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CURRENT
AFFAIRS
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Monthly Current Affairs – June 2024

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Art and Culture

Archaeologists, Sanskrit Scholars Tie Up to Decipher Rigveda Text

Context: A group of archaeologists are now collaborating with Sanskrit scholars to decipher the text of the Rigveda.

Key Highlights

- **NCERT Textbook Update**: The Class 12 History textbook now includes a chapter based on DNA evidence from a 4,600-year-old Harappan woman's remains, indicating that the Harappans were indigenous people.
- **Debate on Vedic Origin**: Historians debate the origin of the Vedas, with some suggesting they date back to between 2,000 BC and 1,500 BC, while others believe they originated around 2,500 BC.
- **Harappan Settlements**: Most Harappan settlements were found along the Saraswati River. Out of nearly 2,000 known settlements, approximately 1,200 are located in the Saraswati basin.
- **Indigenous Harappans**: Contrary to the theory of large-scale Aryan immigration, new textbook revisions suggest the Harappans were native to India, dating back to 10,000 BC.
- **Genetic Analysis**: DNA analysis of 3,000 modern South Asians from various regions showed genetic similarities to the Harappan woman's skeleton, indicating a long-standing indigenous population.

PRINCIPAL SITES OF THE INDUS CIVILIZATION
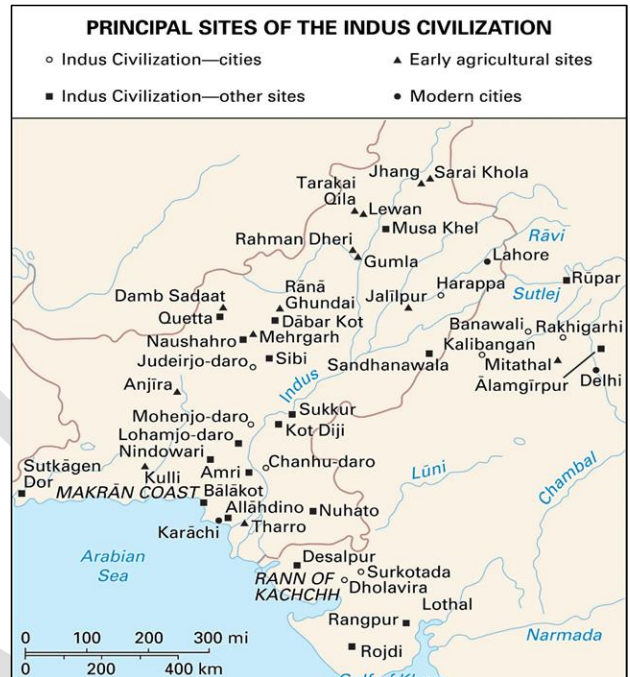
Indus Valley Sites and Features

Site	Features
Harappa	- Stone seals - Citadel on the banks of the Ravi River
Mohenjodaro	- Great bath, - Great granary - Dancing girl - Man with beard - Cotton - Assembly hall - On the banks of Indus
Chanhudaro	- Discovered by Gopal Majumdar And Mackey in 1931 - Pre-harappan culture :jhangar and jhukar
Kalibangan	- Located in Rajasthan on the Ghaggar river - Fire altars - Camel bones - Furrow evidence - Horse remains

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The Rig Vedic Period (1500–1000 BCE)
- **Geographical Spread:** During this period, Aryans were primarily in the Indus region, referred to as Sapta Sindhu or the land of seven rivers, including the five rivers of Punjab, the Indus, and the Saraswati.
- **Rigveda Composition:** The Rigveda Samhita contains 10,552 mantras organized into ten books called Mandalas. Each Mandala is divided into Anuvakas, which contain Suktas made up of riks (verses).

The Saraswati River
- **Geographical Details:** Known as the Ghaggar-Hakra River, it flows during the monsoon season, originating from the Shivalik Hills and passing through Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and into Pakistan.
- **Historical Significance:** The river is crucial to understanding the geographical context of ancient Indian civilizations.

Indian Vedas
- Rigveda
- Samveda
- Yajurveda
- Atharvaveda

Kheer Bhawani Temple Festival

Context: Thousands of Kashmiri Pandits converged at the Kheer Bhawani temple in Kashmir Valley's Ganderbal district to attend the annual festival of Zyestha Ashtami,

Key Highlights
- **Cultural Significance:** The Kheer Bhawani temple has been a vital part of Kashmiri Pandit culture for centuries.
- **Communal Harmony:** Many Muslims participate in the Kheer Bhawani Mela, setting up stalls outside the temple to promote the message of Kashmiriyat.
- **Location and Natural Features:** Nestled amid chinar trees, the temple features a natural spring considered auspicious by the Pandits.

About Kheer Bhawani Temple
- **Dedication:** The temple is dedicated to the goddess Ragnya Devi and is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Kashmiri Hindus. It is located 30 km from Srinagar.
- **Name Origin:** The temple derives its name from "kheer," a milk and rice pudding that pilgrims offer to the goddess by pouring it into the spring within the temple complex.
- **Legend of the Spring:** The spring's water is believed to change colors—white to red to black—predicting future events. Black water is considered an ominous sign.
- **Annual Festival:** The temple hosts an annual mela (festival) which is the largest gathering of Hindus in Kashmir after the Amarnath Yatra.

About Kheer Bhawani Mela
- **Pilgrimage:** On the auspicious day of Jyeshtha Ashtami, Kashmiri Pandits visit the Kheer Bhawani Temple to pay their respects to Mata Ragnya Devi.
- **Deity Significance:** Kheer Bhawani holds great reverence among the local populace.
- **Location:** The mela takes place near the Kheer Bhawani Spring, known locally as Syendh, different from the Indus River (Sindhu).
- **Historical Construction:** Under Ranbir Singh's rule (1830-1885), a temple was built featuring an idol of the goddess and a Shiva linga within a high chamber inside the spring. This unique combination of a Shiva linga and goddess idol is exclusive to this sacred site.
- **Community Symbol:** Over the years, the mela has evolved into a symbol of communal harmony and fraternity in Kashmir.

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Kheer Bhawani Temple
- **Location:** North-eastern region of Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India.
- **Temple Features:** The temple premises include a septagonal spring known for changing colors, though most hues hold no specific significance.
- **Historical Structure:** The current structure of the spring, temple pond, and temple was established during the 1910s by Maharaja Pratap Singh and later renovated by Maharaja Hari Singh. The temple area is adorned with ancient chinar trees.

Ancient Texts

The Kheer Bhawani temple is mentioned in several ancient texts:
- **Kalhana's Rajtarangini**: Describes the sacred spring of Tula Mula, noting its location in a marshy area that was submerged by floods thousands of years ago.
- **Bhrigu Samhita**: References the temple and its significance.
- **Abu'l-Fazal's Ain-i-Akbari**: Describes the Tula Mula area, spanning a hundred bighas, sinking into marshy lands during the summer season.

History

Ahilyabai Holkar

Context: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday described the late Holkar queen of Indore, Ahilyabai Holkari, as the ideal ruler in a message marking the 299th birth anniversary of the queen.

About Ahilyabai Holkar	
Birth and Upbringing	• Ahilyabai Holkar was born on 31 May 1725 into a Marathi Hindu family in Chaundi village, Maharashtra. • Despite prevailing norms against female education, her father, Mankoji Shinde, ensured she received instruction in reading and writing.
Ascension to Leadership	• Ahilyabai became the ruler of Indore following the deaths of her husband, Khande Rao Holkar, and her father-in-law, Malhar Rao Holkar. • She assumed the reins of the Holkar dynasty and shifted its capital to Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh.
Contributions to Culture and Religion	• Ahilyabai Holkar is renowned for her contributions to Indian culture, particularly for reviving the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. • She also promoted the Maheshwari weaving style, enriching the cultural tapestry of India.
Administrative Innovations	• Ahilyabai decentralized military authority by appointing Tukoji Rao Holkar as her military commander. • She separated state revenue from personal finances, ensuring transparent governance and efficient administration.
Religious and Architectural Legacy	• Ahilyabai undertook extensive temple renovation projects across India, including the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi and the Somnath Temple in Gujarat. • These efforts aimed at restoring cultural landmarks and promoting religious harmony.
Social and Judicial Reforms	• She established a fair and impartial judicial system that prioritized justice and protected individual rights. • Her reforms laid the foundation for a just governance structure within the Holkar kingdom. • Ahilyabai championed social welfare, supporting marginalized communities such as widows and orphans.

	• She promoted inclusive policies aimed at uplifting the less privileged sections of society.

About Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

- Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation) is an Indian right-wing, Hindu nationalist volunteer paramilitary organization.
- RSS was founded in 1925 by Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, a doctor in the city of Nagpur, British India.
- The initial impetus of the organization was to provide character training and instill "Hindu discipline" in order to unite the Hindu community and establish a Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation).

PM Modi To Inaugurate New Nalanda University Campus Today

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visited Bihar's Nalanda University to inaugurate its new campus.

Foundation and Early Flourishing

- Nalanda University was established in 427 CE during the Gupta dynasty, under the patronage of Emperor Kumaragupta I.
- Located in modern-day Bihar, India, it became a renowned center of learning in ancient India, thriving for over 600 years.

Golden Era under Harshavardhana and the Palas

- During King Harshavardhana's reign (606-647 AD), Nalanda gained prominence as a hub for Buddhist education.
- Chinese scholar Xuan Zang studied here for five years, translating scriptures into Chinese upon his return.
- It housed 2,000 students supported by contributions from 200 villages, attracting learners from across Asia.

Founded By	• Kumaragupta of the Gupta dynasty in Bihar in the early 5th century CE.
Flourished	• For 600 years until the 12th century AD.
Popularity	• Rose during the era of Harshavardhana and the Pala monarchs.
Significance	• Center of Learning: Influenced Indian civilization and beyond.
Monastic Establishment	• Primarily for monks and nuns; taught major Buddhist philosophies.
International Students	• From China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia.
Code of Conduct	• Students followed strict rules, including daily meditation and study.
Subjects Taught	• Medicine, Ayurveda, Buddhism, Mathematics, Grammar, Astronomy, Indian Philosophy.
Destruction	• In 1193 by Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general of Turkish ruler Qutbuddin Aibak.
Rediscovery	• Found in 1812 by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton; identified by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1861.
Legacy	• Insights by Chinese monk Xuan Zang
UNESCO	• World Heritage Site.

Cultural and Spiritual Influence
- Nalanda attracted scholars and spiritual leaders like Nagarjuna, Aryabhatta, and Dharmakirti, enriching its scholarly traditions.
- Historical accounts mention contributions from diverse regions, including Southeast Asia.

Decline and Rediscovery

Destruction by Bakhtiyar Khilji	o In 1193, Nalanda was ravaged by Bakhtiyar Khilji, marking its decline as a major center of learning. o It remained lost to history until its rediscovery in 1812 by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton and later confirmed by Sir Alexander Cunningham in 1861.
Attack on Nalanda University	o The university faced attacks in 455-470 AD by the Hunas during Emperor Samudragupta's rule. o It was rebuilt by Emperor Skanda Gupta, who also founded the renowned Nalanda library.
Second Attack	o In the early 7th century, Nalanda was targeted again during political tensions with the Goudas emperors of Bengal. o Despite setbacks, Emperor Harshavardhana restored the university, ensuring its continuity.
Revival of Nalanda University	o The revival idea gained momentum in the early 2000s, supported by global leaders and institutions. o The Indian Parliament passed the Nalanda University Act in 2010, laying the foundation for its re-establishment.

International Collaboration
- Nalanda University symbolizes a collaborative effort among India and East Asian nations, fostering regional knowledge exchange.
- It occupies a 455-acre eco-friendly campus near the ancient ruins, designed by architect B.V. Doshi.

Academic Offerings and Facilities
- The university offers postgraduate programs in Buddhist Studies, Historical Studies, Ecology and Environmental Studies, and International Relations.
- It boasts a 'Net Zero' Green Campus with sustainable features like solar power, water treatment plants, and extensive water bodies.

UNESCO Recognition
- The ruins of Nalanda University were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016, highlighting its historical and cultural significance.

Geography

Shyok River

Context: Five soldiers were killed as tank swept away in Ladakh's Shyok river.

About Shyok River
The Shyok River is a significant watercourse in northern Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, India, flowing into the Pakistan-administered region of Gilgit-Baltistan, where it merges with the Indus River.

Origin and Name
- Originates from the Rimo Glacier, a part of the Siachen Glacier, and derives its name from a Ladakhi term meaning 'the river of death'.
- Initially flows southeast from the Rimo Glacier, then turns northwest upon meeting the Pangong range, running parallel to its earlier course.

Aspects	Details
Origin	Originates from the Rimo Glacier, a tributary of the Siachen Glacier. The name 'Shyok' is derived from a Ladakhi word meaning 'the river of death'.
Course	Flows through northern Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir, India, and enters Pakistan-administered Gilgit-Baltistan. Meanders through high-altitude deserts and mountains before joining the Indus.
Length	Approximately 550 km (340 mi) long. Fed by meltwater from various glaciers along its route.
Tributaries	Main right-bank tributary is the Nubra River.

Geographical Features
- Begins in a broad valley but quickly narrows into a gorge after Chalunka before eventually joining the Indus River near Skardu, Pakistan.
- Travels approximately 550 km (340 mi) in total length, fed by meltwater from various glaciers along its journey.
- Passes through Ladakh's high-altitude deserts and mountain ranges en route to its confluence with the Indus.
- The Nubra River is its main right-bank tributary, contributing to its flow and geographical significance.

Agriculture

Minimum Support Price

Context: The Union Cabinet gave its nod to raise the minimum support price (MSP) for paddy by 5.35% to ₹2,300 a quintal for the 2024-25 kharif marketing season.

Key Highlights
The Cabinet recently approved a Minimum Support Price (MSP) hike for all 14 kharif season crops, aligning with the government's policy of ensuring MSPs are at least 1.5 times the cost of production.
Here are the key details:
Margin Above Cost
- Only four crops will provide farmers with a margin of more than 50% above production costs:
- Bajra (77%)
- Arhar dal (59%)
- Maize (54%)
- Black gram (52%)

Paddy MSP Increase
- Paddy, a crucial kharif crop, will see an MSP increase of ₹117 per quintal, offering farmers a 50% margin. This increase is significant ahead of upcoming elections in key states.
- Kharif sowing typically begins in June with the onset of the southwest monsoon, while the marketing season spans October 2024 to September 2025.

What is the Minimum Support Price?

The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a guaranteed amount paid to farmers by the government when they sell their produce. Here's an overview:

Role of CACP

- MSP is determined based on recommendations from the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), considering factors like production costs, market trends, and price parity.
- CACP, an office under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, was established in January 1965.

CCEA Approval

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister, approves the final MSP levels to ensure fair prices for agricultural produce.
- MSP aims to ensure profitable prices for farmers and promote crop diversification in agriculture.

Crops Under MSP

- CACP recommends MSPs for 22 crops and Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane.
- This includes 14 kharif crops, 6 rabi crops, and 2 other commercial crops.

Three Kinds of Production Cost

CACP evaluates production costs using three metrics:

- **A2 Costs:** Direct expenses like seeds, fertilizers, and hired labor.
- **A2+FL Costs:** Includes A2 costs plus an imputed value of unpaid family labor.
- **C2 Costs:** Comprehensive cost covering rentals, interest, and capital assets, in addition to A2+FL.

Need for MSP

- Farmers have faced challenges such as declining commodity prices post-2014, exacerbated by events like demonetization and GST rollout.
- Economic slowdowns and the recent pandemic have further impacted agricultural incomes.
- Rising input costs for essentials like diesel, electricity, and fertilizers have added to farmers' hardships.

MSP ensures farmers receive fair prices, reducing farm distress and poverty, especially in states heavily dependent on agriculture.

WHAT'S MSP

It is a "minimum price" for any crop that the government considers as remunerative for farmers and hence deserving of "support". It's also the price that government agencies pay whenever they procure the particular crop. The government now fixes MSPs for 23 crops, but is NOT legally bound to pay these even if open market rates for the said produce are ruling below their announced floor prices

WAIT IS OVER

Minimum support price for major crops in last 3 years (₹/quintal)

Crops	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Arhar	4,625	5,050	5,450
Groundnut	4,030	4,220	4,450
Masur	3,400	3,950	4,250
Soybean	2,600	2,775	3,050
Wheat	1,525	1,625	1,735
Paddy (common)	1,410	1,470	1,550
Sugarcane (FRP)	230	230	255

Source: Government; figures include bonus

MSP OF RABI CROPS In ₹/quintal
FOR 2024-25 SEASON
(April to March)

- 2020-21
- 2022-23
- 2023-24
- 2024-25
- % change

	Wheat	Barley	Gram	Masur (lentil)	Mustard	Safflower
2020-21	1,975	1,600	5,100	5,100	4,650	5,327
2022-23	2,015	1,635	5,230	5,500	5,050	5,441
2023-24	2,125	1,735	5,335	6,000	5,450	5,650
2024-25	2,275	1,850	5,440	6,425	5,650	5,800
% change	7.06	6.63	1.97	7.08	3.67	2.65

Note: The per cent change is between 2023-24 and 2024-25.   Source: Government of India

Polity

National Food Security Act (NFSA)

Context: Opposition recently said that 14-crore people had been deprived of the benefits under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) as the list of beneficiaries had not been updated because the decadal census did not take place in 2021.

Key Highlights
- The postponement of Census 2021 has immediate repercussions, particularly affecting millions of Indians who are deprived of benefits under the National Food Security Act, 2013, now revamped as PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana.
- At least 14 crore Indians are currently excluded from receiving benefits under the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana due to the delayed Census 2021.
- Census data is crucial for accurately identifying beneficiaries under welfare schemes, ensuring equitable distribution of resources.

National Food Security Act Features
- The National Food Security Act (NFSA) 2013 governs the Public Distribution System (PDS) and ensures food security across India.
- NFSA covers approximately two-thirds of India's total population, providing highly subsidized food grains.
- Rural areas (75%) and urban areas (50%) are entitled to food grains under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and Priority Household (PHH) categories.

Key Provisions
- Specifies monthly food grain allocations: 35 kg for AAY households and 5 kg per person for PHH.
- Beneficiary identification is managed by State/UT Governments based on specific criteria.

Transparent Operations
- Includes grievance redressal mechanisms through State Food Commissions and ensures transparency in PDS operations.
- Assistance provided for intra-state transportation, handling of food grains, and margin for FPS Dealers.

Beneficiaries under NFSA
- Under NFSA, beneficiaries include:
  - Below Poverty Line (BPL) families
  - Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households
  - Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children from 6 months to 14 years old.

About Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)	PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, aims to provide relief to economically weaker sections
	Offers 5 kg of free food grains per month in addition to existing PDS benefits under NFSA.
	Includes cash transfers to vulnerable groups like women and elderly individuals affected by the pandemic.
	Accessible to families identified under AAY and PHH categories by State Governments.
	Extends benefits to widows, terminally ill, disabled persons, elderly without means of subsistence, and various vulnerable groups in both rural and urban areas.

Uniform Civil Code

Context: Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) was part of the Narendra Modi government's agenda.

Key Highlights

The UCC proposes a single law applicable to all religious communities concerning personal matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. It aims to replace the current system of diverse personal laws specific to different religious communities. Other points discussed by law minister are:

- **One Nation, One Election**
  - A committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind has submitted its report on this initiative.
  - The Law Commission is actively working on strategies related to synchronizing elections across the nation.

- **National Litigation Policy**
  - Recently signed by the Law Minister, this policy document is part of the 100-day agenda of the Narendra Modi government.
  - It will soon be presented to the Union Cabinet for approval, focusing on responsible litigation practices.
- **Priority on Faster Justice**
  - The Ministry is prioritizing expediting legal proceedings across various judicial forums including Supreme Court, High Courts, lower courts, tribunals, and consumer courts.

Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Aims to establish a uniform set of laws governing personal matters for all citizens, irrespective of their religious affiliation.

Background of UCC

Pre-Independence Period

- **Lex Loci Report (1840)** Emphasized the **importance of uniformity in codifying Indian law** related to offenses, evidence, and contracts. But recommended that **personal laws of Muslims and Hindus should not be codified.**
- **B N Rau Committee (1941)** Recommended a **codified Hindu law** which would give equal rights to women.

Post-Independence Period

- **Special Marriage Act, 1954** Have provision for **civil marriage for people of India and all Indian nationals in foreign countries,** irrespective of religion or faith followed by either party.
- **Four major enactments on Hindu Law** Viz. Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Hindu Succession Act 1956, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act 1956, Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act 1956.

'DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES CALL FOR UCC'

- SC **favours UCC throughout India** as envisaged under Article 44 of the Directive Principles in the Constitution
- Cites **example of Goa,** says the **state has a UCC for all** irrespective of their religion and no provision for triple talaq
- Says Muslim men whose marriages are registered in Goa cannot practise polygamy
- Says **no attempt made to frame a UCC despite SC appeals** in Shah Bano and Sarla Mudgal cases
- Hindu laws codified in 1956

It is interesting to note that whereas the founders of the Constitution in Article 44 in Part IV dealing with Directive Principles of state policy had hoped and expected that the state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territories of India, till date no action has been taken in this regard

—SUPREME COURT BENCH

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Constitutional Mandate
- Article 44 of the Constitution directs the State to strive towards implementing a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens.
- Part of Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 37), these principles guide governance but are not legally enforceable.

Personal Laws in India
- **Concurrent List**
  - Matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance fall under the Concurrent list, allowing both Parliament and state legislatures to legislate on these subjects.
- **Codification of Hindu Personal Laws**
  - Parliament codified Hindu personal laws in 1956 through acts such as the Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, and Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act.

Enactment of Special Marriage Act, 1954	The Special Marriage Act,1954 was enacted to provide secular alternative in marriages. The inheritance rights of the offsprings of couples married under the act were to be governed by the religion-neutral chapter on inheritance in the Indian Succession Act of 1925.
Continued application of Uniform civil laws in Goa and Puducherry	**Goa Civil Code/Goa Family Law-** With the libaration of Goa, from Portuguese rule, Parliamentary law was enacted for continued application of the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867. **Puducherry-** In Puducherry, a sizable section of citizens called Renoncants (Indians whose ancestors had during the French rule abandoned personal law) are still governed by the 218-year old French Civil Code of 1804.
Uttarakhand UCC	In 2024, Uttarakhand government has tabled the UCC Bill to govern the civil spheres of marriage,divorce of persons belonging to different religions

- **Muslim Personal Laws**
  - Governed by religious texts, aspects of Muslim personal laws are recognized under acts like the Shariat Application Act, 1937, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939, and the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019.
- **Other Religious Communities**
  - Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews are governed by their respective personal laws.

Exception: Goa's Uniform Civil Code
- Goa is the only state in India where a uniform civil code is currently implemented.
- The Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, applicable since India's annexation of Goa in 1961, applies uniformly to all residents, regardless of religion or ethnicity.

Lok Sabha Session

Context: The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha was held from June 24 to July 3. The Rajya Sabha session started on June 27.

Meaning of Session of Indian Parliament
- A "Session of Indian Parliament" refers to a designated period when both Houses of Parliament, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, convene to conduct legislative activities and discussions.

Types of Sessions of Indian Parliament
- Article 85 of the Constitution empowers the President to summon each House of Parliament to meet as deemed necessary.
- Sessions must convene at least twice a year, with not more than a six-month gap between them.

PARLIAMENT MEETS FOR THREE SESSIONS IN A YEAR

BUT It's not unusual for the dates to be shuffled around to accommodate important political and legislative exigencies.

+ In 2017, the Winter Session was delayed on account of the Gujarat Assembly elections.

+ In 2011, Budget Session was cut short for Vidhan Sabha elections in five states.

Sessions have also been cut short or delayed to allow the government to issue Ordinances. Sessions have also been extended.

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Article 85 of the Constitution of India

- **Clause (1)**
  - The Houses of Parliament must be summoned to meet at least twice every year.
  - There should not be a gap of more than six months between the last sitting in one session and the first sitting in the next session.
- **Clause (2)**
  - Subject to the provisions of clause (1), the President may:
  - Summon the Houses or either House to meet at a time and place of his choosing.
  - Prorogue (suspend) the Houses.
  - Dissolve the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

By Convention

Typically, three main sessions are held annually, following parliamentary conventions.

Budget Session	Monsoon Session	Winter Session
• The longest and most critical session of Parliament. • Focuses primarily on presenting, debating, and passing the Union Budget, detailing government expenditures and revenues. • Conducts other legislative discussions and debates. • Generally spans from February to May.	• Named due to its alignment with the Monsoon season in India. • Primary objective is to conduct legislative business, including bill passage, national issue discussions, and policy scrutiny. • Typically held from July to September.	• Focuses on urgent legislative matters and bill discussions. • Similar to the Monsoon Session in its legislative agenda and objectives. • Generally conducted from November to December

UAPA

Context: Delhi Lieutenant-Governor V.K. Saxena sanctioned the prosecution of novelist Arundhati Roy and Sheikh Showkat Hussain, former professor of International Law at the Central University of Kashmir, under Section 13 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) for their alleged statements at an event in 2010.

What is Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)?

- The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was first enacted in 1967 to address secessionist movements and anti-national activities. It has been amended several times, most recently in 2019, to include provisions related to terrorist financing, cyber-terrorism, individual designation, and seizure of property.

Key Features of UAPA

- **Empowerment of NIA:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is authorized to investigate and prosecute cases under UAPA across the country.

1967
- The UAPA was enacted in 1967.

2004
- The first amendment came about in 2004 on the heels of the repeal of POTA, wherein some of the provisions of the repealed Act relating to 'terrorist activities' were imported into the UAPA.

2008
- The second amendment came in 2008, immediately after the 26th November terror attacks in Mumbai, when the central government also enacted the National Investigating Agency Act 2008 (NIA Act).

2012
- The third amendment took place in 2012 when the act was modified to incorporate economic and financial offences relating to terrorism and provided for a transnational approach to curb the international financing of terrorism within India.

2019
- Most recently, the Central Government in 2019 has further amended the UAPA to provide for the notification of individuals as terrorists within the meaning of the Act.

- **Severe Punishments:** The act provides for the death penalty and life imprisonment as the highest punishments for terrorist acts.
- **Detention Provisions:** Suspects can be detained without charge or trial for up to 180 days, and bail can be denied unless the court is satisfied, they are not guilty.
- **Unlawful Activities Defined:** Actions supporting or inciting the secession of any part of India or questioning/disrespecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity are considered unlawful.
- **Definition of Terrorism:** Acts causing or intending to cause death or injury to persons, damage or destruction to property, or threatening the unity, security, or economic stability of India or other countries.

Arguments For and Against UAPA

Arguments in Favor	Arguments Against

• **National Security:** UAPA is essential for national security, allowing preventive measures against terrorism and anti-national activities
   o Example: Jesuit priest Stan Swamy was booked under UAPA for allegedly inciting violence at a Dalit meeting in 2018 and being linked to a banned Maoist group.
• **Counterterrorism Measures:** UAPA is seen as a comprehensive tool for combating terrorism, enabling the government to designate terrorists and freeze their assets.
• **Preventive Detention:** Allows for detaining individuals suspected of unlawful activities before threats materialize, even if formal trial evidence is lacking.
• **Global Commitments:** Aligns with international commitments to combat terrorism, such as the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism.
• **Effective Prosecution:** Facilitates the prosecution of those involved in unlawful activities using modern investigative techniques and electronic evidence.
   o Example: Ajmal Kasab, a 26/11 Mumbai terror attack perpetrator, was prosecuted and convicted using UAPA.
• **Deterrence:** Serves as a deterrent against engaging in activities harmful to national security.
	• **Violates Fundamental Rights:** UAPA infringes on freedoms of expression, assembly, and association, potentially targeting activists, journalists, and minorities.
	• **Lacks Safeguard Mechanisms:** The law lacks safeguards against misuse and provides no judicial review for designations of individuals as terrorists.
	   o Example: The Supreme Court in NIA v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali (2020) ruled against detailed judicial analysis of prosecution evidence when considering bail under UAPA.
	• **Contrary to Federal Structure:** Encroaches on state powers regarding law and order, undermining state autonomy.
	• **Low Conviction Rate:** A low conviction rate (2.2% between 2016-2019) suggests the law is used more for harassment than for curbing terrorism.

Judicial View on UAPA
- **Arup Bhuyan vs. State of Assam (2011)**: Supreme Court ruled that mere membership of a banned organization is not incriminating unless the individual engages in violence or incites disorder.
- **PUCL v. Union of India (2004)**: Human rights violations in combating terrorism are self-defeating.
- **Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb (2021)**: Constitutional courts can allow bail under UAPA if fundamental rights are violated.
- **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan v. Union of India (2018)**: Legitimate uprisings against government actions are lawful if peaceful and non-violent.

Recommended Reforms for UAPA
- **Amend the Law**: Narrow the definitions of "unlawful activity" and "terrorist act" to exclude constitutionally protected activities.

- Dissent is a key feature of free speech as stated in Maqbool Fida Hussain v. Rajkumar Pandey (2008).
- **Shift Burden of Proof**: Ensure the burden of proof lies on the prosecution, not the accused, to facilitate fair trials and bail.
- **Establish Review Mechanism**: Create an independent review mechanism to monitor and challenge government decisions on banning or designating individuals/organizations as unlawful or terrorist.
- **Use as Last Resort**: Reserve UAPA for serious threats and not for suppressing legitimate dissent or criticism..

One Nation, One Election

Context: The report of the committee led by former President Ram Nath Kovind on "one nation, one election" or simultaneous elections could be placed before the Union Cabinet as part of the 100-day agenda of the Law Ministry.

Key Highlights
- **Ministry's Plan**: The Ministry plans to present the report on simultaneous elections "at the earliest" as part of the Legislative Department's 100-day agenda.
- **Prime Minister's Directive**: Before the Lok Sabha election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi instructed all Union Ministries and departments to develop a 100-day agenda for the new government.
- **Committee Report**: The committee submitted its report to President Droupadi Murmu on March 15. It recommended simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies as the first step, followed by synchronized local body polls within 100 days.
- **Implementation Group**: The panel proposed creating an "Implementation Group" to oversee the execution of the committee's recommendations.
- **Constitutional Amendments**: The committee suggested 18 constitutional amendments, most of which would not require ratification by the State Assemblies.
- **Law Commission's Report**: The Law Commission is also prepared with a report that may recommend holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and local bodies starting from 2029. This report may include provisions for a unity government in cases of a hung House or no-confidence motions.

Reviving an old debate

Centre has said a committee has been formed to explore the possibility of simultaneous polls for LS and state assemblies

PANEL FORMED While the panel is likely going to be headed by former PRESIDENT RAM NATH KOVIND, its composition and the terms of its functioning will be announced soon
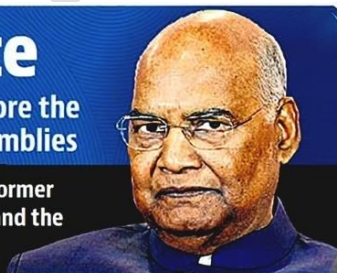
WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ABOUT THE IDEA

NITI AAYOG
A 2016 paper, co-authored by Bibek Debroy and Kishore Desai, noted....
- Separate elections lead to massive recurring expenditures as well as prolonged deployment of forces
- It suggested holding elections in two cycles with an interregnum of 30 months
- It pegged cost of simultaneous polls at ₹4,500 crore, while the cost of 2014 Lok Sabha polls alone was ₹3,870 crore

STANDING COMMITTEE
In 2015, the House panel on personnel, public grievances, law and justice said...
- Elections could be held in two phases
- Polls to some assemblies can be held in Lok Sabha midterm and remaining assemblies could be held at the end of Lok Sabha term

LAW COMMISSION
In 1999, the Law Commission in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws said...
- Holding simultaneous polls would be ideal, but a workable formula is required to be in the Constitution
- The holding of a separate election to assemblies should be an exception and not the rule
- Another law panel report, in 2018, said simultaneous polls don't alter balance of power between Union and the states

Source: Hindustan times
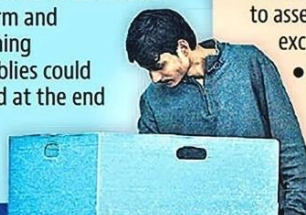
Central Idea Behind One Nation-One Election (ONOE)
- **Concept**: The idea is to hold all State elections simultaneously with the general elections for the Lok Sabha, once every five years.

- **Objective**: The goal is to streamline the electoral process and reduce the frequency of elections, thereby saving time and resources.

Background of ONOE
- **Historical Context**: The Election Commission first proposed the idea in 1983. Simultaneous elections were the norm in India until 1967.
- **Initial Practice**: The first General Elections to the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies were held simultaneously in 1951-52, continuing in 1957, 1962, and 1967.
- **Disruption**: The cycle was disrupted due to the premature dissolution of some Legislative Assemblies in 1968 and 1969. The Lok Sabha was dissolved in 1970, leading to fresh elections in 1971. Consequently, only the First, Second, and Third Lok Sabha completed full five-year terms.

Simultaneous Elections in Other Countries
- **South Africa**: Elections to the national and provincial legislatures are held simultaneously every five years, with municipal elections held two years later.
- **Sweden**: Elections to the national legislature (Riksdag), provincial legislature/county council (Landsting), and local bodies/municipal Assemblies (Kommunfullmaktige) are held on a fixed date, the second Sunday in September every fourth year.
- **Britain**: The Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011, established fixed dates for elections to provide stability and predictability. The first elections under this act were held on May 7, 2015, with subsequent elections on the first Thursday of May every fifth year.

The Way Ahead

Niti Aayog refers to UK which enacted the **Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011**, mandating completion of a term of Parliament before general elections are held

Recommends dividing states and union territories into two groups for simultaneous polls

| Says the term of 14 states in the first group commence in April-May 2019 | For the remaining 17, it can be from Oct-Nov 2021 |

Says fixed terms can be implemented by "suitable amendments in the Constitution and the applicable statutory framework"

CIC Upholds Response to RTI Query on Presidential Assent

Context: In reply to an application asking how many times former President Kovind returned a decision take by the PM or Council of Ministers, the Rashtrapati Bhavan said there was 'no data' available.

Key Highlights
- The Central Information Commission (CIC) upheld the Rashtrapati Bhavan's response to a Right to Information (RTI) Act query regarding how many times former President Ram Nath Kovind had returned decisions made by the Prime Minister or Union Council of Ministers for reconsideration. The President's Secretariat stated that no such information was available on record.
- **Petitioner's Challenge**
  - **Petitioner**: Yuvan Mitran, a college student from Chennai, challenged the Rashtrapati Bhavan's response.
  - **First Appeal**: In his first appeal to the First Appellate Authority, Mitran sought clarity on whether the lack of records indicated that the former President had never returned a decision or if the information was simply not recorded.
  - **Response**: The Officer on Special Duty/First Appellate Authority referred the appeal to the relevant section, which reiterated the original response: "no information rests with this Secretariat."

     o **Second Appeal**: Mitran then took his case to the CIC, arguing that the response was unsatisfactory and asserting that the President of India, being a constitutional authority elected by the people, should be accountable and provide complete information.

- **Key Bills Assented by President Kovind**
  During his tenure, President Kovind gave assent to several significant bills, including:
  - Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019
  - Triple Talaq Bill
  - Amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2019
  - Citizenship Amendment Bill
  - Three farm bills, among others

About Central Information Commission (CIC)

	Details
Establishment	Established by the Central Government in 2005 under the provisions of the Right to Information Act (2005). It is not a constitutional body.
Members	Consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and up to ten Information Commissioners.
Appointment	Appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee comprising the Prime Minister (Chairperson), the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.
Jurisdiction	Extends over all Central Public Authorities.
Tenure	Holds office for a term prescribed by the Central Government or until they attain the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They are not eligible for reappointment.
Powers and Functions	- Receives and inquires into complaints regarding information requested under RTI, 2005. - Can order an inquiry into any matter if there are reasonable grounds (suo-moto power). - Possesses powers of a civil court in respect of summoning, requiring documents, etc.

What is the Right to Information (RTI) Act?

The Right to Information Act, 2005 mandates timely responses to citizen requests for government information. Its primary objective is to empower citizens, promote transparency and accountability in government workings, curb corruption, and ensure that democracy functions for the people effectively.

Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019

- **Term of Office**: The term for the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners (at both the Central and State levels) is now prescribed by the Central Government, rather than being fixed at 5 years.
- **Salary and Allowances**: The salary, allowances, and other service conditions of these officials are determined by the Central Government. Previously, the Chief Information Commissioner's conditions were similar to those of the Chief Election Commissioner, and those of an Information Commissioner were similar to an Election Commissioner (or State Election Commissioners at the state level).

THEN AND NOW

TERM

2005 ACT: Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) at central and state levels will serve for five years.

2019 BILL: Central government will notify the term of office.

SALARY

2005 ACT: At central level, salary of CIC and ICs equivalent to salary of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively. At state level, equivalent to salary of Election Commissioners and Chief Secretary, respectively.

2019 BILL: Salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central government.

DEDUCTIONS

2005 ACT: At the time of appointment, if CIC and ICs (at central and state levels) are receiving pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to that pension. Previous government service includes service under: (i) the central government, (ii) state government, (iii) corporation established under a central or state law, and (iv) company owned or controlled by the central or state government.

2019 BILL: The Bill removes these provisions.

Source: PRS Legislative Research

- **Removal of Provisions**: The amendment removed provisions related to deductions in the salary of these officials due to pension or other retirement benefits from previous government service.

Prohibitory orders imposed in Balasore after communal clash

Context: Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure have been imposed at a small locality in Balasore town of Odisha following a communal clash between two communities.

Key Highlights

- Some people were alarmed by the water in a drain near a mausoleum turning red.
- They claimed that cows were being slaughtered in large numbers for Id-ul-Azha celebrations.
- This led to significant tension between two communities, resulting in stone-throwing incidents.
- Several individuals were injured, vehicles were damaged, and security personnel were attacked.
- In response, the administration imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 from Pir Bazar to Patrapada.

Section 144 of CrPC

General Prohibitions Specific Restrictions Additional Powers Duration of Section 144 Orders

- **Executive Magistrate's Power**: Section 144 authorizes the Executive Magistrate of any state or territory to issue orders prohibiting the assembly of four or more people in an area.
- **Unlawful Assembly**: Anyone participating in such an 'unlawful assembly' can be charged with rioting.
- **Urgent Situations**: The section is invoked in cases of urgent nuisance or potential danger that could harm human life or property.

General Prohibitions

- **Public Gatherings**: Public gatherings are generally prohibited under Section 144.
- **Historical Use**: It has been used to prevent protests that might lead to unrest or riots.
- **Executive Powers**: The local executive magistrate can issue orders under Section 144 during emergencies.

Specific Restrictions

- **Weapons Ban**: Carrying weapons in the area where Section 144 is imposed is restricted, and violators can be detained.
- **Punishment**: The maximum punishment for violating this is three years in prison.

Section 144: What it Says and What it Means

3 Such orders are issued for two months at a time and powers are supposed to be used in cases of urgency and when a quick response is needed

4 The Supreme Court has ruled that section 144, if used appropriately, is not unconstitutional. Powers are supposed to be used in an emergency

1 Usually seen as a law to ban protests in a certain area, the ambit of section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code is actually much wider

2 First introduced in 1861, the law gives powers to a magistrate to order a person to abstain from an act, which could obstruct or cause annoyance or injury to any person "lawfully employed", or pose a "danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquillity"

COLONIAL ERA LAWS VS NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

Offence	Old Section	New Section
Punishment for Murder:	302	101
Cheating	420	318
Sedition	124-A	152
Criminal Conspiracy	120 B	61 (1) and 61 (2)
Waging War Against Govt	121	147
Unlawful Assembly	141-144	187-189(5)
Rioting	146	191
Causing Death by Negligence	304 A	106
Dowry Death	304 B	80
Attempt to Murder	307	109
Assault	351	130
Stalking	354 D	78
Kidnapping	359	137
Abduction	362	138
Rape	375	63
Gangrape	376 D	70
Defamation	499	356

- **Public Movement**: Orders typically prohibit public movement and mandate the closure of educational institutions.
- **Public Meetings**: There is a complete ban on public meetings or rallies during the enforcement period.
- Obstruction of Law Enforcement: Obstructing law enforcement from dispersing an unlawful assembly is punishable.

Additional Powers
- **Internet Access**: Authorities can block internet access under Section 144.
- **Event Restrictions**: Events otherwise allowed are prohibited during the period of the order.

Duration of Section 144 Orders
- **Initial Validity**: Orders under Section 144 are valid for up to two months.
- **Extension**: The state government can extend the order for another two months, up to a maximum of six months.
- **Withdrawal:** The order can be withdrawn at any time if the situation normalizes.

OBJECTS THAT MAKE AN ASSEMBLY UNLAWFUL

1. Intimidate the Government by use of Criminal Force
2. Resist the execution of law or legal process
3. Commit offences like mischief, criminal trespass
4. Possess or dispossess any property by use of criminal force
5. Use criminal force to compel a person to do an illegal act

Pro Tem Speaker

Context: Bhartruhari Mahtab appointed pro tem Speaker of Lok Sabha

Key Highlights
- President Droupadi Murmu has appointed Bhartruhari Mahtab, a seven-time MP from Cuttack, as the pro tem Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha.
- Opposition leaders criticized the Narendra Modi government for not following the tradition of appointing the senior-most member, eight-term MP Kodikunnil Suresh of the Congress, to this role.

About Speaker Pro Tem
- **Appointment**: The Speaker Pro Tem is appointed by the President under Article 95(1) of the Constitution to perform the duties of the Speaker until a new Speaker is elected.
- **Meaning**: 'Pro-tem' is a Latin term that means "for the time being."

Role and Responsibilities

Presiding Over Sessions	→	Oath Administration	→	Conducting Elections	→	Ceasing of Role

- **Presiding Over Sessions**: The Pro Tem Speaker presides over the sittings of the newly elected house. Usually, the senior-most member of the house is chosen for this role.
- **Oath Administration**: The Pro Tem Speaker administers the oath of office to the newly elected MPs during the first sitting of the Lok Sabha.
- **Conducting Elections**: They conduct the election for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker and also oversee the floor test.
- **Ceasing of Role**: The office of the Speaker Pro Tem ceases to exist once the new Speaker is elected by the House.
  - o Duties of the Pro Tem Speaker:
    - ▪ Initial Sitting: Presides over the first sitting of the Lok Sabha.

- Oath Ceremony: Administers the oath of office to newly elected MPs.
- Election Facilitation: Conducts the vote for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker and administers the floor test.

EC Begins Work on Polls In J&K And Three States

Context: The Election Commission (EC) has kicked off preparations for holding Assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Jammu and Kashmir by updating electoral rolls in these States.

Key Highlights

- Historic First: This will be the first Assembly election since the abrogation of Article 370 and the division of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.
- Current Terms Ending
  - Haryana: November 3
  - Maharashtra: November 26
  - Jharkhand: January 5, 2025
- Polls Requirement: Elections must be conducted before the end of these terms.
- Jammu and Kashmir: Elections are also needed to form a new House after delimitation of constituencies.

What is the Election Commission of India?

| Autonomous Authority | Established | Headquarter | Scope | Exclusions |

- **Autonomous Authority**: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is responsible for managing Union and State election processes.
- **Established**: January 25, 1950 (celebrated as National Voters' Day).
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- **Scope**: Administers elections for Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, and State Legislative Assemblies, as well as the offices of the President and Vice President.
- **Exclusion**s: Does not manage elections for panchayats and municipalities; these are handled by separate State Election Commissions.

Constitutional Provisions

Article	Description
Part XV (Article 324-329)	Governs elections and establishes the Election Commission.
Article 324	Grants the ECI control over election administration.
Article 325	Ensures no discrimination in electoral rolls based on religion, race, caste, or sex.
Article 326	Mandates elections based on adult suffrage.
Article 327	Empowers Parliament to legislate on election matters.
Article 328	Allows state legislatures to make election-related provisions.

Article 329	Restricts court interference in electoral matters.

Structure of ECI
- **Evolution**: Initially had one election commissioner; became a multi-member body after the Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989.
- **Current Composition**: Consists of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two Election Commissioners (ECs).
- **State Level Support**: Chief Electoral Officers assist at the state level.

Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners
- **Appointment**: The President appoints the CEC and ECs according to the CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.
- **Tenure**: Fixed at six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier.
- **Salary & Service Conditions**: Equivalent to that of the Cabinet Secretary (previously equivalent to a Supreme Court Judge under the 1991 Act).

Removal
- **Resignation/Removal**: Commissioners can resign or be removed before their term ends.
- **CEC Removal**: Requires a process similar to the removal of a Supreme Court judge by Parliament.
- **EC Removal**: Can only be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.

Limitations
- **Qualifications**: No specific qualifications (legal, educational, administrative, or judicial) are prescribed.
- **Term**: The term of office is not specified in the Constitution.
- **Post-Retirement**: Retiring commissioners are not barred from further appointments by the government.

Election Commission of India (ECI)

Established on *January 25, 1950*
As a *constitutional body*
Provided for under Article 324
In Part XV of the Indian constitution

- *Article 324* vests the power of superintendence, direction and control of all the *elections to Parliament, State Legislative Assemblies* and to the offices of *President* and *Vice-President* in the *Election Commission of India.*

Composition
- As per *Article 324* it shall consist of the *Chief Election Commissioner and such number of other Election Commissioners as the President may from time-to-time fix.*
  - After the *Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989*, it has been made a *multi-member body.*
  - At present, the commission consists of *one Chief Election Commissioner* and two *Election Commissioners.*

Appointment and Service Conditions
Subject to the provisions of any Parliamentary law:
- The Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners are *appointed by the President.*
- The *conditions of service* and *tenure of office* of the Election Commissioners *is determined by the President* by rule.
  - *Fixed tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years,* whichever is earlier.
  - *Status, salary* and *perks* as available to *Judges of the Supreme Court of India.*
  - The conditions of service *shall not be varied* to their disadvantage after the appointment.

Patent Filings Credit Bharat Biotech As 'Inventor' Of Covaxin, Omit ICMR

Context: Health Ministry had claimed that the IP rights of the vaccine were 'jointly owned' by ICMR and Bharat Biotech.

Key Highlights
- India's first indigenously developed coronavirus vaccine, Covaxin, was a collaborative effort between the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) based in Hyderabad. Both organizations share the intellectual property (IP) rights to the vaccine, as per public records.

- patent filings by BBIL in India, the United States, and Europe credit only BBIL scientists and personnel as the inventors, with no mention of ICMR scientists.

Attribute	Covishield	Covaxin
Description	Covishield is the name given to the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine candidate, technically referred to as AZD1222 or ChAdOx 1 nCoV19.	Covaxin is India's only indigenous Covid-19 vaccine.
Produced By	- Developed by the University of Oxford in collaboration with Swedish-British drugmaker AstraZeneca. - Serum Institute of India (SII) manufactures it in India.	- Developed by Bharat Biotech, Hyderabad, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology, Pune.
Constituents and Action	- Based on a weakened version of a common cold virus (adenovirus) found in chimpanzees. - Contains genetic material of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein, which helps the virus bind with human cells. - The body's immune system recognizes this protein as a threat and builds antibodies against it.	- An inactivated vaccine developed by killing the live microorganisms that cause the disease. - Destroys the pathogen's ability to replicate while keeping it intact for the immune system to recognize and respond. - Targets more than just the spike protein. - Aims to develop an immune response to the nucleocapsid protein (the shell of the virus that encloses its genetic material).
Significance	- Triggered an immune response in humans against the novel coronavirus in early trials. - Considered one of the global frontrunners for the Covid-19 vaccine.	- Aims to target multiple proteins of the virus, potentially offering a broader immune response.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), based in New Delhi, is the apex body in India for the formulation, coordination, and promotion of biomedical research. It is one of the oldest medical research bodies in the world.

Organisational Structure of ICMR

- The Governing Body of ICMR is presided over by the Union Health Minister.
- Assisted in scientific and technical matters by a Scientific Advisory Board comprising eminent experts in various biomedical disciplines.
- Research is conducted through the Council's 32 Permanent Research Institutes/Centres, which are mission-oriented national institutes located across India.

History

- In 1911, the Government of India established the Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) to sponsor and coordinate medical research in the country.
- After independence, it was redesignated as the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) in 1949.

Mandate and Vision

- Formulate, coordinate, and promote biomedical research in India.
- Conduct, coordinate, and implement medical research for societal benefit.
- Translate medical innovations into products/processes and integrate them into the public health system.
- Translating Research into Action for Improving the Health of the Population.

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024

Context: The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 that has provision for up to five years' imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹1 crore for malpractices and organised cheating in government recruitment exams was notified by the Union government to come into effect.

What is Public Examinations (Prevention Of Unfair Means) Act 2024?
- This Act was passed by the Indian Parliament in February 2024.
- It aims to prevent unfair practices in public examinations to ensure greater transparency, fairness, and credibility in the examination system.

Central Legislation
- The Act is the first Central Government legislation addressing unfair practices in public examinations.
- It has a broad scope, allowing for the inclusion of other agencies through government notifications.
- Consideration for Candidates' Welfare

Bona Fide Candidates
- Bona fide candidates of public examinations are excluded from the Act's purview.
- Defaulting candidates will not be punished under the Act; instead, appropriate action will be taken by the concerned public examination authority.

Features of the Act

Features	Description
Definition of Unfair Means	**Section 3:** Lists at least 15 actions that constitute unfair means in public examinations for monetary or wrongful gain, including:
	- Leakage of question papers or answer keys and colluding in such leaks.
	- Unauthorized access to question papers or Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) response sheets.
	- Tampering with answer sheets, including OMR sheets.
	- Unauthorized persons providing solutions during exams.
	- Assisting candidates indirectly or directly.
	- Tampering with documents used for shortlisting or ranking candidates.
	- Tampering with computer systems or networks.
	- Creating fake websites.
	- Conducting fake exams and issuing fake admit cards or offer letters for cheating or monetary gain.
Inclusive and Comprehensive	**Structure of the Act:** The Act comprises 19 sections across six chapters, addressing all aspects of preventing unfair means in public examinations.
	- It includes comprehensive definitions covering various unfair practices such as question paper leaks, assistance to candidates, security violations, and tampering with computer systems.
	- It also addresses details like manipulation in seating arrangements.
Punishments	**Section 9:** States that all offences shall be cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable.
	- This means an arrest can be made without a warrant, and bail will not be a matter of right; rather, a magistrate will determine whether the accused is fit to be released on bail.
Definition of Public Examination	**Section 2(k):** Defines a public examination as any examination conducted by a public examination authority listed in the Act's Schedule or any other authority designated by the Central Government through notification.
	- The central government can add new authorities to the schedule through notification as and when required.

Power to Refer Investigation to a Central Agency	**Investigation Referral:** The Act empowers the Central Government to refer any case under the Act to a Central Investigating Agency to ensure the expeditious and cautious disposal of matters.
Designation of a Public Servant	**Accountability:** The Act designates the officials of public examination authorities as public servants, ensuring accountability and transparency in the process.
	- Appropriate administrative action can be taken against defaulting public servants following the service rules and procedures of the authority.
Status of Organized Crime	**Section 11:** Addresses organized crimes, imposing punishments ranging from 5 to 10 years and fines up to 1 crore rupees.
	- If any institution is involved in the commission of an organized crime, its property will be subject to attachment and forfeiture by the government.

UAPA Tribunal Confirms Ban On Tehreek-e-Hurriyat

Context: A tribunal set up under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) confirmed the Centre's decision to impose a five-year ban on the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Highlights
- **Secessionist Activities**: The tribunal determined that two organizations were engaging in secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, supported by external forces, to merge the region with Pakistan and establish Islamic rule in the Union Territory.
- **Support for Terrorist Organizations**: It confirmed the government's assertion that these groups were aiding Pakistan-based terrorist organizations, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen, in conducting militant operations in the valley.

Government Actions

Organization	Action Taken	Reason
Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam Faction)	Banned for 5 years (from Dec 27, 2023)	Involvement in anti-national and secessionist activities. Objective to merge J&K with Pakistan.
Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH)	Banned for 5 years (from Dec 31, 2023)	Promoting terrorism and anti-India propaganda, raising funds for unlawful activities.

Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam Faction)
- **Ban Imposed**: On December 27, 2023, the government banned the Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) for five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) due to its involvement in anti-national and secessionist activities.
- **Leadership**: Masarat Alam Bhat, known for his anti-India and pro-Pakistan stance, became the leader of the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference after Syed Ali Shah Geelani's death.
- **Objectives**: The group aims to secure freedom for Jammu and Kashmir from India, merge it with Pakistan, and establish Islamic rule.

Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH)
- **Ban Imposed**: Founded by the late separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat was banned for five years on December 31, 2023, for promoting terrorism and anti-India propaganda in Jammu and Kashmir.

● **Fundraising and Activities**: The Union Home Ministry stated that TeH's leaders and members raised funds from various sources, including Pakistan and its proxy organizations, to support terrorist activities and instigate violence, including stone-pelting against security forces.
● **Disrespect for Constitutional Authority**: The Ministry emphasized that TeH's activities showed a lack of respect for the constitutional authority and setup of India, and its actions were detrimental to the country's integrity, sovereignty, security, and communal harmony.

Fast Track Immigration Trusted Traveller Programme (FTI-TTP)

Context: Programme to fast-track traveller immigration launched at IGI airport.

Key Highlights
● The initiative, designed for faster, smoother and safer immigration clearance, is likely to ease congestion at immigration counters. Other than New Delhi, the initiative was launched in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi and Ahmedabad airports in the first phase.
● The Union Home Ministry said the programme would run on e-gates or automated border gates that would minimise human intervention in the immigration clearance process and would be implemented in two phases. In the first phase, Indian citizens and OCI cardholders will be covered, and foreign travellers will be included in the second phase.
● The FTI-TTP will be implemented through an online portal and the Bureau of Immigration will be the nodal agency. To enroll in the scheme, the applicant has to register online on the portal with details and documents.
● Under the process, as soon as the registered passenger reaches the e-gate, he/she will scan his/her boarding pass issued by the airlines at the e-gates to get the details of his/her flight.
● The passport will be scanned and biometrics of the passenger will be authenticated at the e-gates. Once the identity of the passenger is established and biometric authentication is done, the e-gate will open and immigration clearance will be deemed to have been granted.

SC Rejects Haryana's Plea on Extra Marks Policy

Context: The Supreme Court upheld a Punjab and Haryana High Court order quashing the Haryana government's policy of granting 5% additional marks to its residents in recruitment exams based on "socio-economic" criteria.

First Phase	The program will operate on e-gates or automated border gates to minimize human intervention. Indian citizens and OCI cardholders will be covered in this phase.
Second Phase	Foreign travelers will be included.

Key Highlights
● The initiative is designed to facilitate faster, smoother, and safer immigration clearance, aiming to reduce congestion at immigration counters.
● Initially, it has been launched at airports in New Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, and Ahmedabad.

Implementation Phases
Enrollment Process
● The FTI-TTP will be managed through an online portal by the Bureau of Immigration.
● Applicants must register online with their details and documents.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Maharashtra | Private sector to employ 80% domiciled workers (Maha residents for more than 15 years); **Status:** Planned, not implemented	for state govt jobs; **Status:** 70% quota applied, 'children of MP' at planning stage
Haryana | Ordinance mandating 75% quota for locals in private sector jobs; **Status:** Planned, not implemented	**Karnataka |** Pvt industries to give priority to Kannadigas in clerical and shop-floor jobs; **Status:** Rules amended, follow-up law not passed yet
Madhya Pradesh | 70% quota in pvt sector jobs for locals; only 'children of MP' to be eligible	**Andhra Pradesh |** Up to 75% quota for locals in govt and pvt sector; **Status:** Law passed, yet to be implemented

- Immigration Clearance Process
- Upon reaching the e-gate, registered passengers will scan their boarding passes.
- Their passports will be scanned, and their biometrics will be authenticated.
- Once the passenger's identity is confirmed and biometrics are authenticated, the e-gate will open, granting immigration clearance.

Supreme Court Rejects Haryana's Extra Marks Policy
The Supreme Court upheld the Punjab and Haryana High Court's decision to quash Haryana's policy of granting 5% additional marks to its residents in recruitment exams based on "socio-economic" criteria.
- The Haryana Staff Selection Commission's plea to challenge the High Court's decision was denied, and new exams were ordered.
- The "socio-economic" criteria provided extra marks to Haryana residents under certain conditions:
- No family members as permanent government employees.
- Total annual family income below Rs 1.8 lakh.

Domicile Reservation
- **Article 16(2):** Prohibits discrimination in employment based on religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, or residence.
- **Article 16(4):** Allows the state to reserve appointments for any backward class not adequately represented in state services.
- **Article 19(1)(g):** Grants citizens the right to practice any profession or engage in any occupation, trade, or business.
- State-imposed limitations can infringe on this right.

High Court's Decision
- The High Court stated that the concept of constitutional morality was violated by giving secondary status to non-Haryana residents and curtailing their fundamental right to earn a livelihood.
- Andhra Pradesh High Court Observation
- The Andhra Pradesh High Court observed that the state's Bill for providing domicile-based reservation, passed in 2019, "may be unconstitutional," but has yet to hear the case on merits.

Keralam
Context: Kerala House passes resolution to rename the State 'Keralam'

Key Highlights
- **Resolution**: The state resolution called for invoking Article 3 of the Constitution to implement this change in the First Schedule.
- **Previous Attempt**: This resolution is similar to an attempt made last year, which was returned by the Centre due to procedural issues.
- **Initial Proposal**: Initially, the state aimed to change the name across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution to 'Keralam'.

Few notable Indian cities that changed their names

NEW NAMES FOR OLD

New Names — Old Names — Year

2016 GURUGRAM Gurgaon
1948 KANPUR Cawnpore
2018 PRAYAGRAJ Allahabad
1974 VADODARA Baroda
2001 KOLKATA Calcutta
1995 MUMBAI Bombay
1996 KOCHI Cochin
1996 CHENNAI Madras
2014 VIJAPURA Bijapur
2014 BELAGAVI Belgaum
2014 KALABURAGI Gulbarga
2006 PUDUCHERRY Pondicherry
2014 MANGALURU Mangalore
2014* BENGALURU Bangalore
2014 HUBBALLI Hubli
2014 CHIKKAMAGALURU
2014 MYSURU
1991 THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

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- **Advice from Home Ministry**: Following advice from the Union Home Ministry, the focus shifted to amending only the First Schedule, leading to a revised resolution passed in 2023.
- **Official Name**: Mr. Vijayan stated that although 'Keralam' is the Malayalam name of the state, it is officially recorded as Kerala. The goal is to align the official name with the Malayalam pronunciation.

Process to Rename a State
- **Parliament's Power**: The Parliament has the authority to change the name of a state.
- **Article 3**: The Constitution of India grants Parliament the power to alter the name of a state under Article 3, which outlines the procedure to change the area, boundaries, or name of a state.

Proposal
- **Initiation**: The process can be initiated by either Parliament or the state assembly.
- **Resolution**: The state legislature sends a proposal in the form of a resolution to the Central government.
- **Presidential Recommendation**: In Parliament, the bill cannot be introduced without a recommendation from the President.

Procedure
- **State Legislation**: The legislation of the states affected by such changes must be presented with the bill.
- This provision to send a bill to the state legislature was added in the 5th Amendment Act, 1955.
- State Legislature Views: The State Legislature may present its views on the bill within the prescribed time period.
- These views are not binding on the President or Parliament. Parliament can dismiss the opinion of the state legislature if it chooses.
- **Parliament Deliberation**: After receiving the suggestions from the State Legislative Assembly or after the expiration of the time period, the bill goes back to Parliament for further deliberation.

Passing of the Bill
- **Presidential Approval**: The bill is sent to the President for approval. Once approved, it becomes law and the name of the state is officially modified.

Steps	Description
Initiation	Proposal initiated by either Parliament or state assembly.
Resolution	State legislature sends a proposal to the Central government.
Presidential Recommendation	Bill cannot be introduced in Parliament without the President's recommendation.
State Legislation	Bill presented to the affected state's legislation for views.
State Legislature Views	Views of the State Legislature are non-binding.
Parliament Deliberation	Bill goes back to Parliament after receiving suggestions or expiration of the time period.
Presidential Approval	Bill sent to the President for approval; once approved, it becomes law.

Other Institutions Involved

No Objection Certificates (NOCs): NOCs are required from several agencies, including:

Ministry of Railways	Intelligence Bureau	Department of Posts	Survey of India	Registrar General of India

Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA): Once the MHA receives the NOCs from these institutions, it gives its consent to the resolution passed by the state.

Maternity Leave for Parents of Child Born Through Surrogacy

Context: The Centre has notified amended rules to allow women government employees to take 180 days of maternity leave in case they have children through surrogacy.

Key Highlights

The government has updated the Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972, to include leave provisions for parents involved in surrogacy:

- Commissioning Mother: The intending mother of a child born through surrogacy is eligible for childcare leave.
- Commissioning Father: The intending father is eligible for 15 days of paternity leave.

Maternity and Paternity Leave for Surrogacy

Both the surrogate mother and the commissioning mother, if they have less than two surviving children, are entitled to 180 days of maternity leave if they are government employees.

Paternity Leave

- The commissioning father, if he is a government employee with less than two surviving children, can take 15 days of paternity leave within six months from the date of the child's birth.
- Existing Leave Rules
- Female government employees and single male government employees are allowed up to 730 days of childcare leave throughout their service.

Definitions

- Surrogate Mother: The woman who bears the child on behalf of the commissioning mother.
- Commissioning Father: The intending father of the child born through surrogacy, as clarified by the Personnel Ministry in the amended rules.
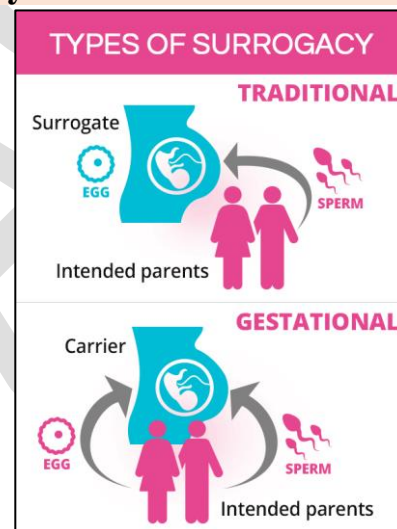
With Dummy Firs, Pocket Guides, Police Get Ready to Switch to New Criminal Laws

Context: Ahead of the implementation of the new criminal laws from July 1, at least 23 modifications have been made to the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network Systems (CCTNS), an online platform used by more than 16,000 police stations across the country to register first information reports.

Key Highlights

- **Registration of FIRs**: With the new laws coming into force, FIRs will now be registered under Section 173 of the Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), replacing Section 154 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).
- **Replacement of Legal Codes**
  - The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaces the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
  - The Bharatiya Sakshya (BS) replaces the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
  - The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.
- **Police Training and Implementation**
  - The Delhi Police is leading the training and educational modules for the new laws.
  - The goal is to sensitize all 90,000 police personnel by August.
- **Changes in Crimes and Penalties**
  - 20 new crimes have been added.
  - The period of imprisonment has been increased for 33 offences.
  - Community service penalties have been introduced for six crimes.
  - A mandatory minimum punishment has been introduced in 23 crimes.

Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems (CCTNS)

- Conceptualized by the Ministry of Home Affairs under the National e-Governance Plan of India.
- Implemented as a "Mission Mode Project (MMP)" since 2009.
- Aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of policing at the police station level nationwide.

Objectives of CCTNS

Citizen-Friendly Policing

Automate police station functions to make policing more transparent and citizen-friendly.

Improved Service Delivery

Use ICT to improve citizen-centric services, such as reporting and tracking complaints.

Support for Investigations

Provide tools, technology, and information for crime investigation and detection.

Enhanced Police Functioning

Improve law and order, traffic management, and other areas of police work.

Information Sharing

Facilitate interaction and information sharing among police stations, districts, state/UT headquarters, and other police agencies.

Better Management

Assist senior police officers in managing the police force effectively.

Case Tracking

Keep track of case progress, including court proceedings.

Reduce Redundancy

Minimize manual and redundant record-keeping.

Implementation
- Collaboration between State and Union Governments.
- Managed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

Key Facts	Details
Establishment	Established in 1986 as a repository of information on crime and criminals.
Ministry	Operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India.
Foundation	Based on recommendations from the Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981), and the Home Ministry Task Force.
Functions	Collects and analyzes crime data, aiding investigators in tracing crimes and criminals.
Headquarters	New Delhi
Central Finger Print Bureau	Acts as the national repository of all fingerprints in the country.
Publications	Compiles and publishes National Crime Statistics: Crime in India, Accidental Deaths & Suicides, and Prison Statistics.
Capacity Building	Assists States in IT, CCTNS, Finger Prints, Network Security, and Digital Forensics.

President flags NEET, mentions Emergency in Parliament speech

Context: In her first address to Parliament since the Lok Sabha election results were announced, President Droupadi Murmu asked MPs to rise above "partisan politics" with regard to the row over "paper leaks" in examinations for medical college admissions and government recruitment.

Key Highlights

The President's address to a joint sitting of both Houses typically outlines the government's agenda and anticipates the Union Budget.

- **Issues Raised by the President:** The President referred to the Emergency imposed by the Congress-led government as "the biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution."
- **Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs):** The President defended the use of EVMs in elections, countering Opposition demands for a return to paper ballots, and highlighted past issues of ballot box lootings.
- **North Eastern States:** The President emphasized the government's efforts to promote peace and prosperity in the northeastern states.
- **Economic Goals:** The President noted that the government, with a full majority, is focused on making India the world's third-largest economy.

About the President's Address

United Kingdom	United States	India
•The tradition of the monarch addressing Parliament began in the 16th century.	•President George Washington addressed Congress for the first time in 1790.	•The practice started after the Government of India Act, 1919. President Rajendra Prasad gave the first address to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on January 31, 1950.

Constitutional Provisions
- Article 87: The President addresses both Houses at the beginning of the first session after each general election and at the beginning of the first session each year.

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Procedure and Tradition
- **Speech Content**: There is no set format; the President's speech highlights the government's policy priorities and plans for the upcoming year.
- **Motion of Thanks**: After the address, both Houses move a motion to thank the President for the speech.
- **Deviation from the Text**: The President or Governor cannot refuse to deliver the address but may deviate from the prepared text. While there have been no instances of a President doing so, some Governors have skipped or changed portions of their addresses.

Plea In Supreme Court Seeks Stay On Implementation Of Three New Criminal Laws

Context: A petition was moved in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking a stay on the implementation and operation of three new criminal laws, Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, scheduled to come into effect from July 1.

Key Highlights
- **Request for Expert Committee**: The petition requested the court to immediately form an expert committee to evaluate the viability of the three new laws that overhaul the criminal procedure and justice system. These laws replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC), and the Indian Evidence Act.
- **Concerns Raised in the Petition**
  - **Lack of Debate**: The petition highlighted that these laws were passed without detailed debate or effective discussion in Parliament, as many Opposition Members were suspended.
  - **Ambiguity and Harsh Measures**: It argued that the new laws were unclear, anti-bail, and even "inhumane" in certain aspects, such as the reintroduction of handcuffs during arrests and granting extensive powers to the police.
- **Specific Issues with the New Laws**
  - **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**: This law, which replaces the IPC, does not define terms like "gang" and "mobile organised crime groups."
  - **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha (Second) Sanhita**: This law, which replaces the Cr.PC, allows 15 days of police custody, which can be taken all at once or in a staggered manner.
  - **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam**: This law, which replaces the Evidence Act, classifies electronic records as primary evidence.

Features	Existing Laws (IPC, CrPC, IEA)	New Criminal Laws: (BNS, BNSS, BSB)	Key Changes in New Criminal Laws
Scope of Offences	IPC defines various crimes.	BNS aims to simplify and clarify offences, categorising them into minor, major, and heinous.	Potential for clearer sentencing guidelines and easier understanding of crimes.
Investigation & Trial Procedures	CrPC outlines procedures for investigation, trial, and appeals.	BNSS focuses on speedy trials, witness protection, and victim assistance.	Aims to reduce delays, improve witness protection, and offer a victim-centric approach.
Evidence Admissibility	IEA determines what evidence is admissible in court.	BSB proposes stricter standards for electronic evidence and introduces "judicial discretion" for certain evidence.	Potential for tighter control over electronic evidence and more flexible handling of sensitive information

Punishment & Sentencing	IPC prescribes punishments for various offences.	BNS introduces tiered sentencing based on offence severity and mitigating factors.	Potentially fairer sentencing and increased focus on rehabilitation for minor offences
Focus on Rights & Safeguards	All laws contain provisions for due process and fundamental rights.	BNS and BNSS emphasise legal aid, community policing, and restorative justice mechanisms.	Potential for better access to legal representation, community involvement in crime prevention, and victim reparation.
Technology Integration	Existing laws lack comprehensive provisions for technology.	BNS and BSB address cybercrimes, digital forensics, and electronic evidence handling.	Aims to better address modern forms of crime and utilise technology for efficient investigations.

Rajya Sabha Decides To Revoke Suspension Of AAP MP

Context: Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar announced the revocation of suspension of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) member Sanjay Singh.

Key Highlights
- Mr. Singh was suspended from the House on July 24, 2023, until the Committee of Privileges submitted its findings.
- The committee found 12 Opposition MPs, including Mr. Singh, guilty of misconduct for disrupting House proceedings in August and warned them against future misconduct.
- The report stated that the committee accepted Mr. Singh's unconditional apology and recommended lifting his suspension, deeming the punishment he had already served sufficient.

> **Rules of Procedure**
> The Speaker uses Rules 373, 374, and 374A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business to deal with MPs who are behaving badly.

House Proceedings
- The House convened after President Droupadi Murmu addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.
- A Motion of Thanks for the President's address will be passed after a discussion.

Suspension of MPs in Rajya Sabha
- Rule 255: Withdrawal of Member
- Rule 255: The Chairman may order any member whose conduct is deemed grossly disorderly to withdraw from the Council immediately. The member must leave and remain absent for the rest of the day's meeting.

Procedure for Suspension of Rajya Sabha MPs
- The Chairman can name a member who disrespects the Chair's authority or abuses Council rules by persistently obstructing business.
- The House can then pass a motion to suspend the member for the remainder of the session.
- The suspension can be terminated by another motion from the House.

> **Suspension in past**
> In 1989, 63 MPs were suspended from Lok Sabha.
> In 2010, 7 MPs were suspended from Rajya Sabha for snatching the women's reservation bill from the minister.

Additional Rule in Lok Sabha
- In 2001, Lok Sabha rules were amended to give the Speaker an additional power.
- Rule 374A: Allows the Speaker to automatically suspend an MP for up to five days for disrupting House business.

Revocation of Suspension

Rajya Sabha	Lok Sabha
• The House can terminate the suspension by passing a motion. • This process is governed by Rules 202 and 266 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha).	• The Speaker can suspend a member, but lifting the suspension is not within her jurisdiction. • The House decides through a motion if it wishes to revoke the suspension.

T.N. Adopts Bill to Enhance Prison Term, Fine for Illicit Liquor Crimes

Context: The Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly adopted a Bill that makes punishment more stringent for offences pertaining to prohibited liquor such as denatured spirits and methanol.

Key Highlights

The Bill amending the Tamil Nadu Prohibition Act, 1937, was introduced in the House following the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy, which resulted in 65 deaths.

Key Provisions

- **Severe Penalties**: The Bill proposes life imprisonment along with a fine of at least ₹10 lakh for the accused.
- **Imprisonment Terms for Other Offences**: For certain other offences, the Bill sets a maximum term of seven years of rigorous imprisonment, with fines ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh.
- **Confiscation and Sealing**: It includes provisions for confiscating all movable assets used in committing the offences and sealing unlicensed places where liquor is consumed.

Provision	Details
Life Imprisonment and Fine	Proposes life imprisonment and a fine of not less than ₹10 lakh for the accused.
Other Offences	Sets a maximum of seven years of rigorous imprisonment and fines between ₹2 lakh and ₹3 lakh.
Confiscation and Sealing	Provides for the confiscation of movable assets used in offences and sealing of unlicensed liquor consumption places.

T.N. passes Bill to increase age limit of chief of SC/ST panel

Context: The Tamil Nadu Assembly approved an amendment to the State Commission for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Act, enhancing the age limit for the Chief of the Commission from 70 to 75 years.

Key Highlights

- **Bill for Utilising Experienced Judge**s: Minister for Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare, N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj, presented a Bill aimed at utilizing the services of experienced former High Court judges. M. Sinthanai Selvan of the VCK suggested including eminent persons from fields other than the judiciary for the post of chief of the panel.
- **Gender Equality in Land Reforms**: The House passed a Bill to amend the Land Reforms (Fixation of Ceiling on Land) Act to promote gender equality, granting unmarried women the same rights as unmarried men.
- **Urban Local Bodies Bills**: The House adopted two Bills related to urban local bodies, along with ten other Bills, before adjourning sine die.

What is the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSCs)?

- The NCSC is a Constitutional Body established to safeguard against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and to promote and protect their social, educational, economic, and cultural interests.

History of NCSC

- **Special Officer**: Initially, the Constitution provided for a Special Officer under Article 338, designated as the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **65th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1990**: This amendment replaced the one-member system with a multi-member National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).
- **89th Constitutional**
- **Amendment Act, 2003**: This amendment separated the National Commission for SC and ST into two distinct commissions:
  - National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) under Article 338.
  - National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) under Article 338A.

Powers

- **Article 338A**: It gives powers to the NCST to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs.
- NCST participates and advises in the planning process of socio-economic development of the STs
- NCST presents to the President reports upon the working of the safeguards.

Legal Provisions

Erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions (in 2004) namely:
- The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)
- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

Composition of NCSC

- **Structure**: The NCSC consists of a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and three additional Members.
- **Appointment**: These positions are appointed by the President, who also determines their conditions of service and tenure.

Powers of NCSC

- **Procedure Regulation**: The Commission has the authority to regulate its own procedure.
- **Civil Court Powers**: When investigating or inquiring into complaints, the Commission has powers equivalent to those of a civil court, including:
  - Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining them on oath.
  - Receiving evidence on affidavits.
  - Requisitioning any public record from any court or office.

Functions of NCSC

Investigation and Monitoring
- Investigate and monitor matters related to constitutional and legal safeguards for SCs.

Inquiries
- Inquire into specific complaints about the deprivation of SCs' rights and safeguards.

Advisory Role
- Advise on the planning process for the socio-economic development of SCs and evaluate their development progress.

Reporting
- Present annual reports and other reports to the President on the working of safeguards.

Recommendations
- Make recommendations for effective implementation of safeguards and other measures for SCs' protection, welfare, and socio-economic development.

Past Role
- Until 2018, the commission also handled matters related to other backward classes (OBCs) but was relieved from this responsibility by the 102nd Amendment Act, 2018.

- **Consultation**: The Central and state governments must consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the SCs.

Constitutional Provisions for the Upliftment of SCs

Article	Provision
Article 15	Prohibits discrimination based on caste, emphasizing protection and upliftment of SCs.
Article 17	Abolishes untouchability and prohibits its practice in any form, promoting equality and dignity for all.
Article 46	Directs the State to promote educational and economic interests of SCs and other weaker sections.
Article 243D (4)	Mandates reservation of seats for SCs in Panchayats in proportion to their population in the area.
Article 243T (4)	Ensures reservation of seats for SCs in Municipalities in proportion to their population in the area.
Article 330	Provides for reservation of seats for SCs in the Lok Sabha.
Article 332	Provides for reservation of seats for SCs in the legislative assemblies of the States.

Governance & Social Justice

Railways To Construct Canopy Bridges Across Track in Assam Gibbon Habitat

Context: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) to construct canopy bridges for India's only ape to move across a railway track bifurcating its prime habitat in eastern Assam.

Key Highlights
- **Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary**: Located in Jorhat district, this sanctuary spans 2,098.62 hectares.
- **Railway Track**: A 1.65-km-long track, which is set to be doubled and electrified, divides the sanctuary.
- **Canopy Bridges**: These bridges, designed by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in consultation with the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), will be constructed at specific points to enable the arboreal Hoolock gibbons to move between the two halves of the sanctuary.

HOOLOCK HOOLOCK
Western Hoolock Gibbon
ONLY APE IN INDIA
(along with the eastern hoolock gibbon)

POPULATION
5,000 animals globally, 2,600-4,450 in India

LIFESPAN
20-25 years in the wild, up to 44 years in captivity

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE
Northeast India (south of Brahmaputra), Bangladesh, and Myanmar

HABITAT
Continuous canopy, broadleaved, wet, evergreen, and semi-evergreen forests

PROTECTION STATUS
Endangered, on the IUCN Red List and on Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972

WEIGHT
6-7 kg

IN THE TREE TOPS
• Hoolock gibbons are arboreal (tree dwelling) and need an unbroken forest canopy to move around.
• Using long, slender arms, they swing from tree to tree (movement is called brachiation). Hoolocks can brachiate at speeds up to 55 kmph, covering up to six metres in just one swing.

FEATURES
Males are black, with a white unibrow. Females are tan, with some brown, grey, and yellowish coloration. They have black faces with white unibrows.

FEED ON
Mainly fruits. Also some leaves, shoots, and flowers.

FAMILY LIFE
Form monogamous pairs. Females give birth to one offspring every 2-3 years, and it remains within the family group for 7-10 years.
Gestation: about 7 months
Sexual maturity: 8-9 years

THREATS
Western hoolock gibbons are among the 25 most endangered primate species in the world. Numbers have declined by 90% since the 1990s.
BIGGEST THREATS ARE:
• Destruction, degradation and fragmentation of habitat for agriculture
• Logging
• Fuel wood collection
• Development projects – mines, roads, and railways
• Poaching for food and trade

WHO HELPS PROTECT THEM?
• Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary is the first protected area in India named after a primate species.
• People Resource and Conservation Foundation
• Gibbon Conservation Centre (ex situ conservation)
• WWF India

About Hoolock Gibbon
- **Smallest and Fastest Apes**: Gibbons are the smallest and fastest of all apes, residing in tropical and subtropical forests of Southeast Asia.
- **Species**: The hoolock gibbon is one of 20 gibbon species globally.

Distribution
- **Southeast Asia**: Found in India, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and southern China.
- **India**: The only ape species in India, found in Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura, south of the Brahmaputra River.
- **Largest Concentration**: Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Assam hosts the largest population of hoolock gibbons.

Types of Hoolock Gibbon
- **Eastern Hoolock Gibbon (Hoolock leuconedys)**: Found in specific regions of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Western Hoolock Gibbon (Hoolock hoolock)**: Distributed throughout the northeast of India.

Physical Features
- **Size**: Males and females are about the same size
- **Males:** Black with distinctive white brows.
- **Females**: Grey-brown fur, darker at the chest and neck.
- Both sexes have white rings around their eyes and mouths, giving them a mask-like appearance.

Behavior
- **Diurnal and Arboreal**: Active during the day and live in trees, moving by brachiating (swinging with their long arms).
- **Monogamous**: Have the same partner for life.
- **Family Structure**: Live in small family groups consisting of males, females, and their young.
- **Communication**: Use vocalizations to communicate within and outside the family group.
- **Intelligence**: Highly intelligent with distinct personalities and strong family bonds.
- **Lifespan**: 25 years.

Conservation Status
- **IUCN Red List**
  - **Eastern Hoolock Gibbon**: Vulnerable.
  - **Western Hoolock Gibbon**: Endangered.
  - **Wildlife Protection Act, India (1972)**: Both species are listed on Schedule I, providing them the highest level of protection.

Remove 100% Fruit Juice Claim from Label and Ads, Says FSSAI

Context: The FSSAI has issued a directive mandating all food business operators to remove any claim of "100% fruit juice" from the labels and advertisements of reconstituted fruit juices.

Key Highlights
The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has determined that, according to the Food Safety and Standards (Advertising and Claims) Regulations, 2018, there is no provision for making a "100%" claim. Such claims are considered misleading, especially when the main ingredient of the product is water and the primary ingredient is present only in limited quantities.

About FSSAI

Autonomous Body	Legislation	Vision	Mission

- **Autonomous Body**: FSSAI is an independent organization established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- **Legislation**: It was founded under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, a comprehensive statute related to food safety and regulation in India.
- **Vision:** To build a new India where citizens have access to safe and nutritious food, preventing diseases and leading healthy, happy lives.
- **Mission**: To set globally benchmarked food standards, ensure food businesses adhere to these standards, adopt good manufacturing and hygiene practices, and enable citizens to access safe and appropriate food.

Functions of FSSAI

Public Health Protection	Standards and Guidelines	Food License Requirement	Regulation Compliance	Laboratory Accreditation	Food Certification	Enforcement Systems

- **Public Health Protection**: FSSAI is tasked with protecting and promoting public health by regulating and supervising food safety.
- **Standards and Guidelines**: It establishes standards and guidelines for food products, licensing, registration, and accreditation for food business operators.
- **Food License Requirement**: Any entity selling or importing food in India must have a food license issued by FSSAI.
- **Regulation Compliance**: FSSAI directly monitors compliance with food regulations, especially for food imports into India. Officers conduct food import controls and ensure products do not contain harmful ingredients by sending samples to accredited laboratories for testing.
- **Laboratory Accreditation**: FSSAI is responsible for accrediting food testing laboratories throughout India.
- **Food Certification**: It oversees the food certification process in India.
- **Enforcement Systems**: FSSAI specifies systems for enforcing standards, accrediting certification systems, and certifying food safety management systems for food businesses.

Aspect	Details
Autonomous Body	Established under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
Legislation	Founded under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
Vision	Citizens have safe and nutritious food, prevent diseases, and lead a healthy and happy life.
Mission	Set globally benchmarked standards, ensure adherence, adopt good practices, provide safe food.
Public Health Protection	Regulate and supervise food safety.
Standards and Guidelines	Establish standards and guidelines, license, register, and accredit food business operators.
Food License Requirement	Necessary for any entity selling or importing food in India.
Regulation Compliance	Monitor food regulations compliance, especially for imports.
Laboratory Accreditation	Responsible for accrediting food testing laboratories.
Food Certification	Oversees the food certification process in India.
Enforcement Systems	Specifies systems for enforcing standards and accrediting certification systems.

Ensure hospitals strictly follow fire-safety norms: Centre to States, Union Territories

Context: Following the recent fires at healthcare establishments in India, the Union Health Ministry held a meeting with officials of the States and Union Territories, and healthcare organisations, directing them to understand the potential risks associated with fire hazards in hospitals.

Key Highlights

- **Ministry's Directive**: The Ministry emphasized the need for strict fire prevention, detection, and response protocols.
- **Seasonal Concerns**: Rising summer temperatures increase the risk of hospital fires, prompting States and Union Territories to conduct regular fire risk assessment drills.
- **Checklist**: The Ministry shared a "Prevention and Maintenance of Fire Safety" checklist for health facilities to complete.

Model Code for Fire Safety in India

- **Accident Statistics**: The Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) report by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) recorded 7,435 deaths in over 7,500 fire accidents in 2022.
- **Historical Incidents**: Major tragedies like the Uphaar Cinema fire in 1997 and the Kumbakonam fire in 2004 highlight the ongoing issue of fire safety.

National Building Code (NBC)

Overview	Contents	Part 4	State Mandate
• The National Building Code (NBC) is India's central standard for fire safety, published by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) in 1970 and last updated in 2016.	• The NBC provides detailed guidelines on construction requirements, maintenance, and fire safety in buildings.	• Specific fire safety instructions are detailed in Part 4 of the NBC.	• States must incorporate NBC guidelines into their local building bylaws as fire services are a state subject, listed as a municipal function in the 12th Schedule of the Constitution.

Model Building Bye Laws 2016

- Guidance: Issued by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs to help states and Union Territories frame their building bylaws.
- Fire Safety Norms: These laws include norms for fire protection and safety requirements.

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Guidelines

The NDMA has established guidelines for fire safety in homes, schools, and hospitals.	Maintaining minimum open safety spaces	Protected exit mechanisms	Dedicated staircases	Crucial evacuation drills

Category	Details
Demarcation	The NBC categorizes buildings into fire zones

Fire Zones	Residential, educational, and institutional buildings are kept separate from industrial and hazardous structures.
Materials	Mandates the use of non-combustible materials for construction, including internal walls of staircase enclosures, with a minimum 120-minute fire resistance rating.
Building Requirements	Specifies maximum height, floor area ratio, open spaces, and wall/floor openings to prevent fire spread.
Electrical Installations	- Requires flame-retardant wiring and cabling. - High, medium, and low voltage wiring must be run in separate shafts/conduits and sealed with fire-stop materials. - Metallic items like steel structural members must be properly bonded to the earthing system.
Emergency Power	Specifies an emergency power-supplying distribution system, including: - Exit signage - Emergency lighting - Fire alarm systems - Public address systems for emergencies
Evacuation	Details requirements for exit access, exits, escape lighting, and exit signage to ensure safe evacuation.
Recommended Technologies	- Automatic fire detection - Down-comer pipelines -Dry riser pipelines - Automatic sprinklers - Water sprays

Health, Defence Ministries to Set Up Tele MANAS Cell

Context: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Ministries of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and Defence to facilitate collaboration between them in operating a special cell of Tele MANAS.

About TeleMANAS
- Tele-MANAS is the digital extension of the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP), providing comprehensive, integrated, and inclusive 24/7 tele-mental health services.
- The initiative offers a toll-free number, 14416, in each State and Union Territory for easy access to mental health support.

National Tele Mental Health Program (NTMHP)
- Announced by the Central Government in the Union Budget 2022-23.
- Aims to improve access to quality mental health counseling and care services across India.

> **World Mental Health Day**
> - Observed annually on October 10th to raise awareness about mental health issues and mobilize global support for mental health.
> - Initiated by the World Federation for Mental Health in 1992.
> - The theme for 2022 was "Make mental health and well-being for all a global priority."

Launch of Tele-MANAS
- Launched virtually on World Mental Health Day by Sh. Thawar Chand Gehlot, Governor of Karnataka, at the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru.
- Offers 24/7 mental health services to provide universal access to affordable, high-quality mental health care through tele-services under the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP).

Nodal Centre for Tele-MANAS

- NIMHANS in Bengaluru is the nodal centre for Tele-MANAS.
- Technical support is provided by the International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Bengaluru.

E-MANAS: The Model for Tele-MANAS

- Modeled after Karnataka's E-MANAS initiative.
- Launched during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in collaboration with NIMHANS.
- Served as a comprehensive mental health resource for the people of Karnataka.

Services Offered by Tele-MANAS

- Accessed by calling the toll-free numbers 14416 and 1-800-891-4416.
- Callers can choose their preferred language for services.

Service Tiers

First Tier	Trained counsellors and mental health specialists.
	Initial interaction through a centralized Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS).
	Calls transferred to a trained counsellor in the caller's region.
Second Tier	In-person services with specialists at DMHP/Medical college resources.
	Audio-visual consultation through e-Sanjeevani.

New Govt. Should Review Agnipath Scheme

Context: Two allies of the BJP said that the new government should review the Agnipath scheme for short-term recruitments to the armed forces.

About Agnipath Scheme

Service Opportunity

Agniveer Recruitment

Annual Recruitment

Retention Rate

Objectives of the Scheme

- **Youth Engagement**
  - The scheme aims to provide an opportunity for patriotic and motivated youth with the 'Josh' and 'Jazba' to join the Armed Forces.
- **Age Profile Reduction**
  - It is expected to reduce the average age profile of the Indian Armed Forces by about 4 to 5 years.
- **Future Vision**
  - Currently, the average age in the forces is 32 years, which will decrease to 26 years in six to seven years

- **Service Opportunity**: This scheme allows patriotic and motivated youth to serve in the Armed Forces for a period of four years.
- **Agniveer Recruitment**: The youth who join the army under this scheme will be called Agniveer. They will be recruited into the army for a short duration.
- **Annual Recruitment**: Approximately 45,000 to 50,000 soldiers will be recruited annually, with most leaving the service after four years.

- **Retention Rate**: After four years, only 25% of each batch will be re-enlisted into their respective services for an additional 15 years.

Eligibility Criteria
- **Non-Officer Ranks**: The scheme is only for personnel below officer ranks (those who do not join the forces as commissioned officers).
- **Commissioned Officers**: These are the highest ranked officers in the army. They hold a commission under the president's sovereign power and are officially tasked with protecting the country.
- **Age Range**: Aspirants between the ages of 17.5 years and 23 years are eligible to apply.

Benefits for Agniveers
- **Seva Nidhi Package**: Upon completion of the 4-year service period, Agniveers will receive a one-time 'Seva Nidhi' package of Rs 11.71 lakhs, including accrued interest.
- **Life Insurance**: They will be covered by a Rs 48 lakh life insurance policy for the four years of service.
- **Death Benefits**: In case of death, the payout will be over Rs 1 crore, including pay for the unserved tenure.
- **Rehabilitation Support**: The government will assist soldiers who leave the service after four years by providing them with skill certificates and bridge courses.

CCI draft regulations attempt to tighten grip on Big Tech

Context: Competition Commission of India (CCI) has proposed new rules to monitor the settlements, and commitments of industry giants.

Key Highlights
The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has introduced a consultation paper and draft regulations aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the technology sector.

Key Provisions
- Appointment of Independent Agencies: A new comprehensive framework has been proposed for appointing independent agencies to oversee the implementation of CCI's orders.
  - This initiative ensures that major industry players adhere to their commitments and do not exploit regulatory loopholes.
- **Empowerment of CCI**: The draft regulations empower the CCI to appoint various independent agencies, including:
  - Accounting firms
  - Management consultancies
  - Professional organizations
  - Individuals such as chartered accountants, company secretaries, and cost accountants
- **Responsibilities and Integrity:** These agencies will monitor the implementation of CCI's orders and ensure compliance with the terms of engagement.
  - To maintain integrity and impartiality, agencies must disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Authority and Enforcement
The CCI retains the authority to suspend or terminate the engagement of these agencies if they fail to meet stipulated standards. Such revocations by the CCI cannot be challenged in any court of law, ensuring swift and decisive action.

Payment to Monitoring Agencies	Payment responsibility lies with the person who has filed an application under the relevant regulations of the Competition Commission of India (Settlement) Regulations, 2024, or the Competition Commission of India (Commitment) Regulations, 2024.
Combination Regulations	In cases where applications are filed under the Combination Regulations or any other relevant regulation, the payment responsibility will be directed by the CCI.

Financial Burden	This approach ensures that the financial burden does not fall on the regulatory body but on the parties seeking settlement or commitment.
Integrity and Impartiality	Agencies must confirm their independence by disclosing potential conflicts of interest.

In Jiribam, some flee attacks for second time since the conflict began

Context: Ethnic conflict in Manipur continues with fresh tensions erupting in Jiribam district.

Key Highlights

Tension gripped Jiribam district when violence erupted after local residents discovered the body of Soibam Saratkumar Singh, a 59-year-old Meitei farmer who had been missing for weeks. The Jiribam District Magistrate promptly imposed a district-wide curfew. In the Vengnuam area, a church and several civilian houses were reported to be burnt down.

Impact of the Conflict

- **Casualties**: Over 150 people have been killed and hundreds injured since the conflict intensified in early May 2023.
- **Displacement**: More than 60,000 people have been displaced due to ongoing clashes.
- **Property Damage**: Significant property damage, including homes and villages being burned down in retaliatory attacks.
- **Ethnic Divisions**: The conflict has deepened ethnic divisions and mistrust between the Kuki and Meitei communities, undermining social cohesion and complicating reconciliation efforts.

Comprehensive Strategy for Resolution and Peace

To address and resolve the deep-seated ethnic tensions in Manipur and ensure lasting peace, the government can employ a multi-faceted strategy:

Strategy Category	Action Items
Conflict Resolution Framework	- Establish an inclusive peace commission involving leaders from both communities and neutral international mediators to facilitate dialogue and negotiations.
Economic and Social Development	- Implement economic development projects in affected areas to improve infrastructure, provide employment opportunities, and reduce economic disparities that fuel ethnic tensions.
Strengthened Local Governance	- Support the creation of local governance structures that allow ethnic communities greater autonomy over administrative and cultural matters to foster ownership and participation in state governance.
Legal and Judicial Reforms	- Enhance the capacity and impartiality of the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to deal with ethnic violence fairly. This includes training in human rights and conflict resolution.
Community Engagement and Reconciliation Programs	- Promote community-driven reconciliation programs, including dialogue forums, cultural exchange programs, and shared community service projects to build trust and understanding between communities.
Education and Awareness Campaigns	- Revise educational curricula to include the history and cultural significance of all communities in Manipur. - Launch campaigns to educate citizens about the benefits of diversity and peaceful coexistence.
Transparent Communication and Media Engagement	- Establish a protocol for transparent communication from the government regarding the conflict. -Engage with media to ensure responsible reporting that promotes peace and reconciliation.

Monitoring and Rapid Response Mechanisms	- Set up a state-level monitoring body that can quickly respond to signs of ethnic tension and prevent escalation. This body should have clear legal authority and the resources necessary to intervene effectively.

Police question people with history of cow vigilantism in Chhattisgarh 'lynching' case

Context: Recently, an alleged mob lynching at Arang in Chhattisgarh that left two cattle transporters dead and one injured

Key Highlights

- **Early Morning Attack**: In the early hours of Friday, two residents of Uttar Pradesh, Guddu Khan and Chand Miya Khan, were found dead, while a third, Saddam Qureshi, was injured in the Arang area.
- **Mob Attack**: According to a relative of Chand and Saddam, the three were attacked by a mob.
- **Police Investigation**: The police have not yet determined the exact events of the night and have registered cases of culpable homicide not amounting to murder and attempt to murder.

'SET UP FAST-TRACK COURTS'

➤ SC orders states to **designate officer of SP rank as nodal officer** in each district to prevent **mob violence**

➤ Centre, states to **broadcast radio, TV and online messages** warning that lynching and mob violence shall invite serious consequences

➤ **FIR must against persons spreading such fake/irresponsible messages**, videos

➤ Police, district admin's **failure to comply with SC's directions** will be **deemed deliberate negligence**

➤ **States to draw up compensation scheme** for lynching with provision for interim relief to victim(s)/next of kin within 30 days

➤ Lynching cases to be tried by fast-track courts in each district and **preferably concluded in 6 months**

Mob Lynching

Definition	• Mob lynching refers to acts of targeted violence carried out by a large group of people.
Nature of Violence	• This violence can involve offenses against a person's body, property, or both, affecting both public and private entities.
Mob Mentality	• The mob believes they are punishing the victim for perceived wrongdoings (not necessarily illegal actions) and take the law into their own hands, bypassing legal procedures.

Related Issues

- **Human Rights Violation:** Mob lynching is a severe violation of human dignity and a breach of Article 21 of the Constitution, which ensures the right to life and personal liberty. It also infringes on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- **Equality and Discrimination:** These incidents violate the Right to Equality and the Prohibition of Discrimination, as outlined in Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India.

PM Kisan Nidhi

Context: The Union government released the 17th instalment of the PM Kisan Nidhi scheme as the first decision of the new Narendra Modi government.

What is PM Kisan?

Features	Details
Launch Date	February 24, 2019
Purpose	Supplement financial needs of landholding farmers
Financial Benefits	Rs 6000/- per year in three installments via DBT
Scope	Initially for SMFs with up to 2 hectares, now covers all landholding farmers
Funding	Central Sector Scheme, 100% by Government of India
Implementing Body	Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
Objectives	Financial support for inputs, prevent debt, ensure farming continuity
PM-KISAN Mobile App	Developed by National Informatics Centre and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
Physical Verification	Mandatory physical verification of 5% of beneficiaries every year, as specified in the scheme provisions.

Objectives

- **Financial Support**: To help Small and Marginal Farmers procure inputs necessary for proper crop health and yield, ensuring anticipated farm income by the end of each crop cycle.
- **Debt Prevention**: To protect farmers from falling into debt with moneylenders for farming expenses, ensuring their continuity in farming activities.

IRDAI

Context: IRDAI eases norms for general insurance.

Key Highlights

IRDAI has issued a comprehensive master circular on general insurance by repealing 13 previous circulars.

Claim Settlement	- General insurers must not reject claims due to missing documents. - They must adhere to strict timelines for settling claims. - Motor insurance customers should be offered the 'Pay as you drive/Pay as you go' option as the primary choice.
Benefits	- Simplifies the claim process for a seamless client experience. - Ensures ease of operations for insurers.

About IRDAI

IRDAI is a statutory body established under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 (IRDAI Act 1999).

- **Objectives**
  - Protect the interests and fair treatment of policyholders.
  - Regulate the insurance industry fairly and ensure its financial soundness.
  - Frame regulations regularly to ensure the industry operates clearly and unambiguously.
  - Head Office: Hyderabad
- **Functions and Responsibilities**
  - Responsible for registering and/or licensing insurance and reinsurance companies, and intermediaries.

o Sets eligibility criteria, qualifications, and capital requirements for obtaining insurance business licenses.

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                    Entities
                  Regulated by
                     IRDAI
   ┌──────────┬──────────┬──────────┬────────────────────┐
  Life       General      Re-       Agency          Intermediaries
 Insurance  Insurance  Insurance   Channels.         such as:
 Companies  Companies  Companies.
 (public and (public and
  private    private
  sector).   sector)
                |
            Standalone
              Health
             Insurance
             Companies.

   Intermediaries such as:
   ┌────────────┬──────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
 Corporate    Brokers    Third-party    Surveyors and
  Agents                 Administrators  Loss Assessors.
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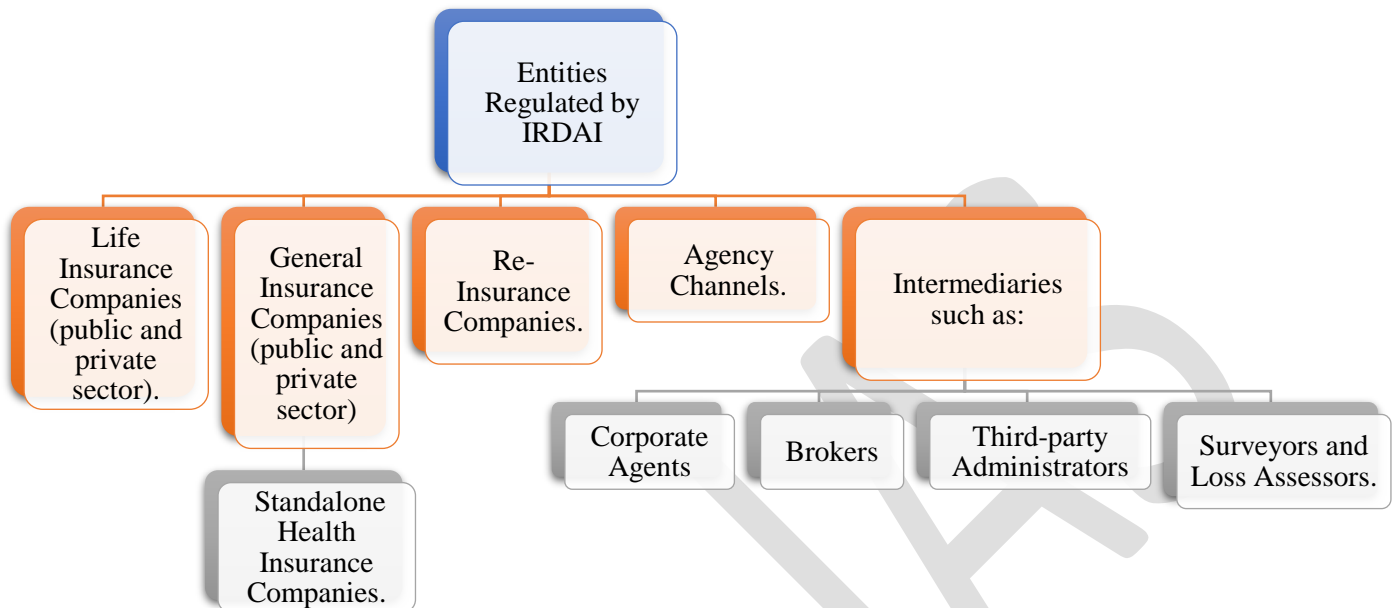
Composition of IRDAI

The IRDAI consists of 10 members:

- A chairman
- Five full-time members
- Four part-time members
- All members are appointed by the Government of India.

Key Responsibilities

- **Policyholder Protection**
  - Ensure fair conduct of the insurance business.
  - Protect policyholders' interests regarding policy assignments, nominations, insurable interest, claim settlements, surrender values, and other contract terms.

- **Regulation and Approval**
  - Approve product terms and conditions offered by insurers.
  - Regulate the investment of funds by insurance companies.
  - Maintain a margin of solvency.

Roles of IRDAI
- Registers and monitors insurance companies
- Supports and protects policyholders
- Supervises Tariff Advisory Committee
- Resolves insurance disputes
- Conducts inspections and inquiries
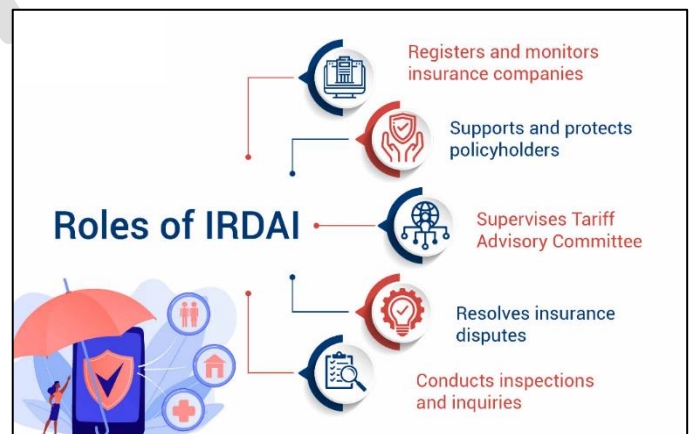
Financial Oversight

  - Specify financial reporting norms for insurance companies.

Code of Conduct

  - Specify the code of conduct, qualifications, and training for intermediaries or insurance agents.
  - Inspection and Investigation:

o   Conduct inspections, call for information, and carry out investigations, including audits of insurance companies, intermediaries, and other related organizations.

Rural and Vulnerable Coverage
o   Ensure insurance coverage is provided in rural areas and to vulnerable sections of society.

Assam counters girls' early marriage with stipends

Context: State Cabinet had approved the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme.

Key Highlights
o   The State Cabinet has approved the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme as an "admission assistance" initiative to boost the enrollment of girls in higher education institutions.
o   Under this scheme, girl students enrolled in Class 11, the first year of a degree program, and the first year of a postgraduate program in government-run schools, colleges, and universities will receive a monthly stipend.

Objectives of the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina Scheme

The primary objectives of the Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme are:
- Empowering Girls through Education: To empower girls by promoting education through financial incentives and government support.
- Reducing Child Marriage: By promoting education, the scheme aims to reduce the incidence of child marriage in Assam.

Financial Incentives for Girl Students

The Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme will benefit approximately 10 lakh girl students in the state. The financial incentives are as follows:
- Higher Secondary Education: Rs. 1,000 per month for girl students enrolled in higher secondary education.
- Graduation Courses: Rs. 1,200 per month for girls pursuing a three-year or four-year degree course.
- Post-Graduation and B.Ed.: Rs. 2,500 per month for girl students enrolled in postgraduate or B.Ed. degree programs.

Certain categories not eligible
- Daughters of ministers and Members of the Assam Legislative Assembly (MLAs).
- Girl students who have received scooters under the state government scheme for excelling in Higher Secondary (HS) exams.
- Students enrolled in private colleges and universities (except venture colleges).
- Girl students who are irregular in attendance or involved in undesirable activities like ragging.

Funding and Implementation
- The Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina scheme is expected to cost the state government Rs. 1,500 crores over the next five years. For the first year, the government has allocated Rs. 300 crores towards the scheme's implementation.

Nitrous oxide emissions

Context: Study published in the journal Earth System Science Data ranks India second in nitrous oxide emissions

Key Highlights

- India is the world's second-largest source of nitrous oxide (N_2O), a greenhouse gas that warms the atmosphere significantly more than carbon dioxide (CO_2).
- 2020 Emissions: Nearly 11% of global man-made N_2O emissions originated from India, surpassed only by China at 16.
- The primary source of these emissions in India is the use of fertilizers.

Atmospheric Concentrations

According to 2022 data, the concentration of atmospheric N_2O was about 25% higher than pre-industrial levels. Carbon dioxide levels reached 417 parts per million (ppm) in 2022.

Comparison of CO2 and N2O

	Carbon Dioxide (CO2)	Nitrous Oxide (N2O)
Current Atmospheric Levels	417 parts per million (ppm)	A thousand times less than CO2
Priority in Climate Action	Higher priority for reduction	Increasingly urgent due to rapid rise
Atmospheric Longevity	Shorter atmospheric presence	Remains longer in the atmosphere
Trend	Significant levels, primary target for reduction	Rapidly increasing, needs immediate action

Emission Trends

- Past Four Decades: N_2O emissions from human activities have increased by 40%, equating to three million metric tonnes of N_2O per year.
- Growth Rates: Between 2020 and 2022, the growth rates of N_2O emissions were higher than any period since 1980, when reliable measurements began.

Agricultural Contributions

- Nitrogen Fertilizers: Agricultural production using nitrogen fertilizers like ammonia and animal manure contributed 74% of total anthropogenic N_2O emissions in the last decade.

Impact on Global Warming

- Radiative Forcing: N_2O emissions from human activities account for 6.4% of the effective radiative forcing of greenhouse gases.
- Temperature Increase: These emissions have added approximately 0.1 degree Celsius to current global warming.

Points to remember	India is a significant contributor to global N2O emissions, primarily due to fertilizer usage.
	N2O concentrations are rising rapidly and have a prolonged atmospheric presence.
	Although CO2 is the primary target for climate change mitigation, urgent action is needed to address N2O emissions as well.
	Agricultural practices are a major source of N2O, highlighting the need for sustainable farming methods.

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Admission Help Line: +91 9823256625 & 9579247470
(WhatsApp)
Email: info@iqraias.com, support@iqraias.com

Residents oppose allotment of flat under CM scheme to a Muslim woman in Gujarat

Context: Several residents of a housing scheme built by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC) under the Gujarat government's housing project have launched protests against the allotment of a flat to a Muslim woman, saying the locality is meant "only for Hindus".

Background and Context
- **Project Overview**: The flat in question is part of Motnath Residency, a housing project developed by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation under the Gujarat government's Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana, aimed at supporting lower-income groups.
- **Allotment Process**: The flats were allotted through a lottery system. A Muslim woman, who received the flat six years ago, has faced continuous opposition from other residents.

Protest Details
- **Opposition**: Residents argue that the housing complex is intended exclusively for Hindus. They have threatened to escalate their protests to Gandhinagar and Delhi if the allotment is not canceled.
- **Legal Backdrop**: Protesters cite the Disturbed Areas Act, claiming it prohibits the sale of property between different religious communities without approval from the District Collector.

Official Response
- **Municipal Commissioner's Statement**
- Review Process: Dilip Rana, the Municipal Commissioner, stated that the situation is under review. A decision will be made after examining all relevant documents to determine if the complex falls under the Disturbed Areas Act.
- **Resident Concerns**: Residents believe the allotment violates the Act and could disrupt the communal harmony they perceive in their area.

Issues
- **Segregation Practices**: This incident highlights the extensive housing segregation in Gujarat, where Muslims often face challenges in leasing or purchasing homes in predominantly Hindu areas.
- **Disturbed Areas Act**: While the Act is meant to prevent distress sales in communally sensitive areas, it is often used in ways that reinforce segregation.

Social Tensions
- **Communal Harmony**: The protests reflect underlying social tensions and the difficulties of fostering communal harmony in diverse societies.
- **Discrimination**: The opposition to the allotment based on religion indicates broader issues of discrimination and exclusion faced by minority communities.

Prerna Sthal

Context: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday inaugurated Prerna Sthal on Parliament House premises, which accommodates 15 statues of freedom fighters and icons of Indian history relocated from various parts of the compound.

Key Highlights
- Mr. Dhankhar's View: Mr. Dhankhar described Prerna Sthal as "inspiring" because it houses statues of great national icons, including former Deputy Prime Minister Devi Lal, under whose mentorship he began his political journey. The statues are all located in one place for visitors to the Parliament.
- Opposition Leaders' Concern: Opposition leaders expressed concern that moving the statues, especially those of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, from their prominent locations might impact the traditional spots where leaders gathered to protest against the government.

About Prerna Sthal

Location	Statues	Purpose
• Prerna Sthal is situated in the Parliament House Complex.	• It features statues of India's prominent leaders and freedom fighters, which were previously scattered across different areas of the Parliament House complex.	• The initiative aims to improve the visitor experience by providing easier access and using modern technology, such as QR codes, to tell the life stories of these inspiring figures in Indian history.

Committee on the Installation of Portraits and Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians

- **Role**: The Committee on the Installation of Portraits and Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians is responsible for making decisions regarding the placement of statues and portraits of national leaders and parliamentarians within the Parliament House Complex.
- **Acceptance**: It also manages the acceptance of such items from outside organizations and individuals, deciding their placement within the complex.
- **Current Status**: The committee has not been reconstituted since 2019.

Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cess

Context: The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahangara Palike (BBMP) has proposed a Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cess of ₹100 per month for each household.

Key Highlights

- Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) levy user fees or SWM cess as per the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016. These guidelines mandate that ULBs collect user fees/cess for the provision of SWM services.
- Monthly Charges: ULBs typically charge about ₹30-50 per month as SWM cess, collected along with property tax.
- Revision Consideration: ULBs are now considering revising these rates and imposing higher charges on bulk waste generators to cover a portion of the costs incurred in providing SWM services.

Components of SWM Services

SWM services comprise four components:
- o Collection
- o Transportation
- o Processing
- o Disposal

Grouping of Services

- Collection and Transportation: These are resource and labour-intensive, accounting for 85-90% of the SWM budget.

- Processing and Disposal: These activities account for only about 10-15% of the SWM budget..

TA-912

Context: After the tragic crash involving a goods train and Kanchanjunga Express in West Bengal that left 10 passengers dead and 43 injured, Eastern Railway has banned issuance of Travel Authority (TA-912) authorising loco pilots to cross signals in red during signal failures.

About Travel Authority TA-912

- **TA-912**: A paper authority issued by railway authorities to loco pilots in cases of signal failure. It permits loco pilots to proceed past a red signal, which normally indicates that the train must stop.

Purpose of TA-912

Main Goal	To manage train movements during signal failures.
Function	Ensures trains can continue to operate even when the signaling system is malfunctioning.
Benefit	Helps avoid significant delays and congestion on the railway network.

Issuance of TA-912

- **Authority**: Issued by the stationmaster or an equivalent authority during signal failures.
- **Permission**: Serves as official permission for the train to proceed past a red signal under specific conditions outlined in the document.

Suspension of TA-912

- **Reason for Suspension**: Following a tragic train crash involving a goods train and the Kanchanjunga Express in West Bengal, the issuance of TA-912 has been suspended.
- **Decision Makers**: The decision was made during a meeting with senior railway officials, including the General Manager, Principal Chief Safety Officer, and Principal Heads of Departments.
- **Objective**: The suspension aims to prevent further accidents under similar circumstances..

School in a box

Context: Flood-affected children are set to get a 'school in a box' in model relief camps across Assam.

Key Highlights

- **Child-Friendly Space Kits**: Each of the 167 model relief camps in the state will receive a CFS kit containing learning materials and other items to ensure the continuity of children's education.

Kit Design and Purpose

- **UNICEF Design**: The CFS kits, designed by UNICEF for Assam, have been updated to cater to the

educational needs of children and teenagers aged six to 18.
- **Educational Focus**: The new kits include notebooks, drawing books, pencils, and other learning materials to support children in overcoming the trauma of displacement.

Psychological Impact Consideration
- **Assessment by ASDMA**: The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) officials made adjustments after assessing the psychological impact of displacement on children older than six years.

Expanded Focus
- **Previous Focus**: Initially, the CFS concept focused on children up to six years of age.
- **Current Focus**: The updated 'school in a box' concept now includes older children, providing essential educational resources to support their learning and emotional well-being.

Training for Continuity

- **Training Initiative**: Training sessions are being conducted at the block and circle levels.
- **Target Audience**: Anganwadi workers and other grassroots stakeholders are being trained to maintain the educational continuity of children in the model relief camps.

Points to Remember	
CFS Kits	Kits with learning materials provided to each of the 167 model relief camps.
Design by UNICEF	Updated kits cater to children and teenagers aged six to 18.
Educational Focus	Includes notebooks, drawing books, pencils, and other materials to help overcome trauma.
ASDMA Assessment	Adjustments made based on the psychological impact of displacement on children older than six.
Previous Focus	Initially focused on children up to six years of age.
Current Focus	Now includes older children with essential educational resources.
Training Initiative	Training conducted at block and circle levels.
Target Audience	Anganwadi workers and grassroots stakeholders.

Vadhavan Port project

Context: PFC, JICA line up to fund ₹76,220-crore Vadhavan Port project

Key Highlights
Indian and global financial institutions, such as:
- Power Finance Corporation
- Rural Electrification Corporation
- Japan International Cooperation Agency

These financial institutions have shown interest in funding the ₹76,220-crore Vadhavan Port project, which was approved by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday, according to Unmesh Wagh, Chairman, Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA).

About Vadhavan Port
- Location: Vadhavan, Palghar District, Maharashtra
- Type: Greenfield deep-sea port
- Characteristics

Development and Management

- **Developer**
  - Vadhavan Port Project Ltd. (VPPL)
- **Stakeholders**
  - Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA): 74%
  - Maharashtra Maritime Board (MMB): 26%
- **Development Phases**
  - The port will be developed in two phases under the landlord model.

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- o All-weather deep draft major port
- o Core infrastructure, terminals, and other commercial infrastructure developed in public-private partnership (PPP) mode

Project Details
- Construction by: Vadhavan Port Project Limited (VPPL), an SPV formed by JNPA and MMB
- Estimated Cost: ₹76,220 crores (including land acquisition)

Infrastructure
- Nine container terminals, each 1000 meters long
- Four multipurpose berths, including the coastal berth
- Four liquid cargo berths
- A Ro-Ro berth
- A Coast Guard berth

Key Features of Vadhavan Port

Area Reclamation	1,448 hectares of sea area
Breakwater and Storage	10.14 km of offshore breakwater and container/cargo storage areas
Capacity	- 298 million metric tons (MMT) per annum cumulative capacity- 23.2 million TEUs (twenty-foot equivalents) of container handling capacity
Connectivity	Linked to the Delhi–Mumbai Expressway via a link expressway
Strategic Importance	- Gateway port for the upcoming India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)- International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC)
Government Initiative	Key project under the Indian government's Sagarmala initiative to enhance the performance of the country's logistics sector

Yoga

Context: Recently, Prime Minister addressed the 10th International Day of Yoga (IYD) event at Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir International Convention Centre (SKICC)

The Origins of International Yoga Day
- **Ancient Roots**: Yoga has a rich history in India, dating back over 5,000 years. It is deeply rooted in ancient Indian philosophy and was developed to achieve harmony between mind, body, and spirit.

International Recognition
- **International Yoga Day**: Recognizing its profound impact, the Prime Minister of India proposed the idea of International Yoga Day during his address to the UN General Assembly in 2014. The proposal received overwhelming support, and the UN declared June 21st as International Yoga Day. The first celebration took place in 2015, marked by millions of participants worldwide.

ABOUT THE IDY LOGO

- Folding of both hands in the logo symbolise Yoga, the union, which reflects the union of individual consciousness with that of universal consciousness, a perfect harmony between mind & body, man & nature; a holistic approach to health & well being.

- The brown leaves symbolise the Earth element, the green leaves symbolise the Nature, blue symbolises the Water element, brightness symbolises the Fire element and the Sun symbolise the source of energy and inspiration.

- The logo reflects harmony and peace for humanity, which is the essence of Yoga.

The Essence of Yoga

- **Cultural Significance**: Yoga's journey through time reflects its deep roots in Indian culture and its evolution into various forms and practices.
  - o Originating from the ancient texts of the Vedas and Upanishads, Yoga was systematized by the sage Patanjali, who is credited with compiling the Yoga Sutras.

Evolution and Pioneers

- Swami Vivekananda: Introduced Yoga to the Western world, spreading its philosophy and practices globally.
- B.K.S. Iyengar: Developed the Iyengar Yoga style, making Yoga more accessible and beneficial for people of all ages and backgrounds.

21st June
International Day of Yoga

The International Day of Yoga is a worldwide healthcare event observed on the 21st of June every year for the past eight years. On this day, various local and global communities gather around to perform yoga collectively with the aim of raising awareness about the numerous benefits of practising yoga.

Great Nicobar Project

Context: The Union Tribal Affairs Ministry will be looking into the forest clearance paperwork for the ₹72,000-crore infrastructure project on Great Nicobar Island

Key Highlights

- Special Attention: Mr. Oram emphasized his commitment to focusing on the forest and land rights of tribal communities.
- Demand for Withdrawal: The Opposition Congress is demanding the withdrawal of clearances for the Great Nicobar project. They call for a comprehensive review due to environmental concerns and alleged violations of tribal land rights.

The Great Nicobar Island Project

- **Project Overview**: The Great Nicobar Island (GNI) Project is a large-scale development initiative at the southern tip of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

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                          Component of
                          Nicobar Island
                          Project
  ┌──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
An international   A greenfield    Township       A 450 MVA gas   The project covers
container          international   development    and solar-based  16,610 hectares.
transshipment      airport                        power plant
terminal
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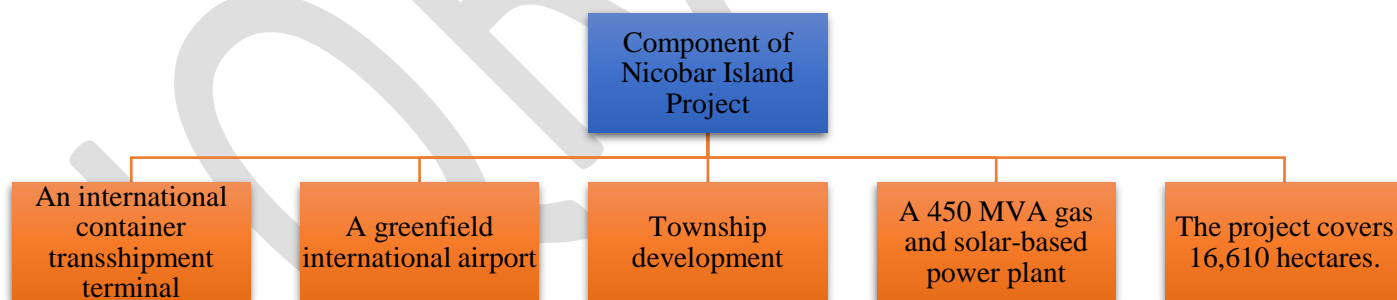
Purpose

- **Maritime Economy**: According to the NITI Aayog report, the port will enable Great Nicobar to become a key player in the regional and global maritime economy by facilitating cargo transshipment.
- **Strategic Location**: Positioned close to the East-West international shipping corridor, the port is equidistant from Colombo, Port Klang (Malaysia), and Singapore.

Strategic Reasons

- **National Security**: The development of Great Nicobar was initially proposed in the 1970s. Its strategic importance for national security and consolidating India's presence in the Indian Ocean Region has been emphasized.
- **Chinese Presence**: Growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean has made the project more urgent.

Criticism

Biodiversity Concerns → Environmental Concerns → Assessment Issues → Tribal Protection

- **Biodiversity Concerns**: Critics highlight the project's potential harm to the area's rich biodiversity and the habitats of endangered species.
    - The area includes Coastal Regulation Zones-IA and IB and the Galathea Bay, a nesting ground for birds.
    - Turtle nesting sites, dolphins, and other species could be affected by dredging.
- **Environmental Concerns**: Environmentalists warn about the loss of tree cover and mangroves due to the project.
    - The loss of tree cover could impact local flora and fauna.
    - Increased runoff and sediment deposits in the ocean could damage coral reefs.
- **Assessment Issues**: Critics argue that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) was insufficient, relying on data from only one season instead of the required three seasons.
- **Tribal Protection**: There are concerns about encroachment into areas inhabited by Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), who are supposed to have the highest level of protection. Despite these protections, development projects pose significant challenges to their way of life.

eSakhsya App

Context: Ahead of roll-out of the new criminal laws, Union Home Ministry tests eSakhsya App

Key Highlights

- Days ahead of implementing three new criminal laws, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is testing eSakshya (e-evidence), a mobile application to assist police in recording crime scenes, conducting searches, and making seizures in criminal cases. This data can then be uploaded to a cloud-based platform.

Police officials must upload a selfie after completing the procedure.

Features of eSakshya

Multiple files can be uploaded for each First Information Report (FIR).

Each recording can be a maximum of four minutes long.

New Criminal Laws

- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS): Replaces the Indian Penal Code, 1860.
- Bharatiya Sakshya (BS): Replaces the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.
- Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS): Replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898.

BNSS Requirements

- Compulsory Audiovisual Recording: Mandatory for search and seizure in each criminal case.
- Mandatory Forensic Examination: Required in all cases where the offence attracts a punishment of seven years or more.

Challenges

- Procuring hardware and cloud space is costly, and many states lack sufficient resources.
- The mobile application, developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), will be available to all police stations that register and download the app.
- Police can record the crime scene on their personal mobile phones, generate a hash value, and upload the file upon returning to the police station.
- Files can be directly uploaded through eSakshya, provided there is good internet speed.

About eSakhsya App

Aspects	Description
About	• The eSakhsya app is a mobile-phone application to help police record crime scenes, conduct searches, and seizures in criminal cases. • It enables police to upload recorded evidence to a cloud-based platform.
Aim	The app aims to create uniformity in investigations, potentially increasing the conviction rate.
Developed by	The app is developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC).It will be available to all police stations for registration and download.
Features	• Police officials must upload a selfie after completing the procedure. • Each recording can be a maximum of four minutes long, with multiple files uploadable per First Information Report (FIR). • If there are connectivity issues, police can record on personal devices, generate a hash value, and upload the file later. • Alternatively, they can upload directly through eSakhsya which requires good Internet speed.
Challenges	• Procuring hardware and cloud space is expensive, and many States lack resources. • Maintaining the sanctity of the chain of evidence submission is crucial to prevent benefiting the accused. • Forensic evidence integrity is essential, and any issues in procuring digital evidence could lead to criminals escaping justice.

Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)

Context: Urban Affairs Ministry to revamp Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban)

Key Highlights

- **Scheme Overview**: The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) [PMAY (U)], a scheme to provide affordable housing for the urban poor, is set to be revamped with new features based on insights gained over the past nine years.

- **Extension and Goals**: Launched in 2015, PMAY (Urban) has been extended until December 2024. The mission aims to address urban housing shortages among the poor and middle-income groups, including slum dwellers, by ensuring a pucca house for all eligible urban households.
- **Additional Schemes**: The Ministry announced schemes for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment in 2023-24 and 2022-23 to improve and accelerate basic urban planning by incentivizing the States.
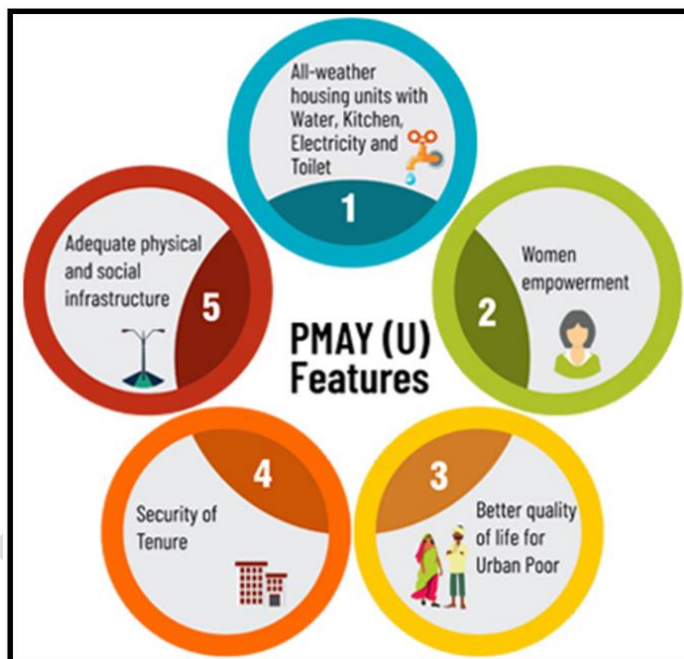
About Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

- **Scheme Introduction**: Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) is a credit-linked subsidy scheme designed to provide affordable housing to low and moderate-income residents across India.
- **Government Approval**: The newly formed government has approved the proposal to provide 3 crore additional rural and urban houses under PMAY.

- **Scheme Components**: PMAY has two components: PMAY-U for urban areas and PMAY-G for rural areas.

PMAY-U (Urban)

- **Objective**: To provide housing for all in urban areas.
- **Beneficiaries**: Includes Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Low-Income Group (LIG), and Middle-Income Group (MIG).

Subsidy Schemes

- **Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme**: Offers interest subsidies on home loans for EWS, LIG, and MIG categories.
- **In-Situ Slum Redevelopment**: Uses land as a resource to provide houses to eligible slum dwellers.
- **Affordable Housing in Partnership**: Promotes partnerships with public and private sectors to provide affordable housing.
- **Beneficiary-Led Construction**: Provides financial assistance to individuals to construct or enhance their own houses.
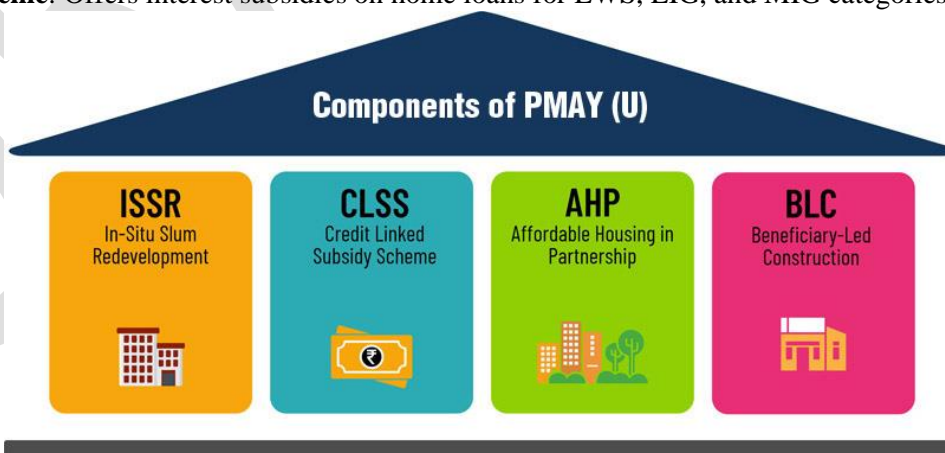
PMAY-G (Gramin)

- **Objective**: To provide a pucca house with basic amenities to all rural families who are homeless or living in kutcha or dilapidated houses.
- **Beneficiaries**: Identified using the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011.

Features

- **Financial Assistance**: Provides Rs. 1.2 lakh in plain areas and Rs. 1.3 lakh in hilly, difficult, and Integrated Action Plan (IAP) areas.
- **Construction**: Houses are to be constructed by beneficiaries with technical assistance from the government.
- **Convergence with Other Schemes**: Encourages convergence with other schemes like Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) for toilet construction and MGNREGA for wage employment.

Components of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

Component	Objective	Beneficiaries	Key Features
PMAY-U (Urban)	To provide housing for all in urban areas	EWS, LIG, MIG	- Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme - In-Situ Slum Redevelopment - Affordable Housing in Partnership - Beneficiary-Led Construction
PMAY-G (Gramin)	To provide pucca houses with basic amenities to rural families	Rural families identified via SECC 2011	- Financial assistance: Rs. 1.2 lakh (plain areas), Rs. 1.3 lakh (hilly/difficult/IAP areas) -Beneficiary-led construction with government technical assistance -Convergence with other schemes like SBM and MGNREGA

Jal Jeevan Mission

Context: Jal Shakti Ministry conceives 'new project' to fix water deficit in Jal Jeevan Mission

Key Highlights

- **Objective**: The government is planning a new project to provide potable water to rural households that have been given taps under the Jal Jeevan Mission but do not yet have access to water.
- **Current Status**: Out of a targeted 19 crore households, 15 crore have been provided with tap water connections.
- **Measurement**: The water supply departments of States or Union Territories aggregate data from districts regarding the number of households, anganwadis, and schools with tap water connections.

What is the Jal Jeevan Mission?

Aspect	Details
Launch Year	2019
Goal	Supply 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024
Ministry	Operates under the Jal Shakti Ministry
Vision	Create a public movement (jan andolan) for water, making it a priority for everyone
Aims	
Functionality	Ensure the functionality of existing water supply systems and connections
Quality Monitoring	Conduct water quality monitoring and testing
Sustainability	Promote sustainable agriculture through effective water management
Conjunctive Use	Utilize conserved water for various purposes, including drinking, source augmentation, and grey water treatment

Features

- **Integrated Management**: Focus on both demand and supply-side management of water at the local level.
- **Infrastructure Creation**: Develop local infrastructure for source sustainability, including rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge, and household wastewater management.
- **Community Approach:** Employ a community-based approach to water management with extensive Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) efforts.

Implementation

- **Paani Samitis:** These committees plan, implement, manage, operate, and maintain village water supply systems.
- **Composition**: Consist of 10-15 members, with at least 50% women, including members from Self-Help Groups, Accredited Social and Health Workers, Anganwadi teachers, etc.
- **Village Action Plan**: Prepare a one-time village action plan, merging all available village resources. The plan is approved in a Gram Sabha before implementation.

Funding Pattern

- **Himalayan and North-Eastern States**: 90:10 cost-sharing between the Centre and states.
- **Other States**: 50:50 cost-sharing between the Centre and states.
- **Union Territories**: 100% funding by the Centre.

International Relations

Donald Trump convicted of felony

Context: Donald Trump became the first former American President to be convicted of felony crimes.

Key Highlights

- Guilty Verdict: A New York jury found Donald Trump guilty of all 34 charges related to a scheme to illegally influence the 2016 election.
- Falsifying Records: Trump was also found guilty of falsifying business records.
- Presidential Run Unaffected: Despite the conviction, Trump can continue his run for the presidential office.

Constitutional Requirements for U.S. Presidential Candidates

- Under the U.S. Constitution, presidential candidates must:

o Be a natural-born citizen of the United States.
o Be at least 35 years old.
o Have been a U.S. resident for at least 14 years.

Running for President with a Criminal Record

- No Bar: There is no restriction on a candidate's criminal record for running for the presidency. While some states prohibit felons from running for state or local offices, these rules do not apply to federal offices, including the presidency.
- Term Limits: No person can be elected to the office of the President more than twice. Additionally, no person who has served more than two years of a term to which another person was elected President can be elected more than once.

Eligibility Conditions for President of India

- To be eligible for election as President of India, a candidate must:
  o Be a citizen of India.
  o Be at least 35 years old.
  o Be qualified for election as a member of the Lok Sabha.
  o Not hold any office of profit under the Union government, any state government, or any local or public authority.

Disqualifications Under the Representation of People's Act 1951

- Conviction for electoral offenses or corrupt practices.
- Conviction for any offense resulting in imprisonment for two or more years (preventive detention is not a disqualification).
- Failure to lodge an account of election expenses on time.
- Having an interest in government contracts, works, or services.
- Being a director or managing agent, or holding an office of profit in a corporation where the government has at least 25% share.
- Dismissal from government service for corruption or disloyalty.
- Conviction for promoting enmity between different groups or for bribery.
- Punishment for preaching and practicing social crimes such as untouchability, dowry, and sati..

- Additional Requirements:
  o Nomination: A candidate's nomination must be supported by at least 50 electors as proposers and 50 electors as seconders.
  o Security Deposit: Each candidate must make a security deposit of Rs. 15,000 with the Reserve Bank of India. This deposit is forfeited if the candidate fails to secure one-sixth of the votes polled.

Historical Changes
- Pre-1997: The number of proposers and seconders was ten each, and the security deposit was Rs. 2,500.
- Post-1997: The numbers were increased to discourage non-serious candidates.

Claudia Sheinbaum makes history as Mexico's first woman President
Context: Claudia Sheinbaum will become the first woman President in Mexico's 200-year history.

Key Highlights
- **Election Results**: Claudia Sheinbaum, aged 61, received nearly 58% of the vote according to preliminary results from the Mexican electoral office.
- **Historic First**: Sheinbaum will be the first Jewish leader of Jewish heritage to hold the office.

Comparing Elections in India and Mexico

Multi-Party System	Change in Government	Election Commission	Election Frequency
•India: Both India and Mexico have multi-party systems.	•India: Political parties in power often lose subsequent elections. •Mexico: The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) did not lose a single election for over 70 years.	•India: Government officials work under the Election Commission during election periods. •Mexico: This practice is not observed.	•India: Elections are held every 5 years. •Mexico: Elections are held every 6 years.

About Mexico

Category	Details
Location	Southern portion of North America
World Ranking (Area)	13th-largest country by area
World Ranking (Population)	10th-most-populous country
Language	Most populous Spanish-speaking country
Capital	Mexico City
Borders	- North: United States
	- Southeast: Guatemala and Belize
	- West: Pacific Ocean
	- Southeast: Caribbean Sea
	- East: Gulf of Mexico

More Than Half of Structures in Gaza Are Destroyed or Damaged, Says UN

Context: Some 55% of all structures in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, damaged or possibly damaged since war erupted in the Palestinian territory eight months ago, according to preliminary satellite analysis by the UN.

Key Highlights

- Destroyed Structures: According to satellite imagery analysis, UNOSAT identified 36,591 destroyed structures.
- Overall Damage: UNOSAT also detected:
  - 16,513 severely damaged structures
  - 47,368 moderately damaged structures
  - 36,825 possibly damaged structures
  - Totaling 137,297 damaged structures

United Nations Satellite Analysis Agency (UNOSAT)

Aspect	Details
Launch	Began operations in 2001 and has been hosted at CERN since its inception.
Expansion	Introduced the Rapid Mapping service in 2003 and joined UNITAR (United Nations Institute for Training and Research).
Headquarters	Geneva
Regional Offices	New York City, Bangkok, and Nairobi
Recognition	Became the UN Satellite Center in 2021.
Ukraine War	Has been analyzing damage to cultural sites for UNESCO since the conflict began.

Mission	Promote peace, security, and resilience using geospatial technologies.

UNOST Services
- Provides satellite analysis
- Offers training and capacity development
- Mandate: Supports UN agencies and Member States with geospatial information.

Short on troops, Australia opens military to non-citizen residents from Five Eyes

Context: Australia will allow non-citizens to join its armed forces

Key Highlights
- **Eligibility Criteria**: Permanent residents who have been living in Australia for at least 12 months are now eligible to serve.
- **Favored Nationalities**: Citizens from Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States are given preference.

- **Current Personnel**: The Australian Defence Forces currently have around 90,000 personnel, including reservists.

About Five Eyes
- **Five Eyes Alliance**: The Five Eyes is an intelligence alliance that includes Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- **UK-USA Agreement**: These countries are parties to the multilateral UK-USA Agreement.

'Five Eyes' intelligence alliance
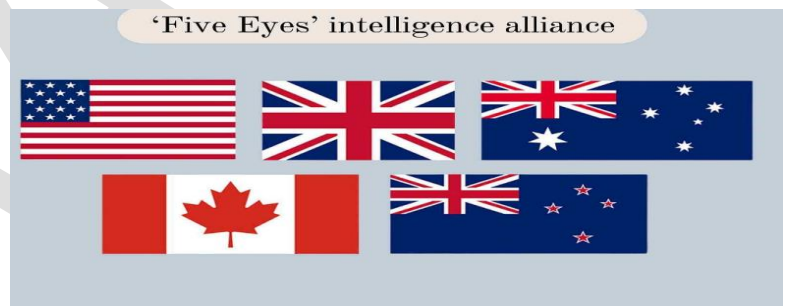
India-Norway cooperation to witness manifold increase

Context: Norwegian businesses are showing a lot of interest in India and a manifold increase in cooperation between the two countries is expected

Key Highlights
- A trade pact was recently signed between India and the four-nation European Free Trade Association (EFTA) bloc.
- Norwegian businesses are keen to invest in India, recognizing it as the fifth-largest and fastest-growing economy in the world.
- Norway is focusing on three key sectors in India: renewable energy, maritime, and the circular economy.
- Norway will host the third India-Nordic Summit in Oslo by the end of this year.

History of India-Norway Relations
- India and Norway have enjoyed a cordial relationship since 1947.
- Norway opened its first Consulates in India in Kolkata (1845) and Mumbai (1857).

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- In 1952, the "India Fund" was established to provide development assistance, focusing on fisheries.
- Norway opened its Embassy in New Delhi in the same year.

Support and Agreements
- Norway has supported India's membership in export control regimes like the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA), and the Australia Group (AG).
- In 1986, India and Norway signed a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), revised in February 2011.

Key Developments
- The Consulate General in Mumbai reopened in 2015, after being closed since the 1970s.
- Innovation Norway, the Norwegian government's trade representative, has offices in Mumbai and New Delhi.
- In December 2018, Norway launched a new 'India Strategy' to guide bilateral cooperation until 2030.

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                    Thematic
                   Priorities for
                   India Strategy

Democracy and a                                             Research, higher
rules-based world    The oceans      Energy     Climate and   education, and
     order                                      environment   global health
```

- Norway aims to achieve these objectives through political contact, business cooperation, and research collaboration.

Task Force on Blue Economy
- In 2020, the India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy for Sustainable Development was inaugurated.
- This initiative was launched during the Norwegian Prime Minister's visit to India in 2019.
- The task force aims to develop and follow up on joint initiatives and mobilize stakeholders from both countries.

Norway's PM Visit to India
- In 2019, the Prime Minister of Norway visited India, resulting in several Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
- The Prime Minister delivered the inaugural address at the Raisina Dialogue and inaugurated the India-Norway Business Summit.

Economic Relations

Aspect	Details
Norwegian Companies in India	Over 100 established companies, 50 represented by agents
Norwegian Pension Fund Global	One of India's largest foreign investors, with investments amounting to USD 9.5 billion in 2019
Norwegian Exports to India	Nonferrous metals, natural gas, plastic in primary form, crude minerals, chemical products
Indian Exports to Norway	Apparel, textile yarns, metal manufactures, rice, miscellaneous manufactured articles

Cooperation in Various Fields

- **Maritime and Ship Recycling**: Norway, with the fifth largest commercial ship fleet, cooperates closely with India in ship recycling and shipbuilding.
- **Academic Collaborations**: Partnerships exist between Indian Institute of Technology-Madras, the Institute of Wind Energy in Chennai, and Norwegian institutions.
- **Digital Archives**: Norwegian company Piql has been involved in creating digital archives for Indian monuments, including the Taj Mahal, Dholavira in Gujarat, and the Bhimbetka Caves in Madhya Pradesh.

Pakistan, China Agree to Upgrade Corridor

Context: Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese President Xi Jinping in their meeting have affirmed consensus on the upgradation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and advancing high-quality development of the multi-billion-dollar project in the second phase.

What is CPEC?
- **Length and Route**: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a 3,000-kilometer network of infrastructure projects. It connects China's northwest Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region to the Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.
- **Bilateral Project**: This is a joint venture between Pakistan and China aimed at enhancing connectivity within Pakistan through highways, railways, and pipelines. It also includes energy, industrial, and other infrastructure developments.
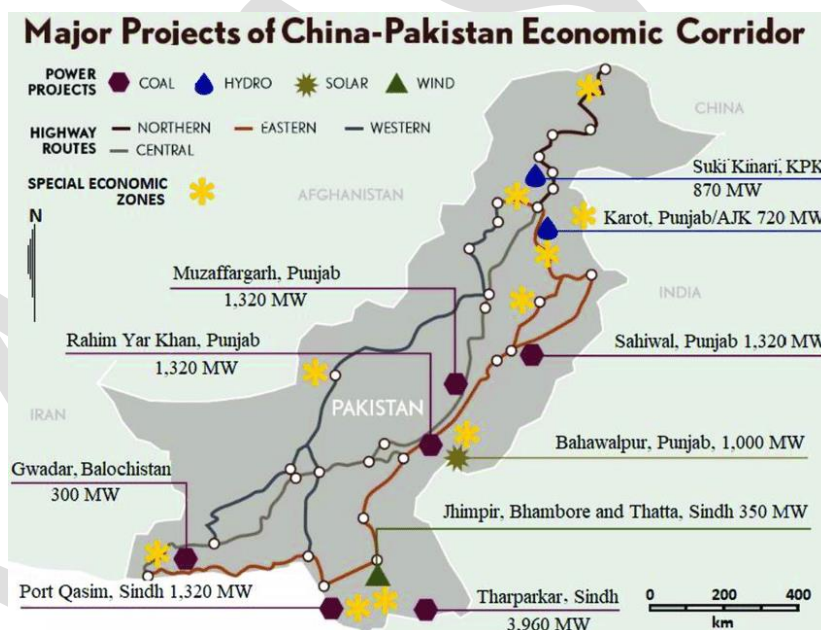
Strategic Importance
- **Access to Regions**: CPEC allows China to reach the Middle East and Africa via Gwadar Port, providing access to the Indian Ocean.
- **Support for Pakistan**: In return, China will aid Pakistan with development projects to address its energy shortages and help stabilize its economy.

Connection to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)
- **Part of BRI**: CPEC is a crucial component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **BRI Goals**: Launched in 2013, the BRI aims to connect Southeast Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf region, Africa, and Europe through an extensive network of land and sea routes.

BRICS

Context: India welcomed Egypt, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia joining the BRICS as their representatives attended for the first time a key meeting of the grouping hosted by Russia.

Key Highlights
- **Indian Delegation**: Senior diplomat Dammu Ravi led the Indian delegation at the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nizhny Novgorod, western Russia.
- **First Expanded Meeting**: This was the first ministerial meeting after BRICS expanded in 2023 to include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE alongside Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

- **Commitment to Multilateralism**: The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to multilateralism and international law. They supported comprehensive reforms of the UN, including its Security Council, to make it more democratic, representative, effective, and efficient.

About BRICS

- Intergovernmental Organization: BRICS is an intergovernmental organization consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- Evolution: Initially identified for investment opportunities, BRICS has evolved into a cohesive geopolitical bloc with annual formal summits and coordinated multilateral policies since 2009.
- Bilateral Relations: These are based on non-interference, equality, and mutual benefit.
- Global Representation: BRICS represents around 40% of the world's population and more than a quarter of the world's GDP. This share is expected to increase with the inclusion of three of the world's largest oil producers: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran.

BRICS

Born out of a vision to challenge Western dominance on the global stage, the BRICS alliance – comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and later South Africa – has gradually evolved into a formidable force in the international arena.

We take a look at its origins, objectives, and more.

What are some key features of the BRICS economies?

BRAZIL

Population	201 mln
Exportable products	Agricultural (coffee, soybeans, sugar cane), iron & steel, crude oil, aerospace & machinery, chemicals
Comparative advantage	Strong R&D in manufacturing sector
Challenges	Exhausting natural resources High income disparities

INDIA

Population	1 224 mln
Exportable products	Agricultural (rice, soybeans), clothes, cars, steel, jewelry, software
Comparative advantage	Low labor costs, strong service sector
Challenges	'Two Indias': imbalance of rural and urban population

RUSSIA

Population	143 mln
Exportable products	Oil & gas, minerals, machinery, software
Comparative advantage	HDI highest among the BRICS countries
Challenges	'Dutch disease' Sanctions

SOUTH AFRICA

Population	51 mln
Exportable products	Gold, diamonds, chromium, chemicals, heavy machinery
Comparative advantage	Unique natural resource base Expertise in diversity management
Challenges	High youth unemployment High diversity of population

CHINA

Population	1 357 mln
Exportable products	Consumer & professional electronics, machinery, instruments, clothes & footware, steel
Comparative advantage	Strong manufacturing capacity in many sectors
Challenges	Growing wages

Sources: SDF concept paper, Harvard Atlas of Economic Complexity

Kuwait fire deaths

Context: At least 49 people, including 40 Indian citizens, were killed in a deadly fire that devastated an apartment complex in Kuwait's southern district of Al-Mangaf.

Expatriate
- **Definition**: An expatriate is an individual living and/or working in a country other than their country of citizenship.
- **Temporary Arrangement**: This situation is often temporary and usually for work reasons.
- **Citizenship Changes**: An expatriate can also be someone who has given up citizenship in their home country to become a citizen of another country.

What is the Current State of Workers in the Gulf Region?
Impact of the Gulf War (1990-1991)
- The Gulf War caused a mass exodus of the Indian community from Kuwait.
- After Kuwait's liberation, many Indians returned, making them the largest expatriate community in Kuwait.
- Before the war, Palestinians were the largest expatriate community in Kuwait.
- Kuwait's Liberation: This refers to the military operations in 1991 that expelled Iraqi forces from Kuwait, ending the Gulf War. A US-led coalition launched a campaign to restore Kuwait's sovereignty and independence.

Indians in Gulf Countries
- As of 2021, approximately 8.9 million Indian migrants resided in the Gulf countries.
- 25% of overseas Indians and 56% of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) live in six Gulf countries: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, and Bahrain.

Definitions
- **NRIs**: Individuals who hold Indian citizenship but live outside of India.
- **Overseas Indians/OCIs**: Individuals with ancestral ties to India, granted specific privileges similar to permanent residents in India.

Remittance Sources
- 28.6% of total foreign inward remittances to India come from the Gulf countries.
- Kuwait alone accounts for 2.4% of these remittances.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)
- The GCC is a regional organization comprising six nations: Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain.
- Established in 1981, the GCC aims to promote cooperation, integration, and connectivity among its member states, based on regional and cultural proximity.

Economic Reliance
- The primary source of revenue for GCC countries is oil export.
- Oil resources have been the backbone of their economies for decades.

Trade Relations
- The Gulf region contributes to about one-sixth of India's total trade.
- In FY 2022-23, India's trade with GCC countries was around USD 184 billion, a 20% increase from FY 2021-22.

Partnership in Energy Cooperation
- India plans to develop a comprehensive relationship with GCC countries in energy cooperation.
- This includes participation in India's strategic petroleum reserves, long-term gas supply agreements, oilfield concessions, and collaboration on renewable energy projects.

Significance of the Gulf for India

Category	Details
Good Relations	- India has enjoyed centuries of good relations with Gulf countries. - Qatar is one of India's closest allies in the region -India shares good relations with most Gulf countries.
Gas and Trade	- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a major trading partner for India. - The GCC has substantial oil and gas reserves crucial for India's energy needs. - GCC includes: UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Kuwait.
UAE	- India's third-largest trading partner in 2021-2022.- Second-largest for both exports ($28 billion) and imports ($45 billion). - Total trade volume: $72.9 billion, behind the USA ($1.19 trillion) and China ($1.15 trillion). - Accounted for 6.6% of India's total exports and 7.3% of imports in the last financial year. - UAE accounts for 11% of natural gas exports to India.
Saudi Arabia	- Fourth-largest trading partner in 2021-2022 with a total volume of $42.9 billion. - Exports: $8.76 billion (2.07% of India's total exports). - Imports: $34.1 billion (7%), mostly crude oil, up 50% from the previous year.
Iraq	- Fifth-largest trading partner in 2021-2022 with $34.3 billion in trade.
Qatar	- Total trade: $15 billion, accounting for 1.4% of India's total trade. - Most important supplier of natural gas, accounting for 41% of India's total natural gas imports.
Crude Oil and Petroleum Import	- Persian Gulf countries contribute around 60% of India's crude imports over the last 15 years. - In 2021-2022, Iraq was the largest oil exporter to India, with a share increasing from 9% in 2009-2010 to 22%. - Saudi Arabia has consistently accounted for 17-18% of India's oil imports for over a decade. - Kuwait and UAE are also major oil exporters to India.
Indian Diaspora	- Gulf countries host the largest numbers of non-resident Indians (NRIs), totaling 13.4 million. - UAE: 3.42 million NRIs. - Saudi Arabia: 2.6 million NRIs. - Kuwait: 1.03 million NRIs. Together, these three countries account for over half of all NRIs.

G-7

Context: Apart from leaders of other G-7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Japan, the U.K., and the U.S. — and the European Union leadership, Mr. Modi was among leaders of 12 countries invited to the outreach.

Key Highlights

- Invitation History: This marks the 11th time India has been invited to the G-7 outreach.
- Prime Minister's Participation: It will be the fifth time Prime Minister Modi participates.
- Significance: India's consistent participation highlights its growing role in addressing global challenges related to peace, security, development, and environmental preservation.

Understanding the G-7

- **Definition**: The G-7 consists of the world's most developed and advanced economies: France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, and Canada.

- **Invitations**: Leaders from key international organizations like the European Union (EU), IMF, World Bank, and the United Nations are also invited.
- **Annual Summits**: Summits are held annually, hosted on a rotational basis by the member countries.

Origin of G-7	Formation	The G-7 was formed in response to the 1973 oil crisis and the subsequent financial crisis, leading leaders of six major industrial nations to meet in 1975.
	Founding Members	Initially, the group included the US, UK, France, West Germany, Japan, and Italy.
	Expansion	Canada joined in 1976, forming the G-7.
	Historical Note	The group was known as the 'G8' for several years after Russia joined in 1997, but reverted to G-7 after Russia's expulsion in 2014 following its annexation of Crimea.

Nature of the Group
- **Informal Grouping**: The G-7 operates as an informal group without formal treaties and lacks a permanent bureaucracy. Each member nation takes turns leading the discussions.
- **Consensus-Based Decisions**: The G-7 cannot enact laws directly, but its influence comes from the economic and political power of its members. Agreements among these major powers can significantly impact global issues.
- **Influence on Global Policies**: The G-7's statements and coordinated efforts, despite limited legislative power, can shape international policies and global agendas.

Overview of G7

Countries Involved	Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tunisia, Turkiye, UAE
India's Involvement	11th G-7 invitation for India; fifth participation for Prime Minister Modi; highlights India's global role
About G-7	Group of seven most advanced economies (France, Germany, Italy, UK, Japan, US, Canada)
Invitations	EU, IMF, World Bank, United Nations
Annual Summits	Held annually, hosted by member nations on a rotational basis
Origin of G-7	Formed after the 1973 oil crisis; original members: US, UK, France, West Germany, Japan, Italy
Expansion	Canada joined in 1976; Russia joined in 1997 but was expelled in 2014
Nature of the Group	Informal, operates without formal treaties or permanent bureaucracy; consensus-based decisions
Influence on Global Policies	Significant impact through economic and political power; shapes international policies and agendas

India Has A 'Significant Role' In Resolving Gaza Violence, Bringing Aid: Palestinian PM Mustafa

Context: India has a "significant role" in finding a solution to the ongoing violence in Gaza, said Palestinian Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa in a congratulatory letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key Highlights
- **Call for Ceasefire**: Mr. Mustafa emphasized the necessity for India to leverage its diplomatic channels to demand an immediate ceasefire and to increase humanitarian aid to Gaza to help alleviate the suffering.
- **Correspondence with Indian Leaders**: Mr. Mustafa previously wrote two letters to Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in May. In his latest letter to Mr. Jaishankar, the Palestinian Prime Minister accused the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) of killing former Indian Army Colonel Waibhav Anil Kale, who was working in Gaza as a UN security coordinator. India has not assigned blame for Col. Kale's death, awaiting the United Nations' investigation.

India's Position on the Israel-Palestine Conflict
- Two-State Solution: India continues to support a two-state solution for the Israel-Palestine crisis while maintaining relations with Israel. This approach has opened Israel's labor market to Indian migrant workers in the absence of a large number of Palestinian laborers.
- Impact on IMEC: The conflict has affected the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project, which was launched during the 2023 G-20 meeting in New Delhi. The IMEC, which includes Israel, was also discussed at the G-7 Outreach Summit in Borgo Egnazia, Italy, where the G-7 pledged to promote infrastructure initiatives like IMEC.

India's Stand on Israel-Palestine Conflict
- Support for Palestine: India has historically leaned towards Palestine for several reasons:
- Gandhiji's opposition to a Jewish state.
- A significant Muslim demographic in India.
- Strong ties with Arab nations.
- UN Voting Patterns: India voted against the partition of Palestine and opposed Israel's admission to the UN.

Post-Cold War Developments
- Prime Minister Narasimha Rao established diplomatic relations with Israel after the Cold War, despite potential backlash from Arab nations.
- In 1992, India formalized full diplomatic ties with Israel while continuing to advocate for Palestine.

India's Balancing Diplomacy

Objective	Description
Strengthening ties with Israel	India aims to deepen relations in areas such as trade, defense, technology, and counter-terrorism.
Supporting Palestine	India continues to provide financial aid and humanitarian assistance, maintaining its historical support for the Palestinian cause.
Enhancing relations with Arab nations	India seeks to bolster its diplomatic and economic ties with Arab countries, balancing its strategic interests in the region.

Current Policy
- **Growing Relations**: India-Israel relations have expanded across trade, defense, technology, and counter-terrorism sectors.
- **Shared Challenges**: India's support for Israel is partly due to shared challenges with cross-border terrorism, though the situations differ.

- **Financial Aid**: India has contributed USD 29.53 million to the UNRWA for Palestinian refugees and provided medical and disaster relief assistance.

India's Unwavering Position

- **Advocating Peace**: India supports a two-state solution for peaceful coexistence between Israel and Palestine.
- **Historical Stance**: This stance was endorsed by the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference mediated by the US.
- **Prime Minister's Visit**: The 2018 visit to Ramallah in the West Bank highlighted this position.

De-hyphenation Diplomacy
- In 2017, Prime Minister Modi made his first visit to Israel.
- In 2018, he made the first official visit to Palestine.
- In 2017, India voted against the US and Israel regarding Jerusalem's unilateral declaration as Israel's capital.

Implications of the Israel-Palestine Conflict on India

- **Defence Ties with Israel**: Israel is a major supplier of military equipment to India, with deals worth about USD 2.1 billion, which could face delays.
- **Energy Security** Concerns: Regional instability can affect energy prices, impacting India's economy.
- **Impact on IMEC**: Regional unrest could pose security challenges, potentially hindering the seamless execution of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) pact.

Rajasthan's SHGs help African women to farm and flourish

Context: A women's self-help group (SHG) model in Rajasthan's Dholpur district has helped about 12,500 women in the western African countries of Mali and Senegal earn livelihoods, conserve environment and establish cooperative federations to take up farming, biogas production, poultry farming and goat rearing.

Key Highlights

- **Training Initiative**: Women leaders from nine cooperatives in Mali and Senegal visited Rajasthan to receive training in new vocations.
- **International Collaboration**: Women from Dholpur's SHGs, established by the Rajasthan Grameen Ajeevika Vikas Parishad (Rajeevika), had previously traveled to Mali and Senegal to share their expertise in rural income generation activities.

Weekly meetings

Maintenance of records

Weekly savings

Dholpur SHG Model Five Principles

Loan repayment

Internal borrowing

Admission Help Line: +91 9823256625 & 9579247470 (WhatsApp)
Email: info@iqraias.com, support@iqraias.com
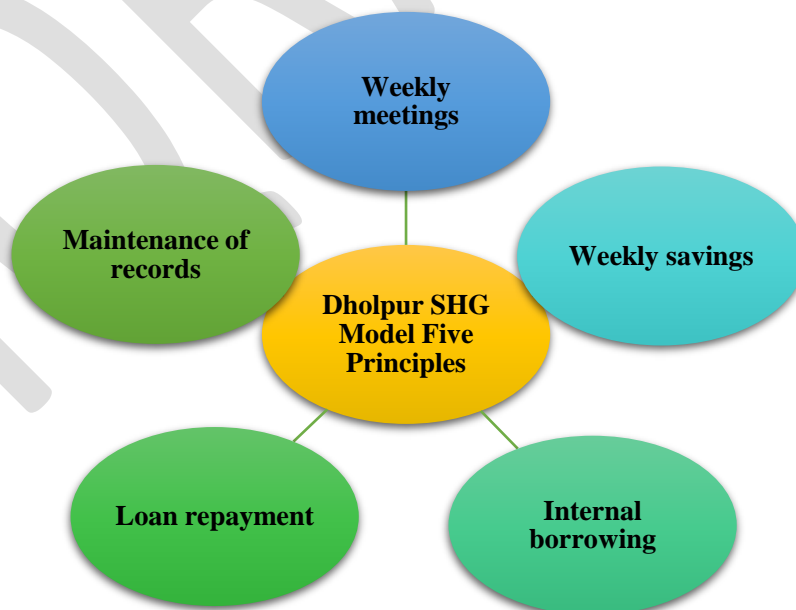
Achievements of Women from Mali and Senegal

- **Financial Success**: Women from Mali and Senegal are saving up to ₹17 crore a year.
- **Mutual Support**: They use the saved money for inter-loaning, helping other women connect with income-generating activities and supporting each other during emergencies.
- **Community Empowerment**: The model has empowered rural communities to promote economic development and self-governance.

Training and Knowledge Exchange

- **Training Provided**: Women from Dholpur trained women in Mali and Senegal in forming SHGs and establishing cooperative federations.
- **Skills Acquired**: African women learned about running federations and manufacturing products.

What are Self-Help Groups (SHGs)?

- **Definition**: Informal associations of people who come together to improve their living conditions.
- **Structure**: Self-governed, peer-controlled groups of people with similar socio-economic backgrounds who collectively perform common purposes.
- **Concept**: Based on "Self Help" to encourage self-employment and alleviate poverty.

Objectives of SHGs

- **Capacity Building**: Enhance the functional capacity of the poor and marginalized in employment and income-generating activities.
- **Conflict Resolution**: Resolve conflicts through collective leadership and mutual discussion.
- **Loans**: Provide collateral-free loans with terms decided by the group at market-driven rates.
- **Credit Guarantee**: Work as a collective guarantee system for members borrowing from organized sources.
- **Savings and Loans**: Members save collectively in banks and receive easy access to loans at low-interest rates to start micro-unit enterprises.

SHG Principles and Importance

Principles	- Weekly meetings - Weekly savings - Internal borrowing - Loan repayment - Maintenance of records
Importance	- Address rural poverty - Financial inclusion - Build community networks - Alleviate poverty - Empower women - Improve literacy and health

Ukraine Summit

Context: Only proposals acceptable to both Russia and Ukraine can lead to peace, said India as New Delhi decided to disassociate itself from the final document issued at the conclusion of a Peace Summit in Switzerland

Key Highlights

- India was among at least seven countries that refused to endorse the "Joint Communique on a Peace Framework" released in Burgenstock, the venue of the two-day summit.
- The communique, which called for the protection of Ukraine's "territorial integrity" and was built on Ukraine's peace formula and the UN charter and resolutions, was thus far signed by more than 80 countries.
- Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Summit, but Russian President Vladimir Putin was not invited, with Swiss officials saying Russia could join a future conference on the "road map" to peace.

- Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia, Mexico and the UAE were among the countries that refused to sign the communique.
- Brazil maintained an observer status, and China declined the invitation to participate.
- Asked about India's abstention, Swiss Ambassador to India Ralf Heckner said that despite the decision, "it was good that India was present" at a conference where the number of countries represented "half of the world" and a "quarter of the world" was represented by heads of state or government.

NSAs of India, U.S. review progress on iCET, silent on Pannun investigation

Context: National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval and his U.S. counterpart, Jake Sullivan resolved to prevent the "leakage" of sensitive and dual-use technologies to countries of "concern" as they chaired the second meeting of the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET).

Key Highlights
- Mr. Sullivan arrived just hours after reports confirmed that Indian national Nikhil Gupta was extradited to the U.S. for alleged involvement in a plot to assassinate Sikh separatist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun.
- During the second iCET meeting, the two National Security Advisors (NSAs) outlined the vision for the next phase of the strategic technology partnership. This was highlighted in a joint fact sheet issued after the dialogue.

Defense and Technology Talks
- India and the U.S. are in advanced negotiations for:
- The purchase of 31 MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles.
- Licensed manufacturing of General Electric GE-414 jet engines.
- Acquisition of Stryker infantry vehicles.

Introduction to ICET	Key Technology Sectors	Expanded Areas of Cooperation
• Announced by Mr. Modi and U.S. President Joseph Biden during the Quad Summit in Tokyo in May 2022. • Officially launched by the NSAs in January 2023.	• Space • Semiconductors • Advanced telecommunications • Artificial intelligence • Quantum science • Biotechnology • Clean energy	• Biotechnology • Critical minerals and rare earths processing technologies • Digital connectivity • Digital public infrastructure • Advanced materials

India Bangladesh Relations

Context: India and Bangladesh agreed to begin a dialogue on a comprehensive economic partnership agreement, paving the way for broader economic ties between the two neighbouring economies.

Key Highlights
- The sixth India-Bangladesh cross-border rail link has been inaugurated between Akhaura and Agartala.
- This link facilitates cargo transport for India's northeastern states via the Khulna-Mongla Port.

Maitree Thermal Power Plant
- Both units of the 1,320-MW Maitree Thermal Power Plant have begun generating electricity.
- Trade in Indian Rupee

Maritime cooperation

Disaster management

Economic relations

Signed MoUs

Health

Rail connectivity

Oceanography

- Trade in Indian rupee has commenced between India and Bangladesh.

New Assistant High Commission
- Prime Minister Modi announced the opening of an Assistant High Commission in Rangpur, northern Bangladesh.
- Rangpur is strategically significant, lying between West Bengal and Assam, and is vital due to the Teesta river, which is central to ongoing negotiations between the two countries.

Teesta River Management
- During the event at Hyderabad House, Prime Minister Modi revealed that a technical team from India would soon visit Bangladesh to discuss the conservation and management of the Teesta river.

What is the dispute
- Bangladesh wants 50% of Teesta's water between Dec and May annually; India claims a share of 55%
- Negotiations on since 1983, preliminary deal gave
  India 39% — Bangladesh 36% — 25% unallocated
- In 2011, Delhi & Dhaka struck interim deal for 15 years — India would get
  India 42.5% — Bangladesh 37.5%
- But Banerjee opposed it; signing shelved to later that year
- Teesta water-sharing agreement waiting to be signed since 2011

Hydropower on Teesta is another point of conflict; At least 26 projects on the river mostly in Sikkim, aimed at producing some 50,000MW

Teesta barrage

What is the Teesta
- Teesta originates in Sikkim from the Khangse and Zemu glaciers
- Its major tributary — Rangeet — joins it at Darjeeling's Teesta Bazaar
- At Mekhligunj in north Bengal's Cooch Behar, it enters Bangladesh, joins Brahmaputra
- Teesta is Bangladesh's fourth largest transboundary river for irrigation and fishing
- Teesta floodplain covers 2,750sq.km in Bangladesh
- Of Teesta's catchment, 83% in India; 17% in Bangladesh
- Its catchment supports about 10m people — and 14% of crop
- Nearly 1 lakh hectares across 5 districts impacted by upstream drawals from the Teesta in India

- Amidst stalled negotiations on Teesta water sharing, Bangladesh proposed a conservation project that has piqued interest from New Delhi.
- This project will also likely be on the agenda during Prime Minister Hasina's upcoming visit to China, as China has shown interest in the project as well.

Indus Water Treaty

Context: India, Pak. delegations reach J&K to inspect power projects under Indus Water Treaty

Key Highlights
- **Arrival in Jammu**: Nearly 40 people arrived in Jammu on Sunday evening and flew to Kishtwar on Monday morning to inspect various under-construction power projects in the Chenab valley region.
- **Historical Visit**: This is the first visit by a Pakistani delegation to Jammu and Kashmir in more than five years under the dispute settlement mechanism of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).
- **Treaty Background**: India and Pakistan signed the IWT after nine

The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)
- The distribution of waters of the Indus and its tributaries between India and Pakistan is governed by the Indus Water Treaty (IWT).
- Was signed on Sept 19, 1960, between India, Pakistan and a representative of World Bank after eight years of negotiations.
- Partition of India cut across the Indus river basin, which has the Indus river, plus five of its main tributaries.

Western rivers
Chenab, Jhelum, Indus
India's rights over these rivers: Limited — can set up certain irrigation, run-of-the-river power plants, very limited storage, domestic and non-consumptive use, all subject to conditions

Eastern rivers
Sutlej, Beas, Ravi
India's rights over these rivers: All exclusive rights lie with India.

Baglihar dam on Chenab

Indus Waters Commission a success story
- Once every five years, conducts a general inspection of all rivers in parts. Total inspection tours so far: Over 100
- Regularly meets once a year. Total meetings thus far, including those for taking up Pak objections: Over 100

years of negotiations, with the World Bank as a signatory. The treaty establishes a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange on the use of waters from several cross-border rivers.

- **Previous Inspection**: A three-member Pakistan delegation last inspected the Pakal Dul and Lower Kalnai hydroelectric power projects under the IWT provisions in January 2019.
- **Current Inspection**: Upon landing at an Army camp, the delegation visited the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC) headquarters. They then proceeded to the 85-MW Ratle hydroelectric power project site at Drabshalla for dam inspection. They will also visit the 1,000-MW Pakal Dul hydroelectric project on the Marusudar River, a tributary of the Chenab, and other power projects in Kishtwar.

What is the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)?

- **Signing and Broker**: The Indus Waters Treaty was signed on September 19, 1960, between India and Pakistan and was brokered by the World Bank.
- **Purpose**: The treaty establishes a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange on the use of water from the Indus River and its five tributaries: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab.

Key Provisions

Water Sharing
- The treaty specifies how water from the six rivers of the Indus River System is shared between India and Pakistan.

Allocation
- Western Rivers: Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum are allocated to Pakistan for unrestricted use, except for certain uses by India.
- Eastern Rivers: Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej are allocated to India for unrestricted use.
- Water Distribution:80% of the water is allocated to Pakistan, with the remaining 20% allocated to India.
- Permanent Indus Commission: Both countries must establish a Permanent Indus Commission, which is mandated to meet annually.

Dispute Resolution Mechanism
- Three-Step Process
- Permanent Commission Questions on both sides can be resolved at the Permanent Commission.

Inter-Governmental
- Level Issues can be taken up at the inter-government level.

Neutral Expert
- Unresolved differences can be addressed by a World Bank-appointed Neutral Expert.

Court of Arbitration
- Appeals from the Neutral Expert can be referred to a Court of Arbitration set up by the World Bank.

Various Projects to be Inspected Under IWT

Project Name	Type	Location	Details	Pakistan's Objection/Ruling
Pakal Dul Hydro Electric Project	Hydro Electric Project	Marusudar River, tributary of Chenab	Built on the Marusudar River, a tributary of the Chenab	N/A
Lower Kalnai	Hydro Electric Project	Chenab River	Developed on the Chenab River	N/A
Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project	Run-of-the-river project	J&K		Pakistan argued it would affect the flow of the Kishanganga River (called the Neelum River in Pakistan). In 2013, The Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled that India could divert all the water with certain conditions.
Ratle Hydroelectric Project	Run-of-the-river hydroelectric power station	Chenab River, J&K		N/A

India and U.S. in talks for Stryker infantry vehicles

Context: Deals for MQ-9B unmanned aerial vehicles and GE-414 jet engines are making progress along with defence industrial collaborations under the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology

Key Highlights

- **India's Interest**: India has shown interest in co-producing Stryker infantry vehicles and is in relatively early stages of talks with the U.S. regarding both the Stryker vehicles and Javelin anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM).
- **Previous Demonstrations**: The U.S. has previously demonstrated both the Stryker and Javelin for the Indian Army during bilateral exercises. The Javelin was extensively evaluated by the Indian Army, though the deal did not proceed.
- **Advanced Stages**: The deal for co-production is in advanced stages and is expected to go for approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in the next few months.
- **GE-414 Engines**: Similarly, the deal for license manufacture of GE-414 engines by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) to power the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)-Mk1A is also in advanced stages.

Defense Equipement	Description
Stryker	- The Stryker is a family of eight-wheeled armoured fighting vehicles derived from the Canadian LAV III, itself derived from the Swiss Mowag Piranha. - Stryker vehicles are produced by General Dynamics Land Systems-Canada (GDLS-C) for the United States Army in a plant in London, Ontario. - It has four-wheel drive (8×4) and can be switched to all-wheel drive (8×8). - The Stryker was conceived as a family of vehicles forming the backbone of a new medium-weight brigade combat team (BCT) that was to strike a balance between Armored brigade combat teams (heavy armor) and Infantry brigade combat teams.

Javelin Anti-Tank Guided Missiles (ATGM)	• The FGM-148 Javelin, or Advanced Anti-Tank Weapon System-Medium (AAWS-M), is an American-made man-portable anti-tank system in service since 1996 and continuously upgraded. • Its fire-and-forget design features automatic infrared guidance, allowing the user to seek cover immediately after launch, in contrast to wire-guided systems, like the system used by the Dragon, which requires a user to guide the weapon throughout the engagement. • The Javelin's high-explosive anti-tank (HEAT) warhead can defeat modern tanks by top-down attack, hitting them from above, where their armour is thinnest, and is also useful against fortifications in a direct attack flight. • The javelin uses a tandem charge warhead to circumvent an enemy tank's explosive reactive armour (ERA) which would normally make HEAT warheads ineffective.
MQ-9B Predator Drone	• The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the MQ-9 "Reaper", an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capable of remotely controlled or autonomous flight operations. • These are high-altitude long-endurance drones armed with strike missiles which can take out enemy targets with high accuracy. • It was developed by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI), primarily for the United States Air Force (USAF). • The MQ-9B has two variants — SkyGuardian and its sibling SeaGuardian. • The Indian Navy has been operating the MQ-9B Sea Guardian since 2020.
GE-414 engine	• The turbo engine has been in use by the US Navy for more than 30 years. • The engines are in the thrust class of 22,000 lb or 98 kN and feature advanced technology such as Full Authority Digital Electronic Control (FADEC)– the latest aircraft ignition and engine control system that controls engine performance digitally- according to GE. • The use of advanced material and cooling techniques improves performance and extends component life. • F414-powered jets: • Eight nations have F414-powered aircraft in operation. • F414-GE-400 engines power the US Navy's Boeing F/A- 18E/F Super Hornet and EA18G Growler electric attack aircraft. • Saab's Gripen E/F fighters use the F414G, the single-engine variant of the F414-GE-400. • As per the company, it can also power emerging platforms like Korean KF-X.

India Slams 'Deeply Biased' U.S. Report on Religious Freedom

Context: India slammed the U.S. State Department's report on International Religious Freedom for 2023 as "deeply biased".

Key Highlights
- **Reaction**: India criticized the U.S. State Department's 2023 report on International Religious Freedom, calling it "deeply biased" and a "one-sided projection of issues."
- **Report Findings**: The report highlighted increasing anti-conversion laws, hate speech, and the demolition of homes and places of worship for minority faith communities in India.
- **Concerns Raised**: It pointed out the alleged complicity between law enforcement agencies and majoritarian groups and flagged campaigns for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) and the creation of a "Hindu Rashtra" as significant issues.

About U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF)

Establishment

- USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan federal government entity created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).

Functions

- **Monitoring**: Reviews facts and circumstances of international religious freedom violations.
- **Policy Recommendations**: Advises the President, Secretary of State, and Congress on policy measures.
- **Standards**: Uses international standards to monitor religious freedom violations globally.
- **Annual Report**: Required to publish an annual report with independent policy recommendations for U.S. actions.

Composition

- **Commissioners**: USCIRF consists of nine commissioners appointed by the President or Congressional leaders from each political party.
- **Support Staff**: Supported by a non-partisan professional staff.

Military Exercises, Defence & Security

Tarang Shakti

Context: India ready to host its first multinational air exercise 'Tarang Shakti' in August

Key Highlights

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is set to conduct its first multinational air exercise, Tarang Shakti-2024, in August. The exercise will feature the participation of 10 countries, with several others attending as observers.

- **Germany's Contribution:** An A-400M transport aircraft will be showcased as it is a contender for the IAF's open tender for medium transport aircraft.

Participating Countries	
•	Australia
•	France
•	Germany
•	Japan
•	Spain
•	United Arab Emirates
•	United Kingdom
•	United States

Red Flag Exercise

The Red Flag exercise, hosted by the U.S. Air Force (USAF), took place from June 4 to 14 at the Eielson Air Force Base in Alaska. This was the second edition of Red Flag this year, with the exercise being held four times annually by the USAF.

IAF's Participation

- The IAF deployed eight Rafale fighters, marking the first time these aircraft participated in Red Flag.
- The Rafales were supported by IL-78 mid-air refuellers for the transatlantic ferry.
- C-17 Globemaster aircraft were also deployed by the IAF.

LCA-Mk1A

Context: After delay due to supply chain-related issues, LCA-Mk1A deliveries may begin by end of July
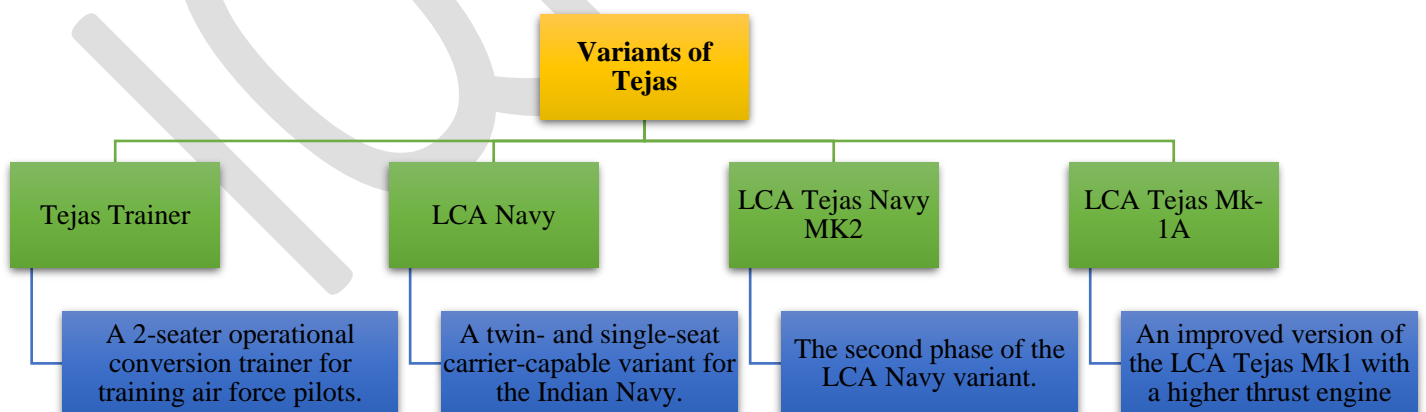
Key Highlights

- In February 2021, the Defence Ministry signed a ₹48,000-crore deal with HAL for 83 LCA-Mk1A jets, which are more advanced than the current LCA-MK1 in service.
- Three LCA-MK1A jets are to be delivered to the IAF in February 2024.
- Subsequently, 16 aircraft will be delivered per year for the next five years.
- These new jets will be powered by the GE F-404 engines, similar to the existing LCA.
- The Defence Ministry has also given preliminary approval for an additional 97 LCA-Mk1A jets.
- A more advanced LCA-Mk2 is under development, which will feature GE F-414 engines.
- The IAF will phase out two MiG-21 squadrons, No. 3 squadron 'Cobras' and No. 23 squadron 'Panthers', converting them to LCA-Mk1A aircraft.

Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas

- The LCA program was initiated by the Government of India in 1984 with the establishment of the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) to manage the program.
- The LCA Tejas was developed to replace the aging MiG-21 fighter planes.
- Designed by ADA under the Department of Defence Research and Development.
- Manufactured by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).

Features

- It is the lightest, smallest, and tailless multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
- Capable of carrying a variety of air-to-air and air-to-surface precision-guided weapons.
- Equipped with air-to-air refueling capability.
- Maximum payload capacity of 4000 kg.
- Maximum speed: Mach 1.8.
- Range: 3,000 km.

LCA AF MK2

It is a state of art multirole supersonic fighter with delta wing and close coupled canard with following features:

- Long range and endurance:
  - Inflight refuelling Capability
  - On Board Oxygen Generation System (OBOGS) to supply oxygen for unlimited duration
- High Payload Carrying capacity with heavy stand off weapons
- Multirole Capabilities:
  - Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missiles carrying capability
  - Air-to-Air & Air-to-Ground Missiles
  - Heavy Precision Guided Weapons with stand-off ranges more than 100 km
- Unified Electronic Warfare Suite (UEWS) with Radar Warning Receiver (RWR) and Jammers
- Netcentric warfare Capabilities
- Quick turn around and role change
- Advanced Avionics with Large Area Display (LAD) and Smart Head Up Display (HUD)
- Fly-by-Wire Flight Controls with Upgraded Digital Flight Control Computer and Indigenous Actuators
- Advanced Sensors:
  - Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA)
  - Infra Red Search & Track (IRST)
  - Multi Sensor Data Fusion capability

Performance
- Service Ceiling : 50000 ft
- 'g' Limits : +9/-3.2
- Max Speed : 1.8 Mach

Variants of Tejas

- **Tejas Trainer** — A 2-seater operational conversion trainer for training air force pilots.
- **LCA Navy** — A twin- and single-seat carrier-capable variant for the Indian Navy.
- **LCA Tejas Navy MK2** — The second phase of the LCA Navy variant.
- **LCA Tejas Mk-1A** — An improved version of the LCA Tejas Mk1 with a higher thrust engine

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Environment

Cities warming due to effect of urbanisation, climate change

Context: The rate of warming in cities is nearly twice that of the rest of the country, with local-scale urbanisation alone causing additional warming of about 60%
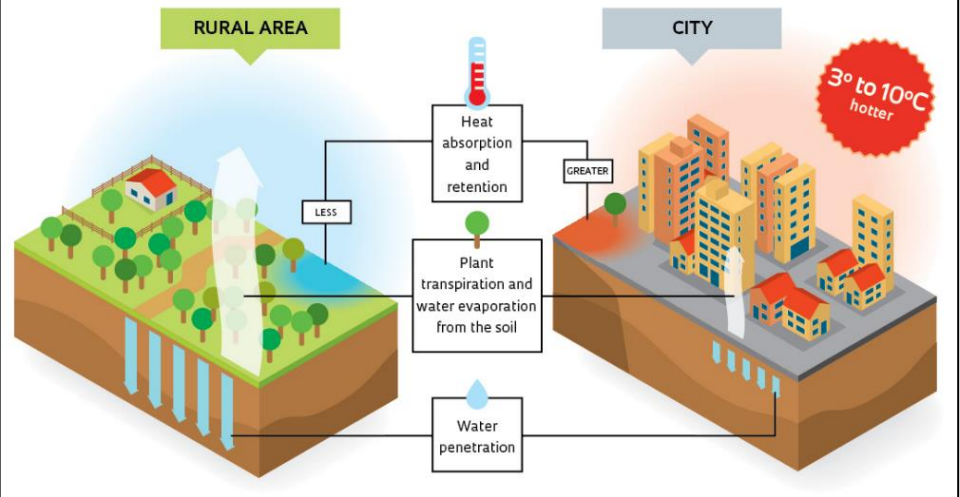
Key Highlights

- The altered thermodynamic and aerodynamic properties of cities trap more heat, making urban areas warmer than rural and suburban counterparts. This is known as the urban heat island (UHI) effect.
- Climate change is causing a significant increase in record-breaking temperatures and frequent prolonged heat waves.
- These changes alter the micro-climate of cities, influencing heat, rainfall distribution, and air pollution dispersion, with serious implications for public health.

- The warming rate in cities is nearly double that of the rest of the country, with local-scale urbanization alone contributing to about 60% of this additional warming.
- All cities show an increase in night-time land surface temperature, with an average rise of 0.53 degrees Celsius per decade, though there is a large variation among different cities.

What Can Be Done?

- Reducing Emissions and Shifting to Renewable Energy: India is actively working to reduce emissions and shift to non-fossil fuel-based energy sources as outlined in the updated nationally determined contribution (NDC) towards climate justice.
- Heat Action Plans and Early Warning Systems: State-level heat action plans and the implementation of early warning and forecasting systems for heatwaves demonstrate India's commitment to reducing heat-related mortality.

- Local Scale Interventions: Cities with significant urbanization contributions can benefit from:

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- o Sustainable materials like cool roofs and cool/permeable pavements
- o Green infrastructure
- o Creation and maintenance of lakes and parks
- o Urban forests
- o Comprehensive emission reduction strategies

Regional Scale Efforts

- Other cities may require more extensive regional efforts, such as:
- National or regional level emission reduction
- Large-scale afforestation and plantation
- Rejuvenation of surrounding water bodies

Implications

Both local and regional interventions can help mitigate warming and have additional benefits such as reducing extreme urban rainfall, floods, and air pollution.

Tonga volcano

Context: Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai (Hunga Tonga for short) erupted on January 15, 2022, in the Pacific Kingdom of Tonga. It created a tsunami, which triggered warnings across the entire Pacific basin, and sent sound waves around the globe multiple times. A new study published in the Journal of Climate explores the climate impacts of this eruption.

Key Highlights
Water Vapour Emission

- Hunga Tonga, being an underwater volcano, produced minimal smoke but released significant amounts of water vapour.
- It emitted between 100-150 million tonnes of water vapour, equivalent to 60,000 Olympic swimming pools.
- The eruption's intense heat turned massive amounts of seawater into steam, which was then propelled into the atmosphere.

Water vapour in the stratosphere has two main effects

- It facilitates chemical reactions that destroy the ozone layer.
- It acts as a potent greenhouse gas.

Impact on the Stratosphere

The water vapour ascended into the stratosphere, a dry atmospheric layer 15-40 kilometres above the Earth's surface. This layer does not produce clouds or rain due to its dryness.

Ozone Layer and Weather Patterns

- The large ozone hole from August to December 2023 was partially attributed to Hunga Tonga.
- The volcano also altered the way atmospheric waves travel, which influence weather patterns.

The volcanic island of
Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai
was built by undersea eruptions.

Two pre-existing islands (Hunga Ha'apai
and Hunga Tonga) were **joined by the 2015
eruption into a single island landmass.**
Its condition in April 2021 is shown here.

Hunga Tonga

Hunga Ha'apai

PACIFIC OCEAN

Hunga Tonga-
Hunga Ha'apai

Australia

New Zealand

Elevation (m)
0   25   50   75   ≥100

500 m

Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai Volcano

- This volcano consists of two small uninhabited islands, Hunga-Ha'apai and Hunga-Tonga.
- It has erupted regularly over the past few decades.
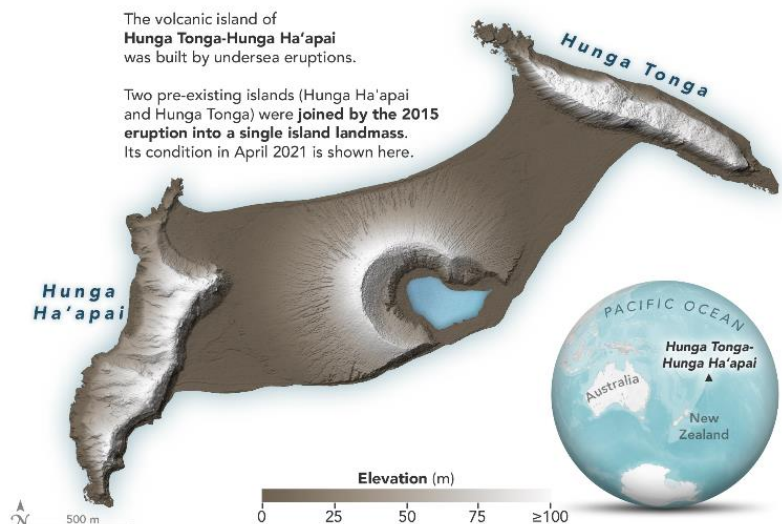
- The recent eruption is one of the massive explosions the volcano produces roughly every thousand years.

Explosive Nature
- The volcano's high explosiveness is due to the Fuel-Coolant interaction.
- The eruption was unique for injecting a massive amount of water vapour into the stratosphere.

| Aspect	Usual Volcanic Eruptions	Hunga Tonga's Distinction
Smoke Emission	Emit smoke containing sulphur dioxide	Produced minimal smoke
Surface Cooling	Sulphur dioxide leads to temporary cooling of the Earth's surface	Not applicable
Aerosol Formation	Sulphur dioxide converts to sulphate aerosols	Not applicable
Sunlight Reflection	Sulphate aerosols reflect sunlight into space, causing surface cooling	Not applicable
Aerosol Settling	Sulphate aerosols settle back on the surface or are washed out by rain	Not applicable
Water Vapour Injection	Minimal water vapour emission	Significant injection of water vapour into the stratosphere
Climatic Effects	Temporary surface cooling due to reflected sunlight	Unique climatic effects due to massive water vapour injection into the stratosphere

Forest Fire in Himachal

Context: A prolonged dry spell and unusually high temperatures across Himachal Pradesh have triggered several wildfires that have destroyed hectares of forest cover and damaged biodiversity and the forest ecosystem.

Key Highlights
- **Forest Fire Outbreaks**: Government data indicates that there have been 1,318 forest fire incidents reported across Himachal Pradesh this year.
- **Temperature and Dry Spells**: The average maximum and minimum temperatures in Himachal Pradesh have been significantly higher than normal since May. These elevated temperatures, combined with dry spells, present a significant challenge for the State government in managing forest fires.
- **Affected Areas**: Forest fires have been reported in the forest circles of Shimla, Chamba, Bilaspur, Dharamshala, Hamirpur, Kullu, Mandi, Rampur, Nahan, Solan, and the Great Himalayan National Park at Shamshi in the Kullu region. These fires have affected a total of 12,718 hectares of land.
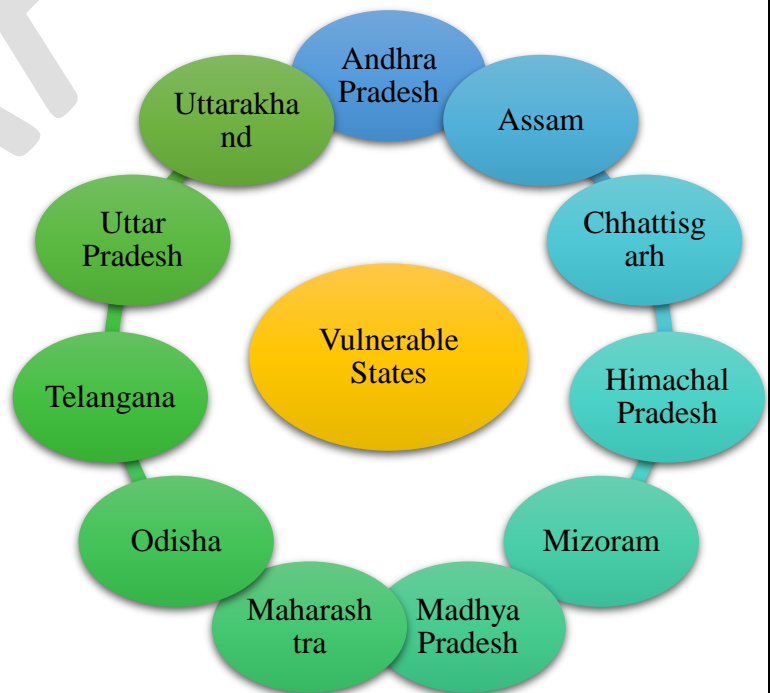
Forest Fires in India
- Forest Fire Prone Areas: According to the biennial India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2019 by the Forest Survey of India (FSI), over 36% of India's forest cover is prone to frequent fires.

Andhra Pradesh
Uttarakhand
Assam
Uttar Pradesh
Chhattisgarh
Vulnerable States
Telangana
Himachal Pradesh
Odisha
Mizoram
Maharashtra
Madhya Pradesh

- High-Risk Zones: About 4% of the forest cover is 'extremely prone' to fire, and another 6% is 'very highly' fire-prone.

Ecosystem Vulnerability
- **Severe Fires**: Dry deciduous forests are most susceptible to severe fires.
- **Less Prone**: Evergreen, semi-evergreen, and montane temperate forests are comparatively less prone to fires.
- **Most Vulnerable Regions**: The forests of Northeast India, Odisha, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Uttarakhand are most vulnerable from November to June.

Factors triggering forest fire

Human Activities: Approximately 95% of forest fires in India are triggered by human activities such as agricultural practices, deforestation, and firewood burning.

Environmental Factors: Drought and higher temperatures increase the risk of forest fires.

Forest Fire Season in India
- **Time Frame**: November to June is considered the forest fire season, with peak fire incidents occurring from February onwards.
- **Worst Months**: April and May are typically the worst months for forest fires across the country.

Causes of Forest Fires
- **Pre-monsoon Season**: Fires often occur during the pre-monsoon summer due to moisture stress and depletion of snowmelt water.
- **Critical Rainstorms**: Less moisture during rainstorms in the pre-monsoon season increases fire impact.
- **Human Activities**: Unattended campfires, discarded cigarettes, and faulty forestry practices contribute to forest fires.
- **Environmental Impact**: Fires emit pollutants like black carbon, contributing to glacier melt and regional climate change.

Forest Fire Situation in 2024

Mizoram: 3,738

Manipur: 1,702

Himachal Pradesh: 1,684

Assam: 1,652

Meghalaya: 1,252

Maharashtra: 1,215

Historical Transformation of Himalayan Forests
- **Exploitation for Railways**: Over the past two centuries, Himalayan forests have been extensively transformed, beginning with railway construction in the 1850s.
- **Loss of Rights and Deforestation**: British exploitation for railway construction led to deforestation and loss of customary rights.
- **Timber and Resin Extraction**: Deodar and Chir pine trees were heavily used for timber and resin.
- **Moisture-Retaining Forests**: Banj oak forests, which retain moisture, were replaced by Chir pines.

- **Current Coverage**: Presently, 17.8% of Himachal Pradesh's 37,033 sq km forest area is covered with Chir pines, which are highly prone to fires.

Great Himalayan National Park	
Location	Situated in the Banjaar Sub-Division of Kullu District, Himachal Pradesh, in the far Western Himalayas.
Area	Spans 1,171 sq km.
Constitution	Established in 1984 and officially notified as a national park in 1999.
UNESCO Status	Awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2014.
Topography	The park features a diverse mix of lush coniferous forests, meadows, glaciers, and mountain peaks.
Fauna	
Species Diversity	Surveys have identified 31 mammal species, 209 bird species, 12 reptile species, 9 amphibian species, and 125 insect species.
Notable Animals	Includes bharal (blue sheep), common leopard, snow leopard, Himalayan brown bear, Himalayan tahr, musk deer, and serow.
Birds	Endangered western tragopan, lammergeiers, Himalayan griffon vultures, and golden eagles.
Flora	
Plant Diversity	The park boasts 832 plant species from 128 families and 427 genera, representing 26% of Himachal Pradesh's total flora. This includes 794 angiosperm species, 11 gymnosperm species (pines, conifers, and cypresses), and 27 fern species.
Contiguous Boundaries	GHNP shares its boundaries with the Pin Valley National Park in the Trans-Himalaya range, the Rupi Bhabha Wildlife Sanctuary in the Sutlej watershed, and the Kanawar Wildlife Sanctuary in Parvati valley.

Global project 'paints' evidence of air pollution in India

Context: Combining digital light painting and low-cost air pollution sensors, the scientific team produced photographic evidence of pollution levels in cities across three countries — India, Ethiopia, and the U.K. — to spark debate among local communities.
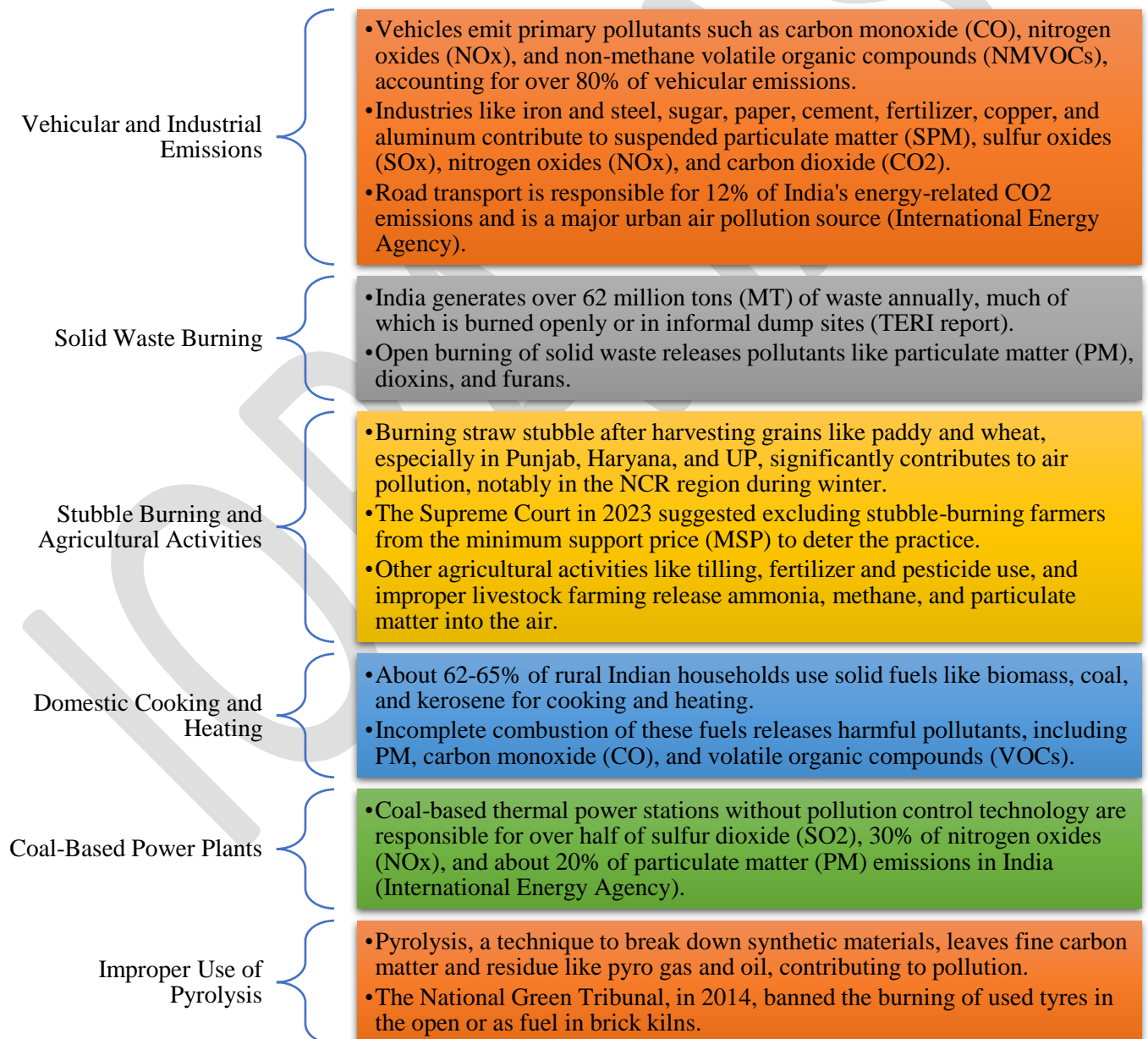
Key Highlights

- The study, published in Nature Communications Earth & Environment, highlights how photos from the 'Air of the Anthropocene' initiative sparked discussions on the impact of air pollution.

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- Air pollution is the top global environmental risk. By using light to create striking images, the initiative makes it easier for people to see and compare air pollution in different settings, turning an often invisible issue into something visible.
- 'Air of the Anthropocene' aims to foster conversations about air pollution, using art to communicate and engage people on the topic.

What is Air Pollution?
- Air pollution includes solids, liquids, gases, noise, and radioactive radiation in the atmosphere at harmful levels for humans, living organisms, property, or environmental processes.
- Pollutants can be natural or human-made, originating from sources like industrial activities, vehicle emissions, agriculture, wildfires, and volcanic eruptions.

Major Driving Factors of Air Pollution

Vehicular and Industrial Emissions
- Vehicles emit primary pollutants such as carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and non-methane volatile organic compounds (NMVOCs), accounting for over 80% of vehicular emissions.
- Industries like iron and steel, sugar, paper, cement, fertilizer, copper, and aluminum contribute to suspended particulate matter (SPM), sulfur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and carbon dioxide (CO2).
- Road transport is responsible for 12% of India's energy-related CO2 emissions and is a major urban air pollution source (International Energy Agency).

Solid Waste Burning
- India generates over 62 million tons (MT) of waste annually, much of which is burned openly or in informal dump sites (TERI report).
- Open burning of solid waste releases pollutants like particulate matter (PM), dioxins, and furans.

Stubble Burning and Agricultural Activities
- Burning straw stubble after harvesting grains like paddy and wheat, especially in Punjab, Haryana, and UP, significantly contributes to air pollution, notably in the NCR region during winter.
- The Supreme Court in 2023 suggested excluding stubble-burning farmers from the minimum support price (MSP) to deter the practice.
- Other agricultural activities like tilling, fertilizer and pesticide use, and improper livestock farming release ammonia, methane, and particulate matter into the air.

Domestic Cooking and Heating
- About 62-65% of rural Indian households use solid fuels like biomass, coal, and kerosene for cooking and heating.
- Incomplete combustion of these fuels releases harmful pollutants, including PM, carbon monoxide (CO), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Coal-Based Power Plants
- Coal-based thermal power stations without pollution control technology are responsible for over half of sulfur dioxide (SO2), 30% of nitrogen oxides (NOx), and about 20% of particulate matter (PM) emissions in India (International Energy Agency).

Improper Use of Pyrolysis
- Pyrolysis, a technique to break down synthetic materials, leaves fine carbon matter and residue like pyro gas and oil, contributing to pollution.
- The National Green Tribunal, in 2014, banned the burning of used tyres in the open or as fuel in brick kilns.

Climate conference in November to emphasise 'peace' and 'truce'

Context: 29th edition of the Conference of Parties (COP) will be held

Key Highlights

- The annual climate conference will emphasize "peace" and "truce" to allow countries to focus on climate solutions amidst ongoing conflicts.
- Azerbaijan, as the host, will lead COP-29 proceedings, guiding countries toward consensus on addressing the climate crisis.
- Most nations recognize the urgency of the problem and the need to limit temperature rises to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century.

What is the Conference of the Parties (COP)?

- COP is the annual United Nations (UN) climate meeting.
- In 1992, at the Rio Earth Summit, 154 countries signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a multilateral treaty aimed at stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous human-induced interference with the climate system.
- The treaty came into force two years later, and countries that are part of the UNFCCC meet annually at different venues.
- Today, there are 198 parties or signatories to the Convention.

Historical Context

- COP was established from a strong belief in the power of international agreements to tackle environmental problems.
- This belief was bolstered by the success of the 1987 Montreal Protocol, which protected the ozone layer, and the 1991 US-Canada agreement to combat acid rain by limiting sulfur dioxide (SO_2) emissions.

Key Milestones

First COP (1995): Held in Berlin, Germany, it focused on implementing the UNFCCC. An agreement was made to meet annually to discuss climate action and emissions reductions.

Kyoto Protocol (COP-3): In 1997, during COP-3 in Kyoto, Japan, an agreement placed international obligations on rich and industrialized countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by specified amounts.

Paris Agreement (COP-21)

Category	Details
Adoption and Entry into Force	- Adopted by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, France, in December 2015. - Entered into force on November 4, 2016.
Main Objectives	- **Limit Global Warming**: Keep global warming below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. - **Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**: Significantly reduce emissions by 2100. - **Support Countries**: Strengthen countries' ability to deal with the impacts of climate change. - **Provide Financing**: Offer financial support to developing countries to mitigate climate change.

Environmental Flows (E-Flows) Monitoring System

Context: The Union Jal Shakti Ministry launched an e-flow ecological monitoring system that allows real-time monitoring of river quality. This will aid the planning and monitoring of projects, river water quality, and other key parameters, according to officials.

Key Highlights

- The Environmental Flows (E-flows) monitoring system has been developed by the National Mission for Clean Ganga, a branch of the Jal Shakti Ministry. It was launched in the presence of Jal Shakti Minister C.R. Patil.

> **Namami Gange Programme**
> The Namami Gange programme is the Ministry's flagship initiative aimed at cleaning the Ganga. The programme now also includes its tributaries.

Key Features

- **Real-time Water Quality Analysis**: The system enables real-time monitoring of the water quality of the Ganga, Yamuna, and their tributaries.
- **Central Monitoring of Namami Gange Programme**: It allows central-level oversight of the Namami Gange programme activities, including:
  - Performance monitoring of sewage treatment plants (STPs).
  - Ensuring STPs operate at their rated capacity.
  - River water quality monitoring at various locations.

Significance of the E-flows Monitoring System

- **Ensuring Sustainable Flow**: The launch of the E-flows Monitoring System is a crucial step towards ensuring the continuous and sustainable flow of the Ganga.
- **Data Utilisation**: The system will use data from quarterly reports by the Central Water Commission.
- **Coverage**: The system will monitor 11 projects along the Ganga Main Stream.

Key Parameters Tracking

| Inflow | Outflow | Mandated E-flow |
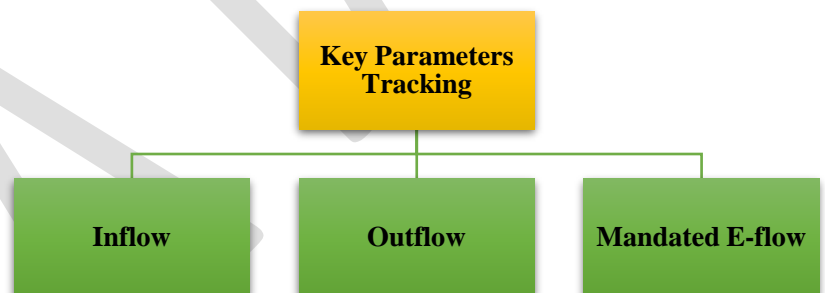
Indian cities are 'heat traps' that make summers worse: official

Context: Above-normal temperatures have been forecast for June in the northwest and central parts of the country, including Delhi, making it one of the longest heatwave spells

Key Highlights

- Indian cities have become "heat traps" due to rapid, unbalanced growth that consumes water bodies and increases greenhouse gas emissions. This transformation has led to significant temperature increases, turning urban areas into hot zones.
- IMD Forecast: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted above-normal temperatures for June in the northwest and central regions, including Delhi. This forecast suggests one of the longest heatwave spells in recent history.
- Temperature Trends: Since May 12, daily high temperatures in Delhi have exceeded 40 degrees Celsius, with predictions indicating they will remain above this mark until June 26. According to IMD's criteria, a heatwave starts at 40 degrees in the plains and 30 degrees in hilly areas.

Impact of Urban Heat

- **Temperature Study**: A study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) revealed that from 2001 to 2010, summer land surface temperatures in cities like Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai dropped by up

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to 13.2 degrees Celsius at night. However, between 2014 and 2023, the night-time cooling effect reduced to 11.5 degrees Celsius.

- **Long-term Plans for Delhi**: Delhi's strategy includes enhancing heat insulation in buildings, creating shelters for the urban poor and slum dwellers, and investing in cooling water bodies to mitigate the heat.

Key Components of HAPs

- **Development and Coverage**: Currently, 23 states are involved in developing these plans, though there is no centralized database for HAPs.
- **Plan Structure**: Each HAP typically includes a heat profile of the region, historical heatwave data, and a vulnerability assessment to identify high-risk areas. They outline detailed response strategies to be implemented before, during, and after heatwave events.

> **Heat Action Plans (HAPs)**
> To manage and mitigate the impact of heatwaves, India employs Heat Action Plans (HAPs) at state, district, and city levels, in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority and IMD.

Governmental Roles

- **Disaster Management**: Coordination of heatwave response and public safety measures.
- **Labour Departments**: Protection of workers from extreme heat conditions.
- **Police**: Ensuring enforcement of safety measures and aiding in public communication during heatwaves.

Recommendations from HAPs

Category	Recommendations
Early Warning and Communication	- Establish early warning systems - Effectively communicate heatwave risks to the public
Public Education	- Increase public awareness about heatwave risks - Promote preventive measures
Establish Heat Shelters and Cooling Centers	- Develop shelters and cooling centers - Ensure availability of clean drinking water to prevent dehydration
Healthcare Preparedness	- Equip healthcare facilities to handle heat-related illnesses
Long-term Urban Planning	- Implement tree planting - Use heat-resistant building materials - Apply cool roofing technologies - Minimize urban heat island effect

Striped Caecilian (Ichthyophis Spp)

Context: A limbless amphibian has been added to the fauna in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Key Highlights

Caecilians are limbless amphibians that spend most of their lives burrowed under the soil, making them the least studied among amphibian species. As an ancient group, they provide critical links to understanding evolution and intercontinental speciation.

Ideal Habitat in Kaziranga

Kaziranga's diverse ecosystem, which includes flood plains, wetlands, grasslands, and hill tracts, offers an ideal habitat for herpetofauna. The Kaziranga Tiger Reserve is home to:

Limbless amphibian found in Kaziranga for first time

GS3 : Environment

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

A limbless amphibian has been added to the fauna in the 1,307.49 sq. km Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Assam's wildlife officials said a team of herpetologists recorded the striped caecilian (*Ichthyophis spp*) in the tiger reserve for the first time during a rapid herpetofauna survey conducted from June 14-17.

The survey was conducted with support from Saibal Sengupta of Assam Don Bosco University; Abhijit Das of the Wildlife Institute of India; Rajeev Basumatary and Samrat Sengupta of D.R. College in eastern Assam's Golaghat; Jaydev Mandal of Madhab Choudhury College in western Assam's Barpeta; Jayaditya Purkayastha of Guwahati-based Help Earth; Jayanta Kumar Roy of Aaranyak; and Sushmita Kar of with Turtle Survival Alliance.

Reptiles and amphibians, collectively called herpetofauna, are the least studied but most vulnerable to climate change. "Caecilians are limbless amphibians that spend most of their lives burrowed under soil. They are, therefore, the least studied of the amphibian species. As they are an ancient species, their presence holds critical linkages to evolution and intercontinental speciation," a statement issued by the Kaziranga authorities said.

The diverse ecosystem of Kaziranga, comprising flood plains, wetlands, grasslands, and hill tracts on the periphery, provides an ideal habitat for herpetofauna. The tiger reserve houses 24 species of amphibians and 74 species of reptiles. It is also home to 21 of the 29 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India.

Kaziranga's Director, Sonali Ghosh, said, "a training and sensitisation programme was held to enhance the skills of forest personnel in herpetofauna identification and conservation for ensuring better management and protection of these vital species."

The striped caecilian. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

- o 24 species of amphibians
- o 74 species of reptiles
- o 21 out of 29 species of tortoises and freshwater turtles found in India

About Caecilians

- •Family: Ichthyophiidae
- •Body: Worm-like and limbless
- •Senses: Limited vision; relies on touch and smell for navigation
- •Habitat: Burrowed under soil
- •Diet: Carnivorous

Ecological Importance

- Evolution Insights: Their ancient lineage provides insights into evolution and intercontinental speciation.
- Environmental Indicators: As indicator species, caecilians play a crucial role in monitoring environmental health.
- Pest Control: They help control pest populations.

Kaziranga National Park Overview

Category	Details
Location	Situated between the Brahmaputra River and the Karbi (Mikir) Hills
Recognition	- Declared a National Park in 1974
	- Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985
"Big 5" Species	- Rhinoceros
	- Tiger
	- Elephant
	- Wild Water Buffalo
	- Swamp Deer
Vegetation Types	- Alluvial inundated grasslands
	- Tropical wet evergreen forests
	- Tropical semi-evergreen forests

Water stress can hurt credit profile

Context: Moody's Ratings on Tuesday warned that India's growing water shortage and increasingly frequent climate change-driven natural disasters, amid a rise in consumption and rapid economic growth, could negatively impact the country's sovereign credit strength.

Key Highlights

- **Rating**: Currently, India holds a Baa3 stable rating from Moody's, the lowest investment-grade rating.
- **Water Dependence**: India is heavily reliant on monsoon rains for water supply. Any decrease in water availability can disrupt industrial and agricultural operations.
- **Economic Impact**: Reduced water supply could lead to increased food prices, lower incomes for affected sectors, and potential social unrest.

Vulnerability and Growth Impact

- **High Vulnerability**: Moody's identifies India as one of the most vulnerable nations regarding water management among G-20 economies.

Water Availability Projections

- 2021: 1,486 cubic meters per capita annually.
- 2031: Projected to drop to 1,367 cubic meters per capita annually.

Water Stress Levels

- Below 1,700 cubic meters per capita indicates water stress.
- Below 1,000 cubic meters per capita signifies water scarcity.

- **Economic Growth**: Rapid economic growth, industrialisation, and urbanisation are depleting water resources in India.

Threats to India's Sovereign Credit Profile

- **Water Scarcity**: India's current Baa3 rating could be downgraded due to increasing water scarcity and climate change-induced natural disasters.
- **Sectoral Impact**: Key sectors such as manufacturing, coal-fired power plants, steel production, and agriculture are at risk.
- **Economic Consequences**: These issues could lead to inflation in food prices, reduced incomes for businesses and communities, and economic volatility.

Current State of Water in India

- **Water Scarcity**: Population vs. Resources: India has 18% of the world's population but only 4% of its freshwater resources, classifying it as a water-stressed country.
- **Contamination**: Approximately 50% of India's rivers are polluted, making the water unsafe for drinking and irrigation.
- **Groundwater Usage**: India is the world's largest user of groundwater, leading to significant depletion.

- **Vital Role**: Groundwater fulfills 80% of drinking water needs and two-thirds of agricultural irrigation requirements.
- **Extreme Weather**: About 75% of India's districts are prone to extreme weather events like droughts and floods, further threatening water availability.
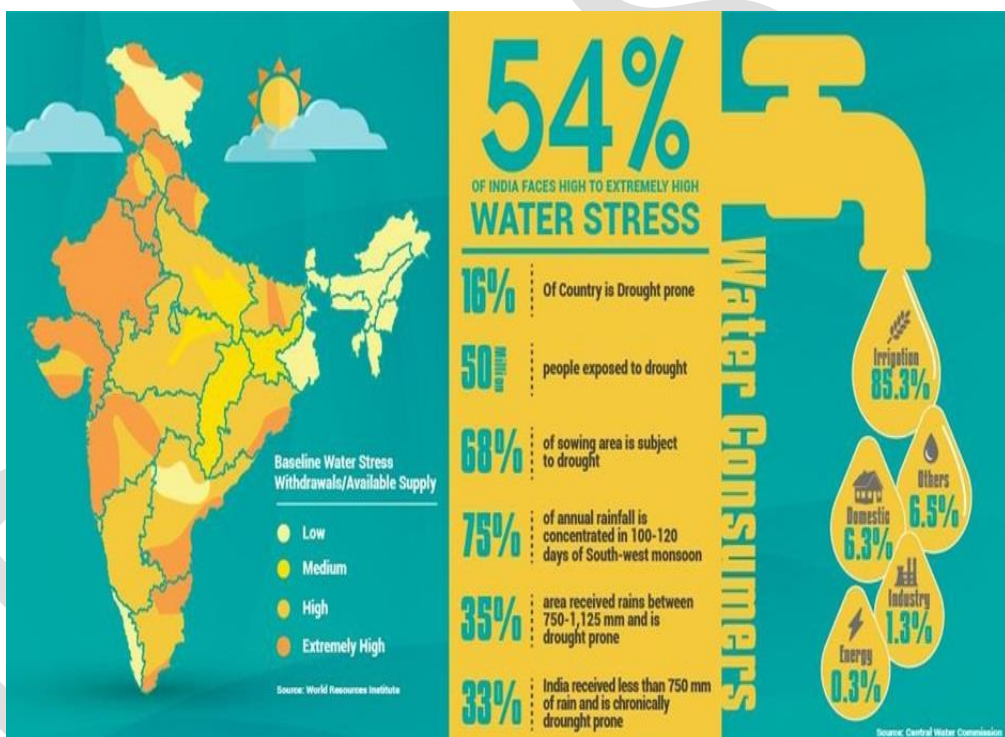
Solutions and Actions

- **Emission Reduction**: India is committed to reducing emissions and transitioning to non-fossil fuel energy sources, as stated in the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC).
- **Heat Action Plans**: Implementation of state-level heat action plans and early warning systems for heatwaves.
- **Local Interventions**: Cities can benefit from sustainable materials like cool roofs, permeable pavements, green infrastructures, and urban forests.
- **Regional Efforts**: National or regional-level emission reductions, large-scale afforestation, and rejuvenation of water bodies are essential for effective mitigation.

India's largest leopard safari opens at Bannerghatta

Context: South India's first and the country's largest leopard safari was inaugurated by Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre at the Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP).
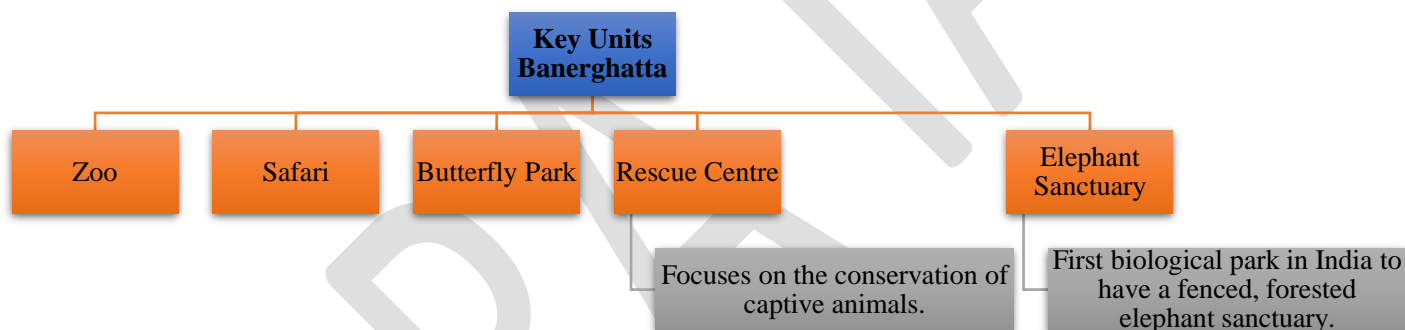
Key Highlights

- **Area and Fencing**: According to Central Zoo Authority guidelines, a 20-hectare area has been designated and fenced for the leopard safari.
- **Current Population**: Eight leopards have been released into this open forest area.
- **Importance**: Highlighting these top predators is crucial as Bannerghatta has a healthy population of free-ranging leopards (Panthera pardus).

Facility Details
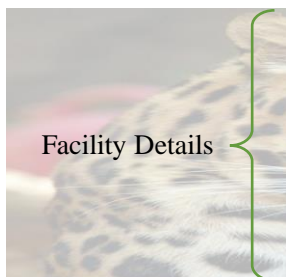
- Cost: The facility was developed at a cost of ₹4.5 crore.
- Terrain: The safari area features undulating terrain with natural rocky outcrops and semi-deciduous forest.
- Fencing: The area is enclosed with a vertical chain-link mesh, 4.5 meters high, and MS sheets inclined at a 30° angle for 1.5 meters.

About Bannerghatta Biological Park (BBP)

- **Origin:** BBP is part of Bannerghatta National Park and became an independent establishment in 2002.
- **Purpose**: Created to cater to the demand for eco-recreation, eco-tourism, and conservation.
- **Area**: Initially, 545 hectares of forest were allocated for the park, later extended to 731.88 hectares.
- **Proximity**: Located about 22 kilometers south of Bengaluru city, Karnataka.

Key Units Banerghatta

- Zoo
- Safari
- Butterfly Park
- Rescue Centre — Focuses on the conservation of captive animals.
- Elephant Sanctuary — First biological park in India to have a fenced, forested elephant sanctuary.

Bannerghatta Biological Park and National Park

Aspect	Details
Leopard Safari	20 hectares fenced; 8 leopards released; ₹4.5 crore cost; undulating terrain; vertical chain-link mesh fencing.
Establishment	Part of Bannerghatta National Park, independent since 2002; created for eco-recreation, eco-tourism, and conservation; extended from 545 to 731.88 hectares.
National Park History	Near Bangalore, Karnataka, in Anekal range; declared a National Park in 1974; first butterfly enclosure in India in 2006.
Natural Features	Suvarnamukhi stream; Dry Deciduous Scrub Forests, Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests, Southern Tropical Moist Mixed Forests.
Flora	Narcissus latifolia, Schleichera oleosa, Sandalwood, Neem, Tamarind, Bamboo, Eucalyptus.
Fauna	Asian Elephant, Indian Gaur, Tiger, Sambar Deer, Spotted Deer, Leopard, Wild Dog, Wild Pig, Sloth Bear, Common Mongoose, Pangolin, Slender Loris, Black-naped Hare.

Uttarakhand govt. to study risk posed by 13 glacial lakes during monsoon

Context: With the monsoon setting in, the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Department (USDMA) will do a vulnerability study of 13 glacial lakes, five of them in "high-risk zone", from July. The study aims to provide data to help avoid calamities such as lake outbursts.

Key Highlights

The lakes in Darma, Lasaryanghati, and the Kutiyangti Valley in Pithoragarh district, along with Vasudhara Tal lake in the Dhauli Ganga basin in Chamoli district, are posing significant risks. These lakes, which cover areas between 0.02 sq. km and 0.5 sq. km, are located at elevations of 4,000 meters above sea level.

Monitoring and Assessment

- **Report Request**: The Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) has requested the Indo-Tibetan Border Police to provide a report on the status of the five high-risk glacial lakes.
- **Expert Teams**: In March, the State government established two expert teams to evaluate the risks associated with these glacial lakes. The teams included specialists from:
    - Indian Institute of Remote Sensing
    - Geological Survey of India
    - National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee
    - Centre for Development of Advanced Computing
    - Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology

Historical Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)

- **Kedarnath Valley (June 2013)**: A devastating flood led to the death of 6,000 people.
- **Rishiganga Valley (February 2021)**: A flood claimed 72 lives in Chamoli.

What is a GLOF?

- A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) is a catastrophic flood that occurs when the natural dam containing a glacial lake fails, releasing a large volume of water. This can happen due to rapid glacier melting, heavy precipitation, or the buildup of meltwater.

GLACIAL LAKE OUTBURST FLOODS (GLOF)
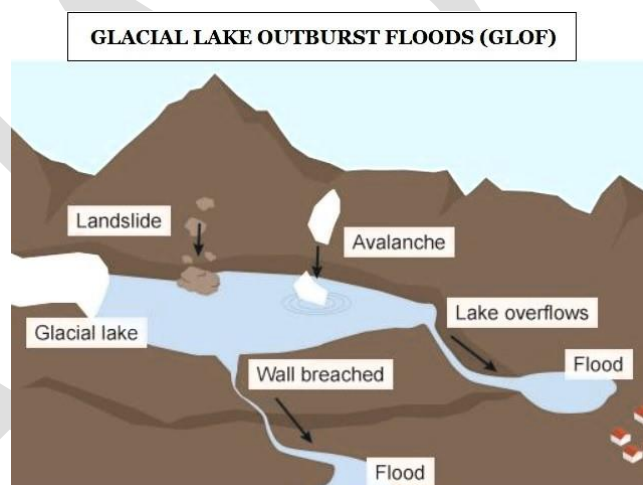
Causes of GLOFs

- Volume Changes: Fluctuations in the glacier's size or water volume can trigger a GLOF.
- Water Level Changes: Sudden changes in the lake's water level due to melting or precipitation.
- Earthquakes: Seismic activity can destabilize the natural dam, leading to a flood.
- Climate Change: According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), climate change is causing glaciers to retreat in the Hindu Kush Himalayas, forming many new glacial lakes, which are prone to GLOFs.

Notable GLOFs in Uttarakhand

Event	Location	Date	Impact
Kedarnath Flood	Kedarnath Valley	June 2013	6,000 deaths
Chamoli Flood	Rishiganga Valley	February 2021	72 deaths

Antelope-like mammal from Bhutan recorded at lowest elevation in western Assam

Context: The mainland serow, a mammal that looks like a cross between a goat and an antelope, has been recorded at the lowest elevation beyond Bhutan, its natural home, in Assam.

Key Highlights

- A team of scientists observed a solitary mainland serow (Capricornis sumatraensis thar) at an elevation of 96 meters above sea level in Raimona National Park, located in western Assam.
- This elusive species has been documented for the first time within a 1 km radius of a human settlement.

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- **Altitudinal Range**: According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the mainland serow typically inhabits regions at altitudes ranging from 200 meters to 3,000 meters.
- **Geographical Range**: Its known habitat extends across the border into the Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.

About	Details
Mainland Serow	A mammal that looks like a cross between a goat and an antelope. The mainland serow inhabits areas at altitudes of 200 metres to 3,000 metres
Habitat	Species of serow native to the Himalayas, Southeast Asia and China. Bhutan is the natural home and habitat of mainland serow.
Characteristics	- The mainland serow, both male and female, is around three feet high at the shoulder, and typically weighs around 200 lb. - The mainland serow possesses guard hairs on its coat that are bristly or coarse. These also cover the layer of fur closest to its skin. - The horns are only characteristic of the males and are light-colored. These are approximately six inches in length, and curve slightly towards the animal's back.
Behaviour	The mainland serow is territorial and lives alone or in small groups. Females give birth to single young after a gestation period of about eight months
Conservation Status	- IUCN Status- Vulnerable - CITES- Appendix I
Prominent Habitat in India	- Its habitat is across the border in the Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary - and the Royal Manas National Park in Bhutan.

Disaster Management

Assam floods

Context: The flood situation in Assam remained unchanged with more than six lakh people affected.

Key Highlights
- The flood situation in Assam remains critical, with more than six lakh people in 10 districts affected by the rising waters.
- The rivers Kopili, Barak, and Kushiyara are flowing above the danger levels, displacing over 40,000 people who are now taking refuge in relief camps across various districts.

- Multiple agencies, including the National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force, local administration, and volunteers, are conducting rescue and relief operations.
- Road and rail communications in several parts of the state are disrupted due to the floods.

Why Assam Gets Flooded Every Year

The Brahmaputra Factor	The Monsoon Factor	Riverbank Erosion	Human Intervention	Climate Change

The Brahmaputra Factor
- **Geographical Setting**: Assam is located at the foothills of the Himalayas and includes the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys.
- **River Characteristics**: The Brahmaputra flows through Assam for about 650 km with an average width of 5.46 km. Originating from the high elevations of the Kailash range, the river becomes highly sedimented by the time it reaches Assam's lower elevations.
- **Sedimentation**: The flattening of the slope causes a drop in the river's velocity, leading to the deposition of large quantities of sediment and debris on the riverbed, raising its level. During summer, glacier melt increases sedimentation, contributing to the flooding.

The Monsoon Factor
- **Intense Rainfall**: The Northeast experiences intense monsoon rains, with Assam receiving an average annual rainfall of around 2900 mm. Most precipitation occurs in June and July.
- **Pre-Monsoon Rainfall**: April and May see significant rainfall due to thunderstorms, saturating the soil and setting the stage for flooding during the heavy rains of June.

Riverbank Erosion
- **Erosion Process**: As the sediment-laden rivers and their tributaries move through Assam, they erode soil and sediment from the banks, expanding the river's width and contributing to flooding. This erosion is a severe problem, with the Brahmaputra's width increasing up to 15 km in some areas.

Human Intervention
- **Embankment Construction**: Initially constructed in the 1960s to control floods, many embankments in Assam have outlived their utility or are in poor condition. These barriers are often breached during floods, leading to widespread inundation.
- **Population Pressure**: The population boom in Assam has put additional strain on the state's ecology. According to the 2011 census, the population density in the Brahmaputra valley has significantly increased, exacerbating the flood situation.

Climate Change
- **Increased Rainfall Events**: A report by the state government predicts a 38% increase in extreme rainfall events. Heavy rainfall, combined with glacier melt due to rising temperatures, means that rivers will carry more water and sediment before reaching Assam.
- **Flash Floods**: The increased water and sediment load from Himalayan rivers and the swelling of smaller rivers due to incessant rainfall raise the likelihood of frequent flash floods in low-lying areas.

Mitigation and Management Strategies
- **Strengthening Embankments**: Repairing and reinforcing existing embankments to prevent breaches.

- **Improving Drainage Systems**: Enhancing urban and rural drainage infrastructure to quickly channel floodwaters away from inhabited areas.
- **Early Warning Systems**: Implementing advanced early warning systems to alert residents of impending floods.
- **Public Education**: Raising awareness about flood preparedness and response strategies among the local population.
- **Reforestation and Afforestation**: Planting trees along riverbanks to reduce erosion and stabilize soil.
- **Sustainable Urban Planning**: Ensuring that urban development does not encroach on natural water bodies and floodplains.

Heatwave and Heatstrokes

Context: M.P., Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh record thousands of cases of heatstrokes.

Key Highlights

- **NCDC Advisory**: The National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has warned that the country may experience above-normal seasonal maximum temperatures, continuing the trend of increasing summertime heat.

Health Centre Protocols	Identify and implement active cooling strategies based on available resources.
	Develop internal protocols and train healthcare staff.
	Ensure emergency cooling resources are available in health facilities and ambulances.
	Provide sufficient drinking water and cooling appliances in waiting and treatment areas.
	Rapidly assess and cool patients with suspected heatstroke using standard treatment protocols.

- **State Preparedness**: States are advised to ensure all hospitals and health facilities maintain a digital record of heatstroke cases and deaths, both suspected and confirmed.
- **At-Risk Groups**: Extreme heat poses risks to people of all ages, particularly older adults, pregnant women, and those with chronic health conditions, especially cardiovascular issues.

Understanding Heatwaves

- Heatwaves are prolonged periods of excessively hot weather that adversely impact human health, the environment, and the economy. As a tropical country, India is particularly susceptible to heatwaves, which are becoming more frequent and intense.

Criteria for Declaring a Heatwave in India

Plains and Hilly Regions	Based on Departure from Normal	Based on Actual Maximum Temperature	Declaration
• Heatwave: Maximum temperature of at least 40°C in plains and 30°C in hilly regions.	• Heatwave: Departure from normal by 4.5°C to 6.4°C. • Severe Heatwave: Departure from normal by more than 6.4°C.	• Heatwave: Actual maximum temperature ≥ 45°C. • Severe Heatwave: Actual maximum temperature ≥ 47°C.	• If the above criteria are met in at least 2 stations in a meteorological subdivision for at least two consecutive days.

Fatality Factors
- High temperatures alone are not fatal, but the combination of high temperature and high humidity (wet bulb temperature) makes heatwaves deadly.
- High moisture content in the atmosphere hampers sweat evaporation, causing the body temperature to rise sharply, which can be fatal.

El Nino Effect
- El Nino events, characterized by the warming of the Pacific Ocean, affect global weather patterns, altering temperature, rainfall, and wind patterns.
- The summer of 2023 is expected to be particularly hot due to the end of the strong La Nina phase in the equatorial Pacific Ocean and the early onset of an El Nino event.

Causes of Heatwaves

Global Warming

Global warming, caused by activities such as burning fossil fuels, deforestation, and industrial processes, leads to higher temperatures and altered weather patterns, resulting in heatwaves.

Urbanisation

Rapid urbanisation creates "urban heat islands," where densely populated areas with buildings and concrete surfaces absorb and retain more heat, exacerbating temperatures during heatwaves.

Region	Heatwave Criteria	Severe Heatwave Criteria
Plains	Max Temp ≥ 40°C or Departure from normal by 4.5°C to 6.4°C	Max Temp ≥ 47°C or Departure from normal by >6.4°C
Hilly Regions	Max Temp ≥ 30°C	Max Temp ≥ 45°C
Coastal Areas	Max Temp Departure ≥ 4.5°C from normal (Actual Temp ≥ 37°C)	N/A

Economy

GDP

Context: India's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for FY24 is estimated to have grown by 8.2%.

Key Highlights
- Real GDP Growth: India's real GDP for FY24 is estimated to have increased to 8.2%, up from 7% in FY23.
- Nominal GDP Growth: The nominal GDP grew by 9.6% in FY24, compared to a growth rate of 14.2% in FY23.
- Real Gross Value Added (GVA): GVA is likely to have expanded by 7.2% in FY24.
- Manufacturing Sector: Significant growth of 9.9% in FY24.
- Mining and Quarrying: Growth rate of 7.1% in FY24.
- Q4 FY24 Estimates: Nominal GVA and nominal GDP growth rates were estimated at 8.0% and 9.9%, respectively.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- Definition: Total monetary or market value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific period.
- Purpose: Measures the value of total output by tracking total demand.

Nominal vs Real GDP

Aspect	Nominal GDP	Real GDP
Definition	Calculated using current market prices; it is the actual observed variable.	Calculated using constant 2011-12 prices, removing the effect of inflation.

Formula	GDP = C + I + G + (X – M)	Real GDP = Nominal GDP - Inflation Rate
Inflation	Because it is measured in current prices, growing nominal GDP from year to year might reflect a rise in prices as opposed to growth in the number of goods and services produced. If all prices rise more or less together, known as inflation, then this will make nominal GDP appear greater.	The rate at which the value of a currency falls, leading to a rise in the general level of prices for goods and services.
Importance	Crucial for budget-making.	Matters more to the general public.

Gross Value Added (GVA)
- **Definition**: Measures the value added in monetary terms in various productive areas of the economy.
- **Purpose**: Tracks total output by looking at total supply.

GDP vs GVA
- **Formula**: GDP = GVA + Taxes earned by the government - Subsidies provided by the government.
- **Comparison**: The difference between GDP and GVA figures reveals the government's role in the economy.

Fiscal Deficit

- **Definition**: A shortfall in the government's income compared with its spending.
- **Significance**: It indicates the health of government finances and tracks the amount the government needs to borrow to meet its expenses.

April core sector output rises 6.2% as electricity, steel buoy

Context: India's infrastructure (core sector) output in April rose 6.2%, backed by strong electricity and steel output

Key Highlights
- Infrastructure Output: Accounts for 40% of industrial production and measures activity in eight sectors, including refinery products and electricity.

Sector Performance

Sector	April Growth	Previous Month Growth
Coal Production	7.5%	-
Electricity	9.4%	-
Steel Production	7.1%	-
Natural Gas	8.6%	-
Cement	0.6%	-
Crude Oil	1.6%	-
Refinery Products	3.9%	1.5%
Fertiliser Production	-0.8%	-1.3%

Analysis
- The significant rise in infrastructure output in April highlights the robust growth in the core sectors of India's economy. The strong performance in electricity and steel production has been a major contributing factor to this growth. Despite the overall positive trend, the fertiliser sector experienced a decline, continuing its downward trajectory from the previous month.
- By maintaining and enhancing output in these crucial sectors, India can sustain its industrial growth and support economic stability.

S&P Global Ratings

Context: S&P Global Ratings will watch the incoming Indian government's fiscal consolidation path for the next two years for a possible sovereign ratings upgrade

Key Highlights
- **Sovereign Rating Outlook**: S&P Global Ratings has raised India's sovereign rating outlook from 'stable' to 'positive.' The rating remains at "BBB-."
- **Reason for Upgrade**: The upgrade is attributed to India's strong economic fundamentals.

About S&P Global
- S&P Global Inc. is an American publicly traded corporation.
- Headquarters: Manhattan, New York City.
- The company specializes in financial information and analytics.

Heatwave, Polls Slow Factory Output

Context: May's HSBC India Manufacturing PMI survey suggests activity levels in the key sector decelerated to a three-month low.

Key Highlights
- **Slowing Factory Activity**: India's manufacturing activity likely decelerated to a three-month low in May due to reduced working hours amidst an intense heatwave.
- **PMI Index**: The seasonally adjusted index dropped to 57.5 in May from 58.8 in April.
- **Moderation in Orders**: New orders for factories declined to their lowest level since February, affected by election-related disruptions and competition impacting domestic demand.

What is PMI?
- **Survey-Based Measure**: PMI surveys ask respondents about changes in key business variables compared to the previous month.
- **Purpose**: It provides information on current and future business conditions to company decision-makers, analysts, and investors.
- **Sectors**: Calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors, with a composite index also constructed.

Factor	Description
Scale	0 to 100
Trend Indicator	Lower current month PMI compared to the previous month suggests economic contraction
Release Frequency	Monthly, usually at the start of each month
Global Compilation	By IHS Markit for over 40 economies worldwide
IHS Markit	A global leader in information, analytics, and solutions, part of S&P Global

Significance of PMI
- **Key Driver**: Manufacturing and services sectors are crucial for economic growth.
- **Positive Sign**: A high PMI reading indicates strong performance and contribution to economic growth.
- **Negative Sign**: A low PMI reading signals struggles in the manufacturing and services sectors, potentially dragging down overall economic performance.

Scale (PMI values range from 0 to 100)
- Above 50: Indicates expansion.
- Below 50: Indicates contraction.
- 50: Indicates no change.

Trend
- If the PMI of the current month is lower than that of the previous month, it suggests economic contraction.

Release
- Usually released at the start of each month, making it a good leading indicator of economic activity.

Compilation
- Compiled by IHS Markit for over 40 economies worldwide. IHS Markit is part of S&P Global and is a global leader in information, analytics, and solutions for major industries and markets.

RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged, Raises GDP Forecast To 7.2%

Context: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5%.

Key Highlights

- **GDP Growth Forecast**: The MPC has revised its GDP growth forecast upwards from the previous estimate of 7% to 7.2% for the financial year 2024-2025.
- **Inflation and Growth**: The MPC remains focused on withdrawing accommodation to prevent inflation from accelerating while supporting growth. These decisions aim to achieve the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4% within a band of +/- 2%, while fostering growth.
- **Economic Resilience**: High-frequency indicators of domestic activity show resilience for 2024-25. An above-normal south-west monsoon is expected, which is positive for agriculture and rural demand. However, risks from geopolitical tensions, international commodity price volatility, and geoeconomic fragmentation remain.

> **About Repo Rate**
>
> **Definition**: The repo rate is the interest rate charged by the Reserve Bank of India when lending funds to commercial banks. The term 'Repo' stands for 'Repurchasing Option' or 'Repurchase Agreement'.
>
> **Agreement**: Both parties sign a repurchase agreement stating the repurchasing of the securities on a specific date at a predetermined price. The repo rate in India is controlled by the Reserve Bank of India

What is the Monetary Policy Committee?

- **Statutory Framework**: The MPC is a statutory and institutionalized framework under the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, aimed at maintaining price stability while considering the objective of growth.
- **Leadership**: The Governor of RBI serves as the ex-officio Chairman of the committee.
- **Policy Determination**: The MPC determines the policy interest rate (repo rate) necessary to achieve the inflation target of 4%.
- **Establishment**: An RBI-appointed committee led by the then deputy governor Urjit Patel in 2014 recommended the establishment of the Monetary Policy Committee.

RBI to ease FEMA guidelines, draft paper expected soon

Context: In the midst of changing dynamics of international trade, RBI is planning to to rationalise the Guidelines for Export and Import of Goods and Services under Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999.

About Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999

FEMA, which replaced the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) of 1973, came into force on June 1, 2000, adapting to the changing economic conditions of post-liberalisation India.

- **Objectives of FEMA**
  o Facilitate External Trade and Payments: Promote orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market in India.
  o Regulation of Foreign Exchange Transactions: Includes procedures, formalities, and dealings related to foreign exchange.
- **Provisions and Regulations**
  o Foreign Exchange Transactions: FEMA regulates the acquisition, holding, payment, and settlement of foreign exchange transactions, including the export and import of currency.
  o Empowerment of RBI: The act empowers the RBI to create rules and regulations to enforce the provisions of FEMA.
  o Civil Offence: Offences related to foreign exchange under FEMA are treated as civil offences.
 o Penalties and Fines: Violations can result in penalties and fines.
- **Headquarters and Enforcement**
  o Enforcement Directorate: FEMA's head office, known as the Enforcement Directorate, is located in Delhi.

Applicability of FEMA

FEMA applies to the entire country, including agencies and offices outside India owned or managed by Indian citizens. It governs the following entities and transactions:

  o Foreign Exchange
  o Foreign Security
  o Exportation and Importation: Covers commodities and services to and from India.
  o Securities: As defined under the Public Debt Act, 1994.
  o Transactions: Purchase, sale, and exchange (i.e., transfer).
  o Banking, Financial, and Insurance Services
  o Overseas Companies: Owned by NRIs with at least 60% ownership.
  o Indian Citizens: Residing in India or abroad (NRIs).
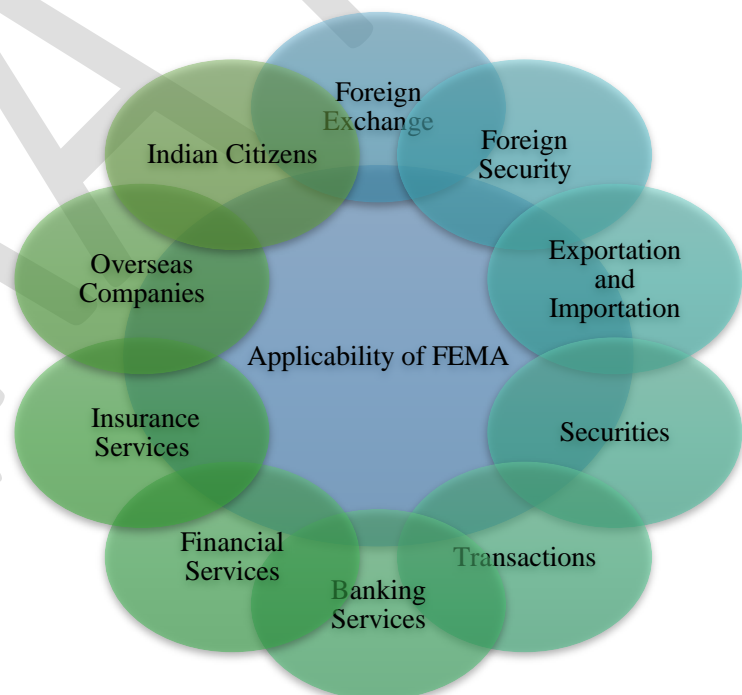
RBI's Role and Authorized Persons

FEMA assigns the RBI a controlling role in managing foreign exchange. Since RBI cannot directly handle foreign exchange transactions, it authorizes "Authorized Persons" to deal in foreign exchange. These authorized persons can include:

- Authorized Dealers
- Money Changers

- Off-Shore Banking Units
- Any other persons authorized by the RBI to deal in foreign exchange or securities.

WPI inflation

Context: May WPI inflation spikes to 15-month high on food prices. Food inflation surges to 10-month peak of 7.4% driven by steeper fruit, vegetable, cereal prices; manufactured products see return of price rise.

Key Highlights

- Wholesale price inflation accelerated to 2.61% in May, more than double April's rate.
- Food inflation surged to 7.4%, the highest in 10 months.
- The rise was driven by higher prices for vegetables, fruits, pulses, and cereals.
- Manufactured products saw a return to price increases after 14 months of deflation.

Economists' Insights

- The acceleration in WPI inflation indicates potential for a further increase in consumer prices.
- This is despite retail inflation easing to a 12-month low of 4.75% in the previous month.
- The spike in global food and industrial input prices adds to the inflationary pressures.

What is the Wholesale Price Index (WPI)?

- **Definition**: Measures changes in the prices of goods sold and traded in bulk by wholesale businesses to other businesses.
- **Publisher**: Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Usage**: Most widely used inflation indicator in India.
- **Criticism**: Not reflective of retail prices paid by the general public.
- **Base Year**: Revised from 2004-05 to 2011-12 in 2017.

What is the Consumer Price Index (CPI)?

- **Definition**: Measures price changes from the perspective of a retail buyer, capturing the cost of commodities and services such as food, medical care, education, and electronics.
- **Publisher**: National Statistical Office (NSO).
- **Components**:
  - CPI for Industrial Workers (IW)
  - CPI for Agricultural Labourer (AL)
  - CPI for Rural Labourer (RL)
  - CPI (Rural/Urban/Combined)
- **Base Year**: 2012, with a new series for CPI-IW released in 2016.
- **Usage by MPC**: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) uses CPI data to control inflation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) adopted the CPI as its key measure of inflation in April 2014.

Impact of Heatwaves

- Heatwaves in May contributed to the highest vegetable inflation rate in nine months, at 32.4%.
- Fruit inflation reached a six-month high of 5.8%.
- Cereal prices rose by 9%, and pulses hit a six-month high of 22%.
- Tomato prices increased by 64.5% in May, up from 40.6% in April.
- Onion and potato inflation slightly eased to just over 58% and 64%, respectively.

Centre unveils 10th tranche of commercial coal mine auction

Context: The Union Coal Ministry unveiled the 10th tranche of commercial coal mine auction.

Key Highlights

- The auction includes 67 coal mines, some of which were offered in previous rounds, spanning across Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, and Telangana.
- The list includes fully explored, partially explored, and three coking coal mines.
- In the previous nine rounds, 107 coal mines were successfully auctioned, attracting an investment of ₹38,400 crore.
- This initiative aims to reduce dependency on coal imports.

What is Coal?

- Coal is a fossil fuel in the form of sedimentary rock, often referred to as 'Black Gold.'
- It is a conventional and widely available source of energy.
- Uses of coal include domestic fuel, industrial applications (iron and steel), steam engines, and electricity generation. Electricity produced from coal is known as thermal power.
- Leading coal producers globally are China, the US, Australia, Indonesia, and India.

Distribution of Coal in India

Gondwana Coal Fields (250 million years old)

- Gondwana coal constitutes 98% of India's total reserves and 99% of production.
- It includes India's metallurgical grade and superior quality coal.
- Found in:
- Damodar Valley (Jharkhand-West Bengal)
- Mahanadi Valley (Chhattisgarh-Odisha)
- Godavari Valley (Maharashtra)
- Narmada Valley

Tertiary Coal Fields (15 – 60 million years old)

- Tertiary coal has low carbon content but is rich in moisture and sulphur.
- Mainly found in extra-peninsular regions.
- Key areas include:
- Assam
- Meghalaya
- Nagaland
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Jammu and Kashmir
- Himalayan foothills of Darjeeling (West Bengal)
- Rajasthan
- Uttar Pradesh
- Kerala.

Classification of Coal

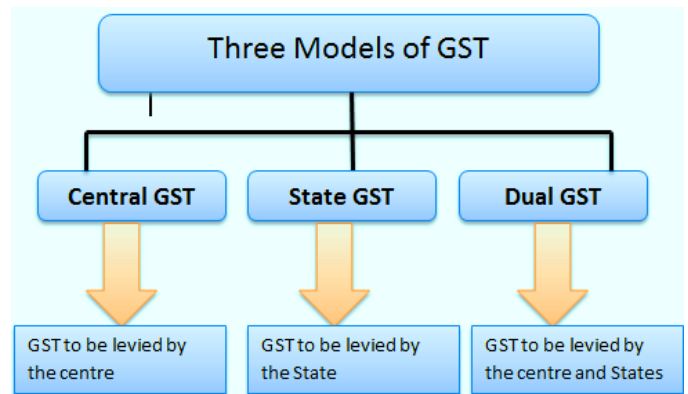| Type	Carbon Content	Locations
Anthracite	80 - 95%	Small quantities in Jammu and Kashmir
Bituminous	60 - 80%	Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Lignite	40 - 55% (high moisture)	Rajasthan, Lakhimpur (Assam), Tamil Nadu
Peat	< 40% (first stage of transformation)	Found in various locations at the early transformation stage

GST

Context: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 53rd GST Council meeting in New Delhi on Saturday

Key Highlights

- **GST Council Decisions**: The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council approved measures to ease compliance for small businesses. It also exempted hostel accommodation costing up to ₹20,000 a month and railway services

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from GST. Additionally, the council resolved to reconvene in August to discuss restructuring the multiple rates under the seven-year-old indirect tax.

- **New Members and Agenda**: With 11 new members from states like Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Odisha, the council addressed only part of its extensive agenda, which included clarifications and trade facilitation measures. However, it did provide some relief to taxpayers, such as waiving interest and penalties on certain past tax demands and taking steps to reduce litigation.

Three Models of GST

Central GST	State GST	Dual GST
GST to be levied by the centre	GST to be levied by the State	GST to be levied by the centre and States

What is the GST Council?

The Goods and Services Tax regime was implemented after the Constitutional (122nd Amendment) Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament in 2016. More than 15 Indian states ratified it in their state Assemblies, leading to the President's assent.

What is GST?

GST (Goods and Services Tax) amalgamates Central & State Taxes. It mitigates double taxation and makes Indian products more competitive.

What are the benefits of GST?

- Final price of goods to be lower
- Relatively large segment of small retailers will wither be exempted from tax or will suffer very low tax rates
- Will boost foreign investment
- Generate more employment
- Average Tax burden on firms to come down

/AkashvaniAIR

State Taxes to be subsumed within GST

- State Tax
- Central Sales Tax
- Purchase Tax
- Luxury Tax
- Entry Tax
- Entertainment Tax
- Taxes on Advertisements
- Taxes on Lotteries, Betting and Gambling

About

- The GST Council is a joint forum of the Centre and the states.
- It was established by the President 279A as per Article (1) of the amended Constitution.

Members

- The Council includes the Union Finance Minister as the chairperson and the Union Minister of State (Finance) from the Centre.
- Each state can nominate a minister in charge of finance or taxation or any other minister as a member.

Functions

- According to Article 279, the Council is meant to "make recommendations to the Union and the states on important issues related to GST, such as the goods and services that may be subjected to or exempted from GST and model GST Laws."
- It also determines various rate slabs of GST. For instance, an interim report by a panel of ministers suggested imposing a 28% GST on casinos, online gaming, and horse racing.

Recent Developments

- This meeting is the first since the Supreme Court's decision in May 2022. The court ruled that the GST Council's recommendations are not binding.
- The Supreme Court stated that Article 246A of the Constitution gives both Parliament and state legislatures the "simultaneous" power to legislate on GST. The recommendations of the Council are the product of a collaborative dialogue involving the Union and States.
- This decision was welcomed by some states, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, who believe it allows states more flexibility in accepting the recommendations according to their needs.

Economy Robust Despite Global Risks

Context: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the 29th issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR).

Key Highlights

Economic and Financial Resilience: The Indian economy and financial system continue to be robust and resilient, supported by macroeconomic and financial stability.

Capital Ratios of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs)	• Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR): 16.8% • Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) Ratio: 13.9% • Data as of End-March 2024.
Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)	• Gross NPA (GNPA) Ratio: 2.8% (multi-year low) • Net NPA (NNPA) Ratio: 0.6% • Data as of End-March 2024.
Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)	• CRAR: 26.6% • GNPA Ratio: 4.0% • Return on Assets (RoA): 3.3% • Data as of End-March 2024.
Macro Stress Tests for Credit Risk	• Baseline Scenario: 16.1% • Medium Stress Scenario: 14.4% • Severe Stress Scenario: 13.0%
Global Economic Concerns	The global economy faces increased risks due to prolonged geopolitical tensions, high public debt, and slow progress in achieving disinflation.

About the Financial Stability Report (**FSR**)

Publication Frequency: Biannual

Purpose

Reflects the collective assessment of the Sub-Committee of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC), led by the Governor of RBI.

Evaluates risks to financial stability and the resilience of the financial system.

Discusses issues related to the development and regulation of the financial sector..

SEBI tightens norms on financial influencers, eases rules for delisting

Context: SEBI introduced new criteria to decide on stocks that can be linked to derivative products, such as futures and options.

Key Highlights

- SEBI, India's market regulator, instructed brokers and mutual funds to stop using unregulated financial influencers for marketing and advertising campaigns.
- Financial influencers engaged solely in investor education are exempt from these restrictions.
- As of April, India had 154 million trading accounts, a significant increase from 36 million in April 2019.
- Regulated entities must ensure their associated individuals adhere to SEBI's rules, including avoiding promises of assured returns.

Changes to Delisting Rules

- SEBI approved changes to make it easier for companies to exit stock exchanges.
- Companies can now offer shareholders fixed prices for shares as an alternative delisting mechanism, replacing the reverse book-building process.

What is SEBI?

- SEBI, a statutory body, was established on April 12, 1992, under the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992.
- Its primary functions are to protect investors' interests and regulate the securities market.
- Before SEBI, the Controller of Capital Issues was the regulatory authority, operating under the Capital Issues (Control) Act, 1947.
- In April 1988, SEBI was created as the regulator of capital markets in India.

POWERS OF SEBI

1 Quasi- Judicial
Power to give judgements on unethical & fraudulent activities.

2 Quasi- Executive
Power to implement regulations & take legal action against violators.

3 Quasi- Legislative
Framing the rules & regulations to protect the interest of investors

- Initially, SEBI lacked statutory powers, but it became autonomous with the SEBI Act of 1992.

Headquarters and Offices

- SEBI's headquarters are in Mumbai, with regional offices in Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Chennai, and Delhi.

Structure of SEBI

- The SEBI Board includes a chairman and several whole-time and part-time members.
- SEBI appoints various committees as needed to address pressing issues.

Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

- SAT protects entities aggrieved by SEBI's decisions.
- It consists of a Presiding Officer and two other Members, with powers equivalent to a civil court.
- Appeals against SAT's decisions can be made to the Supreme Court.

Powers and Functions of SEBI

- SEBI can draft regulations, conduct inquiries, pass rulings, and impose penalties.
- Issuers: Provides a marketplace for issuers to increase their finance.
- Investors: Ensures safety and supplies precise and accurate information.

- Intermediaries: Enables a competitive professional market for intermediaries.

Regulatory Authority
- SEBI can regulate money pooling schemes worth Rs. 100 crore or more.
- The SEBI Chairman can order "search and seizure operations."
- SEBI can request information, such as telephone call data records, from any entity involved in securities transactions under investigation.

Additional Roles
- SEBI registers and regulates venture capital funds and collective investment schemes, including mutual funds.
- It promotes and regulates self-regulatory organizations.
- It prohibits fraudulent and unfair trade practices in securities markets.

Roof collapse at Delhi airport claims one life

Context: One person was killed and six were injured when the canopy over the forecourt at Terminal 1 of the Indira Gandhi International Airport collapsed on cars following heavy rain in New Delhi
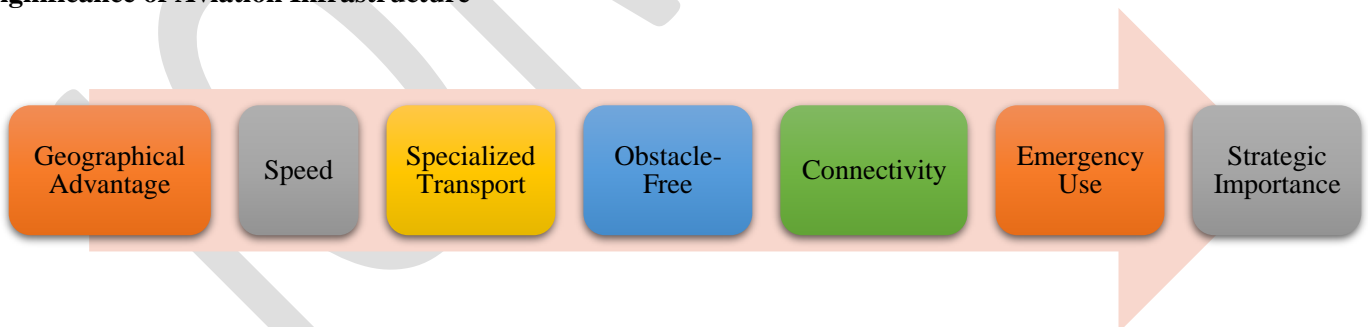
Key Highlights
- One person was killed and six were injured when the canopy over the forecourt at Terminal 1 of Indira Gandhi International Airport collapsed on cars following heavy rain in New Delhi.
- The airport is operated by a GMR Group-led consortium.
- According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), parts of Delhi near the airport recorded a massive 228.1 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours prior to the incident.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has assigned a team from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, to examine the cause of the collapse and has also asked all airports to conduct a thorough inspection of the structural strength of their buildings within two to five days.

About the Aviation Sector
The aviation sector is managed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), founded in 1994 under the Airports Authority Act. All government airports in India must be developed, financed, operated, and maintained by AAI, while the remaining airports are governed by the Aircraft Act (1934).

Significance of Aviation Infrastructure

| Geographical Advantage | Speed | Specialized Transport | Obstacle-Free | Connectivity | Emergency Use | Strategic Importance |

- **Geographical Advantage**: Large plains in India provide good landing sites and an excellent transition from railways.
- **Speed:** It is the fastest way to transport both people and cargo compared to other forms of transportation.
- **Specialized Transport**: Ideal for transporting expensive, light, and perishable items that cannot be moved by road or rail.
- **Obstacle-Free**: Physical impediments like rivers, mountains, and valleys do not hinder air transport, allowing for smooth global movement.

- **Connectivity**: Improves connectivity to smaller cities and the northeastern states, enhancing regional connectivity.
- **Emergency Use**: Widely used during earthquakes, floods, accidents, and famines when trains and roads are not effective for rescue operations.
- **Strategic Importance**: Crucial for advancing both internal and external security.

Challenges of Aviation Infrastructure

- **Space and Land**: There is a problem of unavailability of space and land for airport expansion.
- **Approval Delays**: Government approval processes often delay airport infrastructure development.
- **Funding Issues**: Lack of funds challenges the government, prompting a shift towards Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models for infrastructure development.
- **High Ticket Prices**: Increased airline ticket prices might drive customers to trains and other transportation modes.
- **Safety Oversight**: India's air safety oversight is weaker than that of Bangladesh, the Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and North Korea.
- **Administration Issues**: Ineffective management of air navigation, air traffic, and airline slots.
- **Skill Shortages**: There is a shortage of pilots and gaps in the skills of pilots, crew members, and ground handling personnel.
- **Fuel Costs**: Fuel accounts for 45% of operating expenses in India, compared to a global average of 30%, due to heavy central and state taxation. India's aviation fuel prices are higher than those of ASEAN and Middle East nations.
- **UDAN Scheme**: Many planned routes under the UDAN Scheme have not yet become operational, leaving the country's hinterland partially disconnected from the aviation industry.
- **Airport Construction**: India constructs airports only when there is a need, which slows the expansion of the aviation sector.
- **Cargo Mobility**: Despite India's status as a "Unilateral Open Sky" nation, cargo mobility is still in its infancy.
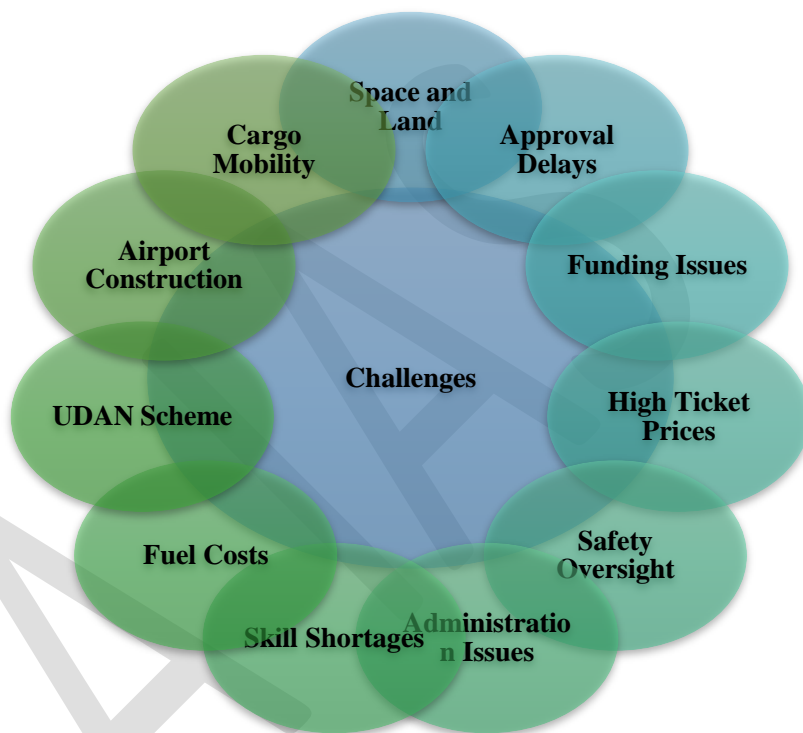
Interest equalisation scheme extended for MSME exporters

Context: The Department of Commerce has extended the Interest Equalisation Scheme for pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit for Micro, Small and Medium-scale (MSME) exporters till August 31.

Key Highlights

- **Extension Details**: The outlay for the extended period is ₹750 crore. The extension is not applicable to non-MSME exporters beyond June 30. The scheme's terms will remain unchanged.
- **Beneficiaries**: This extension will particularly benefit the labour-intensive garment sector, which predominantly consists of MSME units.

About the Interest Equalisation Scheme

- **Introduction**: First implemented on April 1, 2015, the Interest Equalisation Scheme provides pre- and post-shipment export credit to exporters in rupees. Initially valid for five years until March 31, 2020, the scheme has been extended multiple times, including during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Implementation**: The scheme is implemented by the RBI through various public and non-public sector banks, which provide pre- and post-shipment credit to exporters. It is jointly monitored by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and the RBI through a consultative mechanism.
- **Purpose**: The scheme helps identified export sectors remain internationally competitive and achieve high levels of export performance.

Features of Interest Equalisation Scheme	Eligible exporters must submit a certification from an external auditor to the concerned bank to claim the benefit.
	Banks provide Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES) benefits to eligible exporters and claim reimbursement from the RBI based on the external auditor's certification.
	The scheme currently provides an interest equalisation benefit at the rate of 2% on pre- and post-shipment rupee export credit to merchant and manufacturer exporters of 410 identified tariff lines at the 4-digit level, and 3% to all MSME manufacturer exporters.
	The scheme is now fund-limited, capping the benefit to individual exporters at ₹10 crore per annum per Import Export Code (IEC).
	Banks lending to exporters at an average rate exceeding Repo + 4% are debarred from participating in the scheme.

What are MSMEs?

- MSME stands for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. These businesses are involved in the production, processing, and preservation of goods and commodities.
- Classification: MSMEs are classified based on their investment in plant and machinery for manufacturing or equipment for service enterprises, as well as their annual turnover.

MSME Regulation in India

- In 2007, the Ministry of Small-Scale Industries and the Ministry of Agro and Rural

Industries merged to form the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. This ministry develops policies, facilitates programs, and monitors implementation to support MSMEs and aid in their growth.
- The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Act of 2006 addresses various issues affecting MSMEs, establishes a National Board for MSMEs, defines the concept of "enterprise," and empowers the Central Government to enhance MSME competitiveness.
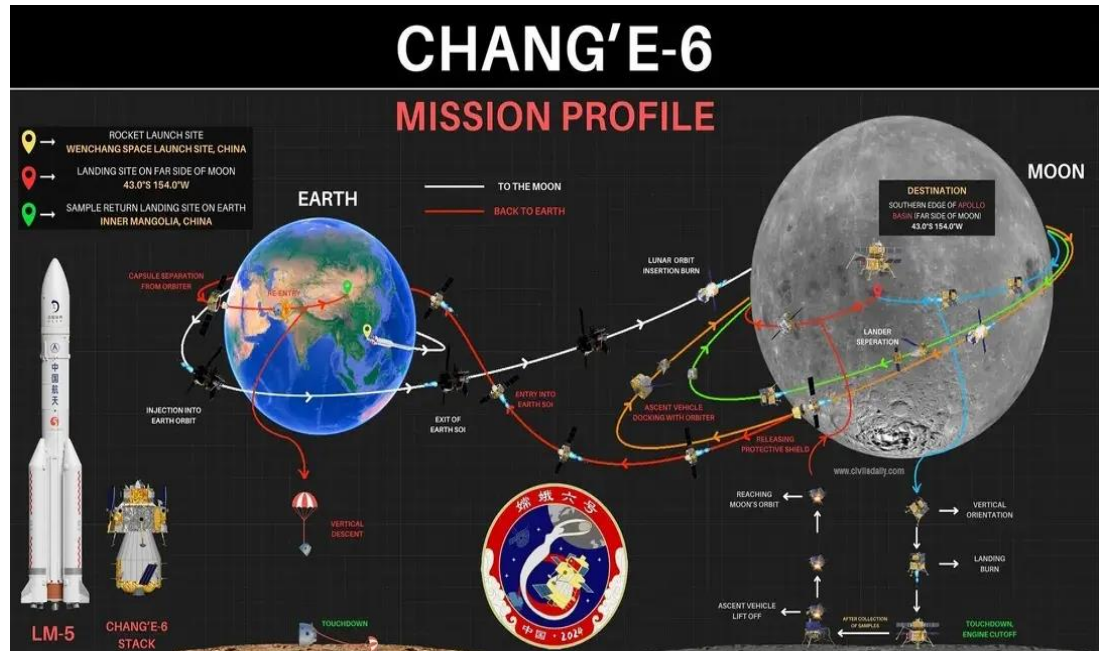
Science & Technology

China probe successfully lands on far side of moon to collect samples

Context: China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe successfully landed on the far side of the moon to collect samples

Key Highlights

- The Chang'e-6 set down in the immense South Pole-Aitken Basin, one of the largest known impact craters in the solar system.
- The landing module touched down at 6:23 a.m. Beijing time in a huge crater known as the South Pole-Aitken Basin.
- The mission is the sixth in the Chang'e moon exploration program, which is named after a Chinese moon goddess. It is the second designed to bring back samples, following the Chang'e 5, which did so from the near side in 2020.
- In China's current mission, the lander is to use a mechanical arm and a drill to gather up to 2 kilograms (4.4 pounds) of surface and underground material for about two days.
- An ascender atop the lander will then take the samples in a metal vacuum container back to another module that is orbiting the moon. The container will be transferred to a re-entry capsule that is due to return to Earth in the deserts of China's Inner Mongolia region about June 25.

What is the Near side and Far side of the Moon?

- The near side of the moon is what is seen from Earth, while the far side always faces outer space
- The far side is also known to have mountains and impact craters, contrasting with the relatively flat expanses visible on the near side.
- The probe has drilled into the core and scooped rocks from the surface.

JWST spots oldest galaxy The Role of Bacteria in Genetic Innovation

Context: NASA's James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) has spotted the earliest-known galaxy, one that is surprisingly bright and big considering it formed during the universe's infancy — at only 2% its current age.

Key Highlights

- The JWST has looked far back in time, observing the galaxy as it existed about 290 million years after the Big Bang, which happened approximately 13.8 billion years ago. This era is known as cosmic dawn.

- The galaxy, named JADES-GS-z14-0, spans about 1,700 light-years across.
- It has a mass equivalent to 500 million stars the size of our Sun.
- The galaxy was rapidly forming new stars, approximately 20 per year.

Scientific Revelations
- Prior to JWST's findings, scientists were unaware that galaxies could exist so early in the universe's history, especially not ones as luminous as this.
- Three main theories have been proposed to explain the brightness of early galaxies:
- Supermassive black holes consuming material.
- The new findings suggest this is unlikely because the light is distributed over a wider area than expected from black hole activity.

James Webb Space Telescope

With plans to launch in 2014, the Webb telescope will extend the discoveries of the Hubble telescope by using infrared to scan the universe and find galaxies created after the Big Bang.
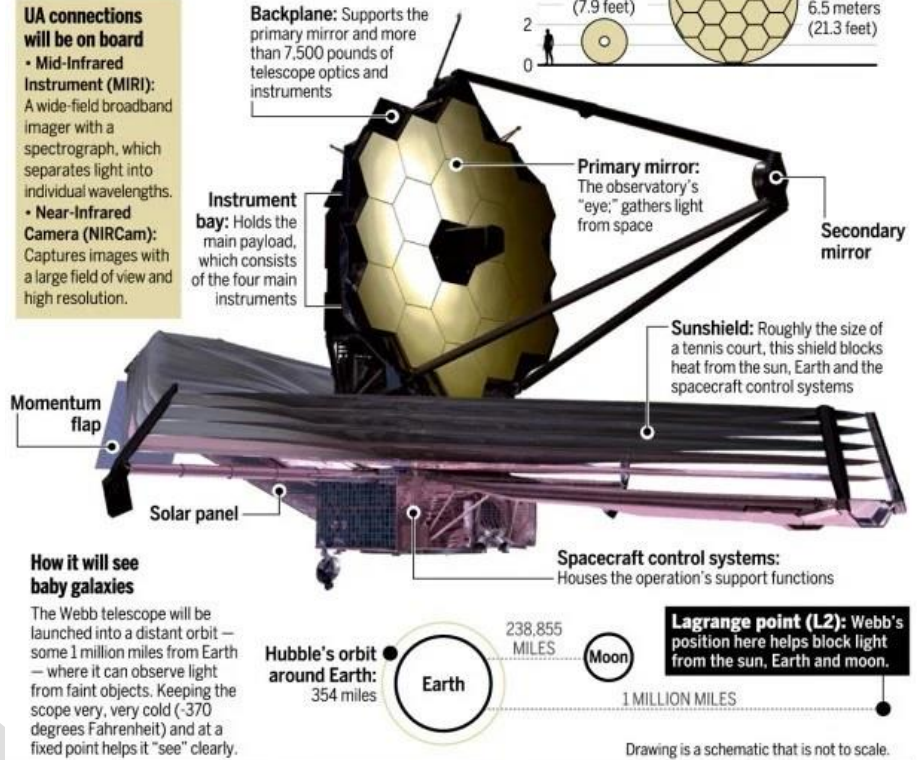
5/14/10 SOURCES: NASA; MCT

KORI RUMORE / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The Role of Bacteria in Genetic Innovation

Context: Researchers at Columbia University have suggested that the Klebsiella pneumoniae bacteria can play a role in stopping infections.

Key Highlights
- When Klebsiella pneumoniae bacteria are infected by bacteriophages, they use reverse transcriptase to create a specific protein named Neo.
- This protein can put the bacterial cell in a state of suspended animation, halting the infection.

Significance of Reverse Transcriptase
- Amid the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the enzyme reverse transcriptase gained prominence.
- This enzyme allows cells to create DNA copies from RNA, revolutionizing molecular biology research.
- Researchers can reverse-transcribe messenger RNAs into DNA, clone that DNA into bacterial vectors, and study gene functions.

Potential and Impact of the Discovery
- Reverse transcriptase can uncover new genetic evolution mechanisms and viral resistance, leading to novel therapeutic strategies and biotechnological tools.

> **Impact on HIV Management**
> - Reverse transcriptase played a critical role in managing HIV infections in the 1980s.
> - Antiviral agents targeting this enzyme helped turn a deadly disease into a manageable one.

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- The discovery that RNA can give rise to DNA challenged the central dogma of molecular biology, which stated that genetic information flows only from DNA to RNA to protein.

Applications in Diagnostics
- Clinicians use reverse transcriptase to convert RNA to DNA to estimate the amount of viral material in samples, which is vital in studying RNA viruses like hepatitis B and HIV.

Evolutionary Significance
- Retroelements in the human genome and bacterial reverse transcriptases share a common evolutionary history and functional mechanisms.
- Bacterial reverse transcriptases, believed to be the precursors to their eukaryotic counterparts, exhibit similar mechanisms.

With Bad News from Cassini, Is Dark Matter's Main Rival Theory Dead?

Context: Various theories associated with astrophysics came into light recently. To explain why galaxies do not fly apart, scientists proposed the existence of an invisible substance called dark matter.

Milgromian Dynamics (MOND)

MOND proposed by Israeli physicist Mordehai Milgrom in 1982. Suggests that gravity behaves differently than Newton's laws predict when it becomes very weak, such as at the edges of galaxies. MOND has successfully predicted galaxy rotation without needing dark matter and has other notable successes.

> **The Cassini Mission**
> - The Cassini spacecraft orbited Saturn from 2004 until its mission ended in 2017 with a deliberate crash into the planet.
> - Cassini's data could potentially detect MOND effects in the outer Solar System.

- **Effects of MOND**
    - While MOND effects typically occur several thousand light years away from a galaxy, significant effects can be observed at just a tenth of a light year from an individual star.
    - This distance is only a few thousand times larger than an astronomical unit (AU), the distance between the Earth and the Sun.
    - Weaker MOND effects might also be detected in the outer Solar System.
- **Other Drawbacks of MOND**
    - MOND predicts that wide binary stars, which orbit a common center several thousand AU apart, should move 20% faster than expected by Newton's laws.
    - MOND fails to explain the energy distribution of comets coming from the distant outer Solar System.
    - The orbits of these bodies are usually close to the plane of planetary orbits, but MOND would cause them to have much larger inclinations.

Newtonian Gravity vs. MOND
- Newtonian gravity is preferred over MOND for scales below about a light year and for scales larger than galaxies.
- MOND cannot explain the motions within galaxy clusters, unlike dark matter, which was proposed by Fritz Zwicky in the 1930s.
- Dark matter provides the necessary gravity to hold galaxy clusters together, while MOND fails in the central regions but provides too much gravity in the outskirts.
- What is the Cassini Mission?
- Cassini–Huygens Mission:
- A space-research mission by NASA, the European Space Agency, and the Italian Space Agency.
- The mission involved sending a space probe to study Saturn, its rings, and its moons.

- The Cassini spacecraft included NASA's Cassini space probe and ESA's Huygens lander, which landed on Titan, Saturn's largest moon.

Points to Remember	
What is Milgromian Dynamics (MOND)?	A theoretical framework modifying Newton's laws to explain galaxy rotation without dark matter.
Introduction to MOND	- Initiated in 1983 by physicist Mordehai Milgrom.
	- Proposes modifications to Newton's laws of gravity and motion in conditions of very low acceleration.
	- Aimed at explaining galaxy rotation curves without the need for dark matter.
Success and Acceptance	- Successful in predicting galaxy rotation and other notable achievements.
	- Not widely accepted; most astrophysicists prefer the Lambda-CDM model for its better observational fit.
Behavior of Gravity Under MOND	- Modifies gravity only at low accelerations, not specific distances.
	- Typically affects areas several thousand light years away from galaxies.
	- Effects become significant much closer to individual stars.

Global Firms Are Adopting Large AI Models To Cut Costs

Context: Enterprises globally are adopting Large Action Models (LAMs) that understand complex goals communicated with natural language.

Key Highlights

- LAMs are sophisticated AI models that extend beyond generating and interpreting text like ChatGPT.
- They can interact with real-world applications and devices to perform tasks autonomously.
- End-to-End Vacation Planning: Handle all aspects of planning a vacation, from booking flights and hotels to creating itineraries.
- Job Application Automation: Streamline the process of applying for jobs, including creating and submitting applications.
- Investment Portfolio Optimization: Manage and optimize investment portfolios based on user preferences and market trends.
- Personalized Social Media Content Creation: Create and tailor social media content that aligns with individual user preferences.
- Continuous Learning and Adaptation: Continuously learn from interactions and adapt to user preferences for improved performance.

Capabilities of LLMs

- Contextual Inference: Understand context to generate coherent and relevant responses.
- Multilingual Translation: Translate text into languages other than English.
- Text Summarization: Condense large texts into shorter summaries.
- Question Answering: Respond to both general and specific questions.
- Creative Writing and Code Generation: Assist in tasks such as writing stories, articles, or generating code.

What are Large Language Models (LLMs)?

- LLMs are AI programs designed to recognize and generate text, among other functions.
- They are trained on vast datasets, giving them the name "large."
- LLMs use deep learning, a type of machine learning, to understand the relationships between characters, words, and sentences.

Aditya-L1

Context: ISRO releases images of sun captured by Aditya-L1.
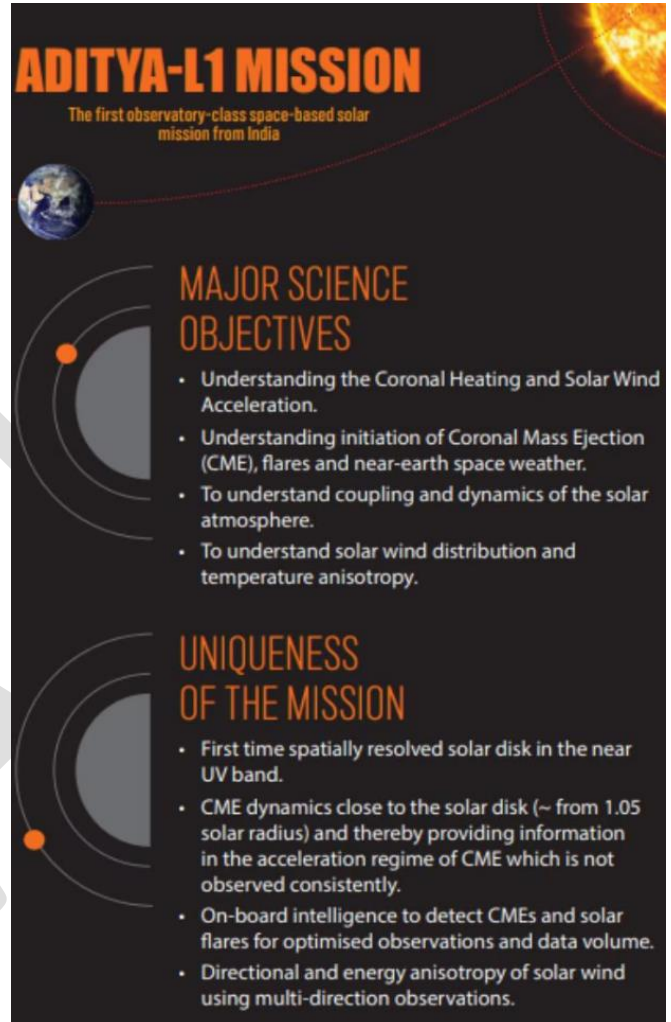
Key Highlights

- **Solar Images Captured**: Two remote sensing payloads aboard India's first solar mission, Aditya-L1, have captured images of the sun and its dynamic activities during a solar storm in May.
- **Solar Flares and CMEs**: Between May 8 and 15, several X-class and M-class flares erupted in the sun's active region AR13664, accompanied by coronal mass ejections (CMEs) on May 8 and 9.
- **Scientific Benefits**: According to ISRO, these images will help study solar flares, energy distribution, sunspots, space weather prediction, solar activity, and UV radiation over a wide wavelength range. They will also aid in the study of long-term solar variations.
- **VELC Observations**: The VELC payload conducted observations in one of the spectroscopic channels for the emission line 5303 Angstrom. Raster scans of the solar corona were carried out on May 14 to capture coronal activities in this specific spectral line.

Aditya-L1 Mission

- **Mission Overview**: Aditya-L1 is India's first space-based observatory-class solar mission to study the sun from a distance of 1.5 million kilometers. It will take about 125 days to reach the L1 point.
- **Previous Missions**: This is ISRO's second astronomy observatory-class mission after AstroSat (2015).
- Orbit: The spacecraft is planned to be placed in a halo orbit around the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) of the Sun-Earth system.
- **Comparison with Other Missions**: The mission's journey is notably shorter than India's previous Mars orbiter mission, Mangalyaan.
- **Objective**
  o The mission aims to provide valuable insights into the solar corona, photosphere, chromosphere, and solar wind.
  o The primary objective is to understand the sun's behavior, including its radiation, heat, particle flow, and magnetic fields, and how these impact Earth.

What are Lagrange Points?

- **Definition**: Lagrange points are special positions in space where the gravitational forces of two large orbiting bodies, such as the sun and the Earth, balance each other out. This allows a small object, like a spacecraft, to stay at these points with minimal fuel usage to maintain its orbit.
- **Characteristics**: There are five Lagrange Points, each with distinct characteristics, enabling a small mass to orbit in a stable pattern amid two larger masses.

Lagrange Points in the Sun-Earth System	L1: Considered the most significant for solar observations. A satellite placed in the halo orbit around L1 can continuously view the sun without any occultation or eclipses. It currently hosts the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory Satellite (SOHO).
	L2: Positioned directly behind Earth as viewed from the sun, L2 is excellent for observing the larger universe without Earth's shadow interference. The James Webb Space Telescope orbits the sun near L2.
	L3: Located behind the sun, opposite Earth, just beyond Earth's orbit, offering potential observations of the far side of the sun.
	L4 and L5: Objects at L4 and L5 maintain stable positions, forming an equilateral triangle with the two larger bodies. These points are often used for space observatories, such as those studying asteroids.

New Portable Atomic Clock

Context: Researchers have built a portable optical atomic clock that can be used onboard ships. While it traded some accuracy for size and robustness, it was still more accurate than other vessel-borne timekeeping options. According to the researchers, it is the most performant optical clock at sea

Key Highlights

- **Role in GPS:** Atomic clocks are essential for the Global Positioning System (GPS), which is used daily for navigating cities, responding to emergencies, and organizing military operations.
- **Limitations:** Despite their sophistication, traditional atomic clocks are bulky, power-hungry, fragile, and expensive. Therefore, they are usually limited to large research facilities.
- **New Developments**
  - **Portable Optical Atomic Clock**: A recent study published in Nature introduced a portable optical atomic clock for use on ships. These clocks are less accurate than traditional atomic clocks but still more accurate than other vessel-borne timekeeping options.
  - **Advancements**: This portable clock is the most advanced optical clock for use at sea, marking significant progress in optical timekeeping.

About Atomic Clocks

- **Fundamentals**: Atomic clocks keep time using atoms, with Cs-133 (a caesium isotope) being a popular choice. The International Committee for Weights and Measures first defined one second using Cs-133 in 1967. India also uses Cs-133 for its official timekeeping.

Optical Atomic Clocks

- **Higher Accuracy**: Optical atomic clocks are even more accurate than traditional ones. They use lasers to stimulate atomic transitions, with the resonance frequency in the optical range, which includes visible light and ultraviolet and infrared radiation.
- **Coherent Light**: The lasers produce coherent light, meaning the emitted light waves have the same frequency and stable wavelengths, resulting in precise and stable properties.

- **Energy Levels**: Atoms can jump between different energy levels by absorbing energy. In a Cs atomic clock, the energy needed to jump to a higher level matches the frequency of microwave radiation, which corresponds to the duration of a second.

Mechanism
- Microwave Radiation: Cs atoms are placed in a cavity with microwave radiation of a specific frequency. When this frequency matches the transition energy of the Cs atoms, resonance occurs.
- **Oscillations**: The Cs-133 atoms absorb the radiation and jump to a higher energy level. One second passes when the Cs-133 atom completes 9,192,631,770 oscillations between energy levels.
- **Accuracy**: A feedback mechanism detects changes in the resonance frequency and adjusts the microwave radiation to maintain resonance, resulting in high accuracy. A caesium atomic clock loses or gains a second only every 1.4 million years.

Miniaturization Efforts
- **Portable Clock Components**: The new study aimed to fit the optical atomic clock within a standardized rack used in data centres, laboratories, and telecommunications facilities by miniaturizing its components.
- **Spectrometer**: Designed to measure transition frequencies, it was miniaturized to a volume of 2.5 litres.
- **Laser System**: Built with optical fibres, the system had a volume of 1 litre and operated at a wavelength of 1,064 nm.
- **Frequency Comb**: This device generates equally spaced optical frequencies, providing a stable reference for tracking transitions. It occupied a volume of 0.5 litres.

Final Product
- **Autonomous Operation**: The clock was equipped with software to autonomously initialize from an off state to full operation, monitoring temperature, identifying transitions, activating components, and ensuring system stability.
- **Specifications**: The final clock had a volume of 35 litres (about the size of a large backpack), weighed around 26 kg, and consumed 85 W of power, slightly more than an incandescent light bulb.

Points to Remember

Component	Function	Volume
Spectrometer	Measures transition frequencies	2.5 litres
Laser System	Uses optical fibres to operate at a wavelength of 1,064 nm	1 litre
Frequency Comb	Generates equally spaced optical frequencies	0.5 litres
Total Volume	Combined size of all components	35 litres
Weight	Overall weight of the clock	26 kg
Power Consumption	Energy usage	85 W

Kavach System

Context: Despite rising number of accidents, Kavach work still on the slow track.

Key Highlights
- Kavach automatically applies brakes to prevent collisions if the loco pilot does not take action when another train is approaching on the same track within specified speed limits.
- Railway Board Chairperson Jaya Varma Sinha indicated that the recent accident was likely due to human error. To minimize such errors, the Ministry plans to implement Kavach in a mission mode.
- The installation of Kavach along the Howrah-Delhi route is expected to be completed this year, with the Northeast Frontier Railway section to follow in the next phase.
- Preparatory work, including surveys and detailed project reports, has been completed for an additional 6,000 km.

- Field trials of Kavach began in February 2016, and the system was adopted nationally in July 2020.

What is Kavach

- Kavach is a train control system with anti-collision features developed by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) in collaboration with three Indian vendors.
- It has been adopted as India's National Automatic Train Protection (ATP) System.

Safety Standards

- Adheres to Safety Integrity Level-4 (SIL-4) standards.
- Monitors the existing signaling system and alerts the loco pilot when approaching a 'red signal'.
- Applies automatic brakes if necessary to prevent overshooting signals.
- Sends SoS messages during emergencies.
- Features centralized live monitoring of train movements through the Network Monitor System.
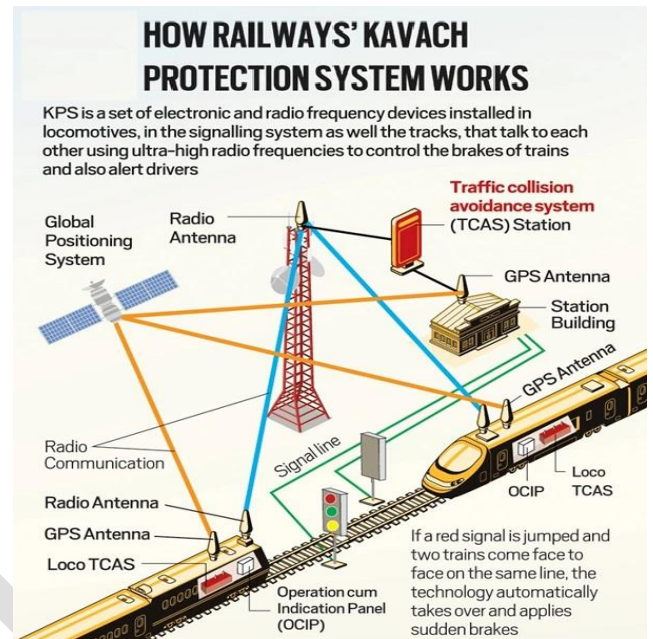
Centre of Excellence

The Indian Railways Institute of Signal Engineering & Telecommunications (IRISET) in Secunderabad, Telangana, hosts the 'Centre of Excellence' for Kavach.

Components of Kavach

First Component

Incorporation of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology into the tracks. RFID uses radio waves to identify objects or individuals and reads wireless device information from a distance without physical contact or line of sight.

Second Component

The locomotive is equipped with RFID readers, a computer, and brake interface equipment.

Third Component

Radio infrastructure, such as towers and modems, installed at railway stations to support the system's functionality.

Challenges in Deployment

- The deployment cost of Kavach is ₹50 lakh per kilometer.
- Currently, Kavach covers only approximately 1,500 km of the 68,000 km rail network, posing a significant challenge for comprehensive implementation.

Russia ready to ship turbine hall valves for Kudankulam

Context: Russia is all set to ship the first batch of 26 turbine hall pipeline valves, totally weighing about 27.5 tonnes, for the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project's (KKNPP) reactors 5 and 6.

Key Highlights

- **Temperature Resistance**: These specially designed valves can withstand temperatures up to 350 degrees Celsius.
- **Source**: The valves are being shipped from Rosatom's machine-building plant, Petrozavodskmash.
- **Destination**: The shipment is headed to the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), which currently operates two 1,000 MWe VVER reactors with Russian technical expertise. Four additional reactors of similar capacity are under construction.
- **Type of Valves**: The shipment includes high-pressure and low-pressure gate valves for installation in the turbine hall of the nuclear power plant.

Function and Testing

- **Primary Function**: The valves ensure a tight shutoff of fluid or gas flow, ensuring reliable system operation.
- **Testing**: Each valve undergoes a series of factory checks, including pneumatic, hydraulic, and tightness tests. The valves have a high class of tightness, verified through life tests under operating parameters in Rosatom-accredited testing laboratories.
- **Route**: The valves are transported from Petrozavodskmash's production site to the Great Port of St. Petersburg by road, and then shipped by sea to the KKNPP site.
- **Previous Installations**: Similar valves from Petrozavodsk have been installed in the reactor and turbine halls of the Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant and the Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant. These valves are essential in piping systems to monitor and control fluid or gas flow.
- **Rosatom's Commitment**: Rosatom has agreed to supply fuel to the power units of the KKNPP throughout their operational life.

Valve Specifications and Transport

Points to Remember	
Temperature Resistance	Up to 350 degrees Celsius
Manufacturing Plant	Petrozavodskmash (Rosatom's machine-building plant)
Destination	Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP)
Current Reactors	2 x 1,000 MWe VVER reactors
Under Construction	4 additional reactors of similar capacity
Valve Types	High-pressure and low-pressure gate valves
Primary Function	Tight shutoff of fluid or gas flow to ensure system reliability
Testing	Pneumatic, hydraulic, and tightness tests; life tests under operating parameters
Transport Route	Road to Great Port of St. Petersburg, then by sea to KKNPP
Previous Installations	Leningrad Nuclear Power Plant and Belarusian Nuclear Power Plant
Fuel Supply Agreement	Rosatom will supply fuel to KKNPP power units throughout their operational life

SIPRI

Context: China has 500 nuclear warheads, says SIPRI

Key Highlights

- India's nuclear arsenal has reached 172 warheads this year, slightly surpassing Pakistan, which has 170.
- In contrast, China has three times that number, with 500 warheads, some of which are reportedly on high operational alert for the first time, according to the Swedish think tank Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- SIPRI also noted that India is bolstering the undersea leg of its nuclear triad and developing long-range missiles.

Recent Indian Naval Developments
- The second SSBN Arighat was launched in November 2017 and underwent advanced sea trials in 2021-22.
- The commissioning of Arighat into the Indian Navy has been delayed and is now expected in 2024.
- India is enhancing the undersea leg of its nuclear triad and developing long-range missiles.
- The third SSBN was launched in November 2021.
- A fourth SSBN is under construction for a possible launch in 2024.
- These new submarines are significantly larger than the first two, with satellite imagery indicating they are approximately 20 meters longer.

About Nuclear Warheads
- **Definition**: A nuclear warhead is the explosive head of a missile or other delivery system that uses nuclear reactions to cause massive destruction.
- **Delivery Platforms**: They can be delivered via various platforms, including intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and strategic bombers.
- **Destructive Power**: The destructive power of a nuclear warhead comes from nuclear fission (splitting atomic nuclei) or nuclear fusion (combining atomic nuclei), resulting in immense energy release, blast effects, radiation, and heat.

About SIPRI

- Independent Institute: SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament.
- Established: It was established in 1966 in Stockholm, Sweden.
- Purpose: It provides data, analysis, and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media, and the interested public.

Kallakurichi illicit liquor tragedy

Context: The Kallakurichi illicit tragedy that has so far claimed more than 50 lives is entirely familiar in its cause, sequence of events, and aftermath.

Ethanol
- Ethanol is a legal liquor for consumption, produced biologically.
- The starting material for ethanol production is molasses, a by-product of the sugar-making process.
- Distilleries, often located near sugar factories, use molasses to produce rectified spirit, which is further distilled to create extra neutral alcohol.
- This alcohol is used to make Indian Made Foreign Liquor, which is a significant revenue source for State governments.
- During ethanol production in responsible distilleries, methanol is also produced but is carefully removed through controlled processes.

Difference Between Ethanol and Alcohol
An alcohol is an organic compound with at least one hydroxyl (-OH) group bound to a saturated carbon atom.
Ethanol — ethyl alcohol; Methanol — methyl alcohol; Isopropanol — isopropyl alcohol
Ethanol or ethyl alcohol is one type of alcohol and the only kind humans can drink.
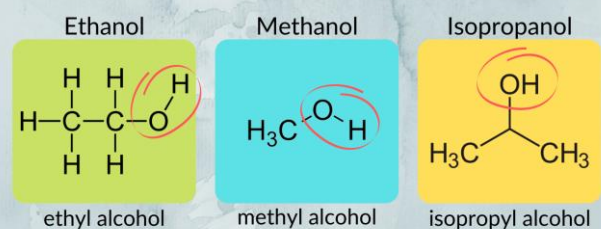
Methanol
- Methanol, unlike ethanol, is produced from fuels like coal in India.
- It is a highly controlled substance, with rules ensuring that its manufacturing, transportation, and storage are licensed, monitored, and audited.
- In northern Tamil Nadu, much of the industrial methanol is sourced from Andhra Pradesh.
- There exists a lucrative methanol pilferage racket operating along the supply route and at the end-user side.
- Methanol Poisoning and Hooch Tragedies

Potential for Poisoning
- Methanol formed during the crude distillation process used by bootleggers may not be removed, leading to methanol poisoning.
- Many hooch tragedies in India result from methanol contamination in liquor.
- There is a dangerous belief that methanol, if diluted enough, can provide the same intoxication as ordinary liquor.

Case Study: Malvani, Mumbai (2015)	In this incident, over 100 people died and around 75 were injured due to methanol poisoning.
	Prosecutors argued that the accused had entered into a criminal conspiracy to procure and supply poisonous methanol deliberately.

Legislative Measures and Future Steps
- The recurring incidents of methanol poisoning highlight the need for robust central legislation to complement State laws.
- Laws like the Poisons Act, which involve State governments, can help tighten the methanol supply chain.
- Effective implementation of these laws is crucial, especially with plans to increase the production of both ethanol and methanol as cheaper, eco-friendly alternatives to petrol and diesel.

NITI Aayog's Proposal
The NITI Aayog has proposed increasing methanol production from two metric tonnes to 20 metric tonnes. It is essential to keep methanol and ethanol separate and prevent any pilferage to ensure public safety.

Pushpak

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation successfully completed the third reusable launch vehicle landing experiment (RLV LEX) at the Aeronautical Test Range in Chitradurga

Key Highlights
- The winged vehicle, Pushpak, developed by ISRO, was released from an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter at an altitude of 4.5 km.
- From the release point, Pushpak autonomously performed cross-range correction maneuvers, approached the runway, and executed a precise horizontal landing at the runway center line.
- Pushpak's aerodynamic configuration has a low lift-to-drag ratio, resulting in a landing velocity of over 320 kmph. In comparison, commercial aircraft land at about 260 kmph, and typical fighter aircraft at 280 kmph.
- After touchdown, the vehicle's speed was reduced to nearly 100 kmph using a brake parachute, followed by the employment of landing gear brakes for further deceleration.
- During the ground roll phase, Pushpak utilized its rudder and nose-wheel steering system to maintain a stable and precise roll along the runway.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR ISRO

The reusable launch vehicle (RLV) will touch Mach 5 (five times the speed of sound), re-enter atmosphere and land on water

> RLV is a winged vehicle that will take off like a rocket and glide back to land like a plane
> A developed version of RLV can be used for manned missions in future
> In the experiment, RLV will land on water as India does not have a runway of the requisite length of 5km. The longest runway in the country is 2km

CONVENTIONAL ROCKET
Today, using a conventional rocket, it costs $5,000 to put 1kg of payload in orbit

REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE
A reusable vehicle can do the same for $500 per kg of payload

₹300 cr
India's current annual spend for satellite launches
> Exclusive use of RLVs will bring down this cost 10 times

Mission Simulation

- This mission simulated the approach and landing conditions for a vehicle returning from space, reaffirming ISRO's expertise in developing critical technologies for an RLV.
- The mission validated an advanced guidance algorithm for correcting longitudinal and lateral plane errors, which is essential for future Orbital Re-entry Missions.

Sensors and Technology

- The LEX-03 mission employed sensors such as an inertial sensor, radar altimeter, flush air data system, and NavIC.
- Notably, the mission reused the winged body and flight systems from the LEX-02 mission without any modifications, demonstrating the robustness of ISRO's design and capability to reuse flight systems.

BrahMos

Context: Terming the BrahMos cruise missiles inducted by the Philippines a "game changer" which provides credible capabilities, Philippines envoy Josel F. Ignacio said India was a major source for the modernisation of the Philippines armed forces which was under way.

Key Highlights

- BrahMos is a game changer for the Philippines in that it confers credible defence and deterrent capabilities.
- For India, the significance is it is the first overseas export of the BrahMos and it is an affirmation of India's rising capabilities and of its own indigenous defence industry. In a way, it expands India's footprint overseas.
- In January 2022, the Philippines concluded a $375-million deal with India for three batteries of shore-based anti-ship variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, becoming the first export customer for the joint venture missile between India and Russia. The first batch of missiles was delivered this April.
- Defence is one the most visible areas seeing a renaissance and catching widespread interest on both sides, the envoy noted. Elaborating, he said, the cooperation was underpinned by a MoU on defence cooperation signed in 2006 and this was reinforced in 2017 by a MoU between the Defence Ministries on industry and logistics cooperation.
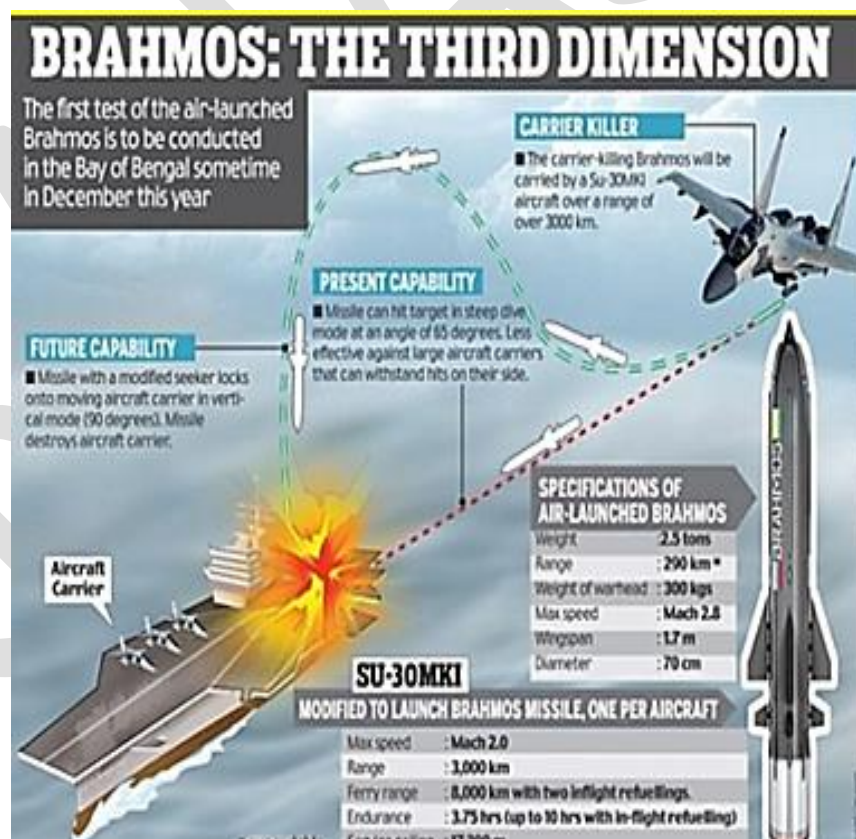
Brahmos Missiles

- The BrahMos missile, an Indo-Russian joint venture, has a range of 290 km and is the fastest cruise missile in the world with a top speed of Mach 2.8 (nearly three times the speed of sound).
- BrahMos is named for the rivers Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia).

- It is a two-stage missile (solid propellant engine in the first stage and liquid ramjet in the second stage).
- It is a multiplatform missile i.e., it can be launched from land, air, and sea and multi-capability missile with pinpoint accuracy that works both day and night irrespective of the weather conditions.
- It operates on the "Fire and Forgets" principle i.e. it does not require further guidance after launch.
- Vietnam, UAE, and Indonesia are among other potential customers of Brahmos missile.

Instem's Fabric Offers Protection from Pesticides

Context: Researchers at the Institute for Stem Cell Science and Regenerative Medicine (inStem), in Bengaluru have developed an anti-insecticide fabric that effectively neutralises organophosphate-based pesticides.

Key Highlights

- When esters present in organophosphate-based pesticides enter the body they bind and inhibit an enzyme (acetylcholinesterase or AChE) critical for neuromuscular function from working.
- Therefore, inhibition of this important enzyme is implicated in learning deficits, suffocation, paralysis, muscle weakness among others.
- The fabric retains the anti-insecticide property even after washing 150 times.
- The small molecules that are covalently bonded with the fabric are nucleophile in nature, and can detoxify the pesticides upon contact through nucleophile-mediated hydrolysis
- The fabric attacks the pesticide molecule and breaks it into non-toxic products. The pesticide is deactivated even before it reaches the skin surface
- Farmers get repeatedly exposed to the insecticide due to frequent usage, and this can cause chronic toxicity and severe adverse health effects.

Internal Security

CDS Releases Blueprint for Warfare in Cyberspace

Context: Acknowledging that cyberspace has emerged as a crucial and challenging domain in modern warfare, the Chief of Defence Staff, General Anil Chauhan, released India's first joint doctrine for cyberspace operations during a meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Key Highlights

- The joint doctrine is a keystone publication that will guide commanders of the armed forces in conducting cyberspace operations in today's complex military operating environment.

7 Types of Cyberwarfare Attacks

Espionage Sabotage Denial-of-service (DoS) Attacks Electrical Power Grid Propaganda Attacks Economic Disruption Surprise Attacks

- Unlike territorial limits in the traditional domains of warfare, cyberspace is a "global common and hence has shared sovereignty.
- Operations in cyberspace need to be dovetailed into the national security fabric, to evolve the 'ends,' 'ways' and 'means' to create advantage and influence events in all other operational environments and across all instruments of power.

Significance of Joint Doctrine

- Provides conceptual guidance to commanders of armed forces, staff and practitioners in planning and conducting Cyberspace Operations.
- Promote Jointness and Integration of three services (Army, Navy and Air Force).

- Integrated with national security strategies. This will help to develop goals, methods, and resources to gain benefits and impact events in all areas of operation and through all forms of power.
- Cyberspace warfare
- It is defined as a cyber-attack by state or no state actors that either constitute serious threat to a nation's security or are conducted in response to a perceived threat against a nation's security.
- Cyber-attacks can disable official websites and networks, disrupt or disable essential services, steal or alter classified data, cripple financial systems etc.
- Cyber warfare ecosystem includes Cyber terrorism, Cyber Fraud, Cyber Spying, Cyber stalking.

Health

Roman Baths May Harbour Novel Antimicrobial Natural Products

Context: The world-famous Roman Baths are home to a diverse range of microorganisms which could be critical in the global fight against antimicrobial resistance, a new study suggests.

Key Highlights

- The study, published in the journalThe Microbe, is the first to provide a detailed examination of the bacterial and archaeal communities found within the waters of the popular tourist attraction in the city of Bath (U.K.).
- Scientists collected samples of water, sediment and biofilm from locations within the Roman Baths complex including the King's Spring and the Great Bath.
- Around 300 distinct types of bacteria were isolated across the Roman Baths site.
- 15 of these isolates—including examples of Proteobacteria and Firmicutes—showed varying levels of inhibition against human pathogens includingE.coli,Staphylococcus AureusandShigella flexneri.
- Thus, there is clear potential for novel antimicrobial natural products discovery from the Roman Baths.

H5N1 Remains Infectious on Milking Equipment

Context: The Atlanta-based CDC has cautioned people to avoid drinking raw milk, especially in the States where H5N1 has been reported in cattle herds.

What is H5B1 Bird Flu?

- **Avian Influenza A(H5N1)**: Commonly known as H5B1 Bird Flu, this is a highly pathogenic virus that mainly circulates among birds but can also infect mammals.
- **Origin**: H5N1 originated from a virus outbreak in China in 1996 and quickly evolved into a highly pathogenic strain.
- **Global Spread**: Since 2020, H5N1 has spread across Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, South America, and even mainland Antarctica.
- **India's First Outbreak**: India experienced its first H5N1 outbreak in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 2015.

THE NEXT PANDEMIC?
Although the H5N1 virus, known as the avian flu virus, does not usually infect humans, new mutated forms of this virus could represent a realistic risk of a flu pandemic, experts say.

Mammals
Intermediate hosts. Hogs can also be infected by human flu virus, which increases the risk of mutated human compatible viruses.

Shorebirds
Are natural carriers of the avian flu virus in the wild.

Natural viral cycle

Domestic birds
Intermediate hosts and easily infected by the virus through contact with nasal or fecal material. Contact with other domestic animals favors the spread of the disease.

Pandemic cycle

Waterfowl
Infected by shared water sources.

Humans
Rarely infected by unaltered strains of the avian flu virus. Experts think that mutated viruses could spread from human to human.

KEY
Common virus
Mutated virus

MAJOR FLU PANDEMICS
Number of deaths in the USA:

Spanish Flu (1918) 500,000
Asian Flu (1957) 70,000
Honk Kong Flu (1968) 34,000

Global killer: The [A(H1N1)] strain of the flu virus, comomnly known as the "Spanish Influenza" killed more than 50 millon people worldwide.

Impact on Animals

- **Wild Birds**: Species like the endangered California condors have been severely affected by H5N1.
- **Poultry**: Chickens have traditionally been the main species affected by the virus.
- **Marine Mammals**: Sea lions and dolphins have suffered mass deaths in regions such as Chile and Peru.
- **Other Mammals**: Foxes, pumas, bears in North America, and farmed minks in Spain and Finland have also been infected.

Human Risk and Spread Factors

- **Human Infection**: While rare, humans can contract bird flu, primarily through direct contact with infected birds.
- **Climate Change**: Changes in climate can exacerbate the spread of the virus by altering bird behavior and increasing interactions between different bird species.

In fight against Nipah, scientists find new way to generate virus-like particles in lab

Context: Scientists at the Institute of Advanced Virology (IAV) at Thonnakkal here have developed a novel way of generating non-infectious Nipah virus-like particles (VLPs) in the laboratory, which mimic the wild-type Nipah Virus (NiV).

Key Highlights

- This method provides a safe and effective alternative platform for developing neutralizing antibodies against the Nipah Virus (NiV) in a biosafety level-2 (BSL-2) laboratory.
- Nipah is a highly pathogenic paramyxovirus with a fatality rate of up to 80% in humans.
- Virus neutralization assays are crucial for the development and evaluation of vaccines and immunotherapeutics, as well as for basic research into the immune response and pathogenesis of NiV.

What are VLPs?

- Virus-Like Particles (VLPs) are molecules that closely resemble viruses but are non-infectious.
- They have long been recognized as effective quantitative platforms for studying viral binding and entry kinetics.
- The advent of NanoBiT technology and the use of "HiBiT-tagged" VLPs (HiBiT is an 11 amino acid peptide) has enhanced their sophistication.
- These VLPs are functionally identical to the native virus.
- The inclusion of a highly sensitive HiBiT tag accelerates their potential in antiviral drug screening and vaccine development.
- Once the body has an immune response to the VLP, it will recognize the virus and prevent future infection, providing immunity to that particular virus.

Structure of VLPs

Size	Composition	Production	Applications

- **Size**: VLPs have a particle radius of approximately 20 to 200 nm, allowing them to easily enter lymph nodes where the immune system is activated.
- **Composition**: A VLP consists of one or more structural proteins arranged in multiple layers. They can also have an outer lipid envelope, which protects the genetic material inside the virus particle.
- **Production**: VLP vaccines can be created using bacterial, yeast, insect, or mammalian cells. When used as a vaccine, VLPs cause a robust immunogenic response due to their high-density display of epitopes and the ability to present multiple proteins to the immune system.
- **Applications**: Recently, VLPs have been used as nanomachines to deliver pharmaceutically active products to specific sites and cells in the body.

Key Facts about Nipah Virus

- **Transmission**: Nipah virus (NiV) is a zoonotic virus, meaning it is transmitted from animals to humans. It can also be transmitted through contaminated food or directly between people.
- **Symptoms**: Infected individuals can experience a range of illnesses from asymptomatic (subclinical) infection to acute respiratory illness and fatal encephalitis.
- **Impact on Animals**: The virus can cause severe disease in animals, such as pigs, leading to significant economic losses for farmers.
- **History**: The first outbreak occurred in Malaysia and Singapore in 1998 and 1999.
- **Treatment**: There are currently no specific drugs or vaccines for Nipah virus infection. Intensive supportive care is recommended to treat severe respiratory and neurologic complications.

What is Nipah virus?

NIPAH VIRUS (NIV) INFECTION IS A NEWLY EMERGING ZOONOSIS THAT CAUSES SEVERE DISEASE IN BOTH ANIMALS AND HUMANS

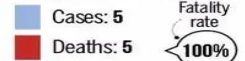- NiV first identified in 1998 during an outbreak in Malaysia
- Fruit bats are natural hosts of NiV
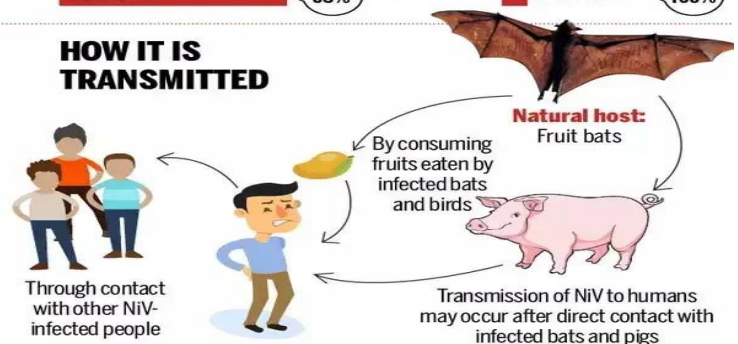
PREVIOUS OUTBREAKS IN INDIA

Jan-Feb, 2001 **Siliguri (WB)**
Cases: 66
Deaths: 45 — 68%

April, 2007 **Nadia (WB)**
Cases: 5
Deaths: 5 — 100% (Fatality rate)

HOW IT IS TRANSMITTED

Natural host: Fruit bats

By consuming fruits eaten by infected bats and birds

Through contact with other NiV-infected people

Transmission of NiV to humans may occur after direct contact with infected bats and pigs

## ICMR Seeks To Provide Oral Formulation Of Hydroxyurea To Treat Sickle Cell Disease

Context: The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has invited eligible organisations for the joint development and commercialisation of a low dose or paediatric oral formulation of hydroxyurea to treat sickle cell disease in India.

Key Highlights

- India has the highest prevalence of sickle cell disease (SCD) in South Asia, with over 20 million affected individuals.
- Sickle cell disease is a common monogenic disorder of hemoglobin.
- Hydroxyurea, a myelosuppressive agent, is effective in treating SCD and thalassemia.
- There is a significant need for pediatric formulations of hydroxyurea, especially in light of India's National Mission to eliminate Sickle Cell Anemia/SCD by 2047.
- According to National Health Mission guidelines, hydroxyurea therapy is initiated only for symptomatic children due to the lack of pediatric doses and concerns about toxicity.
- For children, the recommended dose is 10 mg to 15 mg per kilogram of body weight after two years of age.

What are Sickle Cell Disorders?

- A group of disorders that cause red blood cells to become misshapen and break down.
- The cells die early, leaving a short age of healthy red blood cells and can block blood flow causing pain.
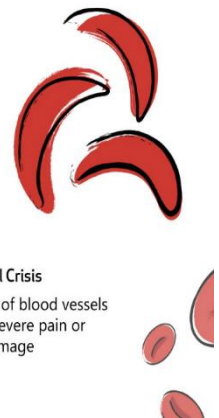
Types:

Sickle Cell Anaemia
Dysfunctional red cells due to abnormal haemoglobin

Sickle Cell Crisis
Blockage of blood vessels causing severe pain or organ damage

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)

- Established in 1911 as the Indian Research Fund Association (IRFA) and rebranded as ICMR in 1949 post-independence.
- Apex body for formulating, coordinating, and promoting biomedical research in India.
- Focuses on conducting, coordinating, and implementing medical research to benefit society.
- Aims to translate medical innovations into products and processes for public health.
- Translating research into action to improve the health of the population.

Admission Help Line: +91 9823256625 & 9579247470 (WhatsApp)

Email: info@iqraias.com, support@iqraias.com

Organizational Structure
- The Governing Body is presided over by the Union Health Minister and assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board of eminent biomedical experts.
- Research is carried out through 32 permanent research institutes/centres across India.

Understanding Sickle Cell Disease
- Sickle Cell Disease (SCD) is an inherited disorder of hemoglobin, caused by a genetic mutation that makes red blood cells (RBCs) assume a sickle or crescent shape.
- This abnormality increases RBC rigidity, impairing their circulation and leading to complications such as anemia, organ damage, severe pain episodes, and reduced lifespan.
- Marginalized tribal populations are particularly vulnerable to SCD, as per the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Symptoms of Sickle Cell Disease
- Chronic anemia causing fatigue, weakness, and paleness.
- Painful episodes, known as sickle cell crises, which cause sudden and intense pain in bones, chest, back, arms, and legs.
- Delayed growth and puberty.

National Sickle Cell Anemia Elimination Mission
- Enhance care for all SCD patients and reduce disease prevalence through screening and awareness campaigns.
- Aim to eliminate sickle cell disease as a public health concern by 2047.
- Under this mission, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) is developing gene-editing therapies for SCD.

Treatment Processes
- **Blood Transfusions**: Help relieve anemia and reduce pain crises.
- **Hydroxyurea**: Reduces the frequency of painful episodes and long-term complications.
- **Gene Therapy**: Treatments like bone marrow or stem cell transplantation using methods such as CRISPR can be effective.

Health Ministry Reworks Protocol as Country's TB Elimination Drive Plateaus

Context: India's goal to achieve rapid decline in the burden of tuberculosis (TB) morbidity and mortality, while working towards the elimination of TB in the country by 2025, has plateaued

Key Highlights
- TB kills an estimated 480,000 Indians every year, translating to over 1,400 deaths daily.
- The country also has more than a million 'missing' TB cases annually, which remain unnotified, either undiagnosed or inadequately diagnosed and treated in the private sector.

About Tuberculosis (TB)
- **Definition**: Tuberculosis (TB) is a bacterial infection spread through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person.
- **Affected Areas**: While it mainly affects the lungs, TB can also impact other parts of the body such as the abdomen, glands, bones, and nervous system.
- **Curability**: TB is a potentially serious condition, but it can be cured with the right antibiotics.

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                    ┌──────────────┐
                    │ Symptoms of  │
                    │     TB       │
                    └──────────────┘
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| Persistent cough lasting more than three weeks | Weight loss | Night sweats | High temperature | Tiredness and fatigue | Loss of appetite | Swellings in the neck |
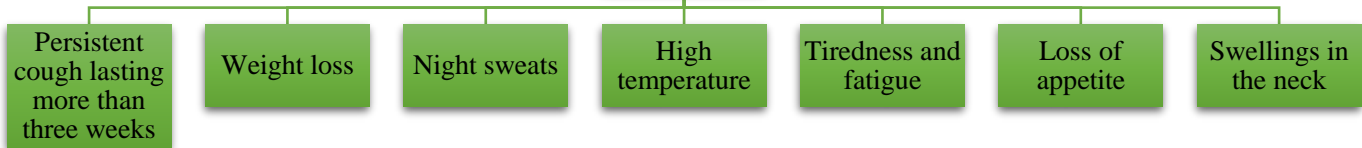
Types of TB

Pulmonary TB
- Description: TB affecting the lungs, the most contagious type, usually spreads after prolonged exposure to an infected person.
- Immune Response: In healthy individuals, the immune system often kills the bacteria, leading to no symptoms.
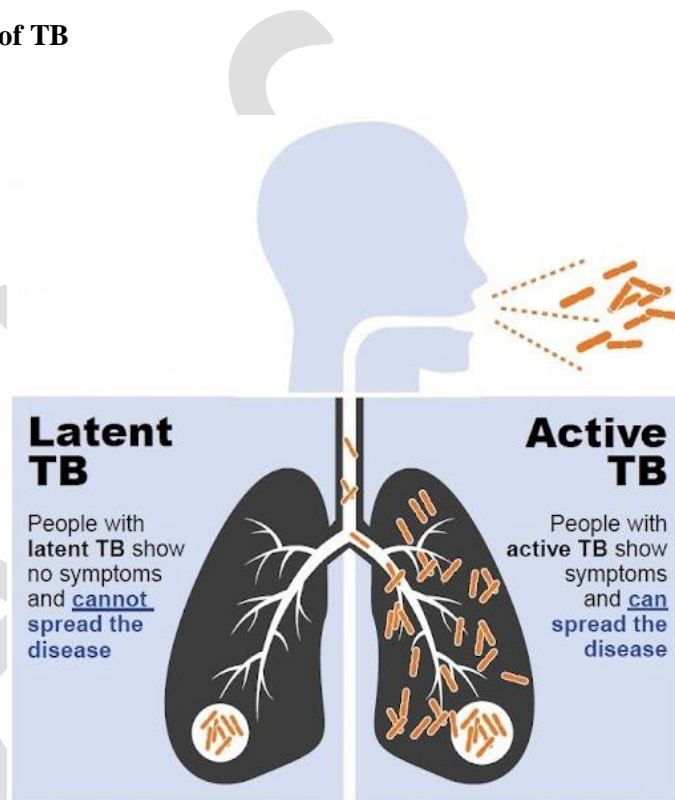
Latent TB
- Description: Occurs when the immune system cannot kill the bacteria but prevents it from spreading.
- Symptoms: None, as the bacteria remain inactive in the body.
- Infectiousness: People with latent TB are not infectious.

Active TB
- Description: If the immune system fails to contain the infection, it can spread within the lungs or other parts of the body, developing symptoms within weeks or months.
- Global Impact: About one-quarter of the world's population is estimated to be infected with TB bacteria, but only 5-15% will develop active TB.
- Risk: Latent TB can develop into active TB, particularly if the immune system weakens.

Latent TB

People with **latent TB** show no symptoms and <u>cannot</u> spread the disease

Active TB

People with **active TB** show symptoms and <u>can</u> spread the disease

Treatment of TB
- Cure Rate: With treatment, TB can almost always be cured.
- Antibiotics: A course of antibiotics usually taken for 6-18 months.
- Variety of Antibiotics: Several antibiotics are used to address antibiotic-resistant TB strains.

Tuberculosis in India

| Incident TB Patients | Global Share | National TB Elimination Programme | National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025) | New National Strategic Plan (2020-2025) |
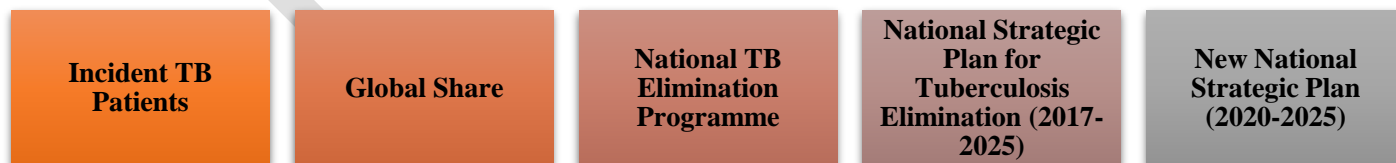
- **Incident TB Patients**: In 2021, India notified 19.33 lakh incident TB patients (new and relapse), up from 16.28 lakh in 2020. In 2022, 24.22 lakh TB cases were registered.
- **Global Share**: India has the largest share of the global TB burden.

- **National TB Elimination Programme**: Strengthened to meet the goal of ending the TB epidemic by 2025, five years ahead of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for 2030.
- **National Strategic Plan for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025)**: Developed to achieve this goal but revised in 2020 to meet objectives.
- **New National Strategic Plan (2020-2025)**: Launched to end TB.

TB

Context: India-made TB diagnostics tech wins acclaim at World Health Assembly.

Key Highlights
- The Truenat platform, a rapid molecular test for the diagnosis of pulmonary, extrapulmonary, and rifampicin-resistant tuberculosis, that was developed in India, has been hailed for its role in combating TB and as a possible component of global healthcare solutions at the recently held 77th World Health Assembly in Geneva.
- Truenat was first launched in 2017 and is a real-time quantitative micro-PCR system. It is a portable, battery-operated machine that can be deployed at labs, health centres, and in the field. Truenat delivers results from samples in less than an hour and can test for over 40 diseases.
- At the World Health Assembly (the decision-making body of the WHO), The Global Fund, which collaborates with the WHO to build stronger health systems across the globe, appreciated India's commitment to eliminating TB by creating mass awareness, and intensive monitoring programmes using digital technologies, a press release from Molbio said.
- TrueNat is used at over 7,000 primary health centres and community health centres under the National TB Elimination Programme and is also being used at roughly 1,500 private labs in the country.

National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination
- The National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination serves as a framework to guide all stakeholders, including national and state governments, developmental partners, civil society organizations, international agencies, research institutions, the private sector, and others whose work is relevant to the elimination of TB in India.
- This program operates on four strategic pillars: Detect – Treat – Prevent – Build [DTPB].

Features of the National Strategic Plan for TB Elimination
- Complete detection of TB cases by 2020 followed by 100% elimination of TB by 2025.
- The Conditional Access Program (CAP) has introduced an Anti-TB Drug named Bedaqualine.
- Under the Make in India program, development of a first-line anti-TB drug was proposed in the public sector.
- A corpus fund for TB to be maintained under the Bharat Kshay Niyantran Pratishthan (BKNP) which is also known as the India TB control Foundation, is one of the visions of this NSP.
- It aims at creating synergy through a shift from a regulatory approach to a
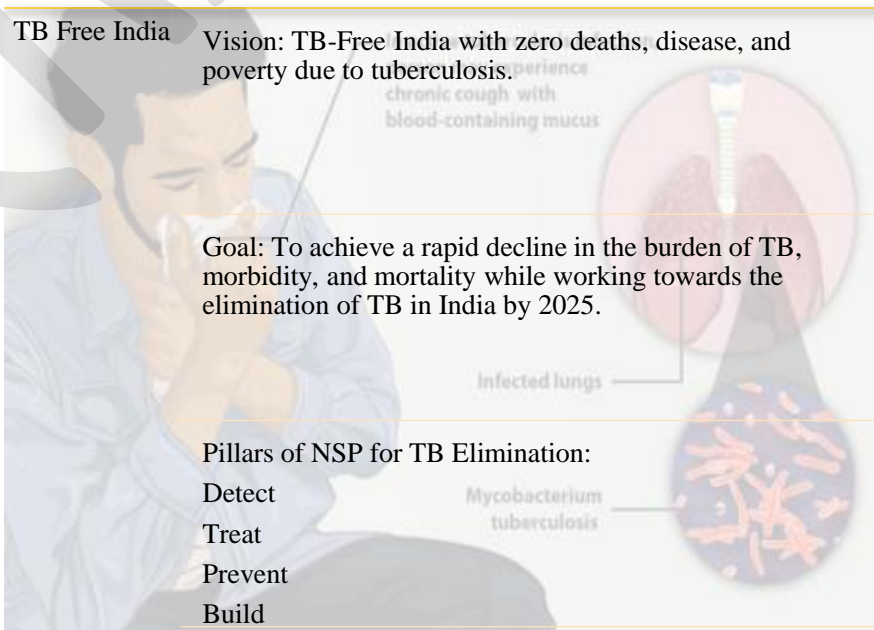
TB Free India

Vision: TB-Free India with zero deaths, disease, and poverty due to tuberculosis.

Goal: To achieve a rapid decline in the burden of TB, morbidity, and mortality while working towards the elimination of TB in India by 2025.

Pillars of NSP for TB Elimination:

Detect

Treat

Prevent

Build

partnership approach to streamline the services in the largely unorganized and unregulated private sector.
- Technological implementation by creating a user-friendly online platform E-Nikshay to let doctors notify the cases as soon as they come across the infected patient.
- Awareness about TB and its prevention among masses is important. Media campaigns are planned under this program to promote TB Preventive measures. Swasth E- Gurukul is one such initiative of the World Health Organization.
- The biggest challenge facing TB control in India is delayed diagnosis and inadequate treatment, particularly among patients seeking care from private providers. The plan aims to detect and treat 100% of the TB cases and at the same time prevent further spread of the disease by building & strengthening the policies in this direction.

First fatal human case of H5N2 bird flu identified

Context: Recently, a person in Mexico had died in the first confirmed human case globally of infection with the H5N2 variant of bird flu.

Key Highlights
- Mexican health authorities confirmed a human infection with the H5N2 virus to the UN health body on May 23. A 59-year-old patient was hospitalized in Mexico City.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) stated this is the "first laboratory-confirmed human case of infection with an influenza A(H5N2) virus reported globally."
- The source of the virus exposure is unknown, though H5N2 cases have been previously reported in poultry in Mexico.
- H5N2 cases were detected in poultry in Michoacan in March, with additional outbreaks in the State of Mexico. Establishing a direct link between the human case and poultry infections is currently not possible. The WHO estimates the risk to humans as "low."
- Another variant of bird flu, H5N1, has been spreading among dairy cow herds in the United States, with a few human cases reported.

What is H5N2?
- H5N2 is a subtype of the Avian Influenza A virus.
- Influenza A viruses are categorized by subtypes based on surface proteins.
- There are 18 hemagglutinin (H) and 11 neuraminidase (N) subtypes, including H5N2.
- Hemagglutinin is a glycoprotein on the virus surface, and neuraminidase is an enzyme that helps release the virus from the host cell.

Spread and Impact
- Initial Reports: H5N2 was first reported in poultry in Mexico.

Spread Factors
- Migratory bird patterns and interactions with domestic birds.
- Environmental changes affecting bird migratory routes and behaviors

Health Effects
- Avian influenza virus infections in humans can range from mild to severe respiratory infections and can be fatal.
- Other symptoms may include conjunctivitis, gastrointestinal issues, encephalitis, and encephalopathy.

Diagnosis and Treatment
- **Diagnosis**: The disease is diagnosed using molecular methods like Real-Time Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR).

Human Infection
Human infections with H5N2 are rare but concerning due to potential mutations that could increase transmissibility while retaining severity.

- **Treatment**: Antiviral drugs, especially neuraminidase inhibitors (oseltamivir, zanamivir), can reduce the duration of viral replication.

Diphtheria

Context: The Odisha government has directed the Health Department and the Regional Medical Research Centre (RMRC) to enquire into the reasons for a suspected diphtheria outbreak at Manuspadar village in Rayagada district.

About Diphtheria
- Diphtheria is a serious and contagious bacterial infection that affects the nose and throat.
- It is caused by the bacterium Corynebacterium diphtheriae, which produces a toxin.
- Person-to-Person: Usually spread through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing.
- Contact with Infected Sores: Touching infected open sores or ulcers can also transmit the bacteria.

Complications
- If untreated, diphtheria can progress to more severe stages, causing damage to the heart, kidneys, and nervous system.

Current Treatments
- Diphtheria Antitoxin (DAT): Neutralizes the unbound toxin.
- Antibiotics: Prevent further bacterial growth.
- Supportive Care: Monitors and treats complications such as airway obstruction and myocarditis.
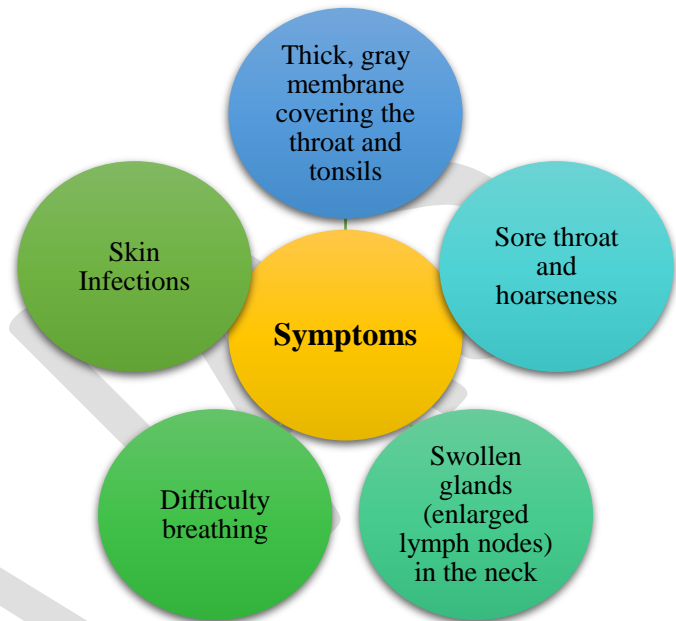
Transmission Modes	Symptoms
Respiratory droplets (coughing, sneezing)	Thick gray membrane on throat and tonsils
Contact with infected sores or ulcers	Sore throat and hoarseness
Skin infections (rare severe disease)	Swollen glands (enlarged lymph nodes) in the neck
	Difficulty breathing

Preventive Measures
- Diphtheria can be prevented through routine vaccination, which is part of many childhood immunization programs.
- Increasing awareness about the symptoms and transmission modes of diphtheria can help in early diagnosis and treatment.
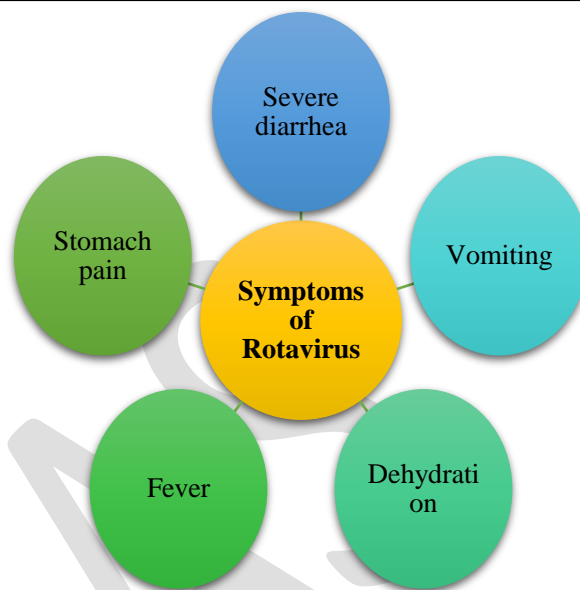
Rotavirus

Context: Studies did not find Bharat Biotech's Rotavac vaccine to be associated with increased risk of intussusception after any dose

What is Rotavirus?
- **Definition**: Rotavirus is a contagious virus that causes diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

- **Transmission**: It spreads easily from child to child through contact with the feces of an infected person. For example, a child with rotavirus who does not wash their hands properly after using the bathroom can spread the virus by touching food or other objects.

WHO Recommendations

- **First Dose**: The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that the first dose of the rotavirus vaccine be given as soon as possible after 6 weeks of age, alongside the DTP vaccination (diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis).
- **Inclusion in National Schedules**: WHO advises including the rotavirus vaccine in the national immunization schedules of countries where under-five mortality due to diarrheal diseases exceeds 10%.

Severe diarrhea

Stomach pain

Symptoms of Rotavirus

Vomiting

Fever

Dehydration

Available Rotavirus Vaccines

Vaccine	Manufacturer	Type	Dosage
Rotarix	GlaxoSmithKline	Monovalent	Orally administered in two doses at 6-12 weeks
RotaTeq	Merck	Pentavalent	Orally administered in three doses starting at 6-12 weeks

Dengue May Have Helped Stem COVID-19 Wave Severity

Context: A study was published in Journal of Medical Virology which suggest that the antibodies following a dengue infection were able to 'neutralise' the coronavirus.

Key Highlights

- Research from the CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata hints at intriguing possibilities following an analysis of antibodies from people infected with dengue and testing them against a kind of coronavirus called murine hepatitis virus (mouse coronavirus).
- In research settings, this virus — being part of the same family of human coronaviruses — is considered a good surrogate to study the behaviour of the coronavirus strains that infected people during the pandemic.
- These latest studies build on the lab's work from 2020 that blood tests specific to check for dengue sometimes led to a positive SARS-CoV-2 test.

Dengue in India & World

EACH YEAR, CLOSE TO **50 MILLION** DENGUE INFECTIONS GET REPORTED GLOBALLY

- Out of these, **70%** of dengue cases are from Asia
- India contributes anywhere between **34%** and **40%** of dengue cases in Asia
- A University of Oxford study says that India has maximum number of dengue cases in world

The study indicates there are **33 million** dengue cases in India

- The first dengue case was reported in India way back in 1946
- After that, there was no major outbreak for two decades
- First major epidemic occurred in Kolkata in 1963

Year-wise cases in State

Year	Cases
2014	704
2015	1,831
2016	4,037
2017	5,369
2018	4,592
2019	1,500

(Till Aug first week)

PRECAUTIONS & PREVENTIVE METHODS

- Keep home, environment and surroundings clean
- Remove stagnant water from containers, dumped tyres, air-coolers etc.
- Use mosquito repellents, medicated screens, coils and sprays
- Observe dry day once a week
- Keep drains well maintained and repair chokes
- Avoid self-medication and consult a General Practitioner if high fever persists for more than 48 hours

- The dengue family of viruses are different from the coronavirus family and hence infection from one, in normal circumstances, is not expected to protect against the other.

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- What is known about dengue is that there are four major serotypes, or strains, that cause dengue infections. Strains Denv-1 and Denv-2 are the most common in India.
- However, being infected with one does not protect against the other and, in fact, a re-infection involving a different strain can be more dangerous — a phenomenon called antibody-dependent enhancement (ADE) in dengue.
- The National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme of India reported a sharp decline of 75% (39,419 versus 1,57,315) in dengue incidence during 2020 as compared with 2019.

What is Dengue?

- Dengue is a mosquito-borne tropical disease caused by the dengue virus (Genus Flavivirus), transmitted by several species of female mosquito within the genus Aedes, principally Aedes aegypti.
- This mosquito also transmits chikungunya, yellow fever and Zika infection.
- There are 4 distinct, but closely related, serotypes (separate groups within a species of microorganisms that all share a similar characteristic) of the virus that cause dengue (DEN-1, DEN-2, DEN-3 and DEN-4).
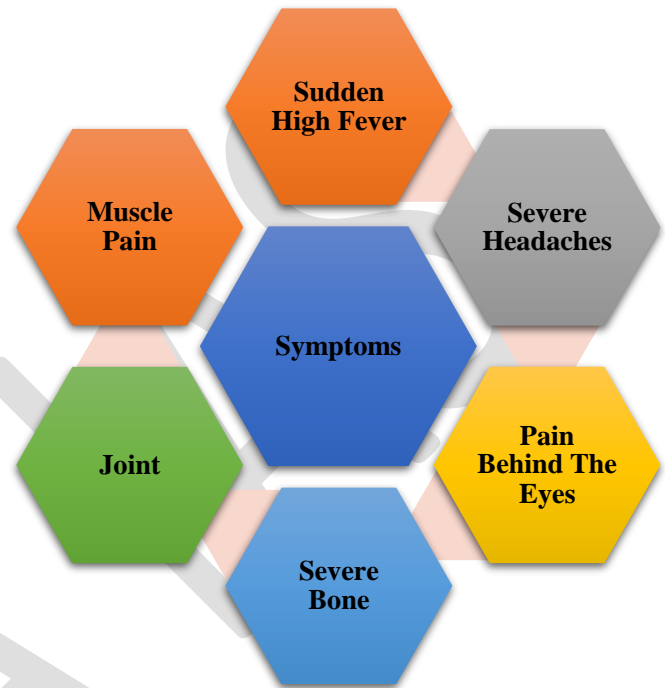
Diagnosis and Treatment

- Diagnosis of dengue infection is done with a blood test.
- There is no specific medicine to treat dengue infection.

Status of Dengue

- Incidence of dengue has grown dramatically around the world in recent decades, with a vast majority of cases under-reported, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- WHO estimates 39 crore dengue virus infections per year, of which 9.6 crore show symptoms.
- According to data shared by the National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control, India recorded 63,280 dengue cases as of September, 2022

Controlling Dengue Using Bacteria

- Recently researchers from the World Mosquito Program have used mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria to successfully control dengue in Indonesia.
- The scientists infected some mosquitoes with Wolbachia and then released them in the city where they bred with local mosquitoes, until nearly all mosquitoes in the area were carrying Wolbachia bacteria. This is called the Population Replacement Strategy.

Sudden High Fever
Muscle Pain
Severe Headaches
Symptoms
Joint
Pain Behind The Eyes
Severe Bone

DENGUE

HOW DENGUE IS TRANSMITTED

1 Uninfected Aedes aegypti mosquito
2 1 dengue infected person
3 Aedes aegypti mosquito infected with dengue for the rest of its life
4 Infected mosquito transmits dengue virus to other humans

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- At the end of 27 months, the researchers found that the incidence of dengue was 77% lower in areas where Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes had been released, as compared to areas without such deployments.

Dengue Vaccine
- The dengue vaccine CYD-TDV or Dengvaxia was approved by the US Food & Drug Administration in 2019, the first dengue vaccine to get the regulatory nod in the US.
- Dengvaxia is basically a live, attenuated dengue virus which has to be administered in people of ages 9 to 16 who have laboratory-confirmed previous dengue infection and who live in endemic areas.
- Vaccine manufacturer Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL) is developing India's first Dengue vaccine and has received permission for a Phase-1 trial.
- The vaccine is being produced in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health in the US.

Report & Index

Western Europeans question reliability of United States: survey

Context: The Eurasia Group's Institute for Global Affairs, in its survey of the three western European nations, still found that more people than not expected the United States to be at least "somewhat" reliable.

Key Highlights
- Only 6% said that the United States would be a "very reliable" guarantor of European security over the next decade, compared with 24% of Americans who believed their country was very reliable.
- Only a tiny number of people in Britain, France and Germany put great faith in the United States to guarantee their security over the coming decade
- The Institute for Global Affairs pursues industry-leading research on geopolitics and global affairs, creates relevant, objective, fact-based content, tools, and programming and partners with people and organizations around the world to drive awareness, increase understanding, and support action.
- This annual survey is part of the Independent America project, which seeks to explore how US foreign policy could better be tailored to new global realities and to the preferences of American voters.

India is now 'second-biggest foreign threat' to Canadian democracy, says report

Context: A parliamentary committee report in Canada has described India as the second-biggest foreign threat to the country's democracy.

Key Highlights

- The revelations of the report added to the negative state of the bilateral relations between the two countries
- According to National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians report, India emerged as the second-most significant foreign interference threat to Canada's democratic institutions and processes.
- The report describes China as the topmost foreign threat to Canada's democracy.
- India and Canada have seen heated

> **About the Khalistan Movement**
> - Origins and Objectives: The Khalistan Movement is a separatist movement seeking to create an independent Sikh state called Khalistan in the Punjab region of India.
> - Activities in Canada: Canada has a significant Sikh population, and some members support the Khalistan Movement. This has led to tensions between Canadian Sikhs and the Indian government.
> - Notable Incident: The murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a pro-Khalistan ideologue, in Surrey, British Columbia, on June 18, 2023, intensified these tensions.

diplomatic exchange since the murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar on June 18, 2023, when the pro-Khalistan preacher was murdered by unknown assailants in Surrey.
- Earlier this year, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service had pointed fingers at foreign countries, including India, for being involved in the election process of Canada.

NSSO Survey

Context: NSSO survey finds COVID-19's second wave hit informal economy hard

Key Highlights

- India's large informal non-agricultural sector was badly hit by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, but has recovered gradually since then, with the number of unincorporated firms and their employees rising almost 6% and 8%, respectively, by the latter half of 2022-23
- Gross Value Added (GVA) by such enterprises grew by 9.83% at current prices during the period October 2022 and March 2023, in comparison with the financial year 2021-22, as per a fact sheet on the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) in 2021-22 and 2022-23.
- It appears that the unincorporated manufacturing, trade and other service activities were hit by the second wave of the pandemic badly
- Between October 2022 and March 2023, the number of estimated informal firms had risen to 6.5 crore with 11 crore employees.
- The survey data, released by the Statistics Ministry on Friday, is used in compiling national account statistics as the country's unincorporated non-farm sector plays a key role in generating jobs, creating economic value and the overall socio-economic landscape.

National Sample Survey Office

- The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), known as NSSO, was established under the Ministry of Statistics in 1950. It was founded with the primary goal of conducting comprehensive surveys across diverse socio-economic groups to gain insights into various facets of the nation's growth and development. NSSO's surveys follow a methodical approach, spanning from six months to over a year, to gather valuable data.

- These objective surveys play a pivotal role in shaping policies and decisions. Notably, on 23rd May 2019, NSSO transformed into the National Statistical Office (NSO) following its merger with the Central Statistical Office (CSO). This amalgamation was aimed at enhancing coordination between the two entities. The NSO is overseen by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MOSPI). Aspiring candidates preparing for exams such as the IAS will find pertinent insights into these organizations, fostering a deep understanding of NSSO's significance for upcoming examinations.
- NSSO conducts surveys that cover a wide range of topics, including employment, education, health, consumption patterns, income distribution, poverty, and more. These surveys involve collecting data from a representative sample of households and individuals across different socio-economic groups. The data collected from these surveys is used to assess the socio-economic condition of the population, monitor trends over time, and inform policymaking and planning.
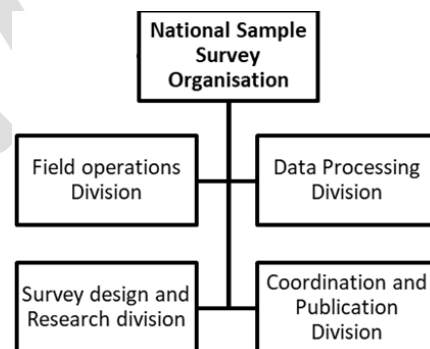
> **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO)**
> The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), now known as the National Statistical Office (NSO), is a prominent statistical organization in India. It was established under the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MOSPI) in 1950. The primary objective of NSSO is to collect and analyze data related to various aspects of the economy and society through nationwide surveys.

Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)

Context: Recently, findings of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES), 2022-23 were discussed in a meeting

Key Highlights

- It is designed to collect information on the consumption of goods and services by households.
- The data collected in HCES is also utilized for deriving various other macroeconomic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), poverty rates, and Consumer Price Inflation (CPI).
- NITI Aayog has stated that the latest consumer expenditure survey indicated that poverty has come down to 5% in the country.
- The findings of the last HCES, conducted in 2017-18 were not released after the government cited "data quality" issues.
- Information Generated: Provides information on the typical spending on both goods (including food and non-food items) and services.
- Additionally, assists in calculating estimates for household Monthly Per Capita Consumer Expenditure (MPCE) and analyzing the distribution of households and individuals across different MPCE categories.

> **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)**
> The Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) is conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) every 5 years.

Highlights of the Recent Survey

Aspect	Details
Expenditure Estimates	- Generated without imputing values for items received free through social welfare programmes like Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana
Increase in MPCE	- Urban households: 33.5% increase since 2011-12, reaching ₹3,510
	- Rural households: 40.42% increase, reaching ₹2,008
Food Expenditure (2022-23)	- Rural households: 46% of total expenditure
	- Urban households: 39% of total expenditure
Distribution of MPCE by Percentiles	- Bottom 5% of rural population: average MPCE of Rs. 1,373
	- Bottom 5% of urban population: average MPCE of Rs. 2,001
	- Top 5% of rural population: average MPCE of Rs. 10,501
	- Top 5% of urban population: average MPCE of Rs. 20,824
State-wise MPCE Variations	- Highest MPCE: Sikkim (Rural: ₹7,731, Urban: ₹12,105)
	- Lowest MPCE: Chhattisgarh (Rural: ₹2,466, Urban: ₹4,483)
	- Highest rural-urban MPCE difference: Meghalaya (83%) followed by Chhattisgarh (82%)
UT-wise MPCE Variations	- Highest MPCE: Chandigarh (Rural: ₹7,467, Urban: ₹12,575)
	- Lowest MPCE: Ladakh (Rural: ₹4,035), Lakshadweep (Urban: ₹5,475)
Food Spending Trends	- Decline in the share of expenditure on food since 1999-2000 survey
	- Increase in the share of non-food items expenditure
	- Reduced share of cereals and pulses within overall food consumption expenditure for both rural and urban households
Non-Food Spending Trends	- Highest share of spending on conveyance among non-food items
	- Till 2022-23, fuel and light saw the highest consumption spending among non-food items

India Achieves 'Outstanding Outcome' In FATF Evaluation

Context: India has achieved an outstanding outcome in the mutual evaluation conducted during 2023-24 by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

Key Highlights

- The Mutual Evaluation Report of India places India in the "regular follow-up" category, a distinction shared by only four other G-20 countries.
- This marks a significant milestone in the nation's efforts to combat money laundering (ML) and terrorist financing (TF)

- The country's anti-money laundering (AML), countering the financing of terrorism (CFT), and counter-proliferation financing (CPF) regime was achieving good results, including international cooperation, access to basic and beneficial ownership information, use of financial intelligence, and depriving criminals of their assets.
- FATF observed that improvements were needed to strengthen the supervision and implementation of preventive measures in some non-financial sectors.
- India also needs to address delays relating to concluding ML and TF prosecutions, and to ensure that CFT measures aimed at preventing the non-profit sector from being abused for TF are implemented in line with the risk-based approach, including by conducting outreach to NPOs on their TF risks.

> **About Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**
>
> • **Foundation**
>   • FATF was founded in 1989 through the initiative of the G7 nations.
> • **Secretariat**
>   • The FATF Secretariat is headquartered at the OECD headquarters in Paris, France.
> • **Plenary Meetings**
>   • FATF conducts three Plenary meetings during each of its 12-month rotating presidencies.
> • **Membership**
>   • As of 2019, FATF consists of 37 member jurisdictions.

India's Engagement with FATF

- **Observer Status**: India became an Observer at FATF in 2006, marking the beginning of its association with the organization.
- **Full Membership**: On June 25, 2010, India officially became the 34th country to attain full membership in FATF, signifying its active participation and commitment to the organization's objectives.

Coal, Electricity Buoy Core Output

Context: Index of Core Industries (ICI) data released.

Key Highlights

- Output growth in India's eight core infrastructure sectors eased to 6.3% in May, from April's 6.7%
- There is a double-digit rise in coal and electricity production offsetting contractions in three sectors, including cement and fertilisers.
- Index of Core Industries (ICI) rose 3.7% from April.
- Electricity generation rose year-on-year at a seven-month high pace of 12.8%, while coal production grew 10.2%, both likely triggered by higher demand amid the heatwave in most parts of the country through May.
- Natural gas output rose 7.5% while steel production increased 7.6%.
- However, refinery products saw a mere 0.5% uptick in May.
- Cement output contracted for the second successive month, dipping 0.8% following a 0.5% fall in April.
- The eight core sectors constitute just over 40% of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- A combination of factors including the heatwave over parts of the country and the phased Parliamentary elections could have curtailed activity and execution in some sectors, even as the heatwave boosted demand for coal and electricity.

> **What is the Core sector?**
> The core sector in India comprises eight key industries: coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilizers, steel, cement, and electricity.
>
> The growth rate of the core sector is a crucial indicator of the overall health of the Indian economy. A strong growth rate in the core sector often signals a positive economic outlook.

Significance

- The core sector's performance is considered a key indicator of a country's overall industrial and economic performance, serving as a barometer for gauging the health of the economy and predicting future economic trends.
- For example, steel is a critical material for construction, automobiles, and machinery. Electricity is essential for powering factories, homes, and businesses.
- The core sector industries have significant interconnections with other sectors. This interdependence creates a multiplier effect, where changes in the core sector's growth or contraction impact the entire economy.
- Core industries are essential for developing a country's infrastructure. Production of steel, cement, and electricity is necessary for building roads, bridges, and power plants.

Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is prepared by whom?

The Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) is prepared every month and released by the Office of the Economic Adviser (OEA), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), and Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

What is Core Sector Growth?

- Core sector growth refers to the growth rate or the increase in output/production from the core industries of an economy over a given period of time, typically measured on an annual or monthly basis.
- The core sector growth is calculated by combining the growth rates of these individual industries, using their respective weights in the overall Index of Core Industries (ICI)

Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI)

- The ICI comprises various components that collectively reflect the performance and vitality of India's industrial sector. These components include:
- Coal: Coal production, excluding Coking coal.
- Electricity: Electricity generation from thermal, nuclear, hydro sources, and imports from Bhutan.
- Crude Oil: Total crude oil production.
- Cement: Production in both large plants and mini plants.
- Natural Gas: Total production of natural gas.
- Steel: Production of alloy and non-alloy steel only.
- Refinery Products: Total refinery production.

Weightage Of The Eight Core Industries	
Petroleum Refinery Products:	28.04%
Electricity:	19.85%
Steel:	17.92%
Coal:	10.33%
Crude Oil:	8.98%
Natural Gas:	6.88%
Cement:	5.37%
Fertilizer:	2.63%

- Fertiliser: Production of urea, ammonium sulphate, calcium ammonium nitrate, complex grade fertiliser, single superphosphate, among others.

Features of Index of Eight Core Index

- For a reference month is released with a time lag of one month on the last day of the next month, which is about twelve days prior to the release of Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for the reference month.
- The choice of the base year of ICI is according to the choice of base year for the IIP.
- The base year in the current series of ICI is 2011-12.
- The ICI is widely used by policymakers, including the Ministry of Finance, other Ministries and Departments, Banks financing Infrastructure projects, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), and the Railway Board.

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Important Places

Event	Details
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Located 700 nautical miles southeast of the Indian mainland, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands add 300,000 sq km to India's exclusive economic zone, with the potential for undersea hydrocarbon and mineral deposits.
Ladakh	Ladakh is also known as "the Land of Passes" (La-passes, dakh-land). Ladakh's strategic location at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia gives it immense geopolitical significance. It serves as a buffer zone between India and its neighboring countries, including China and Pakistan.
Kashmir	The valley of Kashmir is bounded on the southwest by the Pir Panjal Range and on the northeast by the main Himalayas range. It is approximately 135 km (84 mi) long and 32 km (20 mi) wide, and drained by the Jhelum River.
Afghanistan	Afghanistan is a mountainous land-locked country located in South-Central Asia. Afghanistan is divided into 34 provinces. The largest city and capital is Kabul. It is bordered by India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the north, and Tajikistan and China to the northeast.
Kashmir Valley's Ganderbal district	The Ganderbal town is the district headquarter and has derived its name from a famous spring Ganderbhavan. With the passage of time the name got changed into Ganderbal from Gander bhavan, now recognized name and used officially. In the olden days the territory of Ganderbal has acted as gate way to the central Asia by constituting one of the most important stations of the erstwhile silk-route.
Kheer Bhawani temple	The temple is dedicated to the goddess Ragnya Devi. Situated 30 km from Srinagar city, it is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites for Kashmiri Hindus. The temple gets its name from kheer, or milk and rice pudding, that pilgrims pour into the spring inside the temple complex as an offering to the goddess.
Kashi Vishwanath Temple	Kashi Vishwanath Temple is one of the most famous Hindu temples dedicated to Lord Shiva. The temple stands on the western bank of the holy river Ganga and is one of the twelve Jyotirlingas, the holiest of Shiva temples.
Nalanda University	Nalanda was one of the famous universities of ancient India and historic center of higher learning in Bihar, India. It was founded in AD 427 in northeastern India, close to what is now Nepal's southern border, and it lasted until AD 1197.
Shyok river	It is a river that flows through northern Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir, India, and enters the Pakistan-administered region of Gilgit-Baltistan, where it joins the Indus River. It is a tributary of the Indus River. It originates from the Rimo Glacier; one of the tongues of the Siachen Glacier, and gets its name from a Ladakhi word meaning 'the river of death'.
Balasore town of Odisha	Balasore is one of the coastal Districts of Odisha. It lies on the northern most part of the state. It was a part of the ancient Kalinga which later became a territory of Toshal or Utkal, till the death of Mukunda Dev. Balasore as a separate District was created in October 1828.
Assam	Assam is situated in the North-East of India and is the largest northeastern state in terms of population while second in terms of area.
Palghar District, Maharashtra	Palghar is the 36th district of the state. It is spreaded between the west coast of the Arabian Sea and the Sahyadri Mountains rows that are east of the Northern District of Palghar. The district has a total of 8 talukas, Mokhada, Talasari, Vasai, Vikramgad, Palghar, Dahanu and Wada.

Event	Details
Mexico	Mexico is a country in the southern portion of North America. It is bordered to the north by the United States; to the south and west by the Pacific Ocean; to the southeast by Guatemala, Belize, and the Caribbean Sea; and to the east by the Gulf of Mexico.
Gaza Strip	The Gaza Strip is situated in the eastern Mediterranean basin, sharing borders with Egypt in the southwest and Israel to the north and east. To the west, it is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea.
Ukraine	Ukraine is located in Eastern Europe: lying on the northern shores of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The country borders Belarus in the north, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary in the west, Moldova and Romania in the south-west, and Russia in the east.
Australia	Australia is the world's largest island and smallest continent. It is the only nation that completely covers a continent. Its total area is nearly double that of India and Pakistan combined. It lies entirely in the Southern Hemisphere and is aptly named – Austral meaning south. It is located between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, stretches west to east from 114°E longitude to 154°E longitude and from 10°S to 40°S latitude.
Canada	It is a country in North America. Its ten provinces and three territories extend from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and northward into the Arctic Ocean, making it the world's second-largest country by total area, with the world's longest coastline.
New Zealand	New Zealand's location places it along one of the edges of the so-called Ring of Fire, which encircles the Pacific Ocean basin. The positions and activity of the tectonic plates in this zone cause most of the world's earthquakes and have formed more than 75 percent of the world's volcanoes.
Norway	Norway , is a Nordic country in Northern Europe, situated on the Scandinavian Peninsula. The remote Arctic island of Jan Mayen and the archipelago of Svalbard also form part of Norway. The capital and largest city in Norway is Oslo. The country shares a long eastern border with Sweden.
Gwadar Port	Gwadar Port is situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz. The port holds great strategic and economic significance for Pakistan. It is the third important deep seaport of Pakistan. It is located at the cross-junction of international sea shipping and oil trade routes.
Balochistan	It is located in the southwestern part of Pakistan. It is extremely rich in natural resources including gas, oil, copper, and gold.
Africa	It is located between the latitudes 37° North and 35° South and between the longitudes 50° East and 20° West. Africa is the only continent which is traversed by the equator, the Tropic of Capricorn and the Tropic of Cancer. The Greenwich Meridian passes through the western part of Africa.
Egypt	Egypt, the most populous country in West Asia, occupies a crucial geo-strategic location — 12% of global trade passes through the Suez Canal and is a key player in the region. It is a major market for India and can act as a gateway to both Europe and Africa.
Iran	Iran is located at strategic and crucial geographical location between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. Iran is important to India as it provides an alternate route of connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asian republics, in the absence of permission for India to use the land route through Pakistan.
UAE	The United Arab Emirates is a desert country located in the western part of Asia. It has maritime borders in the Persian Gulf with Iran and Qatar and is one of the fastest-growing

Event	Details
	countries in the world today. At the beginning of the 18th century, Dubai was a small fishing village in the UAE.
Ethiopia	It is the tenth-largest country in Africa in terms of area. Ethiopia is located from Sudan in the southeast, Eritrea to the south, Djibouti and Somalia to the west, Kenya to the north, and South Sudan to the east.
Russia	Because of its large size, Russia has a wide variety of natural features and resources. The country is located on the northeastern portion of the Eurasian landmass. It is bordered to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the east by the Pacific Ocean, and to the south, by the Black and Caspian Seas.
Qatar	Qatar is located in the Western Asia, on the Northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It shares its international boundary with Saudi Arabia in the south, rest of three sides; it is surrounded by the Persian Gulf. A strait of the Persian Gulf divides Qatar from its nearby island nation of Bahrain.
Oman	Oman is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. It controls access to the Strait of Hormuz, a vital choke point for global oil trade. Oman's location also gives it a strategic role in maritime security in the Indian Ocean region.
France	It is the largest country in Western Europe. It spans Western Europe and overseas regions and territories in the Americas and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. France share borders with Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Monaco, Italy, Andorra, and Spain in Europe, as well as the Netherlands, Suriname, and Brazil in the Americas via its overseas territory in French Guiana.
Germany	Germany is formally known as the Federal Republic of Germany. It is located in Central Europe. Germany is located between the Baltic and North Sea in the north.
Algeria	Algeria is bounded to the east by Tunisia and Libya; to the south by Niger, Mali, and Mauritania; to the west by Morocco and Western Sahara (which has been virtually incorporated by the former); and to the north by the Mediterranean Sea. It is a vast country—the largest in Africa and the 10th largest in the world
Argentina	It is the eighth-largest country in the world by land area, known for its diverse landscapes. Argentina shares borders with Chile to the west, Bolivia to the north, Paraguay to the northeast, Brazil to the east, Uruguay to the northeast, and the South Atlantic Ocean to the east.
Kenya	Kenya is located in East Africa. Its terrain rises from a low coastal plain on the Indian Ocean to mountains and plateaus at its centre. Kenya's location between the Indian Ocean and Lake Victoria means that people from all over Africa and the Middle East have travelled and traded across it for centuries.
Tunisia	Tunisia, officially the Republic of Tunisia, is the northernmost country in Africa. Tunisia is home to Africa's northernmost point, Cape Angela, and its capital and largest city is Tunis, located on its northeastern coast, which lends the country its name.
Turkey	Turkey is a transcontinental country located mainly on Anatolia in Western Asia, with a portion on the Balkans in Southeast Europe.
Italy	Italy is a boot-shaped peninsula that juts out of southern Europe into the Adriatic Sea, Tyrrhenian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and other waters. Italy has international borders with Austria, France, the Holy See (Vatican City), San Marino, Slovenia, and Switzerland.Italy also shares maritime borders with Albania, Algeria, Croatia, Greece, Libya, Malta, Montenegro, Spain, and Tunisia.

Event	Details
Mongla Port	It lies 62 km north of the Bay of Bengal coastline. It is situated at the confluence of the Pasur River and the Mongla River. The Port is surrounded and protected by the Sundarban mangrove forest. Mongla is the second largest seaport in Bangladesh after Chittagong.
Spain	Spain is located in southwestern Europe occupying most (about 82 per cent) of the Iberian Peninsula. Its mainland is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea (except for the small British territory of Gibraltar); by France, Andorra, and the Bay of Biscay; and by the Atlantic Ocean and Portugal.
Alaska Peninsula	It is a long, narrow strip of land located in the southwestern part of the U.S. state of Alaska. It separates the Pacific Ocean from Bristol Bay, an arm of the Bering Sea. The peninsula is largely mountainous, with numerous active and dormant volcanoes, rugged coastlines, deep fjords, and vast expanses of wilderness.
Pacific Kingdom of Tonga	It is part of the Tonga–Kermadec Islands volcanic arc formed due to the subduction of the Pacific Plate under the Indo-Australian Plate. Tonga is a Polynesian kingdom of more than 170 South Pacific islands, many uninhabited, most lined in white beaches and coral reefs and covered with tropical rainforest.
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijan is a country in Asia that is bordered by Russia, Georgia, Armenia, and Iran. The east of the country is bordered by the Caspian Sea. Much of the north and west is covered by the Caucasus Mountains.

Important Editorials of the Month

Delicate Balancing of Health Care Costs

Why in News?

Increasing healthcare cost considerations are influencing service delivery and patient care in India, highlighting the urgency for equitable and sustainable healthcare policies.

Key Highlights

- Rising costs and health disparities necessitate equitable and sustainable healthcare policies.
- Discussions on setting medical service rates significantly impact healthcare delivery and accessibility.
- Learning from global practices can help India manage healthcare costs more effectively.
- Private hospitals, particularly those accredited by JCI and NABH, are centers of innovation and specialized care.
- These hospitals invest in advanced technologies, enhancing patient outcomes and expanding access through telemedicine.
- Standardizing rates might improve affordability but could undermine healthcare quality and slow down innovation.
- Financial pressures from price caps increase patient dissatisfaction.
- Value-based pricing, reflecting health outcomes rather than service volume, is suggested as a potential solution.
- Proper rate standardization can reduce healthcare disparities but must not destabilize providers' economic health.
- Dynamic pricing models, like Thailand's tiered pricing system, offer a balanced solution considering medical complexity and patients' financial status.
- Legislative reforms are needed to manage healthcare costs effectively.
- States like Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu highlight the need for robust legal frameworks for rate fixation.
- AI, telemedicine, and electronic health records are revolutionizing healthcare.
- Telemedicine in Karnataka has reduced hospital visits by 40%, making care more accessible and cost-effective.
- Mobile health apps and wearable devices help manage chronic conditions and cut costs.

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- Broader internet access and improved digital literacy are crucial for the widespread adoption of healthcare technologies.
- Flexible pricing strategies are needed to reflect medical procedure complexities and patient-care requirements.
- Engaging private healthcare providers is essential for effective and sustainable policy crafting.
- Data-driven insights and predictive analytics are crucial for informed healthcare policy decisions.
- Implementing pilot projects to test rate caps' impact and establishing public-private partnerships are recommended.
- Balancing access, innovation, and affordability in healthcare is essential.
- Government subsidies for R&D in private hospitals and integrating technologies in public hospitals can ensure widespread access to advanced healthcare solutions.
- Ensuring affordable healthcare is a priority for India's national well-being, as emphasized by Dr. Vinod K. Paul from NITI Aayog.
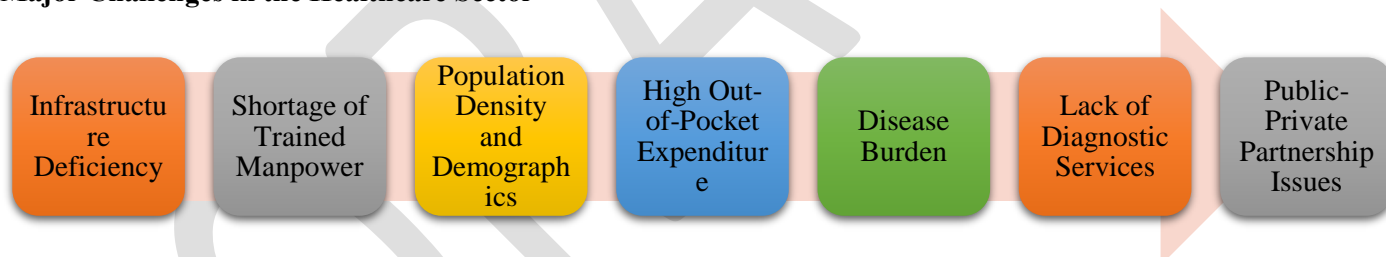
Overview of The Indian Healthcare sector

The sector includes hospitals, medical devices, clinical trials, outsourcing, telemedicine, medical tourism, health insurance, and medical equipment.

Delivery System

Public Sector	Private Sector
Provides basic healthcare through Primary Healthcare Centers (PHCs) in rural areas and limited secondary and tertiary care institutions in key cities.	Dominates secondary, tertiary, and quaternary care with a major presence in metropolitan, tier-I, and tier-II cities.

Major Challenges in the Healthcare Sector

Infrastructure Deficiency → Shortage of Trained Manpower → Population Density and Demographics → High Out-of-Pocket Expenditure → Disease Burden → Lack of Diagnostic Services → Public-Private Partnership Issues

Infrastructure Deficiency

- Lack of well-equipped medical institutes.
- Government mandates for private medical colleges to be built on at least five acres of land, leading to rural locations with poor living conditions and low pay for doctors.
- National Medical Commission (NMC) suggests removing the minimum land requirement.

Shortage of Trained Manpower

- Severe shortage of doctors, nurses, paramedics, and primary healthcare workers.

The performance report

In 2019, Kerala was the top performer followed by AP and Maharashtra. The best incremental change was seen in Haryana, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, AP and Assam.

State-wise health index score - 2019

Top 5*
Bottom 5*

Uttarakhand
Punjab
Uttar Pradesh
Madhya Pradesh
Bihar
Gujarat
Odisha
Maharashtra
Andhra Pradesh
Kerala

* This list excludes Goa and smaller states in the North East.
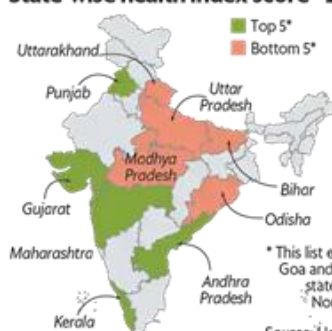
How states improved their scores on healthcare

Change in scores between 2015-16 and 2017-18

► Not improved**
Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu

► Least/moderately improved**
Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Telangana

► Most improved
Rajasthan, Haryana, Jharkhand, Assam, Andhra Pradesh

** Some states may not have shown much improvement but were already in the NITI Aayog's "front runners" list (high scores).

Source: Health Index developed by Niti Aayog in collaboration with MoHFW

- Doctor-to-patient ratio is 0.7 doctors per 1,000 people, below the WHO average of 2.5 per 1,000

Population Density and Demographics
- Large and diverse population poses unique challenges.
- Aging population increases the burden of chronic diseases.

High Out-of-Pocket Expenditure
- Public hospitals offer free services but are often understaffed and poorly equipped, leading to high costs at private institutions.

Disease Burden
- High prevalence of communicable diseases (e.g., tuberculosis) and increasing non-communicable diseases (e.g., diabetes, cardiovascular diseases).
- Approximately 5.8 million annual deaths from heart and lung diseases, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.

Lack of Diagnostic Services
- Diagnostic services are concentrated in metropolitan and big cities.
- Rural areas face shortages in hygiene infrastructure, awareness, access to facilities, trained personnel, medicines, and good doctors.

Public-Private Partnership Issues
- Challenges in effective collaboration between public and private sectors.
- Ensuring private healthcare serves public health goals.

Scenario of the Healthcare Sector in India
- Healthcare sector projected to grow at a CAGR of 22% from 2016-2022, reaching USD 372 billion by 2022.
- Public healthcare expenditure increased to 2.1% of GDP in 2021-22 from 1.8% in 2020-21.
- Health insurance premiums grew 13.3% YoY in FY21.
- Telemedicine expected to reach USD 5.5 billion by 2025.

Recent Developments in India's Healthcare Sector

Accessibility to Remote Areas → Addressing Infectious Diseases → Maternal and Child Health → Traditional Medicine Systems

Accessibility to Remote Areas
- Objective: Provide accessible and affordable healthcare to remote and rural areas. Some of the initiatives are given below:
  - **Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) and Community Health Centres (CHCs)**: Established to strengthen rural healthcare infrastructure.

o **National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)**: Launched to enhance healthcare services in rural areas.

Addressing Infectious Diseases

- Polio, Smallpox, and Measles: Significant progress through comprehensive immunization initiatives.
- **Pulse Polio Immunization Program**: Launched in 1995, successfully eradicated polio in India.
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS)**: Focuses on preventing and managing diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancer.

Maternal and Child Health

- **Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)**: Aims to improve maternal health outcomes and promote institutional deliveries.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**: Focuses on improving child health and reducing infant and maternal mortality rates.

Traditional Medicine Systems

- **Rich Heritage**: India has a diverse range of traditional medicine systems like Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy.
- **Ministry of AYUSH**: Promotes and regulates these systems, integrating them into the mainstream healthcare system.

Health centre count

The map shows the shortfall (%) of primary health centres (PHCs) in urban areas as of July 2020. The shortfall was more than 50% in 14 States/UTs

RAJASTHAN | 7
LADAKH | 100
JAMMU & KASHMIR | 38
UTTARAKHAND | 52
MIZORAM | 39
MANIPUR | 60
GUJARAT | 52
ODISHA | 47
ANDHRA PRADESH | 34
KERALA | 70
TAMIL NADU | 42

NO SHORTFALL
0-20
20-40
40-60
60-80
>80
% SHORTFALL

One Health -INDIA

Environment Health
ONE HEALTH
Human Health
Animal Health
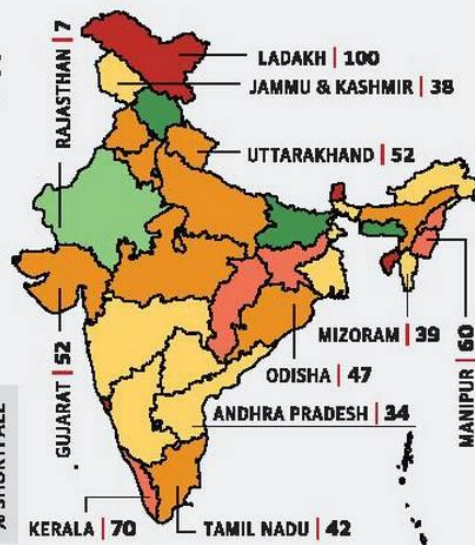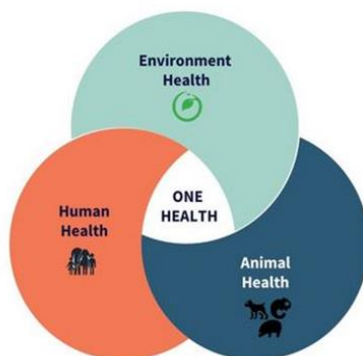
The **Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council** approved to set up a **National One Health Mission** with a cross-ministerial effort which will serve to coordinate, support, and integrate all the **existing One Health activities** in the country.

Recently, **MOHFW**, has transformed its **"Division of Zoonotic Diseases Program"** into the **"Centre for One Health."** The Centre for One Health comprises **8 technical divisions**, each focusing on different aspects of One Health.

Potential of India's Healthcare Sector

Well-Trained Professionals
- Large pool of skilled medical professionals.

Cost Competitiveness
- Surgery costs in India are about one-tenth of those in the US or Western Europe.

Large population
- Robust pharma and medical supply chain
- Over 750 million smartphone users
- Third largest start-up ecosystem globally with easy access to venture capital funding and innovative tech entrepreneurs.

Employment
- One of India's largest employers, with 4.7 million employees.
- Generated 2.7 million additional jobs between 2017-22, averaging over 500,000 new jobs per year.

Government Initiatives for the Healthcare Sector

Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
- Aims to enhance healthcare infrastructure.

National Health Mission
- Improves healthcare access and quality.

Ayushman Bharat – Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)
- Provides health insurance to millions of low-income families.

Pradhan Mantri-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM)
- Strengthens primary, secondary, and tertiary care services.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission
- Connects digital health solutions nationwide, providing digital health IDs and protected health records.

National Medical & Wellness Tourism Board
- Promotes medical and wellness tourism.

National Ayush Mission
- Develops traditional medicines, operating as a centrally sponsored scheme until 2026.

MoU with Denmark
- Cooperates on health and medicine, focusing on joint initiatives and technology development.

Way Forward

Opportunities and Trends	Future Demand	Government's Vision

Opportunities and Trends
- Diversified Industry: Offers numerous opportunities across provider, payer, and medical technology segments.
- Market Dynamics: Businesses are exploring new trends and dynamics to positively impact their operations.
- Medical Device Manufacturing: Significant prospects for growth and development.
- High-End Diagnostic Services: India has become a top location for advanced diagnostic services due to significant capital investments.

Future Demand
- Increasing Health Awareness: Indian consumers are increasingly focused on health maintenance.
- Growing Healthcare Demand: Driven by rising income levels, an aging population, and a shift towards preventative healthcare.
- Health Insurance: Increased coverage has led to higher healthcare spending, expected to continue growing over the next decade.

Government's Vision
- Global Healthcare Hub: Plans to develop India as a leading global healthcare destination.
- Public Health Spending: Aims to increase public health expenditure to 2.5% of GDP by 2025.

Property is real, and so should the 'compensation'

Why in News?

The recent decision of the Supreme Court in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation case has brought significant attention to the right to property in India.

Key Highlights

- The right to property has undergone considerable evolution, transitioning from a fundamental right to a constitutional right.
- The struggle between the courts and the legislature over property rights began with the Bela Banerjee case, involving Articles 19(1)(f) and 31(2).
- The Supreme Court initially interpreted compensation under Article 31(2) as a "just equivalent".
- The Constitution (Fourth) Amendment in 1955 limited judicial review of compensation adequacy.
- The Constitution (Twenty-Fifth) Amendment Act, 1971 replaced "compensation" with "amount" to avoid judicial scrutiny over compensation adequacy.
- The Janata Party, post-1977 election, passed the Constitution (44th) Amendment Act, 1978, removing the right to property from Part III and establishing it under Article 300-A.
- Article 31, which dealt with compensation, was deleted.
- Justice K.K. Mathew and Professor P.K. Tripathi argued for the fundamental nature of property rights and the necessity of compensation for public purpose acquisitions.
- The Supreme Court later affirmed property rights as human rights, linking them to Articles 14, 19, and 21.

Kesavananda Bharati Case

- The Supreme Court upheld the Twenty-Fifth Amendment but allowed scrutiny of the principles for determining compensation.
- This interpretation reinforced the judicial review over compensation principles despite legislative changes.

13 JUDGES OF KESAVANANDA

MAJORITY: Justice S.M. Sikri, Justice J.M. Shelat, Justice K.S. Hegde, Justice A.N. Grover, Justice P.J. Reddy, Justice Hans Raj Khanna, Justice B.K. Mukherjea

MINORITY: Justice A.N. Ray, Justice D.G. Palekar, Justice K.K. Mathew, Justice M.H. Beg, Justice S.N. Dwivedi, Justice Y.V. Chandrachud

KESAVANANDA BHARTI

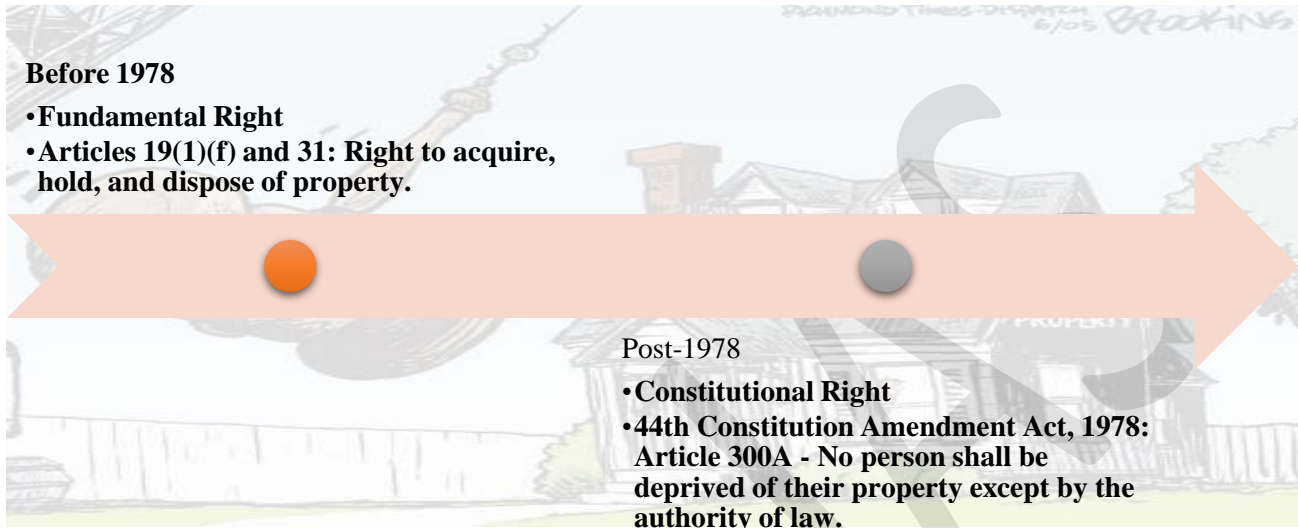| **Recent Supreme Court Decision**	In The Kolkata Municipal Corporation case delineated seven facets protected under Article 300-A:	Right to notice
		Right to be heard
		Right to a reasoned decision
		Duty to acquire only for public purpose
		Right of restitution or fair compensation
		Right to an efficient and expeditious process
		Right of conclusion
		Any law lacking these facets is susceptible to challenge.
		The court reiterated that deprivation of property requires just and reasonable compensation.

What is Right to Private Property?

- The right to private property refers to the legal and moral entitlement of individuals to own, use, and dispose of property, including land, buildings, and other tangible assets. It is a fundamental human right, ensuring individuals have exclusive control over their possessions and the freedom to use them for personal benefit.

Before 1978

- **Fundamental Right**
- **Articles 19(1)(f) and 31: Right to acquire, hold, and dispose of property.**

Post-1978

- **Constitutional Right**
- **44th Constitution Amendment Act, 1978: Article 300A - No person shall be deprived of their property except by the authority of law.**

Evolution and Judicial Interpretation

- The Supreme Court of India has affirmed that the right to private property is a human right, emphasizing that the state cannot dispossess individuals without due process of law.
- The Supreme Court has given a liberal interpretation to the term "property," encompassing both tangible and intangible assets, including money, contracts, and interests in property.
- Right to Property as a Fundamental Right
- Initially, the right to property was protected under Articles 31 and 19(1)(f), ensuring that no person could be deprived of their property without legal authority. The concept of eminent domain, where the state could appropriate private property for public use, was governed by legal principles ensuring public purpose and just compensation.

> **Right To Property Is Now a Constitutional Right**
> - The right to property is now a constitutional right, not part of the basic structure of the Constitution, as held in Jilubhai Nanbhai Khachar v. State of Gujarat.
> - Individuals cannot directly approach the Supreme Court under Article 32 for property right violations but can seek remedies through high courts.

- The American model imposed three restrictions: authorization by law, public purpose, and just compensation.
- India's Article 31(1) provided for legal authority and public purpose but did not ensure compensation adequacy, leading to legal challenges and eventual amendments.
- The 44th Amendment Act, 1978, deleted Articles 19(1)(f) and 31, introducing Article 300A in Part XII of the Constitution. This shifted the right to property from a fundamental right to a constitutional right, limiting direct access to the Supreme Court for violations but allowing recourse through high courts under Article 226.

Land Reforms and Legislative Measures

| Pre-Independence Systems | Land Ceiling Acts | Article 300A | Compensation and Legal Justification |

- **Pre-Independence Systems**
  - The Ryotwari, Mahalwari, Zamindari, and Jagirdari systems led to unequal land distribution, necessitating reforms.
  - The Constitution's 1st and 4th Amendments introduced Articles 31A and 31B to facilitate land reforms and validate certain acts and regulations, overcoming challenges from landowners.
- **Land Ceiling Acts**
  - Implemented between 1960 and 1999, these acts aimed to redistribute land by imposing maximum limits on landholding, although landowners frequently challenged these acts in court.
- **Article 300A**
  - Stipulates that no person shall be deprived of their property except by the authority of law, which must be just, fair, and reasonable.
  - The requirement of public purpose for property acquisition is maintained, ensuring any deprivation of property serves the public interest.
- **Compensation and Legal Justification**
  - Although not explicitly stated, compensation for property acquisition is inferred under Article 300A. The state must justify its actions on justiciable grounds.

Judicial Interpretation

Case Name	Key Issue	Supreme Court's Holding
Hari Krishna Mandir Trust vs. State of Maharashtra	Deprivation of property without legal authority	Deprivation of property without legal authority violates Article 300A.
K.T. Plantation Pvt. Ltd. vs. State of Karnataka	Necessity of public purpose for property deprivation	Reaffirmed the necessity of public purpose for property deprivation.

Right to Own Private Property as a Human Right

- In the recent judgment of Vidhya Devi v. State of Himachal Pradesh, the Supreme Court reiterated that the right to own private property is a human right, emphasizing the necessity of legal authority for property deprivation and the entitlement to compensation for wrongful acquisition.

Law of the land

The SC says there are seven procedural rights of citizens which constitute the 'real content of the right to property under Article 300A'
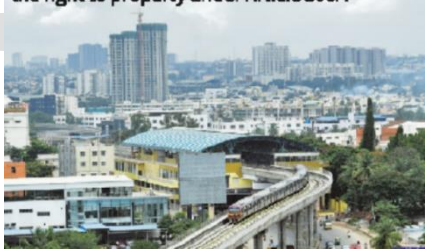
1. The right to notice or the duty of the state to inform a person that it intends to acquire his or her property
2. The right of the citizen to be heard or the duty of the state to hear the objections to the acquisition
3. The right of the citizen to a reasoned decision or the duty of the state to inform the person of its decision to acquire a property
4. The duty of the state to demonstrate that the acquisition is exclusively for public purpose
5. The right of the citizen to fair compensation
6. The duty of the state to conduct the process of acquisition efficiently and within prescribed timelines

- Article 300A of the Indian Constitution defines the right to property as a legal right. This article specifies that:
  - The state can acquire private property only if the acquisition serves a public purpose.
  - The state must provide compensation to the property owner for the acquisition.
- The right to property is classified as a legal right, not a fundamental right. This distinction has several implications:
  - The right to property can be regulated, abridged, or curtailed by ordinary legislation without the need for a constitutional amendment.

- o In case of a violation of this right, individuals cannot approach the Supreme Court for the issuance of writs under Article 32. However, they can file a petition in the High Court under Article 226 for legal redress.
- While the right to property is protected from arbitrary executive actions, it is not immune from legislative actions. This means:
  - o If Parliament passes a law authorizing the acquisition of private property, such acquisition is legally justified.
  - o There is no guaranteed right to compensation if the state acquires property under legislation passed by Parliament. The amount and adequacy of compensation can be determined by the law itself and may not always align with the property's market value.
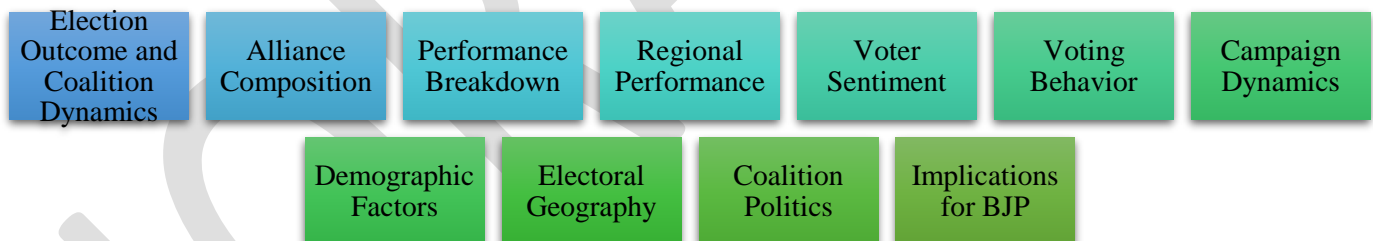
Conclusion
- The right to private property in India has evolved significantly, reflecting a balance between individual rights and public interest.
- While no longer a fundamental right, it remains a constitutional and human right, safeguarded by legal provisions and judicial interpretation.
- The journey from fundamental to constitutional status highlights the dynamic nature of property rights in India, ensuring protection and justice for property owners within the framework of the law.

A return to an era of genuine coalitions

Why in News?

The 2024 Indian general election results have sparked significant interest and discussion. The election results have indicated a substantial shift in the political landscape, with the ruling party's expectations for a third consecutive term thwarted. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), secured a majority only through its coalition, while the opposition alliance, Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA), led by the Congress, made significant gains.

Key Highlights

Election Outcome and Coalition Dynamics	Alliance Composition	Performance Breakdown	Regional Performance	Voter Sentiment	Voting Behavior	Campaign Dynamics

Demographic Factors	Electoral Geography	Coalition Politics	Implications for BJP

- **Election Outcome and Coalition Dynamics**
  - o The NDA coalition secured a majority, but the BJP's performance declined significantly.
  - o The INDIA coalition, a newly formed alliance, closely trailed the NDA, with the Congress party seeing an 80% increase in seats from 52 to 99.
- **Alliance Composition**
  - o The BJP accounted for 80% of the NDA coalition, whereas the Congress constituted a little over 40% of the INDIA coalition.
  - o The number of parties not affiliated with either coalition decreased to 18.
- **Performance Breakdown**
  - o The non-BJP NDA members saw an increase in seats from 50 in 2019 to 53 in 2024.
  - o The BJP lost over 63 seats, impacting the overall strength of the NDA.
  - o The INDIA alliance benefitted all its members, with notable gains for the Samajwadi Party and the Trinamool Congress.

- **Regional Performance**
  - The BJP's decline was prominent in the Hindi heartland states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar, as well as in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and West Bengal.
  - The party made some gains in Telangana and Odisha, but these were insufficient to offset the losses.
- **Voter Sentiment**
  - According to the CSDS-Lokniti post-poll survey, voter support was polarized along party lines.
  - Supporters of a third term for the BJP cited leadership, governance, and development, while opponents pointed to unemployment and price rise.
  - Satisfaction levels with the government strongly influenced voting patterns.
- **Voting Behavior**
  - Nearly half of the voters decided based on the party, while a third focused on the candidate.
  - The leadership factor, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi's influence, saw a decline compared to the 2019 elections.
- **Campaign Dynamics**
  - The heated election campaign saw significant last-minute voter decisions, influenced by campaign issues and promises.
  - Economic issues were central to the campaign discourse.
- **Demographic Factors**
  - The BJP received higher support from younger voters and those with greater access to education.
  - The Congress and its allies garnered uniform support across different age groups and education levels.
  - The BJP maintained strong support among the upper castes, while its appeal among minorities remained limited.
- **Electoral Geography**
  - The BJP's performance improved in southern and eastern India, leading to a more geographically spread support base.
  - However, it lost crucial support in northern states, indicating a halt in the nationalization of its social base.
- **Coalition Politics**
  - The 2024 election marks a return to genuine coalition politics.
  - Unlike the previous decade's coalition government, which had a dominant party, the current scenario demands a more equitable power-sharing arrangement within the NDA.
- **Implications for BJP**
  - The decline in seat share and the resurgence of coalition politics indicate that the BJP's dominance has waned.
  - The party must navigate a more complex political landscape, with varied social coalitions across different states. Coalition Government in India: An Analysis

Introduction to Coalition Governments
A coalition government is formed when multiple political parties come together to form a government, often reducing the dominance of the party with the most seats. This political arrangement was prevalent in India for 32 out of 71 years of its electoral history and has re-emerged after a decade-long hiatus, bringing back the concept of 'coalition dharma' coined by BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee, which emphasizes respecting coalition partners.

THE DECADE OF UNCERTAINTY: 1989-1999

PRIME MINISTER	DAYS	TENURE
V.P. SINGH	344	DEC 1989 TO NOV 1990
CHANDRA SHEKHAR	224	NOV 1990 TO JUN 1991
ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE	13	MAY 1996
DEVE GOWDA	325	JUN 1996 TO APR 1997
I.K. GUJRAL	333	APR 1997 TO MAR 1998
ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE	394	MAR 1998 TO APR 1999

Features of Coalition Government

| Multiplicity of Parties | Dynamic Nature | Pragmatism Over Ideology | Shared Power |

- **Multiplicity of Parties**: Coalition governments consist of at least two or more parties working together.
- **Dynamic Nature**: Coalition politics are fluid, with alliances forming and dissolving based on changing political landscapes.
- **Pragmatism Over Ideology**: Practical considerations often outweigh ideological commitments in coalition politics.
- **Shared Power**: Coalitions are typically formed to share power, either pre-poll with a joint manifesto or post-poll by combining strengths to govern.

Types of Coalition Governments

Pre-Poll Coalition

Parties come together before elections to present a united front to the electorate.

Post-Poll Coalition

Formed after elections when no single party has a clear majority, requiring a joint program for governance.
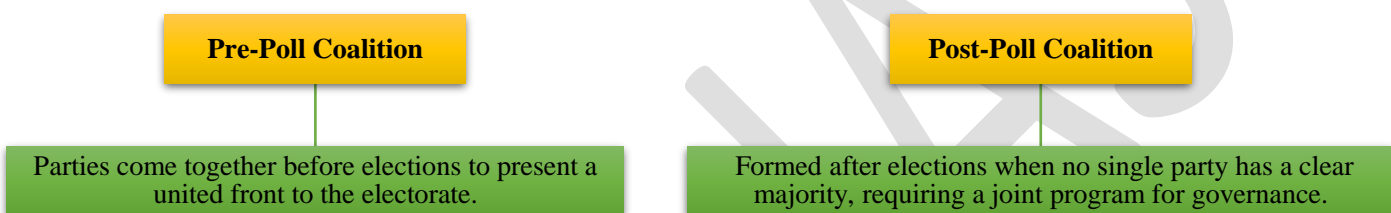
Historical Context in India
- In 1977, post-Emergency, eleven parties, including the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (predecessor of the BJP), formed the Janata government, marking the first coalition at the center.
- The Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) from 1999 to 2004 was the first coalition government to complete a full term.

Formation and Functioning
- Coalitions usually form in parliaments where no single party wins a majority. Parties with enough combined elected members form a majority, agreeing on a program that balances their individual policies to govern effectively. This

HISTORY OF COALITION GOVERNMENT

PERIOD	COALITION	PRIME MINISTER	PARTY IN SUPPORT
1977-1979	JANTA PARTY	MORARJI DESAI	CONGRESS PARTY (O)
1979-1980	JANTA PARTY	CHARAN SINGH	JANTA (S)
1989-1990	NATIONAL FRONT	V P SINGH	JANTA DAL
1990-1991	SAMAJWADI JANTA PARTY	CHANDRA SHEKAR	JANTA DAL (S)
1996-1997	UNITED FRONT	H.D DEVEGOWDA	JANTA DAL
1997-1998	UNITED FRONT	I.K GUJRAL	JANTA DAL
1998-1999	BJP-LED COALITION	A.B VAJPAYEE	B.J.P
1999-2004	NDA	A.B VAJPAYEE	BJP
2004-2009	UPA-I	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2009-2014	UPA-II	MANMOHAN SINGH	CONGRESS
2014-2019	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2019-2024	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP
2024-current	NDA	Narendra Modi	BJP

arrangement is more common in India, given its diverse electorate often delivers fragmented mandates.

Merits of Coalition Governments	Demerits of Coalition Governments
Inclusive Policies: Coalition governments often generate policies that consider diverse interests, reflecting the collective will of a broader spectrum of society.	**Instability:** Coalition governments are prone to instability due to differing opinions among partners, potentially leading to government collapse.
Checks and Balances: The need for consensus among coalition partners can lead to more transparent and accountable governance.	**Constrained Leadership:** The Prime Minister's authority is often limited by the need to consult coalition partners.

Consensus-Based Politics: Policies require agreement from all coalition partners, leading to more balanced and considered decision-making.	**Diminished Cabinet Role:** The presence of a Coordination Committee can overshadow the traditional cabinet's role.
Strengthening Federal Fabric: Coalition politics often make governments more sensitive to regional demands, thereby strengthening the federal structure.	**Influence of Smaller Parties:** Smaller coalition partners may exert disproportionate influence by making extensive demands.
Reduced Despotic Tendencies: With power shared among various parties, the risk of autocratic rule is minimized.	**Regional Pressures:** Regional parties may push national policies to align with their regional priorities, sometimes at the cost of broader national interests.
	Lack of Accountability: Blame-shifting among coalition partners can dilute accountability for governance failures.

Notable Reforms by Coalition Governments
- **P. V. Narasimha Rao (1991-1996)**: Initiated economic liberalization, integrating India into the global economy.
- **Deve Gowda (1996-1997)**: Introduced the "dream budget," reducing tax rates and fostering economic growth.
- **Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004)**: Enacted the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, promoted rural infrastructure, and advanced IT sector regulations.
- **Manmohan Singh (2004-2014)**: Implemented rights-based reforms like the Right to Information and Right to Food, and deregulated fuel prices.

Recommendations for Coalition Governments
- **Punchhi Commission**: Established guidelines for appointing Chief Ministers in hung assemblies, recommending treating pre-poll coalitions as single entities.
- **Sarkaria Commission**: Emphasized improving dialogue between the Centre and states to resolve federal issues.

Conclusion

Coalition governments have played a significant role in shaping India's political and economic landscape. While they bring challenges such as instability and diluted leadership, they also offer benefits like inclusive policymaking and strengthened federalism. The history of coalition governments in India highlights their complex but crucial role in the country's democratic process.

Personal Law Norms Cannot Invalidate Inter-Faith Marriages

Why in News?

The recent judgment by the Madhya Pradesh High Court has sparked controversy and concern by declining protection to an inter-faith couple. This judgment, based on the premise that a marriage between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman would not be valid under Muslim personal law even if registered under the Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954, showcases a profound misunderstanding of the law.

Key Highlights

Ignorance of Law in Judiciary	Misinterpretation of the Special Marriage Act	Judicial Overreach	Irrelevant Legal Query	Conflicting Justifications	Secular vs. Personal Law
	Implications of the Judgment	Call for Legal Clarity			

- **Ignorance of Law in Judiciary**
  - The principle that ignorance of the law is no excuse applies not only to offenders but also to judges.
  - The Madhya Pradesh High Court's decision reflects a significant misinterpretation of the law.
- **Misinterpretation of the Special Marriage Act**
  - The SMA was established to facilitate inter-faith marriages without the need for religious rituals.
  - The judge's focus on Muslim personal law to invalidate an SMA-registered marriage is misplaced.
- **Judicial Overreach**
  - The court's examination of Muslim law treatises to determine the validity of the inter-faith marriage was unnecessary.
  - The couple sought police protection to appear before the Marriage Registration Officer, not a judgment on the validity of their marriage under personal law.
- **Irrelevant Legal Query**
  - The question of whether the inter-faith marriage would be valid under Muslim law is irrelevant when the couple chose to marry under the SMA.
  - The Special Marriage Act overrides the personal law of the individuals involved in such cases.
- **Conflicting Justifications**
  - The judge acknowledged that marriages under the SMA cannot be challenged for non-performance of religious rituals.
  - Yet, he argued that a marriage invalid under personal law cannot be legitimized by the SMA, which is a misinterpretation of the Act.
- **Secular vs. Personal Law**
  - The judgment conflates secular marriage provisions with personal religious law.
  - It imposes religious personal law on individuals opting for a secular marriage under the SMA.
- **Implications of the Judgment**
  - Allowing this judgment to stand undermines the very purpose of the Special Marriage Act.
  - It hinders progress towards a uniform civil code and privileges religious personal law over secular law.
  - This could potentially drive individuals to religious conversion solely for the purpose of marriage.
- **Call for Legal Clarity**
  - There is an urgent need for judicial clarity and adherence to the intended purpose of the Special Marriage Act.
  - Ensuring that personal law does not interfere with secular legal provisions is crucial for protecting the rights of inter-faith couples.

WEDDED TO BELIEFS

A STUDY ON THE STABILITY OF THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA HAS THROWN UP INTERESTING RESULTS. A LOOK

10% of the total marriages in country take place between different castes

2.1% marriages across the country are inter-religious

12.24% girls who opt for inter-caste marriages in Kerala prefer men from lower castes

97.04% people in Tamil Nadu prefer same caste marriages, leading the southern states in such weddings

6 MARRIAGES ARE STILL TAKING PLACE WITHIN THE SAME CASTE AND THERE IS A STRONG CASTE SUPPORT BEHIND EVERY UNION
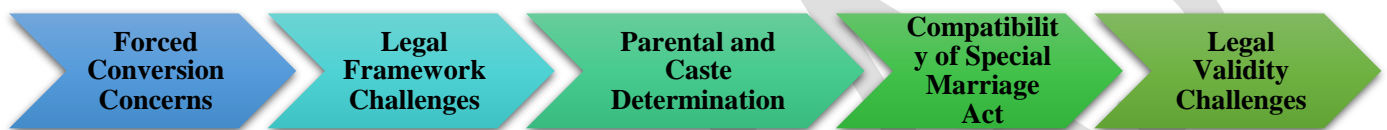
— Srinivasan, Ex-director of IIPS

o This judgment serves as a reminder of the importance of judicial competence and the necessity of upholding secular principles in the application of law. The Special Marriage Act was designed to facilitate inter-faith marriages and should be interpreted to protect the rights of individuals seeking to marry outside the confines of religious rituals.

Interfaith Marriages

- Interfaith marriages, where individuals from different religious backgrounds choose to wed, are a testament to personal choice and love transcending religious boundaries.
- However, in diverse societies like India, such unions often encounter legal, social, and personal challenges that warrant careful consideration.

Issues with Interfaith Marriages

| Forced Conversion Concerns	Legal Framework Challenges	Parental and Caste Determination	Compatibility of Special Marriage Act	Legal Validity Challenges

- **Forced Conversion Concerns**
  - One of the primary concerns is the perceived pressure for one spouse, typically women, to convert to their partner's religion, especially under certain personal laws like the Muslim Personal Law.
- **Legal Framework Challenges**
  - Different religious laws in India, such as those governing Hindu and Muslim marriages, can present obstacles. For instance, Hinduism permits monogamy only, while under Muslim law, marrying a non-Muslim often necessitates conversion.
- **Parental and Caste Determination**
  - There is ambiguity regarding the determination of children's caste in interfaith marriages, raising concerns about societal acceptance and legal status.
- **Compatibility of Special Marriage Act**
  - The Special Marriage Act, 1954, designed to facilitate interfaith marriages through a secular legal framework, faces criticism for not adequately addressing societal complexities and stigmas.
- **Legal Validity Challenges**

    o   High courts have debated the application of constitutional articles, such as Article 226, concerning the annulment of interfaith marriages, highlighting legal uncertainties and challenges.

The Special Marriage Act, 1954

- The Special Marriage Act is a distinctive legislation enabling civil marriages through registration, ensuring couples do not need to relinquish their religious identities.
- It applies uniformly across India, except in Jammu & Kashmir, encompassing marriages between Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists.
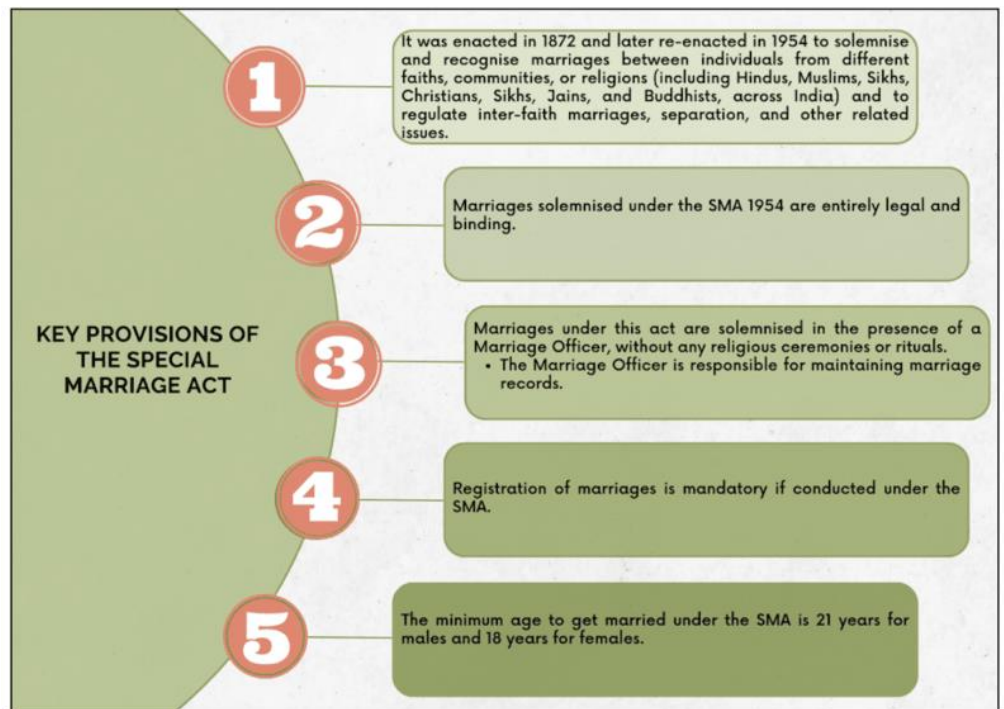
Requirements and Conditions

- Key requisites include mutual consent of both parties without restrictions based on caste, religion, or race.

KEY PROVISIONS OF THE SPECIAL MARRIAGE ACT

1. It was enacted in 1872 and later re-enacted in 1954 to solemnise and recognise marriages between individuals from different faiths, communities, or religions (including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists, across India) and to regulate inter-faith marriages, separation, and other related issues.

2. Marriages solemnised under the SMA 1954 are entirely legal and binding.

3. Marriages under this act are solemnised in the presence of a Marriage Officer, without any religious ceremonies or rituals.
   - The Marriage Officer is responsible for maintaining marriage records.

4. Registration of marriages is mandatory if conducted under the SMA.

5. The minimum age to get married under the SMA is 21 years for males and 18 years for females.

- Minimum age limits are set at 21 years for males and 18 years for females, ensuring legal adulthood.
- Monogamy is mandatory, with neither party having a living spouse at the time of marriage, and mental competence is essential for valid consent.

Legal and Constitutional Perspectives

- Proposals to regulate interfaith marriages through specific laws challenge constitutional guarantees, including the Right to Equality, Freedom of Religion, Personal Liberty, and the Right to Life.
- Article 21 ensures the protection of life and personal liberty under due process of law, applicable to all individuals regardless of citizenship.
- Article 25 guarantees freedom of religion, permitting individuals to practice and propagate any religion, including conversion, as per personal beliefs.
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954, is a pivotal Indian legislation providing a legal framework for marriages between individuals of different religions or castes. It sanctions civil marriages, governed by the state rather than religious customs, thus offering an alternative to religious marriage laws.

Provisions of the SMA

Category	Details
Applicability	Applicable to all Indian citizens regardless of faith, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, and Buddhists.
Recognition of Marriage	Facilitates registration of marriages, confers legal recognition and benefits (inheritance, succession, social security). Prohibits polygamy, nullifies marriage if invalid consent.

| Written Notice	Section 5: Parties must give written notice to the Marriage Officer with at least one party having resided there for 30 days. Section 7: Objections can be raised within 30 days.
Age Limit	Minimum age: 21 years for males, 18 years for females.
Differentiation from Personal Laws	SMA enables inter-faith and inter-caste marriages without conversion, unlike personal laws. Married individuals are deemed severed from family for inheritance rights.
Objections to Marriage	Provision for objections can be misused to delay or prevent marriage. Allahabad High Court (2021) allowed couples to opt out of the mandatory 30-day notice for privacy.
Privacy Concerns	Requirement to publish notices may expose personal information, leading to social stigma and discrimination.
Social Stigma	Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages can face social stigma and discrimination in many parts of India.
Notice and Declaration	Section 5: Parties must provide written notice to the Marriage Officer and sign a declaration with three witnesses. Certificate of Marriage is issued as proof.
Notice Period	Section 6: Notice must be kept in a "Marriage Notice Book" for public inspection. Must be published to invite objections within 30 days. Objections need resolution before marriage.

Way Forward

The state should focus on protecting the rights of women within marriage and aim for a more equal and progressive law. Ensuring privacy and minimizing social stigma are crucial for the effective implementation of the SMA.

Global Plastic Treaty Settling trade disputes through 'litigotiation'

Why in News?

The upcoming INC-5 meeting marks a pivotal moment in global efforts to combat plastic pollution. This treaty aims to establish a legally binding framework to reduce and eliminate plastic waste, addressing critical environmental and social challenges.

Key Highlights
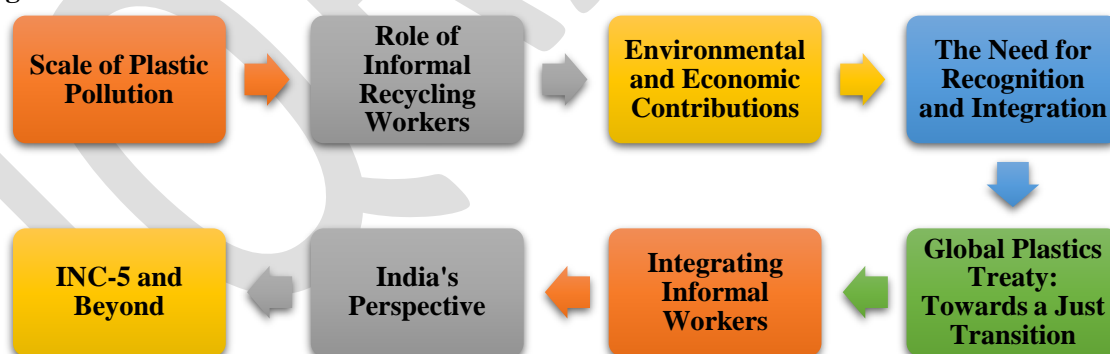
- **Scale of Plastic Pollution**
  - According to the OECD Global Plastic Outlook, global plastic waste production surged to 353 million tonnes in 2019, with projections to triple by 2060. Despite this vast volume, only 9% is recycled, highlighting significant environmental concerns.
- **Role of Informal Recycling Workers**
  - Informal recycling workers play a crucial role, responsible for 85% of the global plastic recycling efforts. These individuals collect, sort, and recover recyclable materials, significantly reducing landfill waste and preventing environmental contamination.

- **Environmental and Economic Contributions**
    - Their contributions extend beyond waste management, promoting circular economy principles and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. However, they face vulnerabilities due to lack of recognition and increasing privatization of waste management.
- **The Need for Recognition and Integration**
    - Despite their essential role, informal recycling workers often face marginalization and lack of legal protections. The informal waste and recovery sector accounts for 80% of municipal solid waste recovery in many cities, underscoring its significance in global waste management systems.
- **Global Plastics Treaty**
    - The Global Plastics Treaty represents a critical step towards comprehensive plastic pollution mitigation. Initiated in 2021, the treaty aims to formalize international efforts in reducing plastic waste through legally binding agreements.
- **Integrating Informal Workers**
    - The International Alliance of Waste Pickers advocates for the formalization and integration of informal waste pickers into policy frameworks. Their inclusion ensures that policies consider their expertise and safeguard their livelihoods.
- **India's Perspective**
    - India, representing the Global South, emphasizes a balanced approach that enhances recycling efforts while acknowledging local capacities and challenges. This approach supports informal waste pickers who are pivotal in the nation's waste management landscape.
- **INC-5 and Beyond**
    - As negotiations progress towards INC-5 in South Korea, there is a critical opportunity to embed social justice and equity principles into the treaty. Recognizing and supporting informal recycling workers is essential for effective and sustainable plastic waste management.

Why a Global Plastics Treaty is Essential

Rapid Expansion of Plastic Production	Environmental Impact of Plastic Waste	Contribution to Climate Change

- **Rapid Expansion of Plastic Production**
    - Since the 1950s, global plastic production has surged dramatically, from 2 million tonnes in 1950 to over 450 million tonnes in 2019.
    - Projections indicate a potential doubling by 2050 and tripling by 2060, highlighting unsustainable growth.
- **Environmental Impact of Plastic Waste**
    - Despite its versatility, plastic poses a severe environmental threat due to its slow decomposition rate of 20 to 500 years.
    - A staggering 6 billion tonnes of plastic now pollute our planet, with annual waste generation expected to increase by 62% between 2024 and 2050.
    - Much of this waste ends up in our oceans and ecosystems, breaking down into harmful microplastics and releasing toxic chemicals.
- **Contribution to Climate Change**
    - Plastic production and disposal processes contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, with plastics alone generating 1.8 billion tonnes of emissions in 2019.
    - These emissions primarily stem from the fossil fuels used in plastic production. If current trends continue, emissions from plastic production could rise by 20% by 2050, exacerbating climate change impacts.

IQRA IAS — An institute for civil services

Objectives of the Global Plastics Treaty

| Addressing Environmental Pollution | Guidelines for International Cooperation | Prohibitions and Targets | Chemical Safety Mandates | Consideration for Vulnerable Workers | Progress Assessment and Accountability |

- **Addressing Environmental Pollution**: The treaty aims to combat marine and environmental pollution caused by plastics by setting global objectives and assessing their impact on ecosystems. It seeks to regulate and reduce plastic production, consumption, and disposal to mitigate environmental degradation.
- **Guidelines for International Cooperation**: It proposes guidelines for wealthier nations to assist developing countries in achieving plastic reduction goals. This includes technology transfer, financial support, and capacity building to facilitate sustainable plastic management practices globally.
- **Prohibitions and Targets**: The treaty may include bans on specific plastics, products, and harmful chemical additives, alongside legally binding targets for recycling rates and recycled content in consumer goods. These measures aim to promote circular economy principles and reduce plastic waste leakage into the environment.

End Plastic Pollution: Looking forward

UNEA-5.2 — 28 Feb – 2 Mar | Nairobi, Kenya Adoption resolution 5/14 End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument

INC-1 — 28 Nov – 2 Dec | Punta del Este, Uruguay Preceeded by a multi-stakeholder forum

INC-3 — 13 – 19 Nov | Nairobi, Kenya

INC-4 — 21-30 April | Ottawa, Canada

INC-5 — 25 Nov – 1 Dec | Busan, Republic of Korea

2022 — **2023** — **2024** — **2025**

OEWG — 30 May – 1 Jun | Dakar, Senegal

INC-2 — 29 May – 2 June | Paris, France

UNEA-6 — 26 Feb – 1 Mar | Nairobi, Kenya Report progress of the INC

Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries — Mid 2025 | For the purpose of adoption and opening for signature the new instrument

UNEA-5 resolution sets the ambition of completing the INC work by the end of 2024

- **Chemical Safety Mandates**: To ensure environmental and human safety, the treaty may mandate testing and regulation of chemicals used in plastic manufacturing. This measure aims to minimize the release of hazardous substances into ecosystems, safeguarding biodiversity and human health.
- **Consideration for Vulnerable Workers**: Recognizing the role of informal waste pickers and workers dependent on the plastic industry, the treaty seeks to ensure a just transition. This involves protecting livelihoods and integrating these workers into sustainable waste management systems.
- **Progress Assessment and Accountability**: The treaty will establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate member states' progress in implementing plastic pollution reduction measures. Regular assessments will promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in global efforts to address plastic pollution.

Challenges in Advancing the Treaty

- Resistance from Industry and Economic Interests: Major oil and gas-producing nations, along with fossil fuel and chemical industries, oppose stringent regulations on plastic production. They argue that plastic waste management, not production, should be the primary focus, complicating treaty negotiations.
- Disagreements on Voting Mechanisms: Negotiations are polarized over whether decisions within the treaty should be based on consensus or majority voting. This debate affects the speed and inclusivity of decision-making processes critical to treaty adoption and implementation.
- Diverging National Priorities: Countries like the US advocate for voluntary measures over binding commitments, diverging from the High Ambition Coalition's call for ambitious targets and timelines. This discrepancy complicates achieving unified global action against plastic pollution.

India's Position and Contributions

Advocating Sustainable Development	India supports a balanced approach, emphasizing equity and sustainable development. Focuses on economic development alongside environmental protection, with differentiated responsibilities in plastic reduction.
Policy Initiatives and Challenges	India implemented the Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules (2021) to regulate single-use plastics. Faces challenges in enforcement and expanding the scope of banned plastic categories.
Global and Local Initiatives	India participates in global initiatives like the UNEP Plastics Initiative. Domestic programs include the Swachh Bharat Mission and the India Plastics Pact to enhance waste management and promote sustainable practices.
India's Complex Relationship with the Global Plastic Treaty	Reflects a balance between addressing environmental concerns and safeguarding economic interests related to plastic production and management.
Plastic Production vs. Plastic Pollution	India differentiates between plastic production (vital for sectors like agriculture, healthcare, infrastructure) and plastic pollution. Emphasizes that the issue is waste management rather than production.
Economic Considerations	Advocates against a blanket ban or stringent production caps due to potential adverse impacts on the economy. Supports targeted interventions for waste management without affecting economic growth.

Government Initiatives and Challenges

- India has taken significant strides in bolstering its EPR framework, making it one of the largest such systems globally.
- This includes mandatory targets for recycling and reducing single-use plastics, initiatives aimed at integrating informal waste pickers into formal recycling networks, and investments in waste-to-energy technologies to manage plastic waste effectively.

> **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**
> Central to India's strategy is the implementation of EPR rules, wherein producers, importers, and brand owners are mandated to manage the end-of-life disposal of their plastic products. This framework not only incentivizes the use of recycled materials in packaging but also promotes sustainable practices across the supply chain.

Corporate Responses and Sustainability Efforts

- Major corporations like Hindustan Unilever and Godrej & Boyce have embraced the EPR mandate, significantly increasing their recycling efforts and reducing plastic use in packaging. This proactive approach underscores the private sector's role in driving sustainable practices amidst regulatory frameworks.

THE PLASTIC PROBLEM

Every country has its own Plastic Overshoot Day, which is determined by the amount of plastic waste generated and the country's capacity to manage it.

Beyond this day, all waste generated by the country becomes mismanaged, ultimately finding its way into the natural environment

PLASTIC OVERSHOOT DAY 2023, BY COUNTRY

Jan 6	India
Jan 6	Indonesia
Jan 8	Brazil
Jan 8	Russia
Feb 3	UAE
Apr 30	Mexico
Oct 12	Italy
Oct 29	China
Nov 17	UK
Nov 28	Australia
Nov 30	US
Dec 22	Canada

(selected countries)
Source: Plastic Overshoot Day – Report 2023

NEWS18

Criticisms and Challenges

- **Environmental and Health Concerns**: Critics argue that India's focus on economic viability overlooks the profound environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution. They highlight issues such as the leaching of harmful chemicals from plastics into ecosystems, affecting human health and biodiversity.
- **Policy Gaps and Regulatory Dilution**: Concerns have been raised regarding recent dilutions in environmental norms for polymer producers and the overall enforcement of stringent regulations. Critics question whether India's subsidies to the polymer industry and lenient regulatory frameworks undermine efforts towards true environmental sustainability
- **Civil Society and Research Perspectives**: Research organizations like the Centre for Science and Environment and Toxics Link advocate for a more holistic approach that considers the true costs of plastic production and pollution. They emphasize the need for stringent environmental standards and the removal of subsidies that artificially lower the cost of plastic.

India's role in shaping the Global Plastic Treaty framework

India's role in shaping the Global Plastic Treaty framework reflects a nuanced approach that navigates between safeguarding national interests and committing to global environmental responsibilities.

India's Role in Shaping the Global Plastic Treaty Framework	Reflects a nuanced approach balancing national interests and global environmental responsibilities.
Strategic Interventions	Actively engaged in negotiations, advocating for principles that protect human health and the environment, particularly marine ecosystems.
Principles of Equity and Differentiated Responsibilities	Emphasizes equity and common but differentiated responsibilities. Over 30 principles proposed, though critics note gaps in addressing fundamental human rights.
Opposition to Production Limitations	Opposes binding limits on primary plastic polymers, arguing they exceed existing international resolutions. Supports regulation of manufacturing chemicals with a transparent, science-based approach.
Midstream Measures and Product Design	Advocates for national measures to enhance plastic usage efficiency, focusing on product longevity through improved design. Resists international imposition of design standards.
Downstream Measures and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)	Insists on nationally tailored EPR approaches that respect national boundaries and capacities. Emphasizes the importance of determining EPR scope and modalities at the national level.

Prioritizing Plastic Waste Management	Focuses on interventions to prevent plastic waste leakage into the environment, concentrating on end-of-life management. Excludes emissions and effluents from manufacturing or recycling stages.
Trade, Finance, and Technology Transfer	Opposes trade-related provisions in the treaty. Advocates for comprehensive financial and technical assistance and technology transfer to support national initiatives.
Continued Advocacy and Evolving Stance	Maintains core positions while introducing new arguments. Reframes discussions on the plastic life cycle and advocates for integrated financial and technological support across treaty provisions.

Way Forward

- As discussions progress within international forums like the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution, India faces the dual challenge of advocating for pragmatic solutions to plastic waste management while upholding its developmental goals.
- The path forward necessitates a balanced approach—one that integrates technological innovation, regulatory rigor, and inclusive stakeholder engagement to achieve sustainable growth while mitigating the adverse impacts of plastic pollution on our planet.
- India's engagement in the Global Plastic Treaty negotiations underscores a delicate balance between asserting national sovereignty and committing to global environmental stewardship.
- While advocating for tailored national approaches in plastic management, India seeks to integrate comprehensive support mechanisms to facilitate sustainable development goals.
- As discussions progress, the challenge lies in harmonizing diverse perspectives to achieve a cohesive international framework that addresses plastic pollution effectively while respecting diverse national contexts and capacities.

Settling trade disputes through 'litigotiation' state of India-U.S. ties
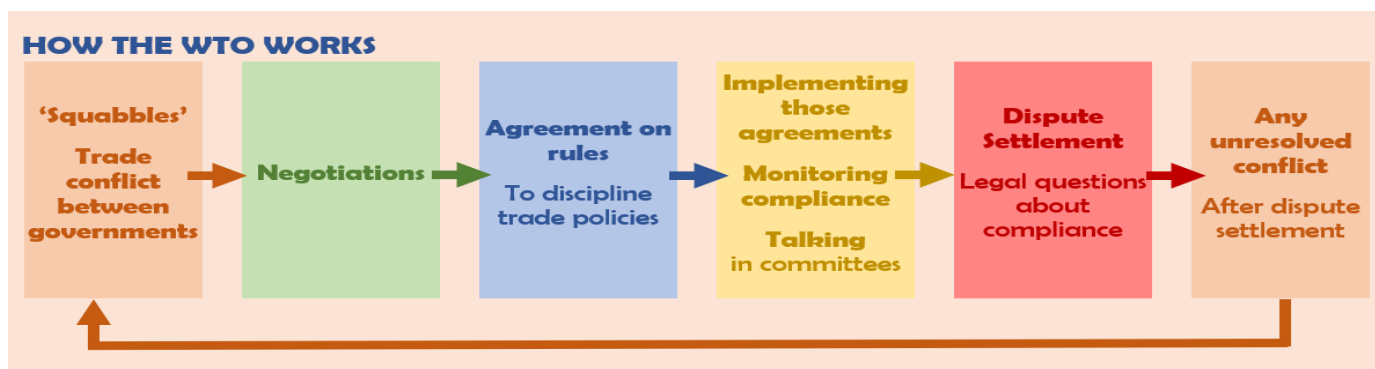
Why in News

In a significant diplomatic achievement, India and the United States have successfully settled a series of longstanding trade disputes at the World Trade Organization (WTO), marking a milestone in bilateral relations.

Key Highlights

A Decade-Long Dispute Resolved → Legal Backdrop and WTO Involvement → Diplomatic Breakthrough → Economic Impact and Strategic Implications → Broader Implications for International Trade → Lessons Learned and Future Prospects
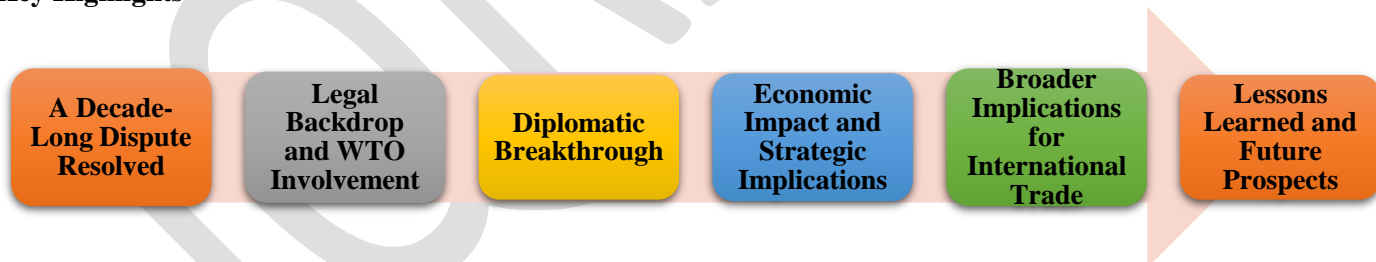
- **A Decade-Long Dispute Resolved:** The dispute primarily centered around India's import restrictions on poultry products from the U.S. due to concerns over avian influenza. Initiated by the U.S. in 2012, it challenged India's deviation from international standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).
- **Legal Backdrop and WTO Involvement:** Both the WTO panel and Appellate Body ruled in favor of the U.S., prompting India to revise its measures. Despite efforts to settle, the disputes remained unresolved until recent bilateral negotiations.

- **Diplomatic Breakthrough:** Following persistent efforts, India and the U.S. reached a comprehensive settlement, withdrawing pending WTO cases related to poultry products. This included India agreeing to reduce tariffs on select U.S. imports like cranberries and frozen turkey.

HOW THE WTO WORKS

| 'Squabbles' Trade conflict between governments | → | Negotiations | → | Agreement on rules To discipline trade policies | → | Implementing those agreements Monitoring compliance Talking in committees | → | Dispute Settlement Legal questions about compliance | → | Any unresolved conflict After dispute settlement |

- **Economic Impact and Strategic Implication:** While the economic impact of this specific dispute may not be staggering, its resolution is crucial for fostering a positive bilateral climate. It eliminates a potential $450 million annual claim against India and underscores the efficacy of diplomatic dialogue in resolving trade conflicts.
- **Broader Implications for International Trade:** The settlement of these disputes sets a precedent for resolving complex trade issues through bilateral negotiations amid the WTO's challenges. It highlights the role of diplomatic channels in supplementing multilateral frameworks during periods of institutional strain.
- **Lessons Learned and Future Prospects:** This achievement reinforces the importance of maintaining open communication and leveraging diplomatic avenues to prevent trade disputes from escalating. It reflects a pragmatic approach where countries prioritize negotiated settlements over prolonged litigation.

Background
- Since 2019, the WTO Appellate Body has been inoperative, posing a significant challenge in resolving international trade disputes. This impasse has affected numerous cases, including six longstanding disputes between India and the U.S., spanning various sectors and products.
- In a notable diplomatic maneuver, both India and the U.S. opted for bilateral negotiations to settle the six unresolved trade disputes. Acknowledging each other's domestic challenges in compliance with dispute rulings, the countries prioritized burying their differences through mutual understanding.

Disputes and Their Settlements
- **Section 232 Tariffs**: In 2018, the U.S. imposed tariffs on Indian steel and aluminum citing national security concerns. India retaliated with tariffs on U.S. goods like soybeans and almonds. The resolution included the U.S. accepting exclusion requests for steel and aluminum products, with approval rates of 70% and 80%, respectively.
- **Domestic Content Requirements for Solar Cells**: India's domestic content requirements for solar cells faced WTO scrutiny from the U.S., alleging violations. India agreed to phase out these requirements over five years, while the U.S. withdrew its challenge.
- **Export Subsidies for IT Products**: The U.S. challenged India's export subsidies for information technology products, arguing WTO violations. India agreed to eliminate these subsidies, and the U.S. withdrew its challenge.
- **Special Economic Zones**: India's special economic zones, contested by the U.S. for preferential treatment to foreign investors, saw India agreeing to unspecified changes. The U.S. withdrew its WTO challenge.
- **Intellectual Property Rights**: The U.S. accused India of inadequate intellectual property rights protection. India committed to enhancing its IP protection regime, leading to the U.S. withdrawing its concerns.

- **Anti-Dumping Duties**: Anti-dumping duties imposed by the U.S. on Indian products prompted disputes. Both countries agreed to establish a working group to address these duties, signaling ongoing efforts to resolve the issue.

Mechanism of Trade Dispute Settlement at WTO
- WTO dispute settlement involves filing cases, bilateral consultations, establishment of dispute settlement panels, and appellate body review. The current non-functioning appellate body has stalled this process due to member countries' differences in appointing members.
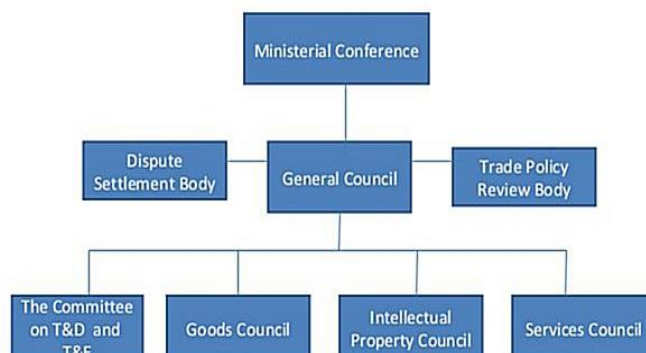
World Trade Organization (WTO):
Resolving Trade Disputes and Shaping Global Trade
The World Trade Organization (WTO) serves as a cornerstone of international trade governance, providing a structured framework for resolving disputes and fostering fair and predictable global commerce. Established on January 1, 1995, in Geneva, Switzerland, the WTO succeeded the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), aiming to create a rules-based system that promotes economic growth and stability among its member countries.

STRUCTURES OF WTO

New Chapter in India-US Trade Relations

The successful resolution of six disputes through diplomatic negotiations sets a precedent at the WTO.

It underscores a pragmatic approach to dispute resolution amid global trade uncertainties and strengthens bilateral ties between India and the U.S.

This milestone paves the way for deeper economic engagements and serves as a model for resolving disputes through diplomatic channels within the WTO framework.

Mechanisms for Dispute Resolution

Through Consultations | Through Dispute Settlement Panels | Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) | Establishing Panels

Reviewing Panel Reports | Monitoring Implementation
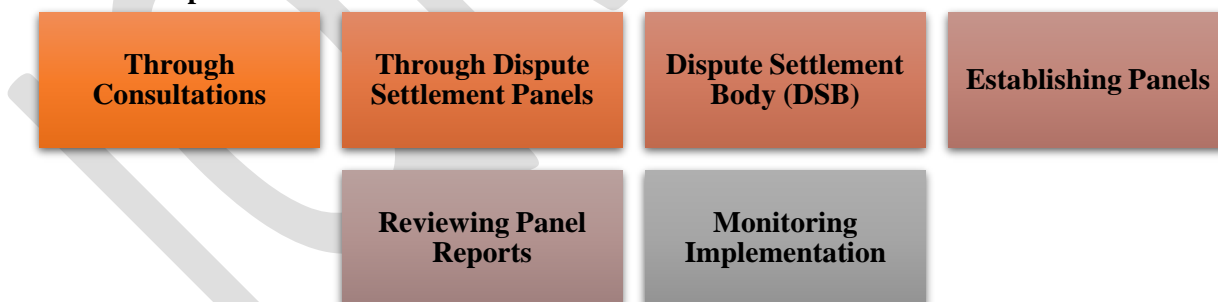
- **Through Consultations:** The WTO offers member countries a mechanism for resolving disputes through consultations. Before initiating formal action, the complaining party must first request consultations to seek a mutually acceptable solution. This process encourages dialogue and negotiation, allowing parties to address concerns cooperatively and avoid escalation.

- **Through Dispute Settlement Panels:** When consultations fail to resolve a dispute, the complaining party may request the establishment of a Dispute Settlement Panel. Comprising independent experts chosen by the WTO Secretariat, these panels conduct thorough examinations of cases, providing detailed assessments before issuing rulings. While the panel's rulings are typically binding, either party can appeal within a specified timeframe, highlighting the WTO's commitment to impartial dispute resolution.

- **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB):** Central to the WTO's dispute resolution framework is the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB). Comprising representatives from all WTO member countries, the DSB oversees the dispute settlement process and ensures its effective implementation. Key responsibilities of the DSB include:

What is the WTO?

The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the only global international organization dealing with the rules of trade between nations.

Location	Geneva, Switzerland
Established	1 January 1995
Created by	Uruguay Round negotiations (1986-94)
Membership	150 countries on 11 January 2007
Budget	175 million Swiss francs for 2006
Secretariat staff	635
Head	Pascal Lamy (Director-General)

⇒The goal is to help producers of goods and services, exporters, and importers conduct their business.

- **Establishing Panels**: The DSB has the authority to establish panels of experts to examine trade disputes between member countries. These panels are tasked with conducting objective assessments based on WTO agreements and principles.

- **Reviewing Panel Reports**: Upon receiving a panel's report, the DSB reviews its findings to determine compliance with WTO rules. It may accept or reject the panel's conclusions, reflecting the consensus-based decision-making process of the WTO.

- **Monitoring Implementation**: The DSB monitors the implementation of rulings and recommendations issued by dispute settlement panels. In cases where a country fails to comply with WTO rulings, the DSB may authorize retaliatory measures to ensure adherence to international trade norms.

Major Achievements of the WTO

Establishment of a Rule-Based System → Reduction of Tariffs and Trade Barriers → Effective Dispute Settlement Mechanism → Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) → Market Access and Special Treatment for Developing Countries

- **Establishment of a Rule-Based System:** A cornerstone achievement of the WTO is the establishment of a comprehensive and rules-based system for international trade. This system promotes transparency, predictability, and fairness in global trade relations, helping to prevent arbitrary trade barriers and discriminatory practices.

- **Reduction of Tariffs and Trade Barriers:** Through successive negotiation rounds, including the Uruguay Round, the WTO has played a pivotal role in reducing global tariff levels. By facilitating trade liberalization and market access, the WTO has enabled member countries to expand their economic opportunities and integrate more deeply into the global economy.

- **Effective Dispute Settlement Mechanism:** The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism is widely regarded as one of its most significant accomplishments. By providing a neutral forum for resolving trade disputes, the WTO ensures that member countries uphold their commitments under international trade agreements. This mechanism enhances confidence in the multilateral trading system and supports a level playing field for all participants.

- **Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA):** The WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement, concluded in 2013, represents a landmark achievement in simplifying and harmonizing customs procedures worldwide. By

streamlining border processes and enhancing transparency, the TFA aims to reduce trade costs and facilitate smoother trade flows, particularly benefiting developing countries.

- **Market Access and Special Treatment for Developing Countries:** Recognizing the diverse developmental needs of its member nations, the WTO provides special and differential treatment to developing countries. This approach allows for flexibility in meeting trade obligations and includes technical assistance to enhance capacity-building efforts, thereby promoting inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Challenges Faced by the WTO

- **Slow Pace of Negotiations**: Negotiations within the WTO have often been characterized by slow progress and complexity. The consensus-based decision-making process, while inclusive, can lead to delays in addressing critical trade issues and adapting to evolving economic realities.

- **Development Imbalances**: Developing countries contend that WTO rules and agreements disproportionately favor developed nations, posing challenges for their economic integration and growth. Issues related to agriculture, intellectual property rights, and services remain contentious, necessitating reforms to ensure equitable participation and support for sustainable development goals.

- **Dispute Settlement Backlog**: The WTO's dispute settlement mechanism has faced challenges, including a backlog of cases and the suspension of the Appellate Body since 2019. Efforts to restore functionality and address procedural issues are essential for maintaining the credibility and effectiveness of the WTO's dispute resolution framework.

- **Limited Scope of Agreements**: While successful in addressing trade in goods, the WTO's agreements have limitations in areas such as services, e-commerce, and investment. Adapting to the digital economy and emerging trade issues requires expanding the scope of WTO agreements to remain relevant and responsive to contemporary trade challenges.

Measures for WTO Reform

- **Modernizing the Rulebook**: There is a growing consensus on the need to modernize and update the WTO's rulebook to address 21st-century trade challenges. This includes updating rules on digital trade, e-commerce, and services to reflect technological advancements and global economic trends.

- **Enhancing Transparency and Public Engagemen**t: Improving transparency within the WTO decision-making processes can enhance accountability and public trust. Increased engagement with stakeholders, including civil society and non-governmental organizations, can foster a better understanding of WTO operations and their impact on global trade dynamics.

Strengthening Dispute

- **Settlement Mechanisms**: Reforming the dispute settlement mechanism, including restoring the functionality of the Appellate Body, is crucial for ensuring timely and effective resolution of trade disputes. Addressing procedural concerns and enhancing the efficiency of dispute settlement procedures are key priorities for WTO reform efforts.
- **Promoting Cooperation with International Organizations**: Collaboration with other international organizations, such as the United Nations and World Health Organization, can help integrate trade policies with broader global objectives, including public health, environmental sustainability, and social development. This coordinated approach can address cross-cutting issues and promote synergies in global governance.
- **Updating Decision-Making Processes**: Exploring alternative decision-making mechanisms, such as qualified majority voting for specific issues, can facilitate consensus-building within the WTO. This approach can streamline decision-making processes and enable more agile responses to emerging trade challenges, ensuring the WTO remains adaptable and effective in a rapidly evolving global economy.

Conclusion

Despite facing significant challenges, the WTO remains indispensable in promoting global economic stability and advancing free and fair trade among nations. By upholding its core principles of transparency, non-discrimination, and dispute resolution, the WTO continues to play a vital role in shaping the rules-based international trading system. Through ongoing reforms and collaborative efforts, the WTO can strengthen its capacity to address current and future trade challenges, supporting inclusive growth and sustainable development worldwide.

State of India-U.S. Ties

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to the United States marks a significant milestone, celebrating a year since his impactful engagement with U.S. President Joseph Biden. This visit was pivotal in rekindling strategic and technological collaborations between the two nations, promising a new phase in their bilateral relations.

Key Highlights

Strategic and Technological Cooperation → Milestones in Bilateral Relations → Challenges and Complexities → The China Factor → Diplomatic Frictions → Security Concerns → Future Prospects → Strategic Imperatives
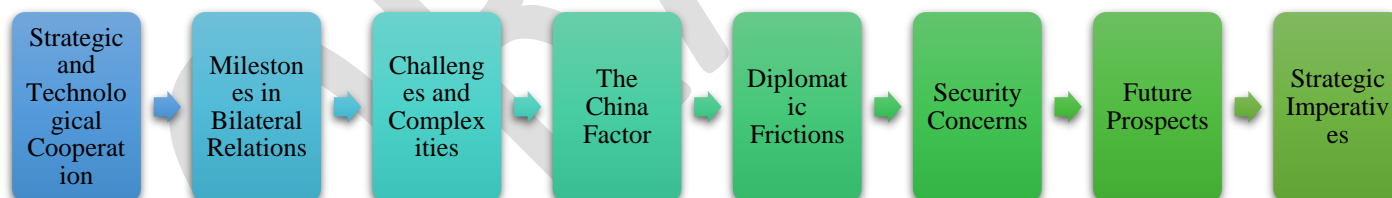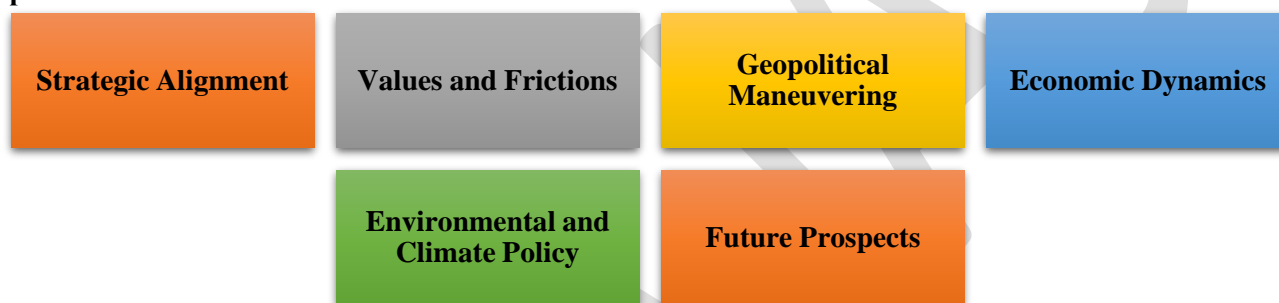
- **Strategic and Technological Cooperation:** During the visit, the U.S. offered to revive the technology transfer plan for jet engines to India, underscoring a commitment to bolstering defense ties. The initiation of the U.S.-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) has been touted as a major success, setting a foundation for enhanced cooperation in high-tech sectors.
- **Milestones in Bilateral Relations:** Since Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's landmark Asia Society speech in 1998, India-U.S. relations have evolved significantly. Strategic trust has deepened with foundational agreements, joint military exercises, and alignment on global issues like climate change and maritime security.
- **Challenges and Complexities:** Despite progress, challenges persist. Differences over multilateral approaches, such as India's nuanced stance on global conflicts like Russia's actions in Ukraine, have strained relations. Moreover, logistical issues and diplomatic tensions, exacerbated by regional dynamics and domestic political shifts, pose ongoing challenges.
- **The China Factor:** Cooperation within the Quad alliance has faced logistical setbacks, influenced by scheduling conflicts and strategic priorities. The absence of the U.S. at India's Republic Day and delayed high-level visits highlight operational challenges amid shared concerns over China's regional assertiveness.

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- **Diplomatic Frictions:** Recent diplomatic incidents, including strained ambassadorial relations and disagreements over human rights and democratic processes, reflect periodic tensions in the bilateral engagement. Such frictions underscore the complexities of managing a multifaceted partnership.
- **Security Concerns:** The alleged involvement of Indian security officials in incidents abroad, like the attempted assassination in the U.S., has strained bilateral trust. These security issues have become contentious points, impacting public perception and diplomatic dialogue.
- **Future Prospects:** As both nations navigate evolving geopolitical landscapes and domestic political transitions, upcoming engagements like the G-7 outreach summit and bilateral meetings between senior officials will be crucial. These interactions aim to recalibrate and strengthen the Indo-U.S. relationship, addressing existing challenges and exploring new avenues for collaboration.
- **Strategic Imperatives:** Amid global uncertainties, including potential leadership changes in the U.S., the need for sustained dialogue and strategic alignment remains paramount. Both countries seek to leverage their partnership to address mutual interests and regional stability effectively.

Complexities of U.S.-India Relations

Strategic Alignment	Values and Frictions	Geopolitical Maneuvering	Economic Dynamics
	Environmental and Climate Policy	Future Prospects	

The relationship between the United States and India is often portrayed as a strategic alliance between the world's oldest and largest democracies. However, beneath the surface, this partnership navigates a landscape fraught with challenges and contradictions.

- **Strategic Alignment: Security Interests and Counterbalancing China:** At the heart of U.S.-India relations lies a strategic imperative: countering China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Both nations view this alignment as crucial to maintaining regional stability and ensuring their respective security interests. Cooperation extends to military engagements, such as joint exercises and defense technology transfers, aimed at bolstering defense capabilities against shared threats.
- **Values and Frictions: Democratic Backsliding and Human Rights Concerns:** Despite shared democratic principles, concerns persist over India's domestic policies under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. The revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and the Citizenship Amendment Act have raised international alarm regarding religious freedoms and minority rights. Organizations like Human Rights Watch have documented instances of repression and curtailment of civil liberties, highlighting a divergence in democratic values.
- **Geopolitical Maneuvering: India's Multipolar Approach:** India's foreign policy ambitions extend beyond bilateral relations with the U.S., encompassing engagements with Russia, China, and multilateral platforms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This multipolar strategy, while promoting India's global stature, occasionally strains its ties with Washington, particularly on issues where U.S. primacy is challenged.
- **Economic Dynamics:** Economically, India's reliance on Russian oil and defense acquisitions complicates its relationship with the U.S., especially amidst sanctions and geopolitical tensions. The procurement of Russian S-400 missiles underscores India's balancing act between economic imperatives and strategic partnerships, prompting cautious responses from Washington.

India's strategic relationship with US

- **Environmental and Climate Policy:** Differences in climate policy pose another challenge. India, as a major carbon emitter with developmental imperatives, advocates for differentiated responsibilities in climate action, often diverging from Western-led initiatives. This stance reflects India's aspirations to lead the global South and secure its energy needs amid environmental concerns.
- **Future Prospects:** Looking ahead, the trajectory of U.S.-India relations remains unpredictable. Political transitions in both nations, coupled with evolving global dynamics, will shape future engagements. Challenges such as trust deficits, divergent foreign policy goals, and evolving geopolitical alignments underscore the need for nuanced diplomacy and strategic foresight.

U.S.-India Relations

The strategic partnership between the United States and India has evolved significantly, anchored in shared democratic values and mutual interests in global security and economic prosperity. However, this relationship also faces substantial challenges, particularly concerning foreign policy alignments and engagements with U.S. adversaries.

Category	Details
Economic Relations	- U.S. is India's largest trading partner. - Bilateral trade reached USD 128.55 billion in 2022-23, a 7.65% rise from the previous year. - Mutual benefits in trade and investment.
Multilateral Engagement	- Collaboration in UN, G-20, ASEAN Regional Forum, IMF, World Bank, WTO. - U.S. supports India's UN Security Council membership. - Joint initiatives like IPEF and International Solar Alliance.

Defense Cooperation	-Signed foundational agreements:
	    o LEMOACOMCASA
	    o BECA
	    o ISA.
	- Enhanced military interoperability and technology sharing.
	- Bilateral military exercises and participation in Quad and I2U2.

Space and Science Technology	- Collaborations between ISRO and NASA: NISAR mission, Artemis Accords. - Initiatives like iCET for cooperation in AI, quantum computing, telecommunications, and defense technologies.

Major Challenges

- **Foreign Policy Divergences**: Despite strategic alignments, challenges persist regarding India's historical policy of nonalignment and its stance on global conflicts. Differences over issues like the Russian-Ukraine war and energy imports from Russia illustrate divergent foreign policy priorities, occasionally straining bilateral relations.

- **Engagement with Adversaries**: India's engagements with U.S. adversaries, such as Iran and its participation in the SCO, pose challenges to U.S. strategic interests. Differing approaches to global alliances and regional dynamics require nuanced diplomacy to navigate potential friction points.

Way Forward
- To further strengthen the strategic partnership, the U.S. and India should focus on deepening economic ties through enhanced trade facilitation and investment promotion. Building on the momentum of bilateral trade growth, both nations can explore new sectors for collaboration, including advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, and digital technologies. Continued dialogue and cooperation in multilateral forums will reinforce shared commitments to global security and economic stability.
- The U.S. and India should prioritize the implementation of defense agreements like LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA, and ISA to bolster military interoperability and technology integration. Regular joint military exercises and strategic dialogues within the Quad framework should be expanded to address emerging security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. Additionally, fostering joint research and development initiatives in defense technology will enhance capabilities and mutual trust.
- Collaborations between ISRO and NASA should be expanded to include joint missions and research projects that leverage India's expertise in space technology and the U.S.'s advancements in scientific exploration. Initiatives like iCET should be scaled up to foster innovation in critical sectors such as AI, quantum computing, and cybersecurity, ensuring both countries remain at the forefront of technological innovation.
- Addressing divergent foreign policy priorities, particularly concerning engagements with U.S. adversaries, requires a balanced approach that respects each nation's strategic autonomy. Regular high-level dialogues and diplomatic engagements will be essential to mitigate misunderstandings and build consensus on global challenges like climate change, cybersecurity, and regional stability.
- Enhancing people-to-people ties through educational exchanges, cultural diplomacy, and tourism will foster greater mutual understanding and goodwill between the peoples of the U.S. and India. Programs that promote academic collaborations, student exchanges, and cultural festivals should be expanded to nurture long-term partnerships and friendships.
- Both countries should reaffirm their commitment to global leadership on issues of common concern, including climate change, sustainable development goals, and pandemic preparedness. Collaboration within international organizations like the UN, G-20, and WTO should focus on advocating for inclusive and equitable global governance frameworks that benefit all nations.

A flawed criminal justice system India's looming financial crisis

Why in News?

Recently, the case of Pooja (name changed) from Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, has sparked widespread controversy and debate surrounding issues of justice, gender stereotypes, and systemic failures within India's legal framework.

Key Highlights
- Pooja's case began with her mother filing a missing person's report in 2019, alleging abduction by Ramesh (name changed). Pooja later returned and accused Ramesh of kidnapping and rape, implicating multiple accomplices.
- During the trial, Pooja's statements fluctuated, initially alleging abduction and rape but later retracting under cross-examination, claiming coercion by her mother and police officers. The prosecution failed to gather substantial evidence, including medical proof of assault or circumstantial corroboration.
- Despite glaring inconsistencies and procedural lapses, Ramesh was acquitted in 2024 due to insufficient evidence. Shockingly, Pooja was convicted of perjury, highlighting the case's contentious nature and raising questions about investigative rigor and prosecutorial diligence.

- The case underscores systemic deficiencies in police investigations, highlighted by the failure to collect forensic evidence, examine crime scenes, or substantiate claims against the accused's family members. The prosecution's over-reliance on Pooja's inconsistent testimony exposed critical flaws in the legal process.

- Ramesh endured over four years of incarceration awaiting trial, emblematic of India's pervasive issue of prolonged undertrial detention. Despite procedural delays and directives for bail during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ramesh remained in custody, underscoring systemic inefficiencies and socio-economic disparities affecting access to justice.

- The case's adjudication in a fast-track court intended for swift justice exemplifies broader challenges within India's judicial system. Inadequate infrastructure, judicial backlog, and procedural complexities hinder the efficacy of fast-track courts, often prolonging trials and perpetuating injustice for both victims and the accused.

Three bills introduced in Lok Sabha

Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, 2023
- It will have **356 sections** (instead of 511 sections in IPC)
- 175 sections have been amended
- 8 sections have been added, and 22 sections have been repealed

Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
- It will have **533 sections** (instead of 478 sections in CrPC)
- 160 sections have been changed
- 9 sections have been added, and 9 sections have been repealed

Indian Evidence Act, 1872
TO BE REPLACED BY
Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023
- It will have 170 sections (instead of 167 sections in IEA)
- 23 sections have been changed
- 1 section has been added, and 5 sections have been repealed

"From 1860 to 2023, the country's criminal justice system functioned as per the laws made by the British. I can assure the House that these bills will transform our criminal justice system. The aim will not be to punish, it will be to provide justice." — AMIT SHAH
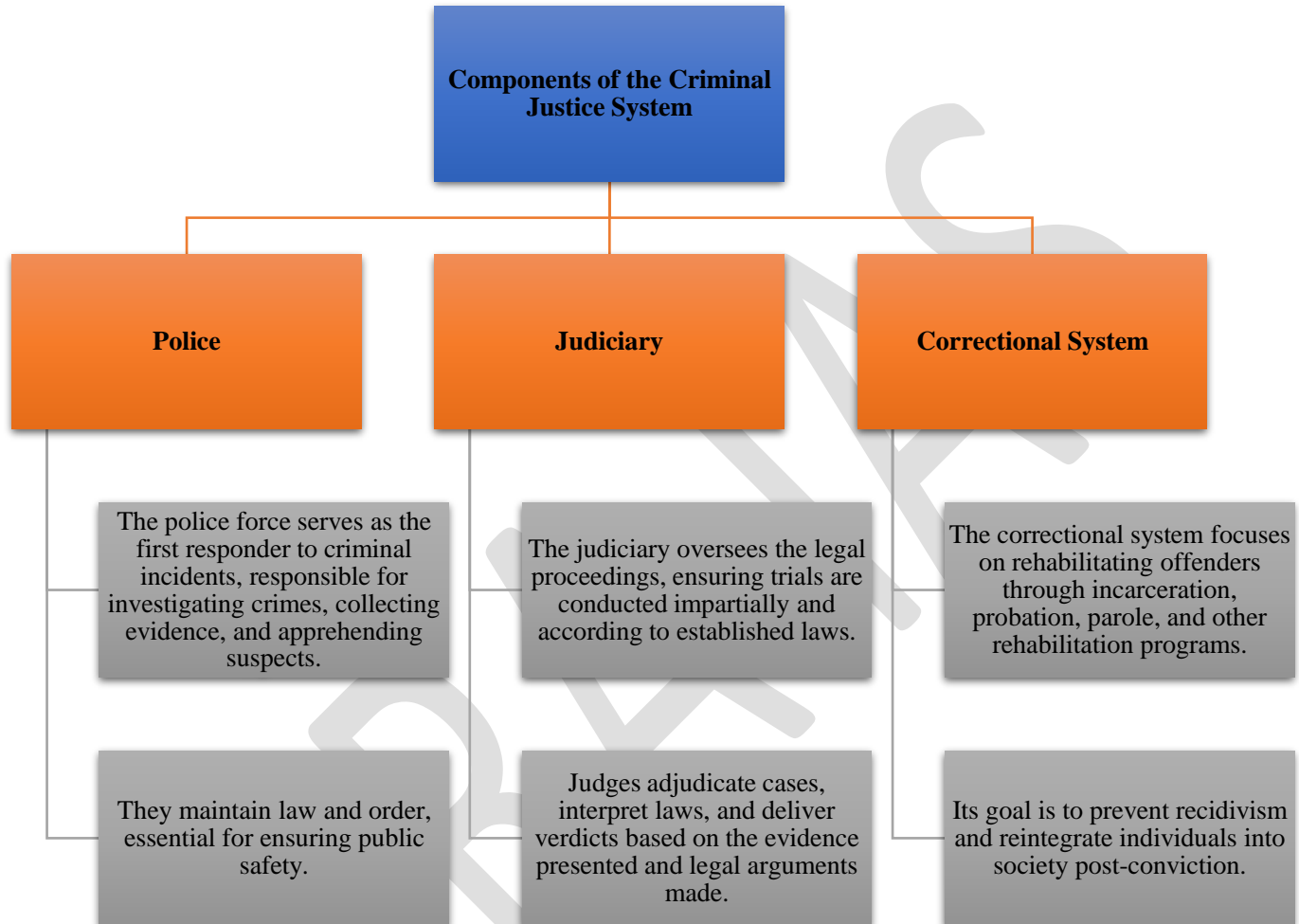
WHAT NEXT
The three bills will be studied by the standing committee on home affairs, which is chaired by BJP MP Brijlal (who is a retd IPS officer).

- There is an urgent need to overhaul police investigation protocols to ensure thoroughness, fairness, and adherence to legal standards. Enhancing forensic capabilities, training for law enforcement personnel, and safeguarding procedural integrity are crucial steps towards restoring public trust in law enforcement agencies.

- Judicial oversight, including stricter scrutiny of charge sheets and adherence to procedural norms, is essential to prevent wrongful convictions and uphold the principles of justice. Judicial reforms should prioritize accountability for investigative lapses and prosecutorial negligence, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability within the legal system.

- Efforts to streamline bail procedures, particularly for non-violent offenses, and mitigate the impact of socio-economic factors on access to legal representation are imperative. Upholding the presumption of innocence and safeguarding the rights of the accused are foundational to a fair and equitable justice system.

REFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

➤ Govt to **bring in a standalone legislation on the bail act,** limiting the **discretionary powers of courts** in grant of bail

➤ In favour of implementing 'restorative justice' model, **a concept where a victim gets a role even before the investigation is initiated** and may negotiate and settle the dispute

➤ SC judge Madan B Lokur-headed panel working **on integrating the criminal justice system** with the home ministry's crime and criminal tracking network and system (CCTNS)

➤ **Integration of CCTNS with e-courts & e-prisons** to help release large number of under-trials

➤ **Govt has asked law commission to submit report** on reforming criminal justice system

➤ **Law ministry keen to implement entire Malimath committee report** on reforms in the criminal justice system

Criminal Justice System

India's criminal justice system, anchored by the Indian Penal Code (IPC) since 1860, serves as the bedrock for addressing criminal activities within the country. This system is designed not only to prosecute offenders but also to safeguard the rights of both the accused and the victims, ensuring fair and just outcomes.

Components of the Criminal Justice System

Police

The police force serves as the first responder to criminal incidents, responsible for investigating crimes, collecting evidence, and apprehending suspects.

They maintain law and order, essential for ensuring public safety.

Judiciary

The judiciary oversees the legal proceedings, ensuring trials are conducted impartially and according to established laws.

Judges adjudicate cases, interpret laws, and deliver verdicts based on the evidence presented and legal arguments made.

Correctional System

The correctional system focuses on rehabilitating offenders through incarceration, probation, parole, and other rehabilitation programs.

Its goal is to prevent recidivism and reintegrate individuals into society post-conviction.

Types of Punishments in India's Criminal Justice System

Punishments under the IPC are categorized into:

Imprisonment   **Fines**   **Capital Punishment**
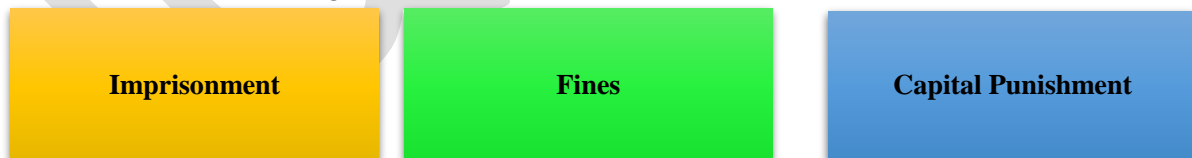
- **Imprisonment:** Imprisonment is the most common form of punishment, ranging from short terms to life imprisonment, depending on the severity of the crime. It aims at reforming offenders and deterring future criminal behavior.
- **Fines:** Monetary fines are imposed on offenders as a punitive measure and deterrent against committing further offenses.
- **Capital Punishment:** Reserved for the most heinous crimes such as murder, capital punishment remains a contentious issue, balancing deterrence with ethical considerations.

Roles in India's Criminal Justice System

Role	Description
Prosecution	- Presents the case against the accused. - Collects evidence. - Ensures fair trial proceedings. - Represents the state's interest in obtaining a conviction based on credible evidence.
Defense	- Advocates for the accused. - Protects the rights of the accused. - Presents arguments to refute the prosecution's case. - Ensures due process and challenges the evidence.
Judge	- Presides over trials. - Ensures adherence to legal procedures. - Assesses evidence impartially. - Delivers judgments based on the law and facts presented in court.
Victim	- Provides testimony and evidence to support their case. - Seeks justice, restitution, and compensation for harm suffered due to criminal acts.
Jury	- In some cases, decides guilt or innocence based on evidence presented during trials. - Delivers verdicts in accordance with the law and societal norms.

Challenges in India's Criminal Justice System

Pendency of Cases	Lack of Resources and Infrastructure	Quality of Investigation and Prosecution	Human Rights Concerns	Outdated Laws
• A staggering number of pending cases in Indian courts lead to delays in justice delivery, violating the right to a speedy trial and eroding public trust.	• Shortages of judges, police personnel, and judicial infrastructure hinder efficient case management and resolution. Inadequate resources affect the quality and speed of justice.	• Issues such as political interference, corruption, and insufficient training undermine effective investigation and prosecution, impacting the integrity of legal outcomes.	• Reports of human rights abuses, including custodial torture and extrajudicial killings, highlight systemic failures in protecting individual rights within the justice system.	• Colonial-era laws fail to address contemporary crimes like cybercrime and terrorism effectively. Modernizing legal frameworks is essential for adapting to evolving societal needs.

Reforming India's Criminal Justice System

- **Capacity Building**

  Investment in training, recruitment, and infrastructure is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement, judiciary, and correctional systems.

- **Technological Advancements**

  Adoption of digital tools for evidence collection, online court proceedings, and AI-assisted legal research can streamline processes and improve efficiency.

- **Restorative Justice**

Promotion of restorative justice principles to focus on reconciliation, rehabilitation, and victim-offender mediation can address root causes of crime and reduce recidivism.

- **Public Awareness**
Educational campaigns about legal rights and responsibilities foster public trust in law enforcement and the judiciary, promoting transparency and accountability.

Committees and Their Recommendations for Reform

| Vohra Committee, 1993 | Malimath Committee, 2003 | Madhav Menon Committee, 2007 | Supreme Court Directives on Police Reforms, 2006 |

- **Vohra Committee, 1993**
  - o Objective: Address criminalization of politics and nexus between criminals and public officials.
  - o Recommendation: Establishment of an institution for intelligence gathering and action against criminal-political linkages.
- **Malimath Committee, 2003**
  - o Objective: Overhaul the criminal justice system to enhance efficiency and fairness.
  - o Recommendation: Introduce 'social welfare offences', reform the adversarial system, and lower the standard of proof for conviction.
- **Madhav Menon Committee, 2007**
  - o Objective: Draft a national policy on criminal justice emphasizing human rights and coordination among agencies.
  - o Recommendation: Promote restorative justice, improve inter-agency cooperation, and uphold dignity in all stages of criminal proceedings.
- **Supreme Court Directives on Police Reforms, 2006**
  - o Objective: Ensure autonomy, accountability, and professionalism in police operations.
  - o Recommendation: Establish State Security Commissions, fix tenures for police leadership, and separate investigation from law-and-order functions.

Significance of Proposed Reforms

| Modernizing Criminal Laws | Addressing Draconian Laws | Strengthening Investigation and Evidence Use |

- **Modernizing Criminal Laws**
  - o Objective: Update archaic laws to align with contemporary societal needs and technological advancements.
  - o Impact: Enhance legal clarity, effectiveness in combating new forms of crime, and protection of constitutional rights.
- **Addressing Draconian Laws**
  - o Objective: Repeal outdated laws like Section 124A (sedition) to safeguard free speech and dissent.
  - o Impact: Mitigate misuse of legal provisions against individuals exercising their rights.
- **Strengthening Investigation and Evidence Use**
  - o Objective: Expand use of electronic evidence and forensic tools to bolster investigative integrity.
  - o Impact: Improve accuracy in criminal proceedings and reduce reliance on coercive methods.

Issues in Current Proposed Reforms

- **Lack of Consultation and Transparency**
  o Concern: Exclusion of key stakeholders in drafting process and lack of public disclosure of draft bills.
  o Risk: Potential for laws that do not reflect diverse societal perspectives and needs.
- **Human Rights Concerns**
  o Concern: Broad and vague provisions in new laws may infringe on human rights, including rights to fair trial and freedom of expression.
  o Risk: Increased instances of arbitrary arrests, coerced confessions, and compromised due process.
- **Inconsistency and Legal Ambiguity**
  o Concern: Contradictory provisions within proposed bills and with existing laws.
  o Risk: Legal uncertainty and challenges in implementation affecting justice delivery and public trust.

Criminal Law Reforms in India

Criminal Law Reforms in India	- On 21 December 2023, India passed The Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023. - These reforms replace colonial-era laws with contemporary, equitable legal frameworks.
The Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023	- Comprehensive overhaul of the penal code. - Addresses long-standing inadequacies. - Distinguishes between threats to national sovereignty and minor infractions. - Prescribes stringent penalties where necessary. - Aims for swift and proportional justice.
The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023	- Focuses on humanizing the criminal justice system. - Introduces streamlined timelines for investigations. - Updates terminology for better accessibility and understanding. - Mandates forensic teams' on-site presence for serious offenses. - Emphasizes humane practices and procedural transparency.
The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023	- Addresses the handling of electronic evidence with integrity. - Broadens the scope of admissible evidence to include digital data. - Includes provisions for DNA evidence and expert opinions. - Ensures legal proceedings remain robust amid technological advancements.

Way Forward

India stands at a critical juncture in reforming its criminal justice system to overcome entrenched challenges and meet contemporary societal demands. Building upon identified issues and recommendations from expert committees, a comprehensive way forward can pave the path towards a more effective and equitable legal framework.

- **Addressing Case Backlogs**: Implement a robust case management system leveraging technology to expedite trials and reduce backlog. This includes prioritizing older cases, increasing judicial capacity through appointments, and establishing specialized courts for specific categories of cases.
- **Enhancing Resources**: Allocate sufficient funds to recruit and train additional judges, prosecutors, police personnel, and forensic experts. Establish clear metrics for assessing resource needs and ensure timely fulfillment to bolster operational efficiency.
- **Professionalization and Accountability**: Institute measures to insulate investigation and prosecution agencies from external influences. Enhance training programs to promote professionalism, ethical conduct, and adherence to legal standards.
- **Technological Integration**: Expand the use of electronic evidence and forensic technology in investigations. Develop protocols for the collection, storage, and presentation of digital evidence to ensure its admissibility and reliability in court.

- **Legislative Revisions**: Undertake a comprehensive review of existing laws to repeal outdated provisions and introduce new legislation addressing contemporary crimes such as cybercrime, terrorism, and hate crimes. Ensure transparency and inclusivity in the drafting process through consultations with legal experts, civil society, and affected communities.
- **Promoting Restorative Justice**: Emphasize restorative justice principles in legal reforms to focus on reconciliation and rehabilitation rather than punitive measures. Integrate restorative practices into criminal proceedings to empower victims and promote community healing.
- **Police Reforms**: Implement Supreme Court directives on police reforms to enhance autonomy, professionalism, and accountability within law enforcement agencies. Establish independent oversight mechanisms, such as Police Complaints Authorities, to investigate allegations of misconduct and abuse of power.
- **Enhancing Judicial Transparency**: Promote transparency in judicial appointments, promotions, and disciplinary actions. Strengthen mechanisms for public access to court proceedings and decisions to foster accountability and trust in the judiciary.
- **Safeguarding Rights**: Embed robust safeguards in new legislation to protect fundamental rights, including the right to fair trial, freedom of expression, and protection against arbitrary arrest and detention. Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and redressing human rights violations within the criminal justice system.
- **Community Engagement**: Foster community engagement and awareness campaigns to educate the public about their rights and responsibilities within the legal framework. Promote dialogue between law enforcement agencies, judiciary, and community stakeholders to build mutual trust and cooperation.

India's looming financial crisis

Why in News?

India's rapid credit growth has become a focal point of concern among economists and policymakers alike, echoing global historical precedents of financial exuberance leading to subsequent crises. Despite warnings from economic experts and the stark lessons of past financial collapses, India finds itself on the precipice of a potentially devastating economic downturn driven by unsustainable lending practices and a flawed economic narrative.

Key Highlights

- India's policymakers have embraced a narrative of "this time is different," fueled by optimism about the transformative potential of digital infrastructure in fostering financial innovation and inclusion. This narrative has underpinned a surge in lending, particularly in the personal loan sector, amid claims of robust financial health and low non-performing assets (NPAs).
- International bodies like the IMF and domestic economic reviews have lauded India's financial sector growth, emphasizing significant increases in bank lending, particularly in personal loans. However, this celebration masks deeper systemic risks and vulnerabilities inherent in such rapid credit expansion.
- The current credit boom primarily revolves around household borrowing, growing at an alarming rate of 25% to 30% annually. This surge has enabled easy access to credit for lower- and middle-income households, often used for non-productive purposes such as consumer goods, housing, and lifestyle expenses.
- Decades of economic policy, exacerbated by recent trends, have prioritized headline GDP growth driven disproportionately by the financial sector. This focus has neglected sustainable job creation and productive investment, perpetuating a cycle of credit dependency rather than economic resilience.
- Chaotic Financial Services Landscape
- India's liberalization efforts have led to a sprawling and chaotic financial services industry, dominated by a few large institutions alongside numerous smaller players, including volatile non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and fintech startups. This environment has fostered predatory lending practices and heightened financial instability.
- A significant portion of household borrowing in India remains unsecured, with credit cards and high-interest personal loans becoming increasingly prevalent. This trend, while boosting short-term consumption, poses severe risks of default and economic contraction once borrowing limits are reached.

- Economic indicators, including stagnant household consumption amidst soaring credit growth, point towards an impending crisis. High debt-service ratios and declining savings rates underscore the vulnerability of Indian households to economic shocks and financial distress.
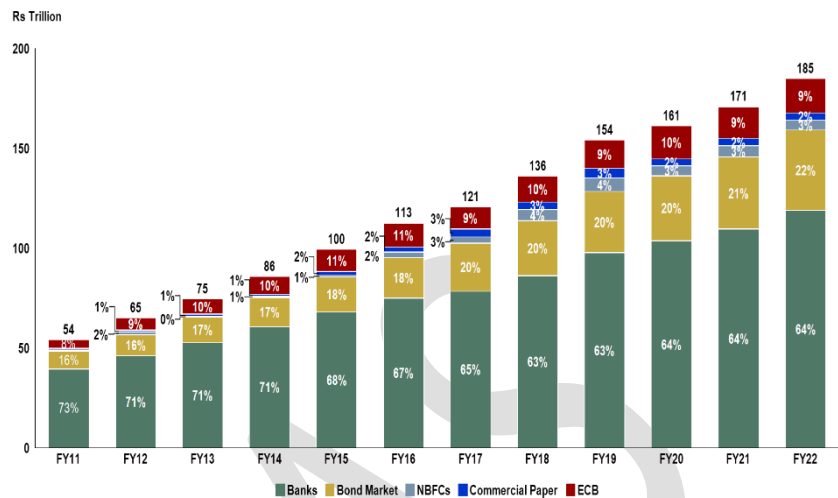
2007-08 Financial Crisis: Causes and Global Impact

The 2007-08 global financial crisis remains one of the most significant economic upheavals in modern history, fundamentally reshaping financial markets and economies worldwide. This crisis, rooted in a complex interplay of economic factors and regulatory failures, highlighted deep-seated vulnerabilities within the global financial system.

- **Savings Imbalances and Risky Investments:** The crisis was precipitated by a massive influx of savings from surplus countries to deficit countries, driving down global interest rates. This environment incentivized reckless investments in high-risk assets, particularly subprime mortgages in the United States. The resulting housing bubble and subsequent collapse triggered a chain reaction of financial distress globally.

- **Impact of Loose**: Loose monetary policies in the U.S. exacerbated the crisis by reducing net interest margins for banks, thereby squeezing their profitability. This environment fostered a bloated financial sector and a flawed faith in the efficiency of markets, encouraging risky lending practices and speculative investments.

- **Regulatory Failures and Excessive Debt**: Critical regulatory oversights allowed banks to operate with dangerously high levels of debt relative to equity capital. Investments in complex, securitized assets tied to subprime loans further amplified vulnerabilities within the financial infrastructure. As defaults on debts increased amid stagnant income growth, the global financial system became increasingly fragile and prone to crisis.

Global Fallout and Regulatory Capture

- **Spread of Financial Distress:** The crisis extended beyond the United States, impacting banks across Europe and parts of Asia heavily invested in risky assets. This interconnectedness exacerbated the financial contagion, leading to widespread banking failures, job losses, and economic contraction globally.

- **Regulatory Capture and Political Consequences**: The concept of 'regulatory capture,' where financial institutions wielded undue influence over government policies and regulators, became glaringly apparent post-crisis.
  - o This phenomenon perpetuated lax regulatory oversight and contributed to the systemic risk buildup that precipitated the crisis.
  - o The political fallout included severe economic crises in European countries like Greece, Spain, and Portugal, as well as geopolitical shifts such as Brexit and the rise of nationalist sentiments in the United States.

India's Resilience Amidst Global Turmoil

While the 2007-08 financial crisis wreaked havoc globally, India managed to weather the storm relatively unscathed due to several key factors:

- **Limited Exposure and Regulatory Safeguards**: India's prudent regulatory framework, including restrictions on short-term foreign borrowings and a cautious approach to capital account convertibility, insulated its financial system from the worst impacts of the crisis. The absence of full capital account convertibility ensured controlled exposure to volatile global financial markets, shielding India from the devastating effects experienced elsewhere.
- **Capital Account Convertibility**: Despite liberalization measures in recent years, India maintains restrictions on full capital account convertibility. This policy stance has been instrumental in safeguarding the economy from abrupt capital outflows and currency volatility, providing stability during periods of global financial instability.

10 REFORMS THAT CHANGED INDIA

GST did change the tax regime. But there are other key steps that form the bedrock of India's market-led economy & helped achieve higher growth...

1 NEW INDUSTRIAL POLICY
- Industrial licensing was abolished and 18 PSU industries were gradually liberalised
- Monopolies And Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969, was abolished

2 FDI & TRADE POLICY
- Import licensing was abolished for capital goods & intermediates, which became freely importable in 1993, simultaneously with the switch to a flexible exchange rate regime
- India joined the World Trade Organization and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement
- Quantitative restrictions on imports of manufactured consumer goods and agricultural products removed in 2001. The policy now allows 100% foreign ownership in many industries and majority ownership in all except banking, insurance, telecommunications and airlines
- Current account convertibility introduced in 1994

3 NEW INSTITUTIONS
- Securities and Exchange Board of India established
- Insurance Regulatory & Development Authority and Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority set up
- Union Budget created 'development finance institutions' and 'bad banks' to fund infrastructure and resolve stressed assets
- GST Council established

4 GOVERNMENT BORROWING
- Domestic bond markets created and Clearing Corporation of India is set up

5 INTEREST RATE LIBERALISATION
- Interest rate controls were dismantled and savings interest rates were deregulated

6 BASEL ACCORDS
- Basel Accords, a series of 3 international banking regulation agreements, adopted

7 NFSA & MGNREGS
NFSA legally entitled up to 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidised food grain under the Targeted Public Distribution System
- MGNREGS guaranteed 100 days of wage-employment per year in rural areas

8 AADHAAR
- Aadhaar system provided a single-source offline/online identity verification, boosting the inclusion of programmes like PMJDY, Ayushman Bharat and Ujjwala

9 INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY CODE
- A comprehensive law, IBC consolidated both consequential aspects of an economic collapse of a debtor — rehabilitation as well as liquidation

10 MONETARY POLICY COMMITTEE
- MPC was set up with basic objective to maintain price stability and accelerate the economy's growth rate. It has brought monetary policy decision-making in line with global best practices

Impact of Global Financial Crisis on India

The global financial crisis of 2007-08 reverberated across economies worldwide, including India, despite its indirect exposure to toxic assets from developed nations. This analysis delves into the specific impacts on India's economy, monetary policies, fiscal actions, and the discourse on financial sector reforms.

Financial Crisis

[fə-'nan(t)-shəl 'krī-səs]

A situation where assets drop sharply in value, businesses and consumers struggle to pay their debts, and liquidity dries up.

- **Trade Dynamics**: India, while insulated from direct exposure to distressed assets, felt the crisis through reduced export demand. The recession abroad led to a decline in international commodity prices, particularly crude oil, which positively impacted India's import bill. However, the flip side was a contraction in export growth, particularly affecting sectors heavily reliant on global trade.
- **Capital Flows**: Unlike the previous year's robust inflows, the crisis saw a reversal in portfolio capital flows, impacting the stock market adversely. Indian firms faced challenges in raising capital abroad, leading to pressures on the domestic banking system. While foreign exchange reserves helped cushion the impact on the exchange rate, net capital flows stagnated, influencing economic stability.
- **Monetary and Fiscal Responses**: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) responded swiftly to the liquidity crunch by reducing Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), repo, and reverse repo rates. These measures aimed to inject liquidity into the system, supporting credit availability amidst drying up of global funds and trade credit.
- **Fiscal Stimulus**: India's fiscal strategy focused on stimulating demand through two primary avenues: cutting excise duties and increasing government expenditure. These actions aimed to bolster aggregate demand, with a critical emphasis on investment-oriented spending to build long-term economic capacity.

- **Fiscal Deficit and Economic Strategy**: The crisis necessitated increased public spending, pushing the fiscal deficit potentially beyond the targeted 5% of GDP. This deviation from the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act underscored the need for counter-cyclical fiscal policies to mitigate economic downturns, even if challenging to maintain during boom cycles.

Financial Sector Reforms Discourse

- **Reforms and Regulatory Environment**: Debate ensued over India's relative resilience to the crisis, with some attributing it to cautious financial sector reforms. Critics argued that further reforms could have enhanced financial system efficiency without exacerbating the crisis. The crisis underscored the imperative for balanced regulation to curb runaway financial innovations that might destabilize economies.
- **Structural Implications**: The shockwaves from the crisis prompted global reflections on the structure of capitalism, advocating for enhanced regulatory frameworks. India, while navigating the aftermath with resilience, pondered on the implications for future financial reforms to bolster systemic stability and economic growth.

Indian Growth Story (1950-2024)

India's economic trajectory from independence in 1947 to the present day has been marked by significant ups and downs, transformative reforms, and resilience in the face of global challenges. This comprehensive analysis explores India's growth phases, key drivers, challenges faced, and the transformative reforms that shaped its economic landscape.

Period	Event/Description	Key Details
1950s	Pursuit of Economic Self-Sufficiency	- Rapid industrialization through state-owned enterprises (SOEs). - Decadal growth rate averaged 3.9%.
1960s and 1970s	Turbulence and Economic Realignment	- Marked by geopolitical tensions, severe droughts, high taxation, and state control. - Growth rates: 4.1% to 2.9%.
1980s	Initiating Economic Reforms	- Liberalization measures: price control removal, industry de-licensing. - GDP growth rose to 5.7%.
1990s	Economic Reforms and Challenges	- Significant reforms: trade liberalization, fiscal adjustments. - Average real GDP growth of 5.8%.
Early 2000s	Sustained Economic Momentum	- Robust economic activity and improved corporate performance. - Decade-average growth rate of 6.3%.
2008	Impact of Global Financial Crisis	- Exposed vulnerabilities: rising bad debts, economic adjustments needed.
2014-2024	Rapid Economic Growth and Structural Reforms	- Fastest-growing economy among G20 nations. - Resilience demonstrated despite global pandemic.
Key Drivers of Growth	Structural Reforms, Infrastructure Development, Digitalization	- Structural Reforms: Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), GST. - Infrastructure Development: Major projects in logistics, roads, airports. - Digitalization: Improved digital infrastructure for financial inclusion, reduced transaction costs, enhanced tax collection.

Challenges and Future Prospects

- **Global Integration**: Increasing integration with the global economy amid geopolitical tensions and economic shifts.
- **Technological Disruption**: AI and automation posing challenges to job security and workforce adaptability.
- **Skill Development**: Efforts like PMKVY aim to equip youth with industry-relevant skills to meet evolving market demands.

## India's Resilient Economy: Navigating Global Challenges

India's economic resilience and stable price environment have positioned it as a beacon of growth amidst global uncertainties. The Finance Ministry's recent report highlights key factors contributing to India's promising economic performance in the face of a volatile global landscape.

Economic Overview Amid Global Uncertainties

- **Global Economic Outlook**: The report acknowledges a gradual resurgence in global economic growth, marked by diminishing recession fears and improved performance in major economies. Despite ongoing geopolitical tensions, perceptions of risk have softened, potentially bolstering global growth prospects.

India's GDP growth rate and IMF estimates
Real GDP growth, annual percent change
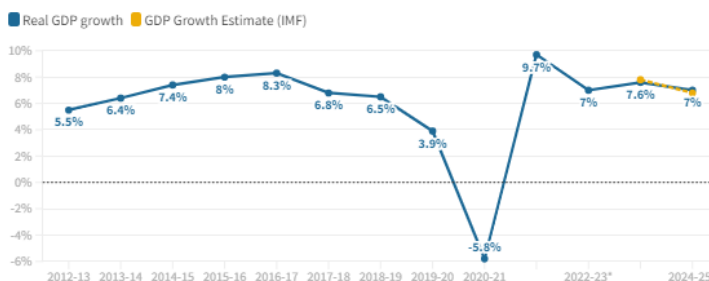
Source: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation • 2021-22: Second Revised Estimates, 2022 - 23: First revised estimates, 2023-24: Second advance estimates, 2024-25: RBI projection | The Hindu Graphics

- **India's Growth Trajectory**: India continues to lead as the fastest-growing major economy globally, with optimistic growth projections for the current financial year supported by international organizations like the IMF and the RBI. The IMF's upward revision of India's real GDP growth to 7.8% for FY24 underscores this positive outlook.

- **Trade Dynamics and External Sector Resilience**: Merchandise TradeIndia's merchandise trade has experienced moderation due to global slowdowns, leading to a narrowing merchandise trade deficit in FY2023-24. Notably, despite challenges, non-petroleum and non-gems & jewellery exports have shown resilience, growing by 3% during the fiscal year.

Financial Stability and Capital Inflows

- **Current Account and Capital Inflows**: India's current account deficit has shown improvement in the first nine months of FY2023-24 compared to the previous year, bolstered by favorable trade dynamics and robust services exports. Moreover, capital inflows surged during the fiscal year, supported by strong investor confidence and policy measures.

- **Foreign Exchange Reserves**: March 2024 saw India's foreign exchange reserves reaching an all-time high, providing a robust buffer equivalent to covering 11 months of projected imports and more than 100% of total external debt. This milestone underscores India's strengthened position in managing external financial risks.

- **Services Sector**: The services sector, particularly driven by software and business services exports, has demonstrated robust growth in FY24. This expansion has contributed significantly to India's external sector dynamics, complementing the resilience seen in merchandise trade.

Way Forward

India's resilient economic performance, underscored by stable prices and robust sectoral growth, sets a solid foundation for navigating future challenges and maximizing opportunities. Building upon the strengths highlighted in the Finance Ministry's report, here's a strategic roadmap for sustaining and accelerating India's growth trajectory:

- **Strengthening Global Integration**: Enhancing Trade Resilience: Foster diversification in export sectors beyond traditional commodities like petroleum and gems. Encourage non-traditional sectors, such as pharmaceuticals, IT services, and renewable energy, to bolster export competitiveness and mitigate dependency risks.
- **Navigating Geopolitical Dynamics**: Maintain diplomatic and economic agility to navigate global tensions effectively. Strengthen partnerships with emerging markets and diversify trade routes to minimize disruptions in global supply chains.
- **Fostering Sectoral Growth**: Services Sector Expansion: Capitalize on the momentum in software and business services exports. Invest in digital infrastructure and skills development to sustain growth in IT-enabled services, fintech, and e-commerce, enhancing India's global service footprint.
- **Manufacturing and Industry**: Leverage initiatives like Make in India and Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes to boost manufacturing competitiveness. Promote innovation, R&D, and skill enhancement to nurture global champions in strategic sectors like electronics, pharmaceuticals, and automobiles.
- **Ensuring Financial Stability**: Managing External Balances: Continue prudent fiscal management and maintain a disciplined approach to current account deficits. Strengthen forex reserves to mitigate external shocks, ensuring resilience against global economic volatilities.
- **Capital Flows and Investment Climate**: Streamline regulatory frameworks to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) across sectors. Facilitate ease of doing business reforms, including simplifying taxation and legal procedures, to enhance investor confidence and sustain capital inflows.
- **Sustainable Development Goals**: Environmental Sustainability: Accelerate investments in renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure projects. Align policies with global climate commitments, fostering green technologies and reducing carbon footprint across industries.
- **Inclusive Growth Initiatives**: Expand social welfare programs and skill development initiatives like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) to empower marginalized communities and bridge urban-rural divides. Ensure equitable access to healthcare, education, and basic amenities to foster inclusive economic growth.
- **Digital Transformation**: Digital Infrastructure: Scale up digital connectivity initiatives to bridge the urban-rural digital divide. Promote digital literacy and digital identity initiatives to enable universal access to digital services, enhancing efficiency in governance and service delivery.
- **Cybersecurity and Data Privacy**: Strengthen cybersecurity frameworks and data protection laws to safeguard digital infrastructure and promote trust in digital transactions. Foster partnerships between government, private sector, and academia to develop robust cybersecurity ecosystems.
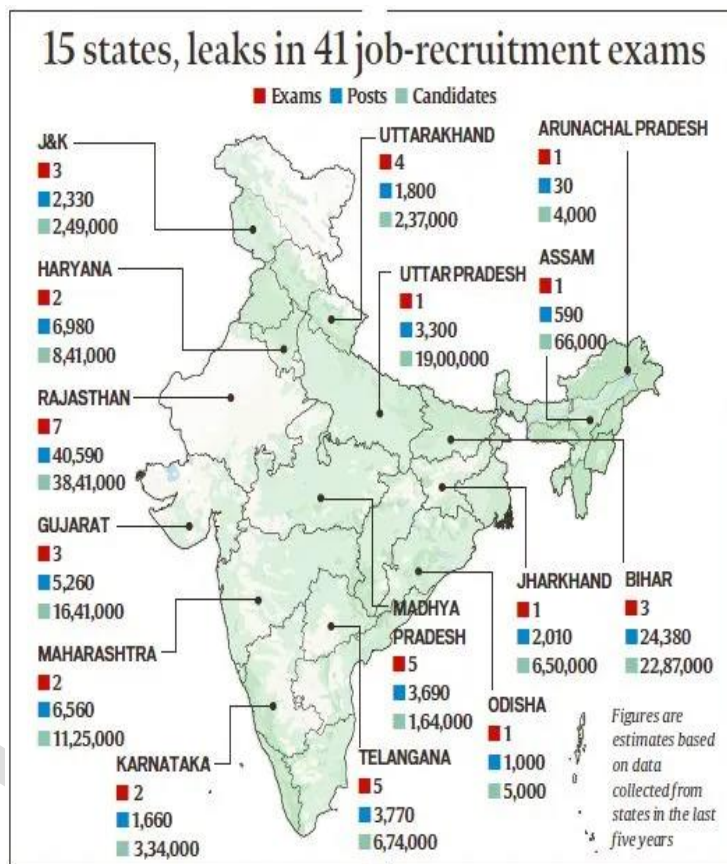
NEET Controversy and NTA

Why in News?

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) has once again come under scrutiny due to numerous allegations and irregularities during the 2024 exams. From technical glitches to leaked question papers, the conduct of NEET has raised serious concerns about fairness and reliability.

Key Highlights

- **Operational Failures**: During the 2024 exams, approximately 1,500 students reported issues such as receiving incorrect question papers, torn OMR sheets, and delays in distribution, which led to inadequate exam time.
- **Grace Marks Controversy**: Following widespread complaints, the court intervened and allowed grace marks for affected students, leading to anomalies like impossibly high scores.

- **Question Paper Leak**: Reports surfaced about the NEET UG question paper being leaked prior to the exam, casting doubts on the integrity of the test.
- **Incorrect Answer Keys**: Allegations arose regarding inaccuracies in the official answer keys issued by the National Testing Agency (NTA), potentially affecting evaluation outcomes.
- **Inconsistent Evaluation**: Concerns were raised over discrepancies in the evaluation of NEET UG papers, suggesting a lack of uniformity in grading standards.
- Calls for Investigation: Political parties and student groups demanded a thorough third-party investigation into the irregularities, emphasizing the need for accountability and transparency.
- **Demand for Retest**: Students affected by the disruptions urged authorities to conduct a retest to ensure fairness and justice in the selection process.
- **Management of Exam Centers**: Regular complaints about poorly managed exam centers and restrictive dress codes highlight systemic issues in the administration of NEET.
- **Cheating Scandals**: Instances of candidates using proxies to write exams and other cheating methods have been exposed, reflecting lapses in security and supervision.

15 states, leaks in 41 job-recruitment exams

■ Exams ■ Posts ■ Candidates

J&K
■ 3
■ 2,330
■ 2,49,000

HARYANA
■ 2
■ 6,980
■ 8,41,000

RAJASTHAN
■ 7
■ 40,590
■ 38,41,000

GUJARAT
■ 3
■ 5,260
■ 16,41,000

MAHARASHTRA
■ 2
■ 6,560
■ 11,25,000

KARNATAKA
■ 2
■ 1,660
■ 3,34,000

UTTARAKHAND
■ 4
■ 1,800
■ 2,37,000

UTTAR PRADESH
■ 1
■ 3,300
■ 19,00,000

MADHYA PRADESH
■ 5
■ 3,690
■ 1,64,000

TELANGANA
■ 5
■ 3,770
■ 6,74,000

ARUNACHAL PRADESH
■ 1
■ 30
■ 4,000

ASSAM
■ 1
■ 590
■ 66,000

JHARKHAND
■ 1
■ 2,010
■ 6,50,000

BIHAR
■ 3
■ 24,380
■ 22,87,000

ODISHA
■ 1
■ 1,000
■ 5,000

Figures are estimates based on data collected from states in the last five years

What is the National Eligibility Entrance Test (NEET-UG)?

The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG) is one of the most challenging medical entrance examinations in India. It is conducted annually by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admission to undergraduate medical courses (MBBS/BDS/Ayush Courses). NEET is the sole national-level undergraduate medical entrance exam, and it also covers admissions to BVSc (Bachelor of Veterinary Science) and AH (Animal Husbandry) colleges across India.

National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG) Key Facts

Key Points	Details
Conducted by	National Testing Agency (NTA)
Courses Covered	MBBS, BDS, AYUSH, BVSc, AH
Mode of Examination	Online
Languages Available	English, Hindi, Marathi, Odia, Tamil, Urdu, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, and Assamese
Historical Context	Before the NTA took over, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted the NEET exam.

Why is the NEET-UG Result 2024 Controversial?

On May 5, over 24 lakh students appeared for the NEET-UG exam at 4,750 centers across 571 cities, including 14 international locations.

Admission Help Line: +91 9823256625 & 9579247470 (WhatsApp)

Email: info@iqraias.com, support@iqraias.com

Issues in NEET-UG Result 2024

Grace Marks	High Scores	Paper Leak	Statistics	Same Center
• Over 1,500 students were allegedly awarded grace marks.	• An unusually high number of students achieved perfect scores.	• Allegations surfaced regarding a leaked question paper.	• Perfect Scores: 67 students achieved a score of 720 in 2024. • 2023: 2 students • 2022: 3 students • 2021: 2 studentsr • 2020: 1 student	• Six of the toppers were reported to have taken the exam at the same center in Haryana.

Responses from various organizations

- **NTA's Response**: The NTA attributed the higher number of perfect scores to an increase in the number of candidates (3 lakh more than in 2023) and an easier exam compared to previous years. The NTA also mentioned compensatory marks for loss of time during the exam.
- **Supreme Court's Ruling**: The Supreme Court ruled for a retest for the 1,563 students who received grace marks, conducted on June 23. Admissions counseling continued unaffected, and candidates opting out of the retest would have their original scores considered.
- **Government Stance**: The Union Education Minister termed the irregularities as an institutional failure of the NTA. A high-level committee, led by former ISRO chairman Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, was formed to review the NTA's functioning. The NTA chief was removed and placed on "compulsory wait." The CBI is investigating the paper leak. New rules under The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024, have been notified.

## Various Provisions Regarding Education and Examination in India

Right to Education (Article 21A) → • Mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years.

Right to Equality (Article 14) → • Ensures equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.

Prohibition of Discrimination (Article 15) → • Prohibits discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, allowing special provisions for backward classes and Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

Promotion of Educational and Economic Interests (Article 46) → • The State promotes the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, particularly Scheduled Castes and Tribes.

Early Childhood Care and Education (Article 45) → • The State aims to provide early childhood care and education until age six.

Duty to Provide Opportunities for Education (Article 51A) → • Citizens must provide educational opportunities to their children or wards between ages 6 and 14.

What is the National Testing Agency (NTA)?

The National Testing Agency (NTA) was established in 2017 as a Society registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act, 1860. It is an autonomous and self-sustained organization responsible for conducting entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.

Major Exams Conducted by NTA

- JEE-Main: Engineering entrance exam
- NEET-UG: Medical entrance exam
- CUET-UG: Entrance for various undergraduate courses
- CUET-PG: Postgraduate admissions
- UGC-NET and CSIR UGC-NET: Eligibility tests for junior research fellowship and assistant professor roles
- Common Management Admission Test (CMAT)
- Hotel Management Joint Entrance Examination
- Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test
- Entrance tests for Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), and Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)
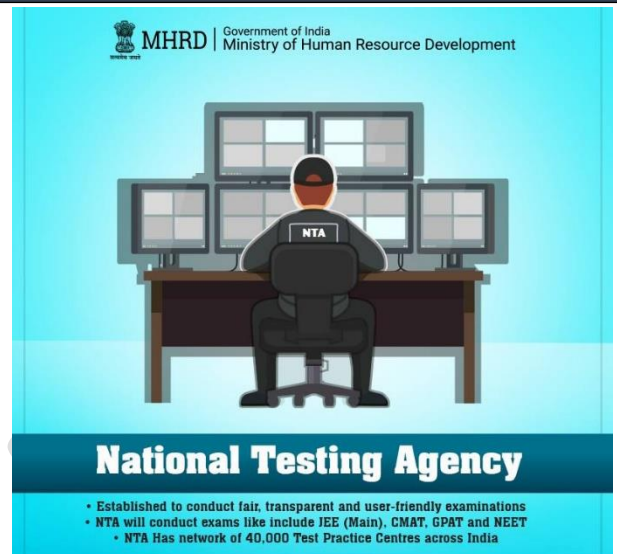
Governance

- **Chairperson**: An eminent educationist appointed by the Ministry of Education.
- **Chief Executive Officer**: The Director General of NTA, with the rank and pay equivalent to a Joint Secretary to the Government of India.

The NTA follows directives from the Government of India and its policies are managed by a Governing Body comprising members from user institutions.

Functions of NTA

Partner Institutions
- Identifying institutions with adequate infrastructure for online examinations

Question Bank
- Creating a question bank for all subjects using modern techniques

R&D Culture
- Establishing a strong research and development culture with a pool of testing experts

International Collaboration
- Collaborating with organizations like ETS (Educational Testing Services)

Additional Examinations
- Conducting any other examination entrusted by Government Ministries/Departments

Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, was introduced in Lok Sabha to combat unfair practices in public examinations. The goal is to enhance transparency, fairness, and credibility in the public examination system. Once enacted, this bill will serve as a model for states to adopt.

Need for the Bill

- **Instances of Question Paper Leaks**
  - **Widespread Issue**: There have been numerous cases of question paper leaks in recruitment exams across India in recent years.
  - **Statistics**: At least 48 instances of paper leaks in 16 states over the last five years, affecting around 1.51 crore applicants for about 1.2 lakh posts.
- **Malpractices Lead to Examination Delays**
  - **Impact**: Malpractices in public examinations result in delays and cancellations, adversely affecting millions of youth.
  - **Current Legal Gap**: There is no specific law to address unfair means or related offenses, necessitating comprehensive central legislation to tackle these vulnerabilities.
- **Aim for Greater Transparency**
  - Objective: The bill aims to enhance transparency, fairness, and credibility in public examinations, ensuring that sincere efforts of youth are rewarded and their future is protected.
  - Deterrence: It seeks to legally deter individuals, organized groups, or institutions involved in unfair practices for monetary or wrongful gains.

Key Provisions of the Bill

- **Section 2(k)**: A Public Examination is defined as any examination conducted by a "public examination authority" listed in the Bill's Schedule or any other authority notified by the Central Government.
- **Punishments**
  - **Section 9**: Offenses under the bill are cognizable, non-bailable, and non-compoundable.
    - **Cognizable Offenses**: Police must investigate without a Magistrate's permission.
    - **Non-Compoundable Offenses**: Cases cannot be withdrawn by the complainant, and a trial must follow.
    - **Arrests and Bail**: Arrests can be made without a warrant; bail is at the Magistrate's discretion.
    - **Punishments**: Three to five years in prison and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh for those resorting to unfair means.
    - **Additional Punishment**: Failure to pay fines results in additional imprisonment under the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023.
  - **Service Providers**: Engaged service providers involved in illegal practices face fines up to Rs 1 crore and recovery of proportionate examination costs.

- **Unfair Means**
  - **Section 3**: Lists 15 actions considered as unfair means, including:
    - Leakage of question papers or answer keys.
    - Unauthorized possession of question papers or OMR response sheets.
    - Providing unauthorized solutions during exams.
    - Tampering with documents for candidate short-listing or ranking.
    - Tampering with computer networks or systems.
    - Creating fake websites and issuing fake admit cards or offer letters for monetary gain.
- **Investigation and Enforcement:** Offenses will be investigated by officers not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police or Assistant Commissioner of Police.
- **Model Draft for States:** Serves as a model draft for states to prevent criminal elements from disrupting state-level public examinations.
- **High-Level National Technical Committee**
  - **Formation**: A High-Level National Technical Committee on Public Examinations will be formed.
  - **Focus**: Developing secure digital platforms, foolproof IT security systems, and national standards for examination conduct to ensure efficiency and reliability.
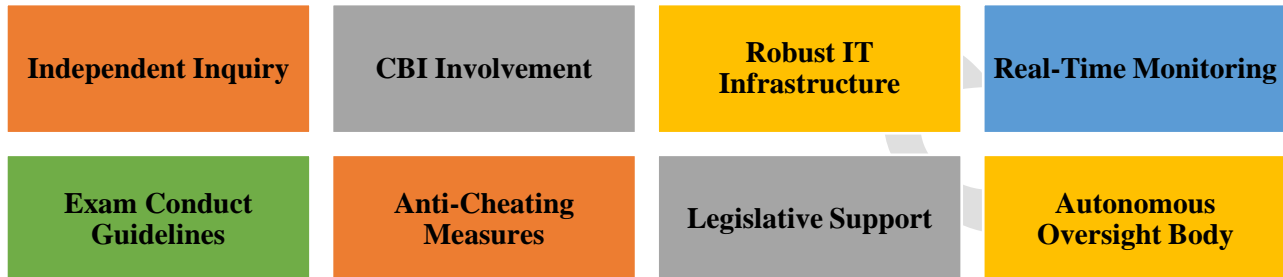
Listed Authorities Under Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024	Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)
	Staff Selection Commission (SSC)
	Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs)
	Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS)
	National Testing Agency (NTA)
	Ministries or Departments of the Central Government and their attached and subordinate offices for staff recruitment.

The central government can add new authorities to the schedule through notifications as needed.

Concerns Related to the Bill

- **Variations in Implementation**: The bill's effectiveness may vary as state governments have the discretion to adopt it, potentially weakening its impact.
- **Insufficient Deterrence**: The fines for service providers may not be commensurate with the financial gains from unfair practices, reducing the deterrent effect.

- **Composition and Qualifications**: The bill lacks details on the committee's composition, qualifications, and mandate, raising concerns about expertise and impartiality.
- **Stringent Measures**: The provisions on cognizability, non-bailability, and non-compoundability of offenses may face legal challenges regarding their proportionality and adherence to natural justice principles.

Way Forward

Independent Inquiry	CBI Involvement	Robust IT Infrastructure	Real-Time Monitoring
Exam Conduct Guidelines	Anti-Cheating Measures	Legislative Support	Autonomous Oversight Body

- **Independent Inquiry**: Establish an independent, third-party committee to investigate the reported irregularities, including question paper leaks, operational failures, and discrepancies in evaluation. This will help ensure transparency and accountability.
- **CBI Involvement**: Support the ongoing CBI investigation into the paper leak, providing all necessary resources and cooperation to expedite the process.
- **Robust IT Infrastructure**: Invest in upgrading the technical infrastructure to prevent glitches and ensure smooth conduct of the examination. This includes improving the security of online platforms and question paper distribution systems.
- **Real-Time Monitoring**: Implement real-time monitoring of exam centers using advanced surveillance technologies to detect and address issues promptly.
- **Exam Conduct Guidelines**: Revise and enforce strict guidelines for exam conduct, including standard operating procedures for distribution, collection, and evaluation of answer sheets.
- **Anti-Cheating Measures**: Strengthen anti-cheating measures, such as biometric verification, use of metal detectors, and deployment of additional invigilators.
- **Legislative Support**: Work with policymakers to draft and pass legislation that strengthens the regulatory framework governing national exams, ensuring strict penalties for misconduct and lapses.
- **Autonomous Oversight Body**: Establish an autonomous oversight body to regularly audit the functioning of NTA and other examination authorities, ensuring compliance with best practices and standards.