than men (62.2%).
- ❖ India is also facing the challenge of a substantial gender gap in the labour market, with low rates of female labour force participation.
- ❖ India remains ready to reap a demographic dividend for at least another decade due to the youth population remaining at 23% of the total in 2036 from 27% in 2021.

MEASURES:

1. Promoting job creation.
2. Enhancing employment quality.
3. Tackling labor market inequalities.
4. Strengthening skills and active labor market policies.
5. Bridging knowledge gaps regarding labor market trends and youth employment.

ABOUT INDIA EMPLOYMENT REPORT 2024

- ❖ **The India Employment Report 2024** is the third in the series of regular publications by the Institute for **Human Development** on labour and employment issues.
- ❖ It is undertaken in partnership with the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**.
- ❖ The report examines the challenge of youth employment in the context of the emerging economic, labour market, educational and skills scenarios in India and the changes witnessed over the past two decades
- ❖ The report highlights recent trends in the Indian labour market, which indicate improvements in some outcomes along with persisting and new challenges, including those generated by the COVID-19 pandemic

9.13 FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT 2024

- ❖ **The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** and **WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme)** has jointly released the **Food Waste Index Report 2024**.
- ❖ According to the Food Waste Index Report 2024, households across the globe wasted over **one billion** meals a day in 2022.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ The report defines "**food waste**" as "**food and the associated inedible parts removed from the human food supply chain**".

- ❖ **“Food loss”** is defined as “all the crop and livestock human-edible commodity quantities that, directly or indirectly, completely exit the post-harvest/slaughter production/supply chain up to, and excluding, the retail level”.
- ❖ It noted that in 2022, there were **1.05 billion tonnes** of food waste generated (including inedible parts), amounting to **132 kilograms** per capita and almost one-fifth of all food available to consumers.
- ❖ Many low- and middle-income countries continue to lack adequate systems for tracking progress to meet Sustainable Development Goal 12.3 of halving food waste by **2030**.
- ❖ At present, only four **G-20 countries** (Australia, Japan, U.K., U.S.) and the European Union have food waste estimates suitable for tracking progress.
- ❖ Hotter countries appear to generate more food waste per capita in households, potentially due to higher consumption of fresh foods with substantial inedible parts and a lack of robust cold chains.
- ❖ As compared to urban areas, rural ones generally wasted less food, due to **“greater diversion of food scraps to pets, livestock and home composting”**.
- ❖ As of 2022, only 21 countries had included food loss and/or waste reduction in their climate plans or **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**.

ABOUT FOOD WASTE INDEX REPORT:

- ❖ It a study jointly authored by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme), a U.K.-based non-profit.
- ❖ It tracks the global and national generation of food and inedible parts wasted at the retail and consumer (household and food service) levels.

ABOUT UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME:

- ❖ It is the leading global environmental authority established in **1972**.
- ❖ It sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system.
- ❖ Headquarters: **Nairobi, Kenya**.

10. INTERNATIONAL, SUMMITS

10.1 CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND (CERF)

- ❖ The **UN’s top relief official released \$100 million** from the **organization’s core humanitarian emergency fund- CERF**, to **support underfunded aid operations in seven countries in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas**.
- ❖ **These countries are- Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan, Syria, Chad, Niger , Lebanon and Honduras**.
- ❖ The **new allocation** is among the **smallest in recent years for the world’s least-financed crises**.

ABOUT CERF

- ❖ **Established by the General Assembly in 2005, CERF is one of the fastest and most effective ways** to ensure **humanitarian assistance and protection reaches people caught up in crises**.
- ❖ The **UN Emergency Relief Coordinator administers the Fund on behalf of the Secretary-General**.
- ❖ It **releases resources for underfunded emergencies twice a year**.
- ❖ It **also serves as a strategic instrument for addressing critical funding gaps in underfunded humanitarian emergencies**.

10.2 ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL GOOD

- ❖ **Ministry of Women & Child Development** launched the **logo and the website for the Alliance for Global Good – Gender Equity and Equality**.

- ❖ The **Alliance for Global Good: Gender Equity and Equality** marks a significant milestone in the **global pursuit of gender equality**.
- ❖ Launched in **Davos 2024**
- ❖ The Alliance aims to **bring together global good practices, knowledge sharing and investments** in the field of **women's health, education, and enterprise** and aligns with **several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including**
 - ✓ SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-Being;
 - ✓ SDG 4- Quality Education;
 - ✓ SDG 5 - Gender Equality and Empowerment;
 - ✓ SDG 17 - Global Partnership for Development and more.

The Alliance is **supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** and **anchored by the CII Centre for Women Leadership with the World Economic Forum** as a **'Network Partner'** and **Invest India** as an **'Institutional Partner'**.

10.3 ALEXANDER STUBB IS NEW FINNISH PRESIDENT

- ❖ **Alexander Stubb** was recently **sworn in as the 13th President of Finland**.
- ❖ He is **taking over from longtime former President Sauli Niinistö** who served 16 years at the **helm**.
- ❖ **Stubb promised to promote an open, safe and international Finland and ensure its continued success**.

10.4 GAS EXPORTING COUNTRIES FORUM

- ❖ The **7th Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF)** was held in **Algeria**.

ABOUT GECF

- ❖ The **GECF is an intergovernmental organisation** that **seeks to build a mechanism for a meaningful dialogue** between **gas producers and consumers** in order to **improve the stability and security of supply and demand in gas markets around the world**.
- ❖ **Headquarters- Doha (Qatar)**
- ❖ The **full-fledged Members** of the GECF are: **Algeria, Bolivia, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Iran, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Russia, Trinidad and Tobago, UAE and Venezuela**.
- ❖ **Angola, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Peru** hold the status of **Observers**.
 - ✓ India is **neither a member nor an Observer**.
- ❖ Together, they **represent 69% of the world's gas reserves, 39% of the marketed production, and 40% of global gas exports**.

10.5 FRANCE LEGALIZES RIGHT TO ABORTION

- ❖ **French lawmakers** approved a **bill to enshrine abortion rights in France's constitution**, making it the **only country to explicitly guarantee a woman's right to voluntarily terminate a pregnancy**.
- ❖ The historic move was **proposed by President Emmanuel Macron as a way to prevent the kind of rollback of abortion rights seen in the United States in recent years**.
- ❖ The measure was **approved in a 780-72 vote in the Palace of Versailles**.
- ❖ Both **houses of parliament**, the National Assembly and the Senate, had already separately adopted a bill — as required — to **amend Article 34 of the French Constitution**.

Abortion enjoys wide support in France across most of the political spectrum, and has been legal since 1975.

- ❖ The measure specifies that **“the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed.”**

10.6 SWEDEN JOINS NATO

- ❖ Sweden has officially **become the 32nd member of NATO** after it **completed its accession process in Washington.**
- ❖ **Sweden applied to join the defence alliance** after **Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022** - but its request was blocked by two members- **Turkey and Hungary.**
- ❖ **Prior to Sweden, Finland** - which has a **1,340km (832 mile) land border with Russia** - **joined in April 2023.**
- ❖ With **Sweden and Finland** joining NATO, it is **seeing its biggest expansion since the 1990s.** They will **add nearly 300,000 active and reserve troops to the alliance's ranks.**

ABOUT NATO

- ❖ **NATO- the North Atlantic Treaty Organization** - was **formed in 1949 by 12 countries**, including the **US, UK, Canada and France.**
 - ✓ It is **a multinational military alliance** founded on the **1949 North Atlantic Treaty.**
 - ✓ Its aim was to **block expansion by the Soviet Union - a group of communist states which included Russia.**
- ❖ **HQ- Brussels, Belgium**
- ❖ **NATO does not have an army of its own**, but **member countries can take collective military action in response to crises.**
- ❖ They **also coordinate military plans and carry out joint military exercises.**
- ❖ NATO has **31 members across Europe and North America**, including the **UK, US, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Turkey.**
- ❖ After the **Soviet Union's collapse in 1991**, many **Eastern European countries** joined: **Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.**

10.7 PANAMA JOINS ISA

- ❖ Panama has **officially ratified the International Solar Alliance (ISA)**, marking its **entry as the 97th member nation.**

ABOUT ISA

- ❖ The **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** is an **action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform** for **increased deployment of solar energy technologies** as a means for **bringing energy access, ensuring energy security, and driving energy transition** in its member countries.
- ❖ **HQ- Gurugram**
- ❖ ISA was **conceived as a joint effort by India and France.**
- ❖ It was **conceptualized on the sidelines of the 21st Conference of Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Paris in 2015.**
- ❖ With the **amendment of its Framework Agreement in 2020**, **all member states** of the United Nations are **now eligible to join the ISA.**
- ❖ Currently, **116 countries** are **signatories to the ISA Framework Agreement.**
- ❖ The ISA is guided by its **‘Towards 1000’ strategy** which aims to
 - ✓ **mobilise USD 1,000 billion of investments** in solar energy solutions by 2030,
 - ✓ while **delivering energy access to 1,000 million people** using clean energy solutions and
 - ✓ resulting in **installation of 1,000 GW of solar energy capacity.**

10.8 GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM FORUM

- ❖ **The United States and India have reaffirmed their commitment to cooperation in multilateral forums like Global Counterterrorism Forum for advancing shared security interests within the region while supporting a free and open Indo-Pacific.**

ABOUT GCTF

- ❖ **The GCTF is an informal, apolitical, multilateral counterterrorism (CT) platform that contributes to the international architecture for addressing terrorism.**
- ❖ **Launched in 2011.**
- ❖ **In addition to the commitment of 32 Members of the GCTF, it welcomes valuable contributions of non-GCTF countries and international and regional organizations as well as civil society organizations.**
 - ✓ **India is a founding member.**
- ❖ **Its overarching mission is to reduce the vulnerability of people worldwide to terrorism by mobilizing expertise and resources to prevent, combat, and prosecute terrorist acts and counter incitement and recruitment to terrorism.**
- ❖ **The GCTF is currently co-chaired by Egypt and the European Union**

10.9 INDIA EFTA SIGN TEPA

- ❖ **India-European Free Trade Association signed a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) recently.**
- ❖ **India has been working on a Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with EFTA countries, which has now been approved by the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister.**
- ❖ **Among EFTA countries, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Norway.**

ABOUT TEPA

- ❖ **The agreement comprises of 14 chapters with main focus on market access related to goods, rules of origin, trade facilitation, trade remedies, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, investment promotion, market access on services, intellectual property rights, trade and sustainable development and other legal and horizontal provisions.**
- ❖ **EFTA has committed to promote investments with the aim to increase the stock of foreign direct investments by USD 100 billion in India in the next 15 years, and to facilitate the generation of 1 million direct employment in India, through such investments.**
 - ✓ **The investments do not cover foreign portfolio investment.**
 - ✓ **For the first ever time in the history of FTAs, a legal commitment is being made about promoting target-oriented investment and creation of jobs.**
- ❖ **EFTA is offering 92.2% of its tariff lines which covers 99.6% of India's exports.**
 - ✓ **The EFTA's market access offer covers 100% of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).**
- ❖ **India is offering 82.7% of its tariff lines which covers 95.3% of EFTA exports of which more than 80% import is Gold.**
 - ✓ **The effective duty on Gold remains untouched.**
 - ✓ **Sensitivity related to PLI in sectors such as pharma, medical devices & processed food etc. have been taken while extending offers.**
 - ✓ **Sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in exclusion list.**
- ❖ **India has offered 105 sub-sectors to the EFTA and secured commitments in 128 sub-sectors from Switzerland, 114 from Norway, 107 from Liechtenstein, and 110 from Iceland.**

- ❖ TEPA has **provisions for Mutual Recognition Agreements in Professional Services** like **nursing, chartered accountants, architects etc.**

ABOUT EFTA

- ❖ EFTA is **an inter-governmental organization founded by Stockholm Convention in 1960** for the **promotion of free trade and economic integration for the benefit of its four Member States.**
- ❖ **Members** include **Switzerland, Iceland, Norway & Liechtenstein.**
- ❖ These countries are **not part of the European Union (EU).**
- ❖ EFTA is **one important economic block out of the three** (other two - EU &UK) **in Europe.**

10.10 D-8 COUNTRIES

- ❖ **Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina** said that the **Muslim countries could introduce a common currency, like the European Union (EU), to boost trade and commerce among them.**
- ❖ She was hosting a delegation of **D-8 trade ministers led by Turkish Deputy Minister of Trade** at her official residence Ganabhaban in Dhaka.

ABOUT D-8

- ❖ The **D-8** is an **Organization for Economic Cooperation** among the **eight Muslim countries: Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey.**
- ❖ The **establishment of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation** was **announced officially** through the **Istanbul Declaration of Summit of Heads of State/Government on June 15, 1997.**
- ❖ The **objectives** of D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation are-
 - ✓ to improve member states' position in the global economy,
 - ✓ diversify and create new opportunities in trade relations,
 - ✓ enhance participation in decision-making at international level, and
 - ✓ improve standards of living.
- ❖ The principal organs of D-8 are-
 - ✓ **The Summit-** which is the **supreme organ of D-8**, is composed of the Heads of State/Government of member states. It is **convened once every two years.**
 - ✓ **The Council-** is composed of the **Ministers of Foreign Affairs of member states.** It is the **political decision-making organ of D-8**, and acts as a forum for thorough and comprehensive consideration of the issues at hand.
 - ✓ **The Commission-** is the **executive body of D-8.** It is **composed of senior officials appointed by their respective governments.** Each Commissioner is responsible for the national coordination in his/her respective country.

10.11 INDIA BY THE CREEK FESTIVAL

- ❖ **Dubai** inaugurated the **first-ever “India by the Creek” festival**, bringing the **vibrant culture of India to Al Seef Park.**
- ❖ Al Seef Park, on the Dubai Creek, has been a bustling center of trade for centuries, a vital link between the two regions.
- ❖ This three-day celebration **highlighted the long-standing historical and cultural connections between India and Dubai.**
- ❖ “India by the Creek” offered a **diverse array of programmes, featuring musical performances, literary discussions, poetry readings, and interactive workshops.**
- ❖ **Renowned Indian figures**, including academics, writers, musicians, and the legendary band Indian Ocean, **graced the stage throughout the fest.**

10.12 NEW PALESTINIAN PM APPOINTED

- ❖ **Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas** has appointed his **longtime economic adviser Mohammed Mustafa** to be the **next prime minister in the face of US pressure** to reform the **Palestinian Authority** as part of Washington's post-war vision for Gaza.
- ❖ Mustafa, a **US-educated economist and political independent**, now faces the **task of forming a new government for the PA**, which has **limited powers in parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank**.

10.13 3RD SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

- ❖ **South Korea** hosted the **3rd Summit for Democracy** in **Seoul** from **18-20 March 2024** in a hybrid format.
- ❖ The Summit for Democracy was started by **American President Joe Biden** in **2021** to address the emerging challenges to democracy from authoritarianism and defend and promote human rights.
- ❖ The Summit was opened by South Korean **President Yoon Suk Yeol**, who was joined by **US Secretary of State Antony Blinken**.
- ❖ The theme of the **third Summit** for Democracy 2024 was **"Democracy for Future Generations."**

SUMMIT FOR DEMOCRACY

- ❖ The 1st Summit for Democracy was organized by the **United States Department (Foreign Ministry)** and hosted by **U.S. President Joe Biden** virtually on 9-10 December 2021. Over **100 countries'** representatives attended it. **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** also addressed the summit.
- ❖ The 2nd Summit for Democracy was co-hosted by the **United States of America** with **Costa Rica, Zambia, South Korea and the Netherlands** from **28-30 March 2023**. It was also held mostly in virtual mode. Around **121 world leaders**, including India, were invited to the summit.
- ❖ At the end of the **2nd summit**, it was decided that **South Korea** would host the **3rd summit**.
- ❖ The 3rd summit mainly focused on threats to democracy from digital sources, including misinformation, deep fakes, and artificial intelligence.
- ❖ Representatives of over **30 countries** attended the **3rd summit**, with **Pakistan and China** not invited. This included US Secretary of State **Antony Blinken**, British Deputy Prime Minister **Oliver Dowden**, the **foreign ministers of Indonesia, Ecuador, Gambia, Guyana, and Mauritius**, and **other minister-level leaders**.

10.14 4TH SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANISATION START-UP FORUM MEET

- ❖ **The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Startup Forum's fourth edition took place in New Delhi on March 19th, 2024.**
- ❖ The initiative focused on broadening startup interactions among the SCO Member States, fostering an **environment conducive to innovation, promoting job creation, and inspiring young talent** to develop innovative solutions.
- ❖ **India** will host the second meeting of the **SWG in November 2024** and the **SCO Startup Forum 5.0 in January 2025**.

HISTORY:

- ❖ **In 2020, India** proposed an initiative to create a new pillar of cooperation between the **SCO Member States**, recognizing the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in driving and diversifying an economy.
- ❖ During the SCO Heads of State Summit in **Samarkand, Uzbekistan**, on September 16th, 2022, all Member States agreed to establish a **Special Working Group for Startups and Innovation (SWG)**.
- ❖ **The Startup Working Group (SWG)** was established to promote collaboration among SCO Member States, not only to benefit the startup ecosystem but also to accelerate regional economic development.

- ❖ After several rounds of meetings chaired by **DPIIT**, the Member States approved and adopted the Regulations of the SWG, making it a permanent entity to be **chaired by India in SCO starting from 2023**.

SPECIAL WORKING GROUP:

- ❖ **The first Meeting of the SCO Special Working Group on Startups and Innovation (SWG)**, permanently chaired by **India**, was organised on the theme **‘Growing from Roots’ in 2023**.
- ❖ 25 representatives from the 9 SCO Member States participated in the meeting and presented their respective startup ecosystems and prospective areas of collaboration related to the agriculture and animal husbandry sectors covered in the theme.

ABOUT SCO:

- ❖ The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** is a eight-member multilateral organisation, established on **15 June 2001 in Shanghai, China**. Its members are **China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, India, Pakistan and Uzbekistan**.

10.15 OPERATION ‘INDRAVATI’

- ❖ **India** launched **'Operation Indravati'** to evacuate its citizens from **violence-torn Haiti** to the **Dominican Republic**.

ABOUT THE OPERATION:

- ❖ India does not have an embassy in Haiti and the situation in the country is being monitored by the Indian mission **at Santo Domingo**, the capital of the **Dominican Republic**.
- ❖ The name **“Operation Indravati”** is derived from **the Indravati River**, which flows through the Indian states **of Odisha and Chhattisgarh**.
- ❖ In the past, India has conducted several successful evacuation operations, including **Operation Raahat in Yemen (2015) and Operation SankatMochan in South Sudan (2016)**.
- ❖ The **Dominican Republic**, where the evacuated Indians are being taken, shares the island of **Hispaniola** with **Haiti**. Despite their geographical proximity, the two countries have stark differences in terms of political stability and economic development.

ABOUT HAITI:

- ❖ **Haiti**, a **Caribbean country**, has descended into chaos with armed gangs taking over its streets. The government has virtually disappeared.
- ❖ The ongoing chaos has prompted widespread displacement, with tens of thousands forced to flee their homes, adding to the already significant number of internally displaced persons due to gang violence.

10.16 INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION’S DIGITAL INNOVATION BOARD (DTB)

- ❖ **Dr Neeraj Mittal** was unanimously elected as co-chair of the Digital Innovation Board of **International Telecommunication Union’s (ITU)**.

ABOUT DIGITAL INNOVATION BOARD:

- ❖ India has the opportunity to lead the Digital Innovation Board under the co-chairmanship of **Dr. Neeraj Mittal**.
- ❖ **Dr. Mittal** was unanimously elected Co-Chair of ITU's Digital Innovation Board, formed under the auspices of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development.
- ❖ The Digital Innovation Board consists of telecommunications/ICT ministers from ITU's 23 member states in Asia, Europe, Africa, North and South America.
- ❖ The Alliance has three main vehicles: - Digital Transformation Lab, Network of Acceleration Centres and Digital Innovation Board.

- ❖ ITU has launched the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Alliance for Digital Development to meet the needs of the ITU membership in the area of innovation. This was expressed in the Kigali Action Plan adopted at the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2022 and the outcomes of the ITU Plenipotentiary **Conference 2022**.

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

- ❖ ITU is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- ❖ It was established in 1865 as the International Telegraph Union.
- ❖ In **1947** the ITU became a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- ❖ The Organization is made up of **193 Member States and more than 1000 companies**, universities and international and regional organizations.
- ❖ **Headquarters - Geneva, Switzerland**
- ❖ India has been an active member of the ITU since 1869 and has been a regular member of the ITU Council since **1952**.

10.17 EXERCISE IMT TRILAT- 2024

- ❖ The second edition of **the India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT)** Tri Lateral (TRILAT) Exercise, is being conducted from **21-29 March 2024**. This year it is being organized at the ports of **Zanzibar in Tanzania and Maputo in Mozambique**.
- ❖ India is being represented by **INS Tir and INS Sujata** in the IMT Tri Lateral (TRILAT) exercise.

ABOUT THE TRILAT EXERCISE:

- ❖ The first exercise of IMT TRILAT took place in October 2022. This **first edition** was organized in **Tanzania and Mozambique**. A joint maritime exercise between the navies of IMT countries began off **Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**.
- ❖ The Indian Navy was represented by the guided missile frigate, **INS Tarkash, Chetak helicopters and MARCOS (Special Forces)**.
- ❖ The current edition of the exercise is planned in two phases. As part of the harbour phase scheduled from 21-24 Mar 24, **Naval ships Tir and Sujata** will engage with the respective Navies at the ports of Zanzibar (Tanzania) and Maputo (Mozambique).
- ❖ This phase would begin with a Planning Conference followed by conduct of joint harbour training activities like **Damage Control, Fire Fighting, Visit Board Search and Seizure procedures, Medical Lectures, Casualty Evacuation and Diving operations**.

10.18 NETRAVATI RIVERFRONT PROJECT

- ❖ The principal bench of **the National Green Tribunal (NGT)** in **New Delhi** has initiated action on the **Netravati Waterfront Promenade Development Project in Mangalore**.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ **The National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has acknowledged the importance of the environmental and social issues related to the project and has taken action by forming a committee to investigate and provide a thorough report.
- ❖ The concerns raised by the local chapter of the **National Environmental Conservation Foundation (NECF)** regarding the impact of the project on the community have been taken into consideration.
- ❖ The project has been criticised for its potential negative effects on the environment and the livelihoods of the local population.

ABOUT

- ❖ **The Netravati Riverfront Project** is a remarkable urban development project which to a great extent is not solely focused on developing the ecological and the recreational aspects of the river but on enhancing the entire surrounding.

- ❖ The implementation of this project mostly involves the execution of different components including beautification of the river banks, construction of pedestrian and cycling trails, establishment of recreational centres, expense on improvement of leisure infrastructure to boost tourism and water activities.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- ❖ It has been established under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**.
- ❖ It is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within **6 months** of the filing of the same.
- ❖ **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the **Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai** shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.

10.19 148TH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION ASSEMBLY

- ❖ **Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh** participated in the **148th** meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, in **Geneva, Switzerland**. He led the Indian parliamentary delegation.
- ❖ The delegation includes five Rajya Sabha members – **S. Niranjan Reddy, Kartikeya Sharma, Ashok Mittal, Prashanta Nanda, and Sumitra Balmik** – along with Rajya Sabha Secretary General **PC Mody**.
- ❖ The Indian delegation highlighted the issues such as parliamentary diplomacy and building bridges for peace and understanding.
- ❖ The delegation attended the meetings of the IPU Asia Pacific Geo Political Group, APG BRICS Parliamentary Coordination Forum and IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians. It also held a bilateral meeting with the Parliamentary delegation of Thailand.

ABOUT INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

- ❖ The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an international organization of national parliaments. Its primary purpose is to promote democratic governance, accountability, and cooperation among its members; other initiatives include advancing gender parity among legislatures, empowering youth participation in politics, and sustainable development.
- ❖ The organization was established in **1889** as the Inter-Parliamentary Congress.
- ❖ Headquarters- **Geneva, Switzerland**
- ❖ Membership - **180 Members**

10.20 INDIA TO SPEND \$3.7 BILLION TO FENCE BORDER WITH MYANMAR

- ❖ **India** is planning to spend about **\$3.7 billion to fence the porous border with Myanmar which is 1,610-km (1,000-mile)**. Earlier, the government decided to end the **Free Movement Regime** along the **Indo-Myanmar border**.

ABOUT INDO-MYANMAR BORDER

- ❖ The India-Myanmar border spans a total of **1,643 kilometers** and runs through four Indian states: Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- ❖ In Moreh, Manipur, a 10 kilometer stretch has already been fenced, and two pilot projects that utilize a Hybrid Surveillance System (HSS) are currently underway. These projects aim to fence one kilometer each in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Additionally, fence works covering approximately 20 kilometers in Manipur have been approved and will commence soon.

ABOUT FREE MOVEMENT REGIME (FMR)

- ❖ **India and Myanmar** have an agreement called the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**. This agreement allows local tribes living along the border to travel up to 16 kilometers inside the other country without needing a visa.

- ❖ According to this agreement, local tribes living within **16 km** on either side of the border can travel with one-year validity and stay for a maximum of two weeks.
- ❖ The Indian government has announced a plan to put up smart fencing along the entire India-Myanmar border to curb illegal immigration.
- ❖ Once implemented, **the Free Movement Regime (FMR)** policy along the border would come to an end and anyone entering the country through this route would require a valid visa. The project is expected to be completed in four and a half years.
- ❖ Currently, only about **10 km of the 390 km** porous border between Manipur and Myanmar is fenced.

PROJECTS WITH MYANMAR

- ❖ India is creating a transportation system called the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport** project that combines road, river, and port transportation.
- ❖ The goal of this project is to connect **Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar** and then to India's northeast through Myanmar's Kaladan river.
- ❖ Furthermore, India is collaborating with **Myanmar and Thailand** on the Asian Trilateral Highway project, which will link India to **ASEAN**. This road is expected to improve trade and commerce in the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area while also benefiting other Southeast Asian countries.

10.21 G20 2ND EMPLOYMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING

- ❖ The two day **2nd Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting** under the **Brazilian Presidency** commenced in Brasilia.
- ❖ The G20 EWG's mandate is to address labour, employment and social issues for strong, sustainable, balanced and job-rich growth for all.
- ❖ As India is a member of the **G20 Troika**, represented by **Ms. Sumita Dawra**, Secretary, Labour & Employment, **India** is co-chairing the 2nd EWG meeting, along with Brazil and South Africa.
- ❖ The Indian delegation also comprises **Mr. Rupesh Kumar Thakur**, Joint Secretary, and Mr. Rakesh Gaur, Deputy Director from the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- ❖ **The focus areas for the 2nd EWG meeting is on**
 - (i) creating quality employment and promoting decent labor;
 - (ii) addressing a just transition amidst digital and energy transformations;
 - (iii) leveraging technologies to enhance the quality of life for all;
 - (iv) the emphasis on gender equity and promoting diversity in the world of employment for inclusivity, driving innovation and growth.

10.22 SAUDI ARABIA TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MISS UNIVERSE COMPETITION FOR THE FIRST TIME

- ❖ **Saudi Arabia** breaks tradition by sending **Rumy Alqahtani** as its first-ever contestant to the Miss Universe pageant, signaling a significant shift in the country's conservative stance towards beauty pageants.
- ❖ **Alqahtani, a 27-year-old** content creator from **Riyadh**, boasts a remarkable academic background with a Bachelor's degree in dentistry and fluency in multiple languages.
- ❖ Her numerous crowns in national and international pageants underscore her versatility and achievements.
- ❖ **The Miss Universe 2024** pageant not only marks **Saudi Arabia's** debut but also features Iran's first appearance.
- ❖ This reflects a broader trend of increasing inclusivity and diversity within the prestigious beauty competition, as seen in recent years with **the inclusion of transgender and plus-size contestants**.

10.23 CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS 2023

- ❖ **The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** organized closing ceremony of the International Year of Millets (IYM) 2023 on 29 March 2024 at the FAO headquarters, **Rome, Italy**.
- ❖ The high-level hybrid event that allowed participants to join both in-person and virtually and was graced by esteemed dignitaries from various parts of the world, including Additional Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare **Smt. Maninder Kaur Dwivedi** from **Govt. of India**.
- ❖ Following a proposal by India, backed by more than **70 countries**, the United Nations General Assembly, at its 75th session in **March 2021**, declared 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
- ❖ The event showcased a series of insightful discussions and presentations underscoring the importance of millets in achieving sustainable development goals and its emergence as **'Global Superfood'**.

10.24 AGALEGA ISLAND

- ❖ Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth **jointly inaugurated an airstrip and the St James Jetty on North Agaléga Island in the Indian Ocean**.
- ❖ **Agaléga** — a group of **two islands with a total area of 26 sq km and a native population of about 300 people** — lies **approximately 650 nautical miles (1,050 km) north of Mauritius**, and belongs to the island nation.
- ❖ **Ties between India and Mauritius go back to 1948**, 20 years before the country's independence from Britain.
- ❖ **Seventy per cent of the inhabitants of Mauritius are of Indian origin**, and the two **countries share deep historical, social, and cultural bonds**.

11. DAYS TO REMEMBER

11.1 RARE DISEASES DAY

- ❖ Rare Disease Day is **observed on the last day of February every year to spread awareness about rare diseases among the people** and provide a **platform to talk about their impact globally**.
 - ✓ With **2024** being a leap year, the **day was marked on February 29 this time**.
- ❖ The **day was set up by the EURORDIS (the European Organization for Rare Diseases) in 2008**.
 - ✓ EURORDIS is a **non-profit alliance of more than 1,000 rare disease patient organisations across 74 countries in the world**.

ABOUT RARE DISEASES

- ❖ According to the **World Health Organization**, rare diseases afflict **1 or less per 1,000 population**.
- ❖ Barely **5% of the over 7,000 known diseases worldwide are treatable**.
- ❖ Most **patients typically receive only basic treatment that alleviates symptoms**.
- ❖ Some require **exorbitantly priced antidotes and supportive medication throughout their lives, which they can't afford**.

11.2 ZERO DISCRIMINATION DAY- MARCH 1ST

- ❖ **Zero Discrimination Day** is observed **every year on March 1st to promote inclusion, equality, and peace and raise awareness about the impact of discrimination worldwide**.
- ❖ The day was **first celebrated on March 1, 2014**.

- ❖ Ten years ago, **UNAIDS** had launched its **Zero Discrimination Campaign** on 'World AIDS Day' in **December 2013**.
- ❖ UNAIDS is a **joint United Nations program** on **Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS)**.
- ❖ The **theme** for **Zero Discrimination Day 2024** is "To protect everyone's health, protect everyone's rights."

11.3 WORLD WILDLIFE DAY- MARCH 3RD

- ❖ **United Nations World Wildlife Day (WWD)** is celebrated every year on **3rd March** to celebrate wild animals and plants.
- ❖ The **WWD2024 Theme** is 'Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation'.
- ❖ The **theme highlights the potential of technology to advance conservation efforts**.
- ❖ **Brief history**
 - ✓ **World Wildlife Day** was **first proposed by Thailand** to the UN General Assembly in **2013**.
 - ✓ The **General Assembly adopted a resolution** on 20 December 2013, designating **March 3 as World Wildlife Day in 2014**.
 - The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**, a global agreement to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival, **was signed on this day in 1973**.

11.4 NATIONAL SAFETY DAY- MARCH 4TH

- ❖ National Safety Day in India is **observed every year on 4 March** to **spread awareness and commitment to working safely**.
- ❖ This year's **theme** for the National Safety Week is '**Safety Leadership for ESG Excellence**.'

BRIEF HISTORY

- ❖ In **1966, on March 4**, the **Ministry of Labour and Employment** of the Government of India established the National Safety Council as a self-financing non-governing body.
- ❖ In the **year 2000**, the **National Safety Council was established as a public trust** under the **Bombay Public Trust Act of 1950**.
- ❖ In **1972, National Safety Day** was **announced on the day the National Safety Council was established**. Since then, the day has been observed every year.

11.5 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISARMAMENT AND NON-PROLIFERATION AWARENESS- MARCH 5TH

- ❖ The **International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness** is observed **yearly on March 5**.
- ❖ The **inaugural** International Day for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Awareness was observed on **March 5, 2023**, following a **UNGA resolution adopted on December 7, 2022**.
- ❖ **Definitions-**
 - ✓ **Disarmament** is defined by the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** as the **elimination of all Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)**, coupled with the '**balanced reduction**' of armed forces and conventional armaments, based on the **principle of undiminished security of the parties to promote or enhance stability at a lower military level**, taking into account the need of all states to protect their security.
 - ✓ **Nonproliferation** is the **limiting of the production and spread of nuclear or chemical weapons into the hands of non-state actors and rogue states**.

11.6 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY- MARCH 8TH

- ❖ International Women's Day is **an annual event celebrated on March 8th**.
- ❖ The day **raises awareness of a number of issues**, including **violence and abuse against women, women's reproductive rights, gender equality and women's achievements** in various fields.
 - ✓ **March** also marks the **start of Women's History Month around the world**.
 - ✓ It **begins on March 1 and ends on March 31**.
- ❖ The United Nations **began celebrating the day in 1975**, and **two years later, in 1977**, the **UN General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the UN Day for Women's Rights and World Peace**.
- ❖ The **United Nations has designated the year 2024's theme as 'Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress'** with a focus on addressing economic disempowerment, while the **campaign theme for this year is 'Inspire Inclusion.'**

11.7 JAN AUSHADHI DIWAS- MARCH 7TH

- ❖ **Jan Aushadhi Diwas** is observed **on March 7 every year in India**.
- ❖ This day **serves as the culmination of a week-long event commencing on March 1**, aimed at **raising awareness about generic medicines and their potential to benefit millions of individuals nationwide**.
- ❖ The **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI)**, under the **Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers (MoC&F)**, spearheads the **organization of Jan Aushadhi Diwas**.
- ❖ The **inception of Jan Aushadi Diwas can be traced back to March 7, 2019**, when Prime Minister introduced it as **part of the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)**.
- ❖ The government has **set a target to increase the number of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs) to 10,500 by March 2025**.

11.8 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR RIVERS

- ❖ **International Day of Action for Rivers** is observed **on March 14th** to spread awareness about **the importance of rivers and climate change**.
- ❖ This year's **theme is "Water for All"**.
- ❖ The **International Day of Action Against Dams and For Rivers, Water and Life** was adopted by the participants of the **first International Meeting of People Affected by Dams, March 1997 in Curitiba Brazil**.
 - ✓ **Representatives from 20 countries** decided that the **International Day of Action would take place on March 14 – Brazil's Day of Action Against Large Dams."**

11.9 WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY- MARCH 15TH

- ❖ The **World Consumer Rights Day** is observed **annually on March 15 across the globe**.
- ❖ The day serves as a **reminder of adequate information regarding the quantity, quality, purity, potency, price, and standard of the commodity** including the **importance of protecting consumer rights**.
- ❖ This year, the **theme** selected by Consumers International for World Consumer Rights Day 2024 is **'Fair and responsible AI for consumers.'**
- ❖ **Brief History**
 - ✓ The **seeds of World Consumer Rights Day** had been **planted by former President of the United States, John F. Kennedy**, on **March 15, 1962**, while addressing consumer rights before the US Congress.

- ✓ This was the **first time a world leader spoke about consumer rights**.
- ✓ The day was **first observed on March 15, 1983**, and since then, the **United Nations has recognised and endorsed World Consumer Rights Day on a global scale**.

11.10 NATIONAL VACCINATION DAY- MARCH 16TH

- ❖ **National Vaccination Day**, also known as the **National Immunization Day**, is **observed in India annually on March 16th**.
- ❖ Brief history
 - ✓ In 1988, the **World Health Organization (WHO) Global Polio Eradication Initiative** was started as the **first step of eradicating the disease from the planet**.
 - ✓ In **1995**, on the **same day**, the **government of India started the pulse polio Immunisation Programme** as the **first attempt of eradicating the disease from the country**.
 - ✓ **Since then, March 16 has been celebrated as National Vaccination Day**.
- ❖ This year's **theme, 'Vaccines Work for All'**, underscores the **critical role vaccinations play in safeguarding lives from preventable diseases**.
 - ✓ They can be **accessible and workable for all to prevent diseases, regardless of age, gender, location, or socioeconomic status**.

11.11 ORDNANCE FACTORIES DAY- MARCH 18TH

- ❖ **Every year, Ordnance Factories Day is observed on March 18th**.
- ❖ In 1775, the **Board of Ordnance was formed in Fort William, Kolkata**.
- ❖ In 1787, a **gunpowder factory was formed in Ishapore** and a **gun carriage factory was formed in Cossipore, Kolkata**.
- ❖ Now it's known as **Gun and Shell Factory, Cossipore**.
- ❖ Ordnance Factories Day is **celebrated on March 18 to commemorate the day when Ordnance Factory in Cossipore, Kolkata was formed**.

11.12 GLOBAL RECYCLING DAY- MARCH 18TH

- ❖ Global Recycling Day is **observed on 18 March, every year**.
- ❖ It is a **day to promote recycling and conservation** by **educating people about the status of essential resources**.
- ❖ Global Recycling Day was **created in 2018 to help recognise, and celebrate, the importance recycling plays in preserving our precious primary resources and securing the future of our planet**.
- ❖ The Global Recycling Foundation has announced the **theme of Global Recycling Day 2024 as #RecyclingHeroes**.

11.13 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS- MARCH 20TH

- ❖ Every year, **International Day of Happiness is observed on March 20th**.
- ❖ On **July 12, 2012**, The **General Assembly of the United Nations** passed a **resolution to proclaim March 20 as the International Day of Happiness**.
- ❖ International Day of Happiness **aims to recognise the significance of happiness in creating goals and aspirations for people and driving them to have a better life**.
- ❖ It also **promotes sustainable development, overall wellbeing and eradication of poverty**.
 - ✓ **India is one of the least happy countries in the world, coming in at 126th out of 146 countries in the World Happiness Index 2023**.

11.14 INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION 2024

- ❖ **'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination'** is celebrated every year on **21 March**. On the occasion of this day, unity is called for against casteism and **racial discrimination**.
- ❖ The legacies of racial discrimination, slavery and colonialism destroy lives. This reduces the various opportunities that come in life. Billions of people are deprived of their full human rights and freedoms due to racial discrimination.
- ❖ The theme of this year 2024 is **'A Decade of Recognition, Justice, and Development: Implementation of the International Decade for People of African Descent'**.

HISTORY-

- ❖ On **March 21, 1960**, people organized a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid law in Sharpeville, **South Africa**. Meanwhile, the police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration in which **69 people died**.
- ❖ **The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** designated **March 21st** as the **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** in **October 1966**.
- ❖ **In 1979**, the **UNGA** adopted a program of activities calling for action to combat **racism and racial discrimination**.
- ❖ During this, UNGA decided that from **21-27 March** it will organize a **'Week of Solidarity with People Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination'**. It is a symbol of solidarity with the people fighting against **racism and racial discrimination**. Since then it is held **every year for a week** in all **countries**.

11.15 WORLD WATER DAY 2024

- ❖ **World Water Day is observed every year on 22nd March** all over the world. It focuses attention on the importance of water and how to preserve it.
- ❖ The day aims to inspire people to sustainably manage freshwater resources, address water-related issues and support the achievement of **Sustainable Development Goal 6: Water and Sanitation for All by 2030**.
- ❖ **The theme for World Water Day 2024 is 'Water for Peace'**.

HISTORY OF WORLD WATER DAY

- ❖ **In 1992**, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution to observe **World Water Day on March 22** every year.
- ❖ The **first World Water Day was observed in 1993**, and since then, the day has been celebrated globally to highlight the importance of water.

ABOUT JAL JEEVAN MISSION (JJM)

- ❖ It is the Ministry of Jal Shakti's main programme, with the goal of connecting every rural family to **tap water by 2024**.
- ❖ The Prime Minister made the announcement in **2019**.
- ❖ It will take a community-based approach to water, with comprehensive information, education, and communication as a fundamental component of the goal.
- ❖ Source sustainability measures, such as recharge and reuse through greywater management, water conservation, and rainfall collecting, will be obligatory parts of the programme.

11.16 WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY 2024

- ❖ Every year on **March 21, World Down Syndrome Day** is observed across the globe.
- ❖ The Theme of World Down Syndrome Day 2024 is **'End The Stereotypes'**.

- ❖ The day is designated to promote awareness about **Down syndrome** and to assist those who live with the condition.
- ❖ The **United Nations (UN)** chose March 21 to represent the uniqueness of Down syndrome caused by triplication (trisomy) of the 21st chromosome.
- ❖ According to the United Nations, the global prevalence of Down Syndrome is estimated to be between **1 in 1,000 and 1 in 1,100 live births**.
- ❖ This chromosomal defect affects between 3,000 and 5,000 infants born each year around the world. It is unknown why this sickness develops, but it has long been a part of the human experience.

HISTORY:

- ❖ **World Down Syndrome Day was first marked in 2006**, following its establishment by Down Syndrome International (DSI) during its **2005 World Congress**.
- ❖ Later, the Brazilian Federation of Down Syndrome Associations collaborated with DSI and its members to launch a large-scale effort to attract international support.

ABOUT DOWN SYNDROME:

- ❖ According to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**, A person with Down Syndrome possesses an extra chromosome.
- ❖ Chromosomes are lengthy DNA strands that hold all of the body's genes. A baby is born with an average of **46 chromosomes (23 pairs)**.
- ❖ "Babies with Down syndrome have an extra copy of one of these chromosomes, **chromosome 21**,".
- ❖ As a result, the extra chromosome alters the way the newborn grows (both body and brain), causing physical and cognitive issues for the child.

11.17 WORLD FORESTRY DAY 2024

- ❖ **World Forestry Day**, also known as **International Day of Forests**, is celebrated on **March 21** each year.
- ❖ The theme for World Forestry Day 2024 is "**Forests and innovation: new solutions for a better world.**"
- ❖ It was established by the **United Nations General Assembly in 2012** to raise awareness about the importance of forests and trees.
- ❖ The day aims to promote the sustainable management, conservation, and development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations.
- ❖ The **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)** and the **United Nations Forum on Forests** are the coordinators of the International Day of Forests.

11.18 WORLD METEOROLOGICAL DAY 2024

- ❖ Each year on **March 23rd**, **World Meteorological Day** is celebrated to commemorate the establishment of the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** which is a specialized agency formed by the United Nations. The day recognizes the vital role of the organization in advancing global efforts in **weather, climate, and water management**.
- ❖ The theme for **World Meteorological Day 2024** is "**At the Frontline of Climate Action.**"
- ❖ **The World Meteorological Organization (WMO)** was established in **March 1950**, becoming a specialized agency of the United Nations in 1951. This marked a significant shift towards international cooperation in meteorology, hydrology, and related sciences.
- ❖ WMO has **193 members**, including **187 member** states and **6 territories**, maintaining their own meteorological services.

11.19 NETRAVATI RIVERFRONT PROJECT

- ❖ The principal bench of **the National Green Tribunal (NGT)** in **New Delhi** has initiated action on the **Netravati Waterfront Promenade Development Project in Mangalore**.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ **The National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has acknowledged the importance of the environmental and social issues related to the project and has taken action by forming a committee to investigate and provide a thorough report.
- ❖ The concerns raised by the local chapter of the **National Environmental Conservation Foundation (NECF)** regarding the impact of the project on the community have been taken into consideration.
- ❖ The project has been criticised for its potential negative effects on the environment and the livelihoods of the local population.

ABOUT

- ❖ **The Netravati Riverfront Project** is a remarkable urban development project which to a great extent is not solely focused on developing the ecological and the recreational aspects of the river but on enhancing the entire surrounding.
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NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- ❖ It has been established under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010**.
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- ❖ **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the **Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai** shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.

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- ❖ The delegation includes five Rajya Sabha members – **S. Niranjan Reddy, Kartikeya Sharma, Ashok Mittal, Prashanta Nanda, and Sumitra Balmik** – along with Rajya Sabha Secretary General **PC Mody**.
- ❖ The Indian delegation highlighted the issues such as parliamentary diplomacy and building bridges for peace and understanding.
- ❖ The delegation attended the meetings of the IPU Asia Pacific Geo Political Group, APG BRICS Parliamentary Coordination Forum and IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians. It also held a bilateral meeting with the Parliamentary delegation of Thailand.

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- ❖ The organization was established in **1889** as the Inter-Parliamentary Congress.
- ❖ Headquarters- **Geneva, Switzerland**
- ❖ Membership - **180 Members**

11.21 INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ZERO WASTE 2024

- ❖ **'International Day of Zero Waste'** is celebrated every year on **30 March**. On this occasion, emphasis is laid on increasing awareness and motivating action towards **'zero-waste'**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ International Day of Zero Waste, celebrated annually on March 30, has a relatively short but impressive history.
- ❖ Driven by growing concern about the global waste crisis in 2017, awareness of waste increased in environmental communities. This led to the concept of a dedicated day to promote zero-waste solutions.
- ❖ It was adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) on **2 March 2022**.
- ❖ Recognizing the urgency and importance of tackling waste, the UNEA adopted a resolution on 14 December 2022. In this, March 30 was declared as the International Day of Zero Waste.
- ❖ This proposal was brought by **Turkey and 105 other countries** joined in sponsoring it.
- ❖ The UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) jointly facilitate the celebration. This day is organized by UNEP and UN-Habitat.

12. APPOINTMENTS

12.1 LOKPAL MEMBERS APPOINTED

- ❖ **Former Supreme Court judge, Justice A.M. Khanwilkar**, has been **appointed as the Lokpal chairperson** recently, **one and half years after he retired from the apex court**.
- ❖ Justice Khanwilkar retired **from the Supreme Court in July 2022**.
- ❖ Justice Khanwilkar's appointment **continues the controversial tradition of top post-retirement positions** going to **judges of the highest court of the country after retirement**.
- ❖ Other members
 - ✓ The **Rashtrapati Bhavan** has also announced the **appointment of former high court judges Lingappa Narayana Swamy, Sanjay Yadav and Ritu Raj Awasthi as judicial members of the Lokpal**.
 - ✓ **Non-judicial members Sushil Chandra, Pankaj Kumar and Ajay Tirkey were also appointed**.

ABOUT LOKPAL

- ❖ **The Lokpal or anti-corruption ombudsman is an independent statutory body established under the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 to investigate graft cases against public servants**.
- ❖ The **Lokpal chairperson and its eight members** are appointed by a **high-level selection committee**
 - ✓ chaired by the **Prime Minister** and
 - ✓ comprising the **Lok Sabha Speaker, Leader of Opposition, Chief Justice of India or a Supreme Court judge nominated by the CJI**.

12.2 NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NSG

- ❖ The Centre appointed 1990 batch IPS officer, **Daljit Singh Chaudhary** as the **director general (DG) of National Security Guard (NSG)**.
- ❖ Chaudhary, who is **currently the DG of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**, has been given the additional charge of heading the NSG.

ABOUT NSG

- ❖ Also known as **black cats, NSG is India's counter terrorism force**.
- ❖ It was **founded on 16 October 1984, following Operation Blue Star**, to combat terrorist activities and protect states against internal disturbances.

- ❖ It is a **federal counter deployment force against terrorism and anti-hijacking operations.**
- ❖ The force is **trained to deal with specific situations and used only in exceptional circumstances as deemed by the government.**
- ❖ The NSG is **modelled on the GSG-9 of Germany and the United Kingdom's SAS.**
- ❖ NSG is directly under the **Ministry of Home Affairs.**
- ❖ NSG **Motto: Sarvatra Sarvottam Suraksha**
- ❖ NSG was **extensively used during the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai.**
- ❖ It is a **task-oriented Force** and has **two complementary elements in the form of the Special Action Group (SAG) comprising Army personnel and the Special Ranger Groups (SRG), comprising personnel drawn from the Central Armed Police Forces / State Police Forces.**

12.3 ANURAG AGARWAL IS NEW HEAD OF PARLIAMENT SECURITY

- ❖ **IPS officer Anurag Agarwal** has been appointed as the **new head of Parliament security.**
- ❖ Currently an **inspector general in CRPF**, the **1998-batch officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre has been appointed as joint secretary (security) for three years.**

12.4 KISHOR MAKWANA IS CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES (NCSC)

- ❖ **Shri Kishor Makwana** assumed the charge of **Chairman of National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** recently.
- ❖ **Shri Luv Kush Kumar** also **assumed the charge of Member of National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC).**

ABOUT NCSC

- ❖ The **National Commission for Scheduled Castes** is a **constitutional body** established with a **view to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and Anglo Indian communities** to promote and protect their **social, educational, economic and cultural interests**, special provisions were made in the Constitution.
- ❖ **Article 338** of the Indian constitution **deals with National Commission for Scheduled Castes.**
 - ✓ Under this, a **Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** was appointed as **the special officer.**
- ❖ The **65th Amendment to the constitution** replaced the **one-member system with a multi-member National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.**
- ❖ The **89th Amendment in 2003** replaced this Commission, with effect from 2004, with the separate-
 - ✓ **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (Under Article 338)**
 - ✓ **National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (Under Article 338A)**
- ❖ The NCSC consists of a **Chairman, a Vice Chairman and three additional members.**

12.5 NAYAB SINGH SAINI IS HARYANA CM

- ❖ **Nayab Singh Saini** has been appointed the **new Chief Minister of Haryana**, hours after his predecessor, **senior BJP leader Manohar Lal Khattar, and the entire cabinet** - including three members of Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala's JJP - **stepped down.**
- ❖ An influential figure within the OBC, or Other Backward Classes, community, **Nayab Saini is the BJP's Lok Sabha MP from Kurukshetra.**

12.6 RAJENDRA PRASAD GOYAL IS NHPC CHAIRMAN

- ❖ Rajendra Prasad Goyal, who is **presently serving as Director (Finance) of NHPC Limited, has been given additional of NHPC's Chairman and Managing Director post.**
- ❖ **Goyal, who has been serving NHPC since November 18, 1988, brings over three decades of experience within the organization to his new role.**

12.7 NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED

- ❖ The government notified the **appointment of ex-bureaucrats Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as election commissioners.**
- ❖ Prior to the new appointments, **Election Commission of India only had Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar.**
- ❖ **Mr Sandhu and Mr Kumar are retired IAS officers of the 1988 batch. While Mr Sandhu is from the Uttarakhand cadre of IAS, Mr Kumar is from the Kerala cadre.**
- ❖ **Process**
 - ✓ A **search committee led by the Law Minister prepares a shortlist.**
 - ✓ Then, a **selection panel led by the Prime Minister and comprising the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and a Union Minister makes the final choice.**
- ❖ **Issues**
 - ✓ The **Supreme Court had in March last year ruled that the panel must have the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of India and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha.**
 - ✓ But the **Centre thereafter brought a law to replace the Chief Justice by a Union Minister.**

12.8 RAHUL SINGH IS CBSE CHIEF

- ❖ Senior bureaucrat **Rahul Singh** has been **appointed chairperson of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).**
- ❖ **He succeeded Nidhi Chhibber, who has been appointed as Advisor to the Niti Aayog.**
- ❖ **Singh, a 1996-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Bihar cadre, is currently serving as the Additional Secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).**

12.9 RAJEEV KUMAR MITTAL IS DG OF NMCG

- ❖ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) recently approved the appointment of **IAS officer Rajeev Kumar Mittal as the Director General of the National Mission for Clean Ganga under the Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS).**
- ❖ **He is a 1998 batch officer from the Maharashtra cadre.**

12.10 NAVNEET SEHGAL IS CHAIRPERSON OF PRASAR BHARATI

- ❖ The Government of India appointed **retired bureaucrat Navneet Sehgal as Chairperson of Prasar Bharati.**
 - ✓ The **Prasar Bharati Chairman's post has been vacant since A. Surya Prakash completed his tenure in February 2020.**
- ❖ **Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, who is also the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, headed the selection panel for the post of Prasar Bharati Chairman.**
 - ✓ The **chairperson of the Press Council of India and a nominee of the President complete the three-member panel.**
- ❖ The **post of the Prasar Bharati Chairman has a three-year tenure or until the person attains the age of 70 years.**

ABOUT PRASAR BHARATI

- ❖ Prasar Bharati is a **statutory autonomous body established under the Prasar Bharati Act** and came into existence on 23.11.1997.
- ❖ It is the **Public Service Broadcaster of the country.**
- ❖ The **objectives** of public service broadcasting are **achieved in terms of Prasar Bharati Act** through **All India Radio and Doordarshan**, which **earlier were working as media units under the Ministry of I&B** and since 1997 **became constituents of Prasar Bharati.**

12.11 SHEETAL DEVI NAMED PWD ICON BY ECI

- ❖ **Election Commission** has announced **Sheetal Devi**, a **distinguished Para-archer from J&K** and **recipient of the Arjuna Award**, as the **National Icon in the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) category.**
- ❖ Her name was announced at an **Exhibition Cricket Match between the Indian Deaf Cricket Association Team and the Delhi and District Cricket Association team** held in Delhi.

12.12 INDIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

- ❖ **The Ministry of External Affairs**, in a statement, **announced** that **Vinay Kumar** has been appointed **India's next ambassador to Russia.**
- ❖ **The Ministry of External Affairs** also **announced** a host of new ambassadors of India appointed to different countries.
- ❖ All the new appointees are expected to take up their new assignments shortly, said the Ministry of External Affairs.

AMBASSADOR TO RUSSIA

- ❖ **1992 batch Indian Foreign Service officer Vinay Kumar**, who is presently the ambassador to **Myanmar**, has been named the next ambassador to Russia.

AMBASSADOR TO CUBA

- ❖ **The 1997 batch of Indian Foreign Service officer T. Armstrong Changsan** has been appointed the next ambassador of **India to Cuba.** **T. Armstrong Changsan** is currently posted as a Joint Secretary in **the Ministry of External Affairs.**

AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

- ❖ **The 1993 batch of Indian Foreign Service officer Soumendu Bagchi** has been appointed the next ambassador of **Iraq.** **Soumendu Bagchi** is currently the **DDG, Indian Council for World Affairs(ICWA).**

AMBASSADOR TO CHILE

- ❖ **1995 batch Indian Foreign Service officer MsAbhilasha Joshi** has been appointed the next Indian ambassador to the **South American country Chile.** **MsAbhilasha Joshi** is currently an **Additional Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs.**

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AND HIGH COMMISSIONER

- ❖ Every sovereign country appoints a senior diplomat to a foreign country to represent and safeguard its national interest. The senior diplomat is either called an Ambassador or a **High Commissioner.**

HIGH COMMISSIONER

- ❖ When a country which is a member of the **Commonwealth** appoints a senior diplomat to another **commonwealth country**, then the senior diplomat will be called as High Commissioner. For **example**, a senior Indian diplomat to Britain will be called as High Commissioner.
- ❖ **The Commonwealth** is an association of **Independent countries** who were once part of the **British empire.** At present **56 countries** are members of the commonwealth.

AMBASSADOR

- ❖ **Senior diplomat** appointed to a country that is not a **commonwealth** member is called Ambassador. For e.g. **India's ambassador to Russia, the United States of America, France**, etc. These countries are not members of the **Commonwealth**.

12.13 MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES

- ❖ **President Droupadi Murmu** has given the additional charge of **the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to Union Minister Kiren Rijiju**.
- ❖ He also has the charge of **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- ❖ He replaced the **Pashupati Kumar Paras**, who **resigned** from the post.
- ❖ **Pashupati Kumar** resigned after the BJP-led NDA announced its seat-sharing pact and gave five seats to **the Chirag Paswan-led LJP (Ram Vilas)**, ignoring his faction's claims.

12.14 NAVEEN JINDAL TAKES CHARGE AS PRESIDENT OF THE INDIAN STEEL ASSOCIATION

- ❖ Jindal Steel and Power Chairman **Naveen Jindal** has taken over as the President of the Indian Steel Association (ISA).
- ❖ He succeeded the **Dilip Oommen** the CEO of AMNS India and Executive Vice-President, Arcelor Mittal.

12.15 SADANAND DATE APPOINTED NIA CHIEF

- ❖ **Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad chief Sadanand Vasant** Date has been appointed as the **Director General of the National Investigation Agency (NIA)**.
- ❖ He is a **1990-batch Indian Police Service (IPS)** officer of **Maharashtra cadre**.
- ❖ **The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)** has approved the appointment of Date as the **Director General (DG)** of the **NIA** for a tenure up to his superannuation on **December 31, 2026**.
- ❖ He will succeed **Dinkar Gupta**, who is due to superannuate on **March 31**.

NATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE FORCE

- ❖ **Piyush Anand** has been appointed as the **new chief of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**.
- ❖ A 1991-batch IPS officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, Anand is presently the Special DG of **the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**.
- ❖ He has been appointed as the DG of the **NDRF** for a period of **two years**.
- ❖ He will replace **Atul Karwal**, who is retiring on **March 31**.

SPECIAL PROTECTION GROUP

- ❖ **S Suresh**, a **1995-batch IPS officer of Kerala cadre**, as the Additional Director General of the Special Protection Group (SPG).

BUREAU OF POLICE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

- ❖ **Rajeev Kumar Sharma**, a 1990-batch IPS officer of Rajasthan cadre, as the Director General of the Bureau of Police Research & Development. **He will have a tenure up to his superannuation on June 30, 2026**.
- ❖ Sharma will succeed **Balaji Srivastava**, who completes his tenure at March end.

12.16 ABHAY THAKUR APPOINTED AS INDIA'S NEXT AMBASSADOR TO MYANMAR

- ❖ Senior diplomat **Abhay Thakur** has been appointed as the next **Ambassador of India to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar**.
- ❖ The **1992-batch** officer of the **Indian Foreign Service (IFS)** had served as sous-sherpa of the **G20** process during India's presidency of the influential bloc.
- ❖ Myanmar is one of India's strategic neighbours and it shares a 1,640-km border with a number of northeastern states, including Nagaland and Manipur.

12.17 CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

- ❖ The Centre for Policy Research Board has announced the appointment of **Srinivas Chokkakula, CPR** senior fellow and **Ministry of Jal Shakti Research Chair**, as the president and Chief Executive.
- ❖ He replaced **Yamini Aiyar** who resigned on **March 26**.

ABOUT CENTRE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

- ❖ The CPR was founded in **1973**.
- ❖ It is a “**non-profit, non-partisan, independent institution** dedicated to conducting research that contributes to high quality scholarship, better policies, and a more robust public discourse about the issues that impact life in India”.
- ❖ It is a member of the Indian Council of Social Science Research and is recognised by the Department of Science and Technology.
- ❖ Its funders have included the **government of India**, the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, and the Ford Foundation, among many others in India and abroad.

12.18 SIMON HARRIS SET TO BECOME IRELAND'S YOUNGEST PM

- ❖ **Simon Harris** is set to become Ireland's youngest ever **prime minister** after being appointed party leader.
- ❖ He took over from **Leo Varadkar**, who announced his surprise departure.
- ❖ He is 37 years old, meaning he will be **Ireland's youngest prime minister** if elected.
- ❖ The media has already dubbed him "**TikTok Taoiseach**”.

12.19 JUSTICE R R AWASTHI SWORN IN AS JUDICIAL MEMBER, LOKPAL

- ❖ **Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi** was sworn in as judicial member, Lokpal. The oath was administered by **Justice A. M. Khanwilkar**, Chairperson, Lokpal of India.
- ❖ **Shri Pankaj Kumar and Shri Ajay Tirkey** took oath as member, Lokpal. The oath ceremony was organised today at Lokpal of India office in **New Delhi**.
- ❖ The new appointments took place as two existing Judicial Members namely Justice P. K. Mohanty and Justice Abhilasha Kumari and three Members namely Shri D. K. Jain, Smt. Archana Ramasundaram and Shri Mahender Singh have completed their tenure in Lokpal on 26th March 2024.
- ❖ Shri Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, before joining as Judicial Member, Lokpal of India, was serving as the Chairperson of **22nd** Law Commission of India. Before that, he was **Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court**.
- ❖ Shri Pankaj Kumar is a **1986 batch IAS officer** from Gujarat cadre. Before joining as Member of Lokpal of India, he was serving as Chief Secretary of Gujarat.
- ❖ Shri Ajay Tirkey is a 1987 batch IAS officer from Madhya Pradesh cadre. Before joining as Member of Lokpal of India, he was serving as Secretary of Department of Land Resources, Government of India.

ABOUT LOKPAL IN INDIA:

- ❖ The idea of a constitutional ombudsman in India was first presented in Parliament in the early 1960s by **Law Minister Ashok Kumar Sen**.
- ❖ The terms Lokpal and Lokayukta were introduced by eminent **jurist LM Singhvi**.

- ❖ The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 provided for the institution of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for the States.
- ❖ These institutions are statutory bodies with no constitutional status.
- ❖ Till 2011, eight attempts were made to pass a bill related to this, but all attempts were unsuccessful.
- ❖ In the year 2011, the government constituted a group of ministers under the chairmanship of Pranab Mukherjee to give suggestions to curb corruption. This committee was formed to examine the proposal of Lokpal Bill.
- ❖ The '**India Movement against Corruption**' under the leadership of **Anna Hazare** put pressure on the then UPA government at the Centre. As a result, the Lokpal and Lokayukta Bill, 2013 was passed in both the houses of the Parliament.
- ❖ On January 1, 2014, the President gave his assent to it, which came into force on January 16, 2014.
- ❖ The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 has provided for the institution of Lokpal for the Center and Lokayukta for the states.

12.20 BASSIROU DIOMAYE FAYE NAMED AS SENEGAL'S NEXT PRESIDENT

- ❖ **Bassirou Diomaye Faye**, an anti-establishment figure, has won the **Senegalese presidential election** with 54.28 per cent of the votes in the first round. At 44 years old, Faye is set to become Africa's youngest elected president and the first opponent to win in the first round since Senegal's independence from France in 1960. His victory still needs to be validated by Senegal's Constitutional Council in the next few days.
- ❖ Faye, who was freed from prison just 10 days before the election, has said he wants a "break" with the current political system.
- ❖ He has promised to restore national "**sovereignty**" and implement a program of "left-wing pan-Africanism."
- ❖ His election could herald a profound overhaul of Senegal's institutions.

12.21 LUIS MONTENEGRO NAMED PORTUGAL'S PRIME MINISTER

- ❖ After eight years of Socialist rule in **Portugal**, **Luis Montenegro**, leader of the centre-right Democratic Alliance (AD), has been appointed as the new prime minister. However, his minority government faces challenges due to his refusal to ally with the far-right Chega party.
- ❖ **Montenegro's appointment** marks the return of a centre-right leader to the prime minister's office after more than eight years.
- ❖ Despite his party's victory in the recent election, the AD falls short of a majority in the parliament, with only 80 out of 230 seats.
- ❖ Montenegro's rejection of a coalition with the far-right Chega party leaves his government in a fragile position, necessitating negotiations with other parties for legislative support.
- ❖ About **Portugal**
 - ✓ **Capital- Lisbon**
 - ✓ **Currency – euro**

12.22 KAMAL KISHORE APPOINTED SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF UN DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

- ❖ United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed **Kamal Kishore** of India as Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, **United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)**.
- ❖ Currently **Mr. Kishore** is Head of Department of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in the rank of Secretary to the Government of India (**since 2015**).
- ❖ He succeeds **Mami Mizutori** of Japan at UNDRR.

ABOUT UNITED NATION OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:

- ❖ The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), created in December 1999, is the successor to the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.
- ❖ It was established to ensure the implementation of the International Strategy for **Disaster Reduction**.
- ❖ It is part of the United Nations Secretariat and its functions span the social, economic, environmental as well as humanitarian fields.
- ❖ UNISDR supports the implementation, follow-up and review of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction adopted by the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction on **18 March 2015 in Sendai, Japan**.

13. AWARDS AND HONOURS

13.1 SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL GETS KNIGHTHOOD

- ❖ Bharti Enterprises founder and chairman, **Sunil Bharti Mittal** has become the **first Indian citizen to receive an Honorary Knighthood from United Kingdom's King Charles III**.
- ❖ The award grants Mr. Mittal the title of **Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire**, recognising his contributions to **fostering stronger business ties between India and the UK**.
- ❖ An **honorary Knighthood** is **one of the highest honours granted by the British Sovereign to civilians**, conferred upon **foreign nationals in recognition of their exceptional contributions**.

13.2 JOHAN ROCKSTROM WINS TYLER PRIZE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT

- ❖ The **2024 Tyler Prize for environmental achievement** will be awarded to **Johan Rockstrom** for his **groundbreaking contributions and pioneering work** to the development of the **Planetary Boundaries framework**, the science for **defining the safe operating space for humanity on Earth**.
 - ✓ The **prestigious Tyler Prize** is often **described as Nobel Prize for environment**.
 - ✓ Established in **1973**, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement **recognises global leaders in environment and sustainability**.
- ❖ Rockstrom is **director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK)** and **co-chair of the Earth Commission**.
- ❖ The **Planetary Boundaries framework** provides boundaries for world development and a **basis for human justice**.
- ❖ The **Planetary Boundaries** is an **international collaboration** across **multiple Earth system science disciplines**.
- ❖ The **theory** establishes **defined boundaries for nine Earth systems**, emphasising the **critical importance of their stability and resilience in preserving life as we understand it**.
- ❖ The framework, **published in 2009**, defines **these systems as**:
 - ✓ **Climate change; rate of biodiversity loss (terrestrial and marine); interference with the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles; stratospheric ozone depletion; ocean acidification; global freshwater use; change in land use; chemical pollution; and atmospheric aerosol loading**.

13.3 SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI AWARDS

- ❖ President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the years 2022 and 2023 to eminent artists** in the field of performing arts, including **music, dance, drama, folk and tribal arts**.
- ❖ Besides the Akademi Awards, the **President of India also bestowed the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship to 6 eminent artists**.
 - ✓ **These include-** folklorist from Goa **Vinayak Khedekar**, Veena virtoso from Karnataka **R. Visweswaran**, Kathak exponent **Sunayana Hazarilal**, famous Kuchipudi dancers **Raja and Radha Reddy**, theatre artists **Dulal Roy and D.P. Sinha**.
 - ✓ The **Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship** or “**Akademi Ratna**” is the **highest honor given to eminent artists** in the field of **performing arts for his or her exceptional contribution to performing art form**.
 - ✓ It is **restricted to 40 at any given time**.
- ❖ The Akademi Awards have **been conferred since 1952**.
 - ✓ **Awards in Hindustani and Carnatic music were instituted in 1951, even before Sangeet Natak Akademi was set up** and these were **known as Presidential Awards**.
- ❖ While the honour of **Akademi Fellow** carries a purse money of **₹3,00,000**, the **Akademi Award** carries a purse money of **₹1,00,000**.

13.4 KRYSZYNA PYSZKOVA IS MISS WORLD 2024

- ❖ **Czech Republic's Krystyna Pyszkova** won the **coveted Miss World 2024 title at a grand event in Mumbai**.
 - ✓ **Miss Lebanon Yasmina Zaytoun** was named the **first runner-up**.
 - ✓ **Reigning Miss World Karolina Bielawska from Poland** crowned her successor at the star-studded finale here.
- ❖ **Pyszkova is the second Miss World from Czech Republic** after 2006 pageant winner **Tatana Kucharova**.
- ❖ Pyszkova is a **Czech model who is pursuing separate degrees in law and business administration**.
- ❖ Pyszkova, who is in her 20s, is **also the founder of the Krystyna Pyszko Foundation**.
- ❖ The model, who is **fluent in English, Polish, Slovak, and German languages**, is an **advocate for sustainable development through education**.

ABOUT THE EVENT

- ❖ **India hosted the event after 28 years**
- ❖ **India was represented by 22-year-old Sini Shetty**.
 - ✓ **Mumbai-born Shetty was crowned Femina Miss India World in 2022**.
- ❖ **India has won the prestigious title six times -- Reita Faria Powell (1966), Aishwarya Rai Bachchan (1994), Diana Hayden (1997), Yukta Mookhey (1999), Priyanka Chopra Jonas (2000), and Manushi Chhillar (2017)**.

13.5 NATIONAL CREATORS AWARDS

- ❖ The Prime Minister presented the **inaugural 'National Creators Award' at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi** recently.
- ❖ The award **aims to honour excellence and influence across various fields** such as **storytelling, environmental sustainability, education, and gaming**.
- ❖ It serves as a **platform to utilise creativity for promoting positive transformations**.
- ❖ The award **encompasses twenty categories**, including **Best Storyteller, Disruptor of the Year, Celebrity Creator of the Year, Green Champion, Best Creator for Social Change, Most Impactful Agri Creator, Cultural Ambassador of the Year, and International Creator**.

WINNERS INCLUDE

- ❖ Nishchay - Best Creator in Gaming Category
- ❖ Ankit Baiyanpuria - Best Health and Fitness Creator
- ❖ Naman Deshmukh - Best Creator in Education Category
- ❖ Kabita Singh (Kabita's Kitchen) - Best Creator in Food Category
- ❖ RJ Raunac (Bauaa) - Most Creative Creator-Male
- ❖ Shraddha - Most Creative Creator-Female
- ❖ Jahnvi Singh - Heritage Fashion Icon Award
- ❖ Malhar Kalambe - Swachhta Ambassador Award
- ❖ Gaurav Chaudhary - Best Creator in Tech Category
- ❖ Kamiya Jani - Favourite Travel Creator
- ❖ Drew Hicks - Best International Creator
- ❖ Maithili Thakur - Cultural Ambassador of The Year
- ❖ Jaya Kishori - Best Creator for Social Change
- ❖ Pankti Pandey - Favourite Green Champion
- ❖ Ranveer Allahbadia (BeerBiceps) - Disruptor of the Year
- ❖ Piyush Purohit - Best Nano Creator
- ❖ Aridaman - Best Micro Creator
- ❖ Aman Gupta - Celebrity Creator of the Year
- ❖ Lakshay Dabas - Most Impactful Agri Creator

13.6 OSCAR 2024

- ❖ The winners of the **96th annual Academy Awards (Oscars)** were unveiled at the **Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood in Los Angeles**.
- ❖ **Jimmy Kimmel** hosted the event for fourth time.
- ❖ **Winners**
 - ✓ Best picture: "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best director: Christopher Nolan, "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best actress: Emma Stone, "Poor Things."
 - ✓ Best actor: Cillian Murphy, "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best supporting actress: Da'Vine Joy Randolph, "The Holdovers"
 - ✓ Best supporting actor: Robert Downey Jr., "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best original screenplay: Justine Triet and Arthur Harari, "Anatomy of a Fall"
 - ✓ Best adapted screenplay: Cord Jefferson, "American Fiction"
 - ✓ Best animated feature: "The Boy and the Heron"
 - ✓ Best animated short: "War is Over! Inspired by the Music of John Lennon and Yoko Ono"
 - ✓ Best international feature: "The Zone of Interest" (United Kingdom)
 - ✓ Best documentary feature: "20 Days in Mariupol"
 - ✓ Best documentary short: "The Last Repair Shop"
 - ✓ Best live action short: "The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar"
 - ✓ Best score: Ludwig Göransson, "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best original song: Billie Eilish and Finneas O'Connell, "What Was I Made For?" from "Barbie"
 - ✓ Best sound: Tarn Willers and Johnnie Burn, "The Zone of Interest"
 - ✓ Best production design: James Price, Shona Heath and Zsuzsa Mihalek, "Poor Things"
 - ✓ Best cinematography: Hoyte van Hoytema, "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best makeup and hairstyling: Nadia Stacey, Mark Coulier and Josh Weston, "Poor Things"
 - ✓ Best costume design: Holly Waddington, "Poor Things"
 - ✓ Best editing: Jennifer Lame, "Oppenheimer"
 - ✓ Best visual effects: Takashi Yamazaki, Kiyoko Shibuya, Masaki Takahashi and Tatsuji Nojima, "Godzilla Minus One"

13.7 AMITAV GHOSH WINS ERASMUS PRIZE

- ❖ Indian writer **Amitav Ghosh** is the winner of **this year's Erasmus Prize**, for his writings on the **planetary crisis and climate change**.
- ❖ Many of **Ghosh's works** including **The Great Derangement and The Nutmeg's Curse** dwell on the **ongoing planetary crisis and are interlinked with the impacts of climate change**.

ABOUT THE AWARD

- ❖ The **Praemium Erasmianum Foundation in the Netherlands** awards the prize annually for an **organisation or individual's "exceptional contributions"** in the **fields of the humanities, social sciences or arts in Europe and the rest of the world**.
- ❖ Launched in **1958**, the **Erasmus Prize** consists of a **cash prize of 150,000 Euros**.

13.8 RIKEN YAMAMOTO WINS PRITZKER PRIZE

- ❖ **Riken Yamamoto**, noted for his **socially aware designs that encourage community**, was **awarded the Pritzker Prize**, the **world's highest achievement in architecture**.
- ❖ Yamamoto is the **ninth Japanese architect to receive the honor in the award's 45-year history**, making **Japan again the country with the most Pritzker laureates, followed by the U.S.**

ABOUT THE PRIZE

- ❖ The international prize, which is **awarded each year to a living architect/s for significant achievement**, was **established by the Pritzker family of Chicago through their Hyatt Foundation in 1979**.
- ❖ It is **granted annually** and is often **referred to as "architecture's Nobel" and "the profession's highest honor."**
- ❖ The award **consists of \$100,000 (US) and a bronze medallion**.
- ❖ The award is **conferred on the laureate/s at a ceremony held at an architecturally significant site throughout the world**.

13.9 SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARDS 2023

- ❖ **Twenty four writers received the Sahitya Akademi Award for 2023**.
- ❖ The awards were given for **literary works** including **nine books of poetry, six novels, five of short stories, three essays, and one literary study**.
- ❖ The awards are **selected on the basis of unanimous selections** made by the **jurors or the selection made on the basis of a majority vote**.
- ❖ The **awards relate to books first published during the five years immediately preceding the year of the award**, i.e. between January 1, 2017, and December 31, 2021.
- ❖ The **authors and poets received the award** in the form of a **casket containing an engraved copper plaque, a shawl and an amount of ₹1 lakh**.

WINNERS

<u>Poetry</u>	<u>Novel</u>	<u>Short Stories</u>
Vijay Verma (Dogri)	Swapnamay Chakrabarti (Bengali)	Pranavjyoti Deka (Assamese)
Vinod Joshi (Gujarati)	Neelum Saran Gour (English)	Nandeswar Daimari (Bodo)
Manshoor Banihali (Kashmiri)		Prakash S. Parienkar (Konkani)

<p>Sorokkhaibam Gambhini (Manipuri)</p> <p>Ashutosh Parida (Odia)</p> <p>Swarnjit Savi (Punjabi)</p> <p>Gaje Singh Rajpurohit (Rajasthani)</p> <p>Arun Ranjan Mishra (Sanskrit)</p> <p>Vinod Asudani (Sindhi)</p>	<p>Sanjeev (Hindi)</p> <p>Krushnat Khot (Marathi)</p> <p>Rajasekaran (Devibharathi) (Tamil)</p> <p>Sadiqua Nawab Saher (Urdu)</p>	<p>Taraceen Baskey (Turia Chand Baskey) (Santali)</p> <p>T. Patanjali Sastry (Telugu)</p>
<p><u>Essays</u></p> <p>Lakshmisha Tolpadi (Kannada)</p> <p>Basukinath Jha (Maithili)</p> <p>Judhabir Rana (Nepali)</p>	<p><u>Literary Study</u></p> <p>E.V. Ramakrishnan (Malayalam)</p>	

ABOUT SAHITYA AKADEMI

- ❖ The Sahitya Akademi was **formally inaugurated by the Government of India on 12 March 1954.**
- ❖ It works as an **autonomous body under the Union Culture Ministry** and is **dedicated to promoting literature in Indian languages.**
- ❖ It was **registered as a society in 1956 under the Societies Registration Act of 1860.**
- ❖ It is the **central institution for literary dialogue, publication and promotion in the country.**
- ❖ Besides the **22 languages enumerated in the 8th schedule of Constitution of India**, the Akademi has recognised **English and Rajasthani as languages in which its programme may be implemented.**

13.10 DIANA LEGACY AWARDS

- ❖ **Uday Bhatia**, founder of Uday Electric, and **Manasi Gupta**, founder of Huesofthemind Foundation, are the **winners among the worldwide recipients of Diana Legacy Awards**, celebrating the **25th anniversary of the Diana Award charity set up in memory of the late Princess of Wales.**
- ❖ The Diana Legacy Award is a **prestigious accolade for exceptional young people from around the world for their social action or humanitarian work.**
- ❖ It was **established in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world for the better.**
- ❖ The **Award has the support of both of her sons, The Prince of Wales and The Duke of Sussex.**

13.11 RATAN TATA AWARDED PV NARASIMHA RAO MEMORIAL AWARD

- ❖ **Ratan Tata**, former chairman of Tata Sons, **was bestowed with the prestigious PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award** for his **outstanding philanthropic contributions**.
 - ✓ The **PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award**, named after the former Prime Minister of India, is an **award of recognition for individuals** who have **demonstrated exceptional dedication to social welfare and humanitarian causes**.
- ❖ Ratan Tata, who has **donated more than half of his income to charity**, has **given generous donations at an individual level as well as under Tata Trusts**.
- ❖ Tata Sons Chairman emeritus Ratan Tata, 86, has **also received two of the highest civilian awards of India** -- the **Padma Vibhushan (2008) and Padma Bhushan (2000)** – for his immeasurable contributions towards nation building.

13.12 SARASWATI SAMMAN, 2023

- ❖ **Noted poet and litterateur Prabha Varma** will be **awarded the prestigious Saraswati Samman, 2023** for his verse novel **Roudra Sathwikam**.
- ❖ Published in 2022, Roudra Sathwikam is a **novel written in poetic verse in Malayalam** and probes the **conflict between power and politics, individual and state, art and power** in a unique way.

ABOUT THE WRITER

- ❖ Born in **Thiruvalla, Kerala, in 1959**, Varma has excelled as a **bilingual writer**, with exemplary **literary works in both Malayalam and English**.
- ❖ In a career spanning decades, Varma has to his credit **more than 30 books**, including a **dozen collections of poems, three novels in verse, eight books on the contemporary sociopolitical milieu and literature**, and seven collections of essays in criticism, among others.
- ❖ He has **bagged more than 70 awards**, including the **National Sahitya Akademi Award and the National Film Award**.

ABOUT THE AWARD

- ❖ **Instituted in 1991**, Saraswati Samman is **one of the most prestigious literary awards in the country**.
- ❖ It is awarded by the **KK Birla Foundation**.
- ❖ It is **given every year** to an **outstanding literary work written in any Indian language** by an **Indian citizen** and **published within the last 10 years**.
- ❖ It carries a **citation, a plaque, and a cash prize of ₹15 lakh**.
- ❖ The **recipient** is chosen by a **selection committee**, whose **current head** is former Supreme Court judge, **Justice Arjan Kumar Sikri**.

13.13 17TH RAMNATH GOENKA AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM

- ❖ **The Indian Express Group has announced the 17th Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards (RNG Awards)** for journalists across the country for the **years 2021 and 2022**.
- ❖ Union Minister for Road Transport and Highway **Nitin Gadkari** was the chief guest of the award ceremony.
- ❖ **The 4-member jury** which selected the winners in various categories included former **Chief Election Commissioner SY Quraishi, former Supreme Court Judge Justice B N Srikrishna, K G Suresh and Dr C. Raj Kumar**.

ABOUT THE AWARD:

- ❖ **RNG awards** are one the most prestigious awards in India in the field of journalism, held annually **since 2005**.
- ❖ The award is named after **Ramnath Goenka**, the founder of "The Indian Express" and Indian Express Group in **1932**.

AWARD WINNERS:

S. No	Award Category	Winner of 2021	Winner of 2022
1	Print (Hindi)	Kiriti Dubey , BBC News Hindi	Anand Choudhary , India Today Magazine
2	Print (Regional)	Shabitha MK , Mathrubhumi Daily	Anand Madhusoodan Sowdi , Kannada Prabha Daily
3	Environment, Scientific and Technology Reporting	Jayshree Nandi Hindustan Times	Basant Tiwary and Ayush Kumar Newslaundry
4	Uncovering Invisible India	Monica Jha Freelancer for FiftyTwo.In	Rupa Chakraborty The Indian Express
5.	Business and Economic Journalism	Aditya Kalra and Steve Stecklow Reuters News Agency	Twesh Mishra The Economic Times
6	Reporting on Politics and Government	Ritika Chopra The indian Express	Prawal Bhatt The News Minute
7	Sports Journalism	Mahender Singh Manral and Mihir Vasavada The Indian Express	Andrew Amsan The Indian Express
8	Investigative Journalism	Devesh Kumar and Arun Godana Lok Satta	Zoya Hassan TRT World
9	Feature Writing	Vandana Menon The Print	Raj Chengappa India Today magazine
10	Foreign Correspondent Covering India	Joanna Slater and Niha Masih	

		The Washington Post	
11	Prakash Kardaley Memorial Award for Civic Journalism	Vinod Kumar Menon Mid- Day	Azeefa Fathima, Balakrishnan Ganeshan and Prjwal Bhatt The News Minute
12	Photojournalism	Gurinder Osan Press Trust of India	Abhinav Saha The Indian Express
13	Books (Non-Fiction)	The Long Game Vijay Gokhale	The Life and Times of George Fernades Rahul Ramagundam
14	Broadcast (Hindi)	Jugal Purohit BBC Hindi News	Hriyadesh Joshi Newslaundry
15	Broadcast (Regional Language)	Sofia Bind Media One TV	Tejas Vaidya BBC News Gujarati
16.	Broadcast (Environment, Scientific and Technology Reporting)	Princess GiriRashir East Mojo	Down to Earth Web Multimedia Team Down to Earth Web Portal
17.	Broadcast (Uncovering India Invisible)	Vishnukant Tiwari The Quint	Vikas Trivedi BBC Hindi News
18	Broadcast (Reporting on Politics and Government)	Brut India	Abhishek Bhatia Indiatoday.com
19.	Broadcast (Investigative Reporting)	Meghnad Bose The Quint	Saurabh Shukla NDTV

13.14 PM MODI RECEIVES 'ORDER OF THE DRUKGYALPO'

- ❖ **Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi** has received the "**Order of the DrukGyalpo**", **Bhutan's highest civilian award**, making him **the first non-Bhutanese** to be conferred with the honour.
- ❖ The award has been conferred to **Prime Minister Modi** in recognition of "his outstanding contribution to the growth of India-Bhutan relations and for his distinguished service to the Bhutanese nation and people."
- ❖ **PM Modi** is also the first foreign head of government to receive Bhutan's prestigious civilian honour.
- ❖ **Bhutan's King Jigme** conferred the Order of the **DrukGyalpo on PM Modi** after the two leaders met in **the capital**.
- ❖ The announcement for the honour was made by **the King of Bhutan** during the **114th National Day celebrations on December 17, 2021**.

ABOUT THE AWARD:

- ❖ The Order of the **DrukGyalpo** Award is the **highest civilian award** instituted by the **Government of Bhutan**. The award is given for lifetime achievement and takes precedence over all orders, decorations and medals given in Bhutan.

INDIA - BHUTAN RELATIONS:

- ❖ **India and Bhutan** share very close political and diplomatic ties.
- ❖ The relationship between the two countries is based on the Treaty of Perpetual Peace and Friendship, which was signed in **1949**. The treaty was revised as **the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty in 2007**.
- ❖ According to the treaty, both countries have agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries.
- ❖ Both countries will cooperate closely on issues of national interest and will not allow the use of its territory to harm the national security and interests of the other.
- ❖ The treaty provides for free trade and commerce between the **two countries**.
- ❖ **PM Modi's** visit seeks to further cement India's unique and enduring relations with Bhutan as part of the country's '**Neighbourhood First**' Policy.

ABOUT BHUTAN:

- ❖ **Bhutan**, also known as **Druk Yul**, means "**Land of the Thunder Dragon**".
- ❖ **Bhutan** is a **landlocked country** in **South Asia**. It shares international boundaries with **India and China**.
- ❖ Four **Indian states, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim**, share a land border with **Bhutan**.
- ❖ The length of India's international border with Bhutan is 699 km.

13.15 COP28 PRESIDENT SULTAN AL JABER RECEIVES SIERRA ENERGY LEADERSHIP AWARD

- ❖ **Dr. Sultan Al Jaber** was recognized with the '**CERAWeek** Leadership Award for Building Global Consensus towards a Sustainable Energy Future' for his role in bringing Parties together to deliver the UAE Consensus.
- ❖ **Dr. Al Jaber** was presented the award by **Daniel Yergin**, Vice Chairman of S&P Global and CERAWeek conference chair.
- ❖ The UAE Consensus delivered a series of firsts focused on keeping **1.5°C** within reach. The commitment from all Parties to transition away from fossil fuels in a just, orderly and equitable manner; targets to expand renewable energy with a goal to triple global capacity, and the objective to double energy efficiency by 2030.
- ❖ In his acceptance remarks, **Dr. Al Jaber** said "Last year... I delivered a clear call to action for oil and gas to step up. In fact, I said, 'Houston, we have a problem'. Today, I am pleased to say that in Dubai at COP28 this industry proved that they are essential to the solution."
- ❖ During COP28 the Presidency launched **the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC)**, in his address **Dr. Al Jaber** welcomed the "**good news**" that the China National Petroleum Corporation, which represents **3.8 percent** of global oil production, will soon join the OGDC, increasing the ratio of oil production represented to **44 percent**.
- ❖ **Dr. Al Jaber** stressed the need to leverage finance and new technologies, highlighting that the roadmap of the UAE Consensus must be met with "**smart policies to commercialize clean technologies**" and coupled with financing to meet the huge opportunity that the energy transition presents for businesses and the climate.

13.16 MICHEL TALAGRAND AWARDED THE 2024 ABEL PRIZE

- ❖ The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters has decided to award the Abel Prize for 2024 to **Michel Talagrand** of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Paris, France.
- ❖ Michel Talagrand receives the prize for his work in probability theory and stochastic processes.

- ❖ The common theme in Michel Talagrand's groundbreaking discoveries is working with and understanding the random processes we see all around us. It has now become apparent that a thorough understanding of random phenomena is essential in today's world.

ABOUT ABEL PRIZE:

- ❖ **The Abel Prize** is named after **Niels Henrik Abel**, Norway's greatest mathematician throughout the times.
- ❖ The Abel Prize was established by the Norwegian Parliament (The Storting) in 2002, on the occasion the 200-year anniversary of his birth. The Prize is 7,5 million Norwegian Kroner.

14. SPORTS

14.1 KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES 2023 CONCLUDE

- ❖ The **Khelo India University Games 2023**, which started on the 17th of February, were **officially declared closed by the Assam sports Minister** at the Sarusajai Sports Complex in **Guwahati**.
- ❖ **Chandigarh University** clinched the **overall championships of the 4th Khelo India University Games 2023**.
- ❖ **Lovely Professional University** was a distant second while **Guru Nanak Dev University** finished third.
- ❖ **Defending champions Panjab University** came in fourth.

14.2 PUNERI PALTAN WINS PRO KABADDI LEAGUE

- ❖ **Puneri Paltan** won **Season 10 of the Pro Kabaddi League** after **defeating Haryana Steelers 28-25** to secure **their maiden championship**.
- ❖ **The final was held** at the **GMC Balayogi Stadium in Hyderabad**.
- ❖ Puneri Paltan had finished second in the previous edition, losing **33-29 to Jaipur Pink Panthers**.
- ❖ Now, they **have secured their first title in 10 attempts**.
- ❖ Meanwhile, the **Steelers lost their first final in the competition**.

14.3 B. SAI PRANEETH RETIRES

- ❖ Tokyo Olympian **B. Sai Praneeth** has **formally announced his retirement from competitive badminton**.
- ❖ He will be **shifting to the US with his family for a new role as Badminton Coach**.

14.4 SATWIKSAIRAJ RANKIREDDY AND CHIRAG SHETTY WIN

- ❖ **Satwiksairaj Rankireddy** and **Chirag Shetty** claimed their **first title of the year at the French Open** after defeating **Chinese Taipei, Lee Jhe Huei-Yang Po Hsuan**, in just **36 minutes in the French Open 2024**.
- ❖ The **Indian pair won by a 21-11, 21-17 scoreline** in the **men's doubles final**.
- ❖ This is the **first title the Indians have won in 2024** and their **seventh world tour title**.
- ❖ The **Indian pair had also won the French Open title in 2022**.

14.5 KHELO INDIA RISING TALENT IDENTIFICATION (KIRTI) PROGRAMME

- ❖ The **Khelo India Rising Talent Identification (KIRTI) programme** was launched by the **Union Sports Minister** recently.
- ❖ The scheme, **aimed at school children in the age group of nine to 18 years**, will focus on **using sports as a tool for healthy life and primarily keep youngsters away from drugs and gadgetry distractions**.
- ❖ KIRTI works on the **principle of 'catching them young' and 'nurturing' them** into champions using innovative IT tools, who will **excel and secure medals at national and international levels**.
 - ✓ The launch **was also made in 50 centres across the country**.
 - ✓ **Fifty thousand applicants were being assessed in the first phase across 10 sports disciplines**, including athletics, boxing, wrestling, hockey, football, and wrestling.
 - ✓ It was stated that **20 lakh assessments would be done in the first year to identify and assess talent through notified talent assessment centres**.

Data analytics based on artificial intelligence would be used to **assess the sporting acumen of the aspiring athletes**.

14.6 RCB WINS WPL-24

- ❖ **Royal Challengers Bangalore** won the **Women's Premier League 2024 title** with an eight-wicket victory **over Delhi Capitals in the final**.
- ❖ RCB made easy work of their **114-run chase against DC to lift their maiden WPL title**.

14.7 INDIA'S FIRST INDOOR ATHLETICS STADIUM AND INDOOR AQUATIC CENTRE

- ❖ **Odisha CM inaugurated India's first indoor athletics stadium and indoor aquatic centre at the Kalinga stadium in Bhubaneswar**.

FEATURES

- ❖ The Indoor Athletics Centre stands as **India's first capable of hosting indoor continental and regional championships**.
- ❖ The centre **boasts a 10,000-square-meter track used in Olympics**, marking a pioneering feat within the country.
- ❖ The centre **includes a 200-meter synthetic track, an 80m+20m running track, and designated areas for long jump, triple jump, pole vault, and shot-put**, each meticulously designed to meet specific athletic requirements.
- ❖ Accommodating the needs of high-performance athletes, the facility **features 60 twin-sharing rooms for those undergoing full-time coaching**.
- ❖ Its iconic stature was **solidified with the esteemed Category 1 certification from World Athletics in December 2023**.

14.8 PANKAJ ADVANI INDUCTED INTO BILLIARDS HALL OF FAME

- ❖ India's great billiards player **Pankaj Advani** has been inducted into the **'Hall of Fame of the World Billiards Museum'**.
- ❖ The **World Billiards Museum** is located in **Shangrao, China**.
- ❖ In November 2023, the 38-year-old Indian star won his **26th IBSF (the International Billiards and Snooker Federation)** title after beating compatriot Sourav Kothari.

ABOUT PANKAJ ADVANI:

- ❖ **Pankaj Advani** became a snooker professional in the year 2012-2013.
- ❖ Pankaj made his debut in billiards in the year 1999.
- ❖ Pankaj won the first world title of billiards in the year 2005.

- ❖ Pankaj Advani has won 26 world titles in snooker and billiards combined. In which Pankaj has 18 billiards and 8 snooker world titles.
- ❖ Pankaj Advani has received many honors for his sports achievements in the country and abroad.
 - ✓ **Arjuna Award in 2004**
 - ✓ **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna in 2006**
 - ✓ **Padma Shri in 2009**
 - ✓ **Padma Bhushan in 2018**

14.9 3RD EDITION OF NORTH EAST GAMES 2024 BEGINS IN NAGALAND

- ❖ The **3rd edition of North East Games 2024** kick-started with a glittering opening ceremony at Regional Centre for Sporting Excellence, **Sovima, Nagaland**.
- ❖ More than 3000 athletes from eight North Eastern states are competing in 15 disciplines being held across 12 venues in **three** districts – **Chumoukedima, Dimapur, and Kohima**.

14.10 PARIS OLYMPICS 2024: SHARATH KAMAL TO BE INDIA'S FLAG BEARER

- ❖ Veteran table tennis player and **CWG champion Sharath Kamal** will be **India's flag bearer** at the **2024 Paris Olympic Games**.
- ❖ Also, **legendary boxer MC Mary Kom** was appointed the chef de mission of the country's contingent.
- ❖ She will be assisted by **luger Shiva Keshavan**, who has been appointed the deputy chef de mission.
- ❖ **Gagan Narang**, a **bronze medalist** in the **10m air rifle** event at the **2012 London Olympics**, has been appointed to head the shooting village operations for **the Paris Olympics**.
- ❖ The Olympic Games will take place from **July 26 to August 11**.

ABOUT SHARATH KAMAL:

- ❖ **Ranked World No. 88**, **Kamal** has won the **national table tennis championship a record 10 times**.
- ❖ He has also claimed **13 medals** at the CWG, including **seven golds**, and has earned **two medals at the Asian Games**.
- ❖ The legendary table tennis player is also a **three-time bronze medalist at the World Championships**.

ABOUT MARY KOM

- ❖ **MC Mary Kom**, the **first female boxer** in boxing history to have captured **six world titles**.
- ❖ **The five-time Asian champion** was also the first female boxer from India to win a **gold medal at the 2014 Asian Games**.

14.11 SATHIYAN GNANASEKARAN WINS FIRST-EVER WTT FEEDER TITLE

- ❖ **Sathiyen Gnanasekaran**, a renowned **Indian table tennis player**, has made history by becoming the **first Indian** to win the **men's singles title** at a **WTT Feeder Series event in Beirut, Lebanon**.
- ❖ **Sathiyen**, ranked **103rd** in the world, defeated fellow Indian and **world No. 74 Manav Vikas Thakkar** in the final with a **score of 3-1 (6-11, 11-7, 11-7, 11-4)**.
- ❖ In an all-Indian mixed double final, the pairing of **Diya Chitale and Manush Shah** emerged triumphant against **Manav Thakkar and Archana Kamath**.

14.12 CARLOS SAINZ WINS FORMULA ONE AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX

- ❖ **Carlos Sainz** clinched an impressive win at the **Australian Grand Prix**, defying challenges including a health scare and career uncertainty.
- ❖ **Sainz** finished ahead of teammate Charles Leclerc for Ferrari's first 1-2 result since the 2022 Bahrain Grand Prix, with McLaren's Lando Norris finishing in third for his first podium at Albert Park.

14.13 RANJI TROPHY

- ❖ **The Mumbai cricket team**, led by **Ajinkya Rahane**, defeated **Vidarbha** in the final of the Ranji Trophy to win their **42nd title**.
- ❖ On the fifth day of the five-day final, the Mumbai team defeated the Vidarbha team by 169 runs. The final was played at the **Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai**.
- ❖ The Mumbai team last won the **Ranji Trophy in 2015-2016**.
- ❖ Incidentally, Mumbai (then Bombay) also won the inaugural Ranji Trophy in 1934-35.
- ❖ **Musheer Khan** of Mumbai was the **Player of the Match**, while **Tanush Kotia** of Mumbai was the Player of the Series.

ABOUT RANJI TROPHY

- ❖ The Ranji Trophy is India's premier domestic first-class cricket championship, named **after K. S. Ranjit Singhji**. **K.S. Ranjit Singhji**, the **Nawab of Jamnagar**, was the first Indian to play test cricket. He played cricket for England and Sussex County of England.
- ❖ **The BCCI (Board for Control of Cricket in India)** started the Ranji Trophy in his honour in **1934-35**.

14.14 INDIA MAKES NEW GUINNESS WORLD RECORD IN KABADDI

- ❖ India made history by making a Guinness World record with participation of **128 players**, on **The World Kabaddi Day, 24 March**.
- ❖ This new history in the field of Kabaddi game has been written at **Tau Devi Lal Stadium in Panchkula** district.
- ❖ An MOU recently signed between Holistic **International Pravasi Sports Association (HIPSA)** and the **Government of Haryana**, for the promotion of Kabaddi, globally, was one of the main reasons to choose India as a venue and Haryana in particular, for the event.
- ❖ While Guinness had set the record benchmark for 84 players to break the record, the organizers had challenged the record, with an attempt for 154 players.

15. PERON IN NEWS

15.1 SHAFIQR RAHMAN BARQ

- ❖ **Parliament** lost **its oldest member**, with the **passing of Shafiqur Rahman Barq aged 93** at a hospital in Moradabad.
- ❖ The **five-time MP from Sambhal in western Uttar Pradesh** was **set to recontest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on a Samajwadi Party (SP) ticket**.
- ❖ Barq was **born on July 11, 1930 in Sambhal** and was **elected five times as an MP and four times as an MLA**.

15.2 DAYANAND SARASWATI

- ❖ **Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati Jayanti** was celebrated on March 5.

- ❖ As per Hindu Panchang, **Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati Jayanti** is celebrated on the **tenth day of Krishna Paksha in the month of Phalgun**.

ABOUT MAHARISHI DAYANAND SARASWATI

- ❖ He was **born in 1824 in Tankara, Gujarat in a Brahmin family**.
- ❖ He was **earlier named Mool Shankar Tiwari** as he was **born during Mool Nakshatra**.
- ❖ He **wandered as an ascetic for fifteen years** in search of truth.
- ❖ Dayananda's views were published **in his famous work, Satyarth Prakash (The True Exposition)**.
- ❖ He supported a **number of social reforms** and **publicly denounced discrimination and women inequality**.
- ❖ He was the **founder of Arya Samaj**.
 - ✓ The **first Arya Samaj unit** was **set up by him at Bombay in 1875** and **later the headquarters of the Samaj were established at Lahore**.
- ❖ He was the **first to give the call for Swaraj** as **"India for Indians" in 1876**, which was **later taken up by Lokmanya Tilak**.
- ❖ He upheld the **infallibility of the Vedas, the doctrines of karma and denounced idolatory and rituals**.
- ❖ He gave the **slogan "Back to the Vedas"**.

15.3 BHIMA NAYAK

- ❖ Bhima Nayak sometimes spelled as Bhima Naik, was a **resident of Dhaba Bawdi in the Badwani district of Madhya Pradesh**.
- ❖ He was a **prominent leader of the Bhils of Nimar**.
- ❖ He took **part in the Uprising of 1857 against the British Raj** raising an anti-British force by bringing in **men from Bhil, Bhilala, Mandoi, and Naik tribes, and collaborated with Tantia Tope**.
- ❖ He **deployed his troops on the Bhil-populated Bombay (Mumbai) and Agra Highway between Singhawa and Khull, where they constantly disturbed the British troop movements**.
- ❖ Bhima had an **important role in the 1857 Ambagani War**.
- ❖ On the basis of espionage by one of their own men, the **British succeeded in arresting him only in 1861 from his jungle hideout**.
- ❖ He was **found guilty, sentenced to transportation for life, and sent to Cellular Jail of the Andaman Islands**.
- ❖ He **died in the Andaman Islands on 29 December 1876**.

15.4 NANA JAGANNATH SHANKARSETH

- ❖ The **Maharashtra cabinet** decided to ask the Ministry of Railways to rename **Mumbai Central station** after **Nana Jagannath Shankarseth**.

ABOUT NANA JAGANNATH SHANKARSETH (FEBRUARY 10, 1803-JULY 31, 1865)

- ❖ The **social reformer, educationist, and philanthropist Nana Jagannath Shankarseth** is often described as the **"architect" of Mumbai (then Bombay)**, who made **extremely valuable contributions** in terms of **both ideas and money to multiple sectors**, to lay a strong foundation for the city.
- ❖ Shankarseth was **greatly inspired by the legendary merchant and philanthropist Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy**.
- ❖ He became the **first Indian to be nominated to the Legislative Council of Bombay**.
- ❖ He was the **founder of Bombay Association**.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

- ❖ **Education-**
 - ✓ He **donated land owned by his family for educational institutions**.

- ✓ Shankarseth founded the **Native School of Bombay**, which was **renamed first as the Bombay Native Institution, and then as the Board of Education.**
- ✓ Finally, this institution evolved into the **prestigious Elphinstone College.**
- ❖ **Railways –**
 - ✓ The **first train in India ran between Boribunder and Thane on April 16, 1853.**
 - ✓ The **34-km project undertaken by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway Company.**
 - ✓ The **committee** that gave the **project impetus** included **Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Nana Shankarseth.**

15.5 NETRAVATI RIVERFRONT PROJECT

- ❖ The principal bench of **the National Green Tribunal (NGT)** in **New Delhi** has initiated action on the **Netravati Waterfront Promenade Development Project in Mangalore.**

KEY POINTS

- ❖ **The National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has acknowledged the importance of the environmental and social issues related to the project and has taken action by forming a committee to investigate and provide a thorough report.
- ❖ The concerns raised by the local chapter of the **National Environmental Conservation Foundation (NECF)** regarding the impact of the project on the community have been taken into consideration.
- ❖ The project has been criticised for its potential negative effects on the environment and the livelihoods of the local population.

ABOUT

- ❖ **The Netravati Riverfront Project** is a remarkable urban development project which to a great extent is not solely focused on developing the ecological and the recreational aspects of the river but on enhancing the entire surrounding.
- ❖ The implementation of this project mostly involves the execution of different components including beautification of the river banks, construction of pedestrian and cycling trails, establishment of recreational centres, expense on improvement of leisure infrastructure to boost tourism and water activities.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- ❖ It has been established under the **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.**
- ❖ It is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within **6 months** of the filing of the same.
- ❖ **New Delhi** is the Principal Place of Sitting of the **Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai** shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.

15.6 RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

- ❖ **Ramakrishna Mission president Swami Smaranananda** passed away due to old age ailments at the age of **95.**
- ❖ He became the **16th president of the order in 2017.**

ABOUT RAMAKRISHNA MISSION:

- ❖ The Ramakrishna Mission is a Hindu religious and spiritual organization that is at the heart of the **Ramakrishna Movement**, also known as **the Vedanta Movement.**
- ❖ The mission was created on **May 1, 1897**, by **Ramakrishna Paramahansa's** principal follower **Swami Vivekananda**, and is named after and inspired by the Indian spiritual Guru **Ramakrishna Paramahansa.**
- ❖ The organization primarily promotes **Advaita Vedanta**, a Hindu philosophy, as well as four yogic ideals: **Jnana, Bhakti, Karma, and Raja yoga.**

- ❖ Vivekananda advocated for the application of technology and contemporary science to the benefit of humanity.
- ❖ At **Baranagar**, the first Math was founded.
- ❖ Another math was established in **Belur in 1899**, and it became the central math.
- ❖ It is responsible for the organizing and operation of all maths' located across India and even beyond the country.
- ❖ It is also the educational center for the **Ramakrishna Mission's saints**.

ABOUT RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA

- ❖ **Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya**, a poor Brahmin priest who later became known as **Ramakrishna Paramahamsa**.
- ❖ On the **18th of February 1836**, **Sri Ramakrishna** was born into a poor Brahmana family in the Bengali hamlet of **Kamarpukur**.
- ❖ He had no formal education in philosophy or Shastras, and his schooling ended at the primary level.
- ❖ Ramakrishna was a priest at the **Dakshineswar Kali Temple** who drew a large number of monastic and lay followers.
- ❖ **Sarada Devi**, **Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's** spiritual companion, was also his wife.
- ❖ **Narendra Nath Datta (1863-1902)**, later known as **Swami Vivekananda**, was Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's most ardent disciple who spread Ramakrishna's teachings throughout the world, particularly in **America and Europe**.

15.7 'PHOOL BAHADUR'

- ❖ '**Phool Bahadur**' is **the first Magahi novel**, which has been translated into English by '**Abhay K**'. It was launched at the Dibrugarh University International Literary Festival on **19-21 March 2024**.
- ❖ The launch event was attended by **Jnanpith Awardee Damodar Mauzo, Professor Rita Kothari, Dr. AJ Thomas and Chuden Kabimo**. Also, writers and distinguished guests from many countries participated in this programme.

ABOUT 'PHOOL BAHADUR'

- ❖ **This novel (Phool Bahadur)** was originally written by **Jayanath Pati**. It was first published in **1928**. This novel was not very popular among the people. Now it is gaining a lot of fame due to its translation into English. Whereas it was forgotten until recently. '**Abhay K**' rediscovered it while editing '**The Book of Bihari Literature**'.
- ❖ '**Phool Bahadur**' is the first Magahi novel translated into English by **Abhay K**.
- ❖ Published by Penguin Random House India, '**Phool Bahadur**' is a delightful novel based in the town of **Biharsharif in Nalanda district** of Bihar.
- ❖ The story of the book revolves around the ambitious **Mukhtar Samlal**. The novel describes the harmonious union of a Nawab, a courtesan, and a circle officer. The characters in this novel each try to exploit the other. All characters and events are manipulated by a dishonest Mukhtar whose only goal is to somehow acquire the title of Rai Bahadur.

ABOUT 'ABHAY K':

- ❖ **Abhay K**, hailing from Nalanda, Bihar, is a versatile writer who excels as a **poet, editor, translator, and author** of numerous poetry collections.
- ❖ Abhay's poems have appeared in more than **100 literary journals**, including Poetry Salzburg Review and Asia Literary Review.
- ❖ His '**Earth Anthem**' has been translated into more than **150 languages**.
- ❖ Abhay's upcoming book '**Nalanda**' will be published by **Penguin Random House in 2025**.
- ❖ He was given the KLF Poetry Book of the Year Award (2020-21) for translating **Kalidasa's Meghdoot and Ritusamhar from Sanskrit**.
- ❖ He was given the **SAARC Literary Award in 2013**.
- ❖ Abhay was invited to record her poems at the Library of Congress, **Washington, DC in 2018**.

16. SOCIAL ISSUES, HEALTH, EDUCATION

16.1 MEALES

- ❖ More than **half of the world's countries will be at a high or very high risk of measles outbreaks** by the **end of the year** unless **urgent action is taken**, according to the **World Health Organization (WHO)** update.

ABOUT MEASLES

- ❖ **Measles is an airborne virus that mainly affects children under the age of five.**
- ❖ Measles virus belongs to the **Paramyxoviridae family** and is **very well known for its rapid transmission.**
- ❖ Measles is **one of the most contagious diseases on the planet.**
- ❖ **Humans** are the **only natural hosts of measles virus.**
- ❖ A person infected with measles **can potentially spread the virus to nine to 18 others**, making the disease **even more contagious than the coronavirus.**
- ❖ It **spreads through the air, by infectious droplets, and on surfaces.**
- ❖ The **usual symptoms** of the disease begin **around 10–14 days after exposure to the virus.**
- ❖ **Symptoms-One of its most visible symptoms is rashes on the body. Others are:**
 - ✓ **Running nose.**
 - ✓ **Cough.**
 - ✓ **Red and watery eyes.**
 - ✓ **Small white spots inside the cheeks.**
- ❖ It **can be prevented by MR (Measles Rubella) vaccination** – more than 50 million deaths have been averted since 2000, as per WHO.

16.2 NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECT AWARENESS MONTH 2024

- ❖ This campaign is **an effort for observing World's Birth defect day**, which is **observed on 3rd of March every year** and the **National Birth Defect Awareness Month** is an initiative in **raising awareness for all birth defects and improve the care and treatment for children.**
- ❖ The **theme** of this **National Birth Defect Awareness Month 2024** is **“Breaking Barriers: inclusive support for children with birth defects”**.

Six percent of children are born with Birth Defects every year worldwide.
- ❖ The **birth defects awareness campaign** would be **focusing on the awareness about prevention, early identification and timely management.**
- ❖ The **month-long activities** are **planned under Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram of Child Health division, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).**
- ❖ RBSK focuses on **early identification and management of birth defects to minimize disability.**
- ❖ To achieve this objective, the **program screens the children at four different levels-**
 - ✓ **Comprehensive New born screening at Delivery points**
 - ✓ **Screening for visible birth defects in New born by ASHA during home visitation**
 - ✓ **Children (6 weeks to 6 years) bi-annually screening at Anganwadis**
 - ✓ **Children (6 years to 18 years) screening at Government and Government aided schools once a year**

FACTS

- ❖ As per **Sample Registration System 2020 Report**, presently-
 - ✓ **The Neonatal mortality rate is 20 per 1000 live births,**
 - ✓ **Infant mortality rate is 28 per 1000 live births and**
 - ✓ **Under 5 mortality rate is 32 per 1000 live births**

- ❖ As per Cause of Death Statistics 2017-19 report of Sample Registration System under Registrar General of India, **Birth Defect contributes to 4.9% defects of neonatal mortality and 5.7% of U5MR mortality.**

16.3 'POSHAN UTSAV'

- ❖ The **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)** organized the 'Poshan Utsav' in **New Delhi**, aiming to **advocate and spread the importance of proper nutrition.**
- ❖ The ministry unveiled the '**Poshan Utsav Book**' and introduce a "cartoon coalition" in support of the **POSHAN** cause.
- ❖ Curated by the **Deendayal Research Institute (DRI)** and backed by the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**, the '**Poshan Utsav Book**' is crafted to promote cultural heritage and traditional nutritional practices.
- ❖ Designed as an atlas on food, the book provides insights from cultural, social, economic, and scientific angles.

16.4 PARAKH

- ❖ **National Council for Educational and Research Training (NCERT)** has introduced a new "holistic" report card that incorporates feedback from parents, classmates, and even self-evaluation by students to track their overall progress regularly.
- ❖ **PARAKH**, a standard-setting body under the **NCERT**, has devised the **Holistic Progress Card (HPC)** for **foundational stage** (Classes 1 and 2), **preparatory stage** (Classes 3 to 5) and **middle stage** (Classes 6 to 8) and is currently working on developing one for the secondary stage.
- ❖ The **NCERT** has asked all states to either adopt the HPC or adapt it according to their requirements.
- ❖ The HPC, aligned with the recommendations of the **National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE)** to make evaluation more "learner-centric", has started considering various aspects of learning, including diverse skills and competencies, rather than solely relying on marks obtained in periodic tests.
- ❖ Its aim is to track not only students' academic performance but also their cognitive, socio-emotional abilities, and creativity during class activities.

ABOUT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT, REVIEW, AND ANALYSIS OF KNOWLEDGE FOR HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT (PARAKH)

- ❖ Established in **February 2023.**
- ❖ **PARAKH** was set up in the **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** as an independent constituent unit.
- ❖ It aims to fulfill the basic objectives of setting norms, standards, and guidelines and implement activities related to student assessment along with other tasks as mandated by the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.**

16.5 IRIS- HUMANOID TEACHER INTRODUCED

- ❖ A **Kerala school** has introduced a humanoid as a teacher.
- ❖ Named **Iris**, the humanoid was unveiled last month at **KTCT Higher Secondary School in Thiruvananthapuram** in collaboration with **Makerlabs Edutech Private Limited.**
- ❖ According to **Makerlabs**, **Iris** was built as part of the **Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL)**, a 2021 **NITI Aayog** project to boost students' extracurricular activities in schools.
- ❖ **Iris** can speak three languages and also answer difficult questions, along with features including voice assistant, interactive learning, manipulation capabilities, and mobilities.

- ❖ Equipped with a **dedicated Intel processor and a coprocessor for maneuvering tasks**, the robot offers **seamless performance and responsiveness**.
- ❖ With its **Android App interface**, users can easily control and interact with the robot for a **personalized learning experience**.

16.6 MEASLES AND RUBELLA CHAMPION AWARD

- ❖ In recognition of country's tireless efforts to combat Measles and Rubella, **India** has been bestowed with the **prestigious Measles and Rubella Champion Award** by **The Measles and Rubella Partnership** at the American Red Cross Headquarters in Washington D.C., USA.
- ❖ The **Measles and Rubella Partnership** comprises a **multi-agency planning committee**, including the **American Red Cross, BMGF, GAVI, US CDC, UNF, UNICEF, and WHO**, all dedicated to reducing global measles deaths and preventing rubella illness.

ABOUT MEASLES

- ❖ Measles is a **highly contagious virus**, spread by **contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing**.
- ❖ It is **caused by a single-stranded, enveloped RNA virus with 1 serotype**.
- ❖ It is **particularly dangerous for children from the economically weaker background**, as it **attacks malnourished children and those with reduced immunity**.

ABOUT RUBELLA

- ❖ Rubella (German Measles) is **acute, contagious viral infection transmitted by airborne droplets when infected people sneeze or cough**.
- ❖ **Humans** are the **only known host**.
- ❖ Rubella and measles **share some signs and symptoms, such as the red rash** but are **caused by different viruses** and **rubella isn't as infectious or as severe as measles**.

ABOUT VACCINE

- ❖ **Measles and Rubella** are **vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs)**.
- ❖ **MR Vaccine** is **part of India's Universal Immunization Programme since 2017**.

16.7 SHERNI INITIATIVE

- ❖ The **She Research Network India** has been **launched by the University Grants Commission's Information and Library Network Centre**.
- ❖ This initiative is **designed to achieve equal representation of women scientists across various research areas**.
- ❖ The SheRNI website is **set to connect 81,818 profiles of Indian women involved in science and research fields**.
- ❖ Furthermore, it **encompasses an extensive collection of 675,313 publications and 11,543 patents**, underscoring the **crucial role women play in advancing scientific progress and encouraging innovation**.
- ❖ This platform **empowers female scientists and faculty members to establish strong professional networks, fostering collaboration, mentorship, and opportunities for career advancement**.

16.8 FOOD COLOURING AGENTS

- ❖ The **Karnataka government** has banned use of food coloring agents in **Gobi Manchurian and cotton candy across the state over health concerns**, primarily because **eateries use food colouring agents like Rhodamine-B and Carmoisine, which studies have shown to be toxic**.

- ✓ **Rhodamine B (RhB)** is a chemical compound commonly employed in synthetic dyes for colouring silk, jute, leather, cotton, and wool, as well as in the cosmetics and plastics industries. Its low cost, however, also makes it a popular choice for food colouring.
- ❖ Of the **171 samples** collected from eateries across the state, **107** were prepared using unsafe chemicals like **Tartrazine, Sunset Yellow, Rhodamine-B and Carmoisine**.
- ❖ The **permitted synthetic colouring agents, as per FSSAI**, are-
 - ✓ **Red** - Ponceau 4R, Carmoisine, Erythrosine
 - ✓ **Yellow** - Tartrazine, Sunset Yellow FCF
 - ✓ **Blue** - Indigo Carmine, Brilliant Blue FCF
 - ✓ **Green** - Fast Green FCF

16.9 POSHAN PAKHWADA

- ❖ Poshan Pakhwada 2024 is being **organized from 9th March till 23rd March, 2024**.
- ❖ The **focus of mass sensitization and community activities** would be around the **following main themes-**
 - ✓ **Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi (PBPB)**- towards better Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE)
 - ✓ **Tribal, Traditional, Regional & Local dietary practices** focused on sensitization around nutrition
 - ✓ **Health of pregnant women & Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices**
- ❖ The **Ministry of Women & Child Development is the nodal Ministry** for coordinating activities during the **Poshan Pakhwada**.
- ❖ In the **State/UT, Department of Women & Child Development /Social Welfare Department will be the nodal department for Poshan Pakhwada**.

September is celebrated as **Rashtriya Poshan Maah** across the country.

16.10 AYUSHMAN BHARAT SCHEME

- ❖ **Uttar Pradesh** has become as the first state in the country to **issue 5 crore cards** under the **Ayushman Bharat Scheme providing health insurance**.

ABOUT AYUSHMAN BHARAT

- ❖ It is a **government-led healthcare scheme** launched in **2018**.
- ❖ The scheme **aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC)** and **has two main components: the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana program and Health and Wellness Centers**.
 - ✓ **PM-JAY is the world's largest health insurance scheme** fully financed by the government.
 - It **offers a sum insured of Rs.5 lakh per family for secondary care and tertiary care**.
 - **Health Benefit Packages** covers surgery, medical and day care treatments, cost of medicines and diagnostics.
 - The funding ratio is **60:40 for most states, 90:10 for northeastern states and Himalayan states, and 100:0 for union territories without a legislature**.
 - ✓ **Health and wellness Centres (HWC) –**
 - In February 2018, the government **announced the creation of 1,50,000 Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs)** by **transforming existing Sub Centres and Primary Health Centres as the base pillar of Ayushman Bharat**.
 - These centres would **deliver Comprehensive Primary Health Care (CPHC)** bringing **healthcare closer to the homes of people covering both maternal and child health services and non-communicable diseases, including free essential drugs and diagnostic services**.

