

LAKSHYA

CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2024



Indo-U.S. Maritime Security Exercise, 'Sea Defenders-2024,' concludes at Port Blair.

Government of India notified the Citizenship Amendment Act rules

Government announced Geographical Indication(GI) Tag for 10 products

PM Modi honoured with Bhutan's highest civilian award 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo'





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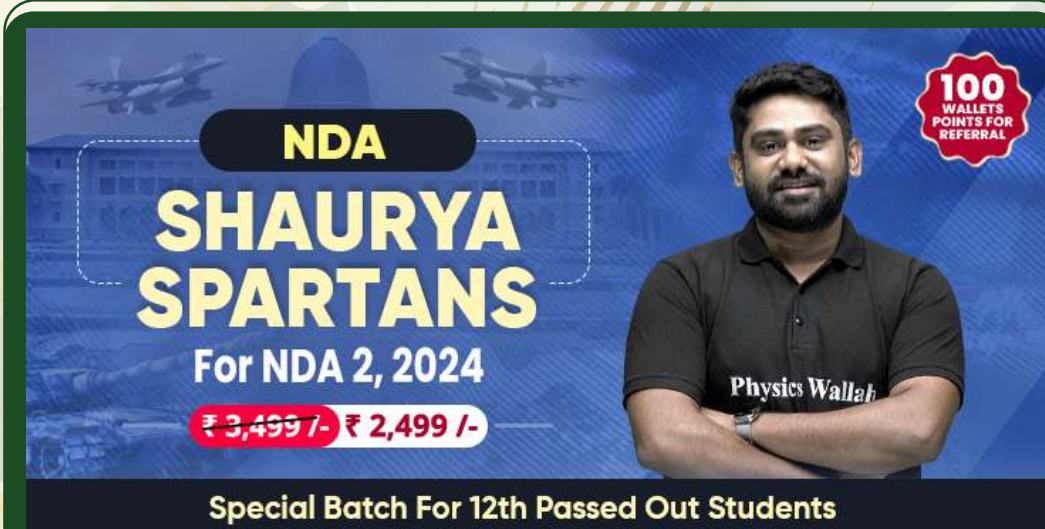


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History and Culture

GORSAM KORA FESTIVAL

The Gorsam Kora festival, symbolising the enduring friendship between India and Bhutan, commenced on **7th March and concluded on 10th March** this year.

Gorsam Kora Festival	- The festival is held at Gorsam Chorten, a 93-foot-tall Stupa constructed in 13th century AD by a local monk, Lama Pradhar. - It served as the first rest stop for the 14th Dalai Lama upon fleeing Tibet in 1959.
History	- The Gorsam Kora festival is steeped in history, centered around the Gorsam Chorten. - It is older than the Tawang Monastery and has historical significance as the first refuge for the Dalai Lama upon his escape from Tibet.
Attractions	- The festival features cultural performances, Buddhist rituals, and pilgrimages to Gorsam Chorten. - It attracts devotees, including many Bhutanese nationals, who come to celebrate during the last day of the first month of the Lunar calendar.
Cultural Exchange	- The festival fosters camaraderie and cultural exchange, drawing pilgrims and Lamas from Bhutan, Tawang, and neighbouring regions. - It serves as a platform for spiritual and cultural interaction among diverse communities.
Events	- The festival boasts a diverse array of events, including captivating performances by local cultural troupes and Indian army bands. - It also showcases martial arts demonstrations such as Mallakhamb and Zanjh Pathaka.



KOCHRAB ASHRAM

Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the renovated **Kochrab Ashram in Ahmedabad, Gujarat**, commemorating the 94th anniversary of the Dandi March.

Aspect	Description
Name	Kochrab Ashram
Location	Kochrab village, on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, Gujarat
Establishment	- Founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1915, upon his return to India from South Africa. - Initially named Satyagraha Ashram, it was established based on Gandhi's philosophy of achieving India's independence through nonviolent means.
Significance	- Gopal Krishna Gokhale urged Gandhi to return to India, recognizing his skills as a community organizer. - Gandhi chose Ahmedabad as his base, believing that he could best serve the nation through the Gujarati language. He started living in Kochrab village on May 20, 1915.

Premises	- Initially a bungalow provided by lawyer Jeevanlal Desai, Gandhi soon transformed it into Satyagraha Ashram. - The colonial-style building features a white-washed façade and includes hostels and kitchens.
Duration	Gandhi resided at Kochrab Ashram for approximately one-and-a-half years before relocating to the new campus of Sabarmati Ashram.
Museum	The Gandhi Memorial Museum within the ashram compound houses a modest collection of artifacts associated with Mahatma Gandhi's life, along with historical photographs.