16.11 EAT RIGHT CAMPUS'

- ❖ Nearly **100 jails across the country** have been **certified as 'Eat Right Campus'** by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)**, marking a **significant milestone in its goal of promoting safe and healthy eating habits** within **different campuses**.
 - ✓ **Uttar Pradesh** had the **most certified jails**, followed by **Punjab, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh**.
- ❖ The certification is based on **compliance with key parameters** like **basic hygiene criteria, steps to ensure the provision of healthy food, and efforts towards building awareness about local and seasonal food**.
- ❖ This initiative **falls under FSSAI's Eat Right India movement** and **aims to promote safe, healthy and sustainable food in different workplaces and institutions, including jails**.
- ❖ In addition to jails, **more than 2,900 workplaces nationwide** have also **been acknowledged as Eat Right campuses by the FSSAI**.

16.12 FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY ASSESSMENT TEST (FLNAT)

- ❖ The government conducted the **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Test (FLNAT)** as part of **Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram** across 23 states.
- ❖ The FLNAT was **held in all districts of each participating State and UT**.
- ❖ The assessment **comprises three subjects – Reading, Writing, and Numeracy – each carrying 50 marks, totalling 150 marks**.
- ❖ The test was **conducted in the regional language of the learners, in line with National Education Policy 2020's focus on promoting multilingualism**.
- ❖ The test is **crucial in assessing the impact of teaching-learning sessions conducted** as part of the **ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram**.

ABOUT ULLAS

- ❖ **ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society)** was announced for the **period FYs 2022-2027 to cover all the aspects of Education For All (erstwhile termed as Adult Education)** to align with **National Education Policy 2020**.
- ❖ The **objectives** of the scheme is to impart **not only Foundational Literacy and Numeracy** but also to **cover other components** which are necessary for a citizen of 21 st century such as
 - ✓ **Critical Life Skills** (including financial literacy, digital literacy, commercial skills, health care and awareness, child care and education, and family welfare);
 - ✓ **Vocational Skills Development** (with a view towards obtaining local employment);
 - ✓ **Basic Education** (including preparatory, middle, and secondary stage equivalency) and
 - ✓ **Continuing Education** (including engaging holistic adult education courses in arts, sciences, technology, culture, sports, and recreation, as well as other topics of interest or use to local learners, such as more advanced material on critical life skills).
- ❖ The scheme is **implemented through volunteerism through online mode**.
- ❖ **Trainings, orientations, workshops of volunteers will be organized** through face-to-face mode.
- ❖ All **material and resources shall be provided digitally for easy access to registered volunteers** through easily accessible digital modes, viz, TV, radio, cell phone-based free/open-source Apps/portals, etc.
- ❖ Target Audience -The scheme will **cover non-literates of the age group of 15 years and above in all state/UTs in the country**.

16.13 YAOUNDÉ DECLARATION

- ❖ In a **historic gathering in Cameroon's capital Yaoundé**, African health ministers, global malaria partners, funding agencies, scientists, civil society organisations and other principal malaria stakeholders pledged to end malaria deaths.

STATISTICS

- ❖ Globally, the number of malaria cases in 2022 surged significantly compared to the pre-COVID-19 era.
- ❖ The **total cases rose from 233 million in 2019 to a staggering 249 million**.
- ❖ **Africa** remains the **epicentre of the malaria crisis**, bearing an immense burden.
 - ✓ It accounts for **94 per cent of all global malaria cases** and a **staggering 95 per cent of global malaria-related deaths, totaling an estimated 580,000 deaths in 2022**.
- ❖ Significantly, the **11 African countries whose health ministers took part in the Yaoundé conference — Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania** — “account for **more than 70 per cent of the global malaria burden**.”

16.14 MTBVAC

- ❖ **Bharat Biotech's TB vaccine MTBVAC** begins clinical trials in India
- ❖ **MTBVAC** is derived from a human strain of the **Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacteria**.
- ❖ It was developed by **Biofabri** in collaboration with the Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech.
- ❖ It is the only **tuberculosis (TB)** vaccine currently available, holds promise as a more effective and long-lasting alternative to the **Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG)**.

16.15 IIT-GUWAHATI TRANSFERS TECHNOLOGY FOR FIRST ANTI-SWINE FEVER VACCINE

- ❖ **The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati** has achieved a significant milestone by successfully transferring technology for the production of **India's first recombinant virus-based vaccine for classical swine fever**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

- ❖ This breakthrough represents a pivotal development in combating the **highly contagious disease affecting pigs and wild boars**.
- ❖ **IIT Guwahati** has facilitated the transfer of pioneering vaccine technology to **BioMed Pvt Ltd**, a manufacturing company specializing in high-quality vaccines.
- ❖ This transfer enables commercial production of the vaccine, offering a swift and cost-effective solution for pig vaccination.
- ❖ The vaccine developed at IIT Guwahati utilizes a recombinant virus-based platform, which is a novel approach in India for combating classical swine fever.
- ❖ This method represents a significant advancement in vaccine technology, ensuring effective protection against the disease.
- ❖ The development of this vaccine is the result of collaborative efforts between researchers from the Department of Biosciences and Bioengineering at **IIT Guwahati and Assam Agricultural University** in Guwahati.

ABOUT SWINE FEVER:

- **Classical swine fever is a highly infectious and often fatal viral disease of swine.**
- Swine infected with classical swine fever virus usually develop fever, hemorrhages, lethargy, yellowish diarrhea, vomiting, and purple skin discoloration of the ears, lower abdomen, and legs.
- Neurological signs, reproductive failures, and abortion may also be observed.
- Diagnostic tests for the disease include **RT-qPCR assay, virus isolation**, immunofluorescence assay, and detection of antibodies by serological tests such as ELISA and virus neutralization.

- Swine fever poses a significant threat in various states across India, particularly in the **northeastern states, Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat, and Kerala.**
- The availability of an indigenous vaccine holds promise for controlling the spread of the disease and safeguarding the livestock industry.

17. MISCELLANEOUS

17.1 BK 'SWALLOWING THE SUN' RELEASED

- ❖ **Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri's** new book **'Swallowing the Sun'** was launched recently.
- ❖ Set during the freedom movement, **Lakshmi Puri's Swallowing the Sun** is about the **encounter of India's national story with unknown individuals**, the **constant tussle between revolution and reform**, encapsulated in the gaze of **Malati, a girl from a Maharashtrian village who grows up to know the cost at which independence — for herself and her country — comes.**

17.2 WORLD POVERTY CLOCK

- ❖ India has **managed to bring down 'extreme poverty' below 3 per cent of its population**, latest data on the **World Poverty Clock** showed.

ABOUT WORLD POVERTY CLOCK

- ❖ The World Poverty Clock **provides real-time poverty estimates through 2030 for nearly every country in the world.**
- ❖ It **monitors progress against Ending Extreme Poverty**, which is the UN's **first SDG.**
 - ✓ The **escape rate** calculates the **current rate of poverty reduction in the world.**
- ❖ **Funded by-** The **International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)** and the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.**
- ❖ The Clock **shows the number of people living in extreme poverty worldwide**, disaggregated by **age, gender and rural/urban location.**
- ❖ The clock **has taken \$2.15 a day income to present the finding.**
 - ✓ Accordingly, in India nearly **3.44 crore people are living in extreme population in 2024** against **4.69 crore in 2022.**

17.3 NCPCR CELEBRATES FOUNDATION DAY

- ❖ The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** celebrated its **19th Foundation Day** on 12th March, 2024 at Jacaranda Hall, Indian Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

ABOUT NCPCR

- ❖ **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** is a **statutory body.**
- ❖ It was **established in March 2007** under an **Act of Parliament (December 2005)** under the **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.**
- ❖ The **commission's mandate** is to ensure that **all laws, policies, programs and administrative systems conform to the vision of the rights of the child** as enunciated in the **Constitution of India** as well as the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.**
 - ✓ **A child is defined as a person falling in the age group of 0 to 18 years.**
- ❖ 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.**
- ❖ The Commission comprises a **Chairperson and six Members appointed by the central government.**

- ✓ The members must have **a minimum of two women members.**

17.4 ISRAEL WAR DIARY BOOK RELEASED

- ❖ **Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur** has released a book titled **Israel War Diary**.
- ❖ It has been **written by Vishal Pandey**, Chief Special Correspondent of Zee News.
- ❖ Vishal Pandey offered poignant insights into the inspiration behind the book and shared personal anecdotes from **his experiences as a frontline journalist covering the Israel-Hamas conflict.**

17.5 'THE CONSPIRACY TO OUST ME FROM THE PRESIDENCY' BOOK RELEASED

- ❖ Two years after his dramatic ouster from office by a popular people's movement, **Sri Lanka's former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa** has sought to defend his tainted regime, by launching a book titled **'The Conspiracy to oust me from the Presidency'**.
- ❖ The book **attributes his political downfall to a "conspiracy" involving foreign and local parties.**

18. HIMACHAL NEWS

18.1 ATUL VERMA IS DG-CID

- ❖ IPS officer **Atul Verma** was recently appointed as the **director general of Himachal Pradesh CID**.
- ❖ Verma is a **1991-batch IPS officer** and **replaced** Additional DGP of State Vigilance and anti-corruption bureau **Satwant Atwal Trivedi**, who had an additional charge as DG-CID.

18.2 REBEL CONGRESS LEGISLATORS DISQUALIFIED

- ❖ Vidhan Sabha Speaker **Kuldeep Pathania** disqualified **six rebel Congress legislators** from the **membership of the Himachal Vidhan Sabha** under the **provision of the anti-defection law**.
 - ✓ The **six MLAs** who have been the **disqualified** are **Sudhir Sharma (Dharamsala), Rajinder Rana (Sujanpur), Inder Dutt Lakhnpal (Barsar), Ravi Thakur (Lahaul-Spiti), Chaitanya Sharma (Gagret) and Davinder Bhutto (Kutlehar)**.
- ❖ It is **first-ever disqualification of any MLA** under the **anti-defection law in the history of Himachal Pradesh**.

BRIEF OF ANTI DEFECTION LAW

- ❖ The **anti-defection law (found under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution)** was enacted to **curb frequent floor-crossing by legislators**.
- ❖ It was **added to the Constitution through 52nd Amendment Act in 1985**.
- ❖ The **decision on questions as to disqualification on ground of defection** are referred to the **Chairman or the Speaker of such House**, which is subject to **'Judicial review'**.
- ❖ **Grounds for Defection**
 - ✓ An elected member **voluntarily gives up his membership of a political party**.
 - ✓ An elected member **votes or abstains from voting in such House, contrary to any direction issued by his political party or anyone authorized to do so**, without obtaining prior permission.
 - ✓ If any **independently elected member joins any political party**.
 - ✓ If any **nominated member joins any political party after the expiry of six months**.

18.3 SHANAN POWER PROJECT

- ❖ A day before **Punjab's 99-year lease of the Shanan power project was to end**, the Centre has **ordered the status quo so as not to disrupt the functioning of the 110 MW power plant**, located in **Mandi, Himachal Pradesh**.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

- ❖ The **initial capacity** of the Shanan Power Project was **48 MW** which, over a period of time, has been **increased to 110 MW**.
- ❖ When the project was first envisaged, its cost was **Rs 2.50 crore**, but its **value today is calculated at around Rs 1,600 crore**.
- ❖ The **British-era project at Jogindernagar, 40 km from Palampur in HP, was constructed in 1925** under the lease executed between **Raja Joginder Sen, the ruler of the then Mandi State, and Col BC Batty, a British representative**.
- ❖ The project harnesses the power of the **Uhl River, a tributary of the Beas River**.

18.4 INDIRA GANDHI PYARI BEHNA SUKH SAMMAN NIDHI YOJANA

- ❖ Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu recently announced that **monthly financial assistance of ₹1,500 will be given to women above 18 years**, during the **ongoing financial year**.
- ❖ Under 'Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi Yojana', all the **women above 18 years of age of the State will be given ₹1,500 per month**.
- ❖ It will put **an additional financial burden of about ₹800 crore annually on the State exchequer**.
- ❖ Around **five lakh women were expected to benefit from the scheme**.
- ❖ The government was **already providing ₹1,500 to all the women of district Lahaul-Spiti and to all women of the State aged above 60 years since February, 2024, under the 'Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh-Sammaan Nidhi Yojana'**

18.5 ASIAN RIVER RAFTING CHAMPIONSHIP

- ❖ Himachal Pradesh's Chief Minister recently inaugurated the **Asian River Rafting Championship on the Sutlej River at Basantpur near Shimla**.
- ❖ About 20 **national and international teams from Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia**, are participating in the championship,
- ❖ It has **drawn international attention**, showcasing the **global appeal of river rafting as a sport and Himachal Pradesh as a prime destination for adventure tourism**.

18.6 SANSAD KHEL MAHAKUMBH

- ❖ **Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur** grandly inaugurated the **Sansad Khel Mahakumbh 3.0** at the **Luhnu Cricket Ground in Bilaspur, Hamirpur constituency**.
- ❖ The Union Minister said as many as **40,000 athletes participated in the first edition of Sansad Khel Mahakumbh** in 2018 while **45,000 aspiring sportspersons took part in the second edition of the event**.
- ❖ The target for the **third edition is the participation of 75,000 players**.

18.7 SUHI FAIR

- ❖ **Chamba MLA** has expressed gratitude to Chief Minister for **declaring the Suhi fair and Saho Jatar of Chamba as district-level events**.
- ❖ Declaring these two fairs as district-level events **would help local artistes, craftsmen, artisans, and self-help groups to uplift their economy**.
- ❖ The **Suhi fair is celebrated in the month of April**.
- ❖ This fair is **exclusive for women and children of Himachal Pradesh**.
- ❖ This fair is **celebrated to pay tribute to the Rani Sunayana, popularly known as Rani Suhi, who had sacrificed herself to bring water in the Chamba District of Himachal Pradesh**.

18.8 STATE UNIVERSITY REGISTERS 100 PATENTS

- ❖ **Shoolini University researchers** claimed to have **achieved the landmark of being granted 100 patents by the Indian Patent Office**, which looks after the intellectual property **under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**.
- ❖ The **departments of chemistry and physics secured 23 and 29 patents**, respectively.
- ❖ The **engineering and pharmacy departments** have also made significant strides with **15 and 12 patents, respectively**.

18.9 AMBAR MAHAJAN IS HPTDC DIRECTOR

- ❖ **Ambar Mahajan**, has been **appointed the Director** of the **Board of Directors of Himachal Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (HPTDC)**.

18.10 56 LAKH VOTERS IN THE STATE

- ❖ A total of **56.38 lakh voters** will **cast their vote in the Lok Sabha elections for four seats and Assembly byelections for six segments**(Dharamsala, Barsar, Lahaul-Spiti, Sunajpur, Gagret and Kutlehar) to be held **simultaneously on June 1**.
- ❖ There are **56,38,422 voters** comprising **28,79,200 men, 27,59,187 women and 35 third gender**.
- ❖ There will be **1,38,918 first-time voters (75,001 male and 63,916 female) in the 18 to 19 years' age group** in these elections.
- ❖ The **total number of voters with physical disability is 56,320, besides 60,995 voters above the age of 85 years**.

18.11 MISSION 414

- ❖ The Election Commission (EC) of India has launched a **special campaign in Himachal Pradesh to maximise voter turnout in 414 polling stations** which **registered less than 60% voting in the last Lok Sabha polls**.
- ❖ **Bypolls to six Assembly seats** that fell vacant after disqualification of Congress MLAs would be held **simultaneously with four Lok Sabha seats in Himachal Pradesh in the last phase on June 1**.

OTHER FACTS

- ❖ As many as **7,990 polling stations**, which are **267 more than the last Lok Sabha elections** have been notified and **150 polling stations would be supervised exclusively by women election officers, 54 by youth and 29 by PwD (People with Disability)**.
- ❖ The **expenditure limit** of candidates for **Lok Sabha polls would be ₹95 lakh and Assembly bypolls ₹40 lakh**.
- ❖ **Tashigang polling station in Lahaul and Spiti** located at an altitude of 15,256 feet is the **highest polling booth in the country**.
- ❖ **Manola polling station in Dalhousie of Chamba district** has the **maximum number of 1,410 voters**, while **Kaa polling station in Kinnaur district** has the **lowest of 16 voters**.

18.12 YOUNGEST PARAGLIDER IN THE COUNTRY

- ❖ Samuel Lalbiakhlua, an 11-year-old from the Saitual hamlet in Mizoram, has become one of India's youngest paragliding pilots.
- ❖ He successfully completed a paragliding session at the world's second-highest paragliding institute, Bir Billing in Himachal Pradesh, on March 16.
- ❖ His achievement becomes all the more significant as none from Samuel's family has ever flown a paraglider. Presently, he is learning paragliding in the Kangra Valley under the guidance of the Bir-Billing Paragliding Association.

18.13 PERSONAL EXCELLENCE' PROGRAMME

- ❖ **The Indian Institute of Management, Sirmour**, conducted a 2-day Management Development Programme (MDP) on the topic '**Personal Excellence**' for officials of **Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited**.
- ❖ The programme was specifically designed for officials of the Green R&D Centre and was aimed at enhancing managerial skills.

- ❖ The process of co-learning with the participants involved a series of sessions focused on understanding strengths, team dynamics, and mindfulness techniques such as the 'raisin exercise'.



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