BATTLE OF OKINAWA



- The **Battle of Okinawa**, which took place from April 1 to June 21, 1945, marked the final major conflict of World War II and was one of the most harrowing.
- It unfolded between **U.S. and Japanese forces** on the island of Okinawa, the largest Ryukyu Islands, approximately 350 miles from mainland Japan.
- The strategic importance of Okinawa, boasting four airfields capable of supporting both **tactical and strategic air operations**, made its capture crucial as a prelude to a ground invasion of the Japanese home islands.
- Code-named **Operation Iceberg**, the invasion of Okinawa and neighbouring Ryukyu Islands commenced on April 1, 1945, heralding the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific War.

- The battle's ferocity led to staggering casualties for both sides. By the time American forces secured Okinawa on June 22, 1945, the United States had suffered over 49,000 casualties, with more than 12,500 killed or missing in action.
- Ultimately, the battle's grim toll played a pivotal role in the American decision to deploy atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, influencing the course of history and hastening the end of World War II.

USHA MEHTA



- Usha Mehta**, popularly known as Ushaben, was born in 1920 in the village of Saras, near **Surat in Gujarat**.
- From a young age, she displayed a deep commitment to Gandhian principles. At just eight years old, in **1928**, she participated in a protest march against the Simon Commission.
- On **14th August 1942**, along with her associates, she established the Secret Congress Radio, a covert radio station that began broadcasting on **27th August**.
- This underground radio station played a crucial role in maintaining communication between freedom movement leaders and the public despite strict censorship by the British authorities.
- Setting up this clandestine radio station was not without its challenges. In 1939, at the onset of World War II, the British had suspended all amateur radio licenses across the Empire.
- Mehta, along with **Babubhai Khakar, Vithalbhai Jhaveri, and Chandrakant Jhaveri**, played key roles in organizing Congress Radio, defying British restrictions.
- The trial of the five accused in the **Congress Radio case, including Mehta, Babubhai Khakar, Vithalbhai Jhaveri, Chandrakant Jhaveri, and Nanak Gainchand Motwane**, who sold essential equipment to the team, garnered significant attention in Bombay.
- While Vithalbhai and Motwane were acquitted, Mehta, Babubhai, and Chandrakant received severe sentences.
- Despite her imprisonment, Usha Mehta continued to be celebrated as a hero of the nationalist movement.
- She was released from **Pune's Yerawada Jail in March 1946** and was hailed in the nationalist media as "Radio-ben" for her courageous efforts in operating the Secret Congress Radio.

MOHINIYATTAM



About Mohiniyattam

Mohiniyattam is an Indian classical dance form that originated in the state of **Kerala**.

History and Evolution

- Mohiniyattam traces its roots back to the ancient Sanskrit Hindu text on performing arts known as the 'Natya Shastra'.
- Initially performed by **Devadasis (temple dancers)** in Kerala's temples during the reign of the Chera kings (9th to 12th century CE).

- It further evolved as a performing art during the 18th and 19th centuries, gaining prominence due to the patronage of princely states.

Features

- Traditionally a solo dance form performed by female artists.
- Exhibits the Lasya type, characterized by graceful, gentle, and feminine movements.
- Themes revolve around love and devotion to God, often featuring Lord Vishnu or Lord Krishna as the central character.
- Performances typically include dancing and singing, **with songs in Manipravala, a mix of Sanskrit and Malayalam.**
- Music style is **Carnatic**.
- Emphasizes graceful swaying movements with no abrupt jerks or sudden leaps.
- Focuses on hand gestures (adopted from 'Hastha Lakshana Deepika') and Mukhabhinaya (subtle facial expressions).
- Costumes consist of plain white or ivory cream traditional saris embroidered with bright gold-laced brocade.

Instruments Used

- Mridangam, Madhalam, Idakka, Flute, Veena, and Kuzhitalam (cymbals).

Environment and Geography

NAGPUR 1ST TO LAUNCH ZERO CARBON PLAN FOR BUILDINGS



- Nagpur launches **Zero Carbon Buildings Action Plan (ZCBAP)**, a significant step toward sustainable development.
- Plan targets decarbonization of public buildings, affordable housing, commercial, and residential buildings.
- Roadmap includes strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through material choices and building lifecycle management.
- Buildings accounted for the majority of Nagpur's energy consumption and GHG emissions in 2017-18.
- ZCBAP is led by **Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) and NSSCDCL**, with support from international partners.
- Aim to achieve net-zero carbon emissions from buildings by 2050, aligning with national and international goals.
- Plan integrates with India's **NDCs and long-term strategy for net-zero emissions by 2070**.

AUSTRALIA'S GREAT BARRIER REEF HIT BY FIFTH MASS BLEACHING EVENT IN EIGHT YEARS



- Australia's **Great Barrier Reef** is experiencing its **fifth mass coral bleaching** event since 2016, which is consistent with patterns of heat stress due to climate change.
- **Coral bleaching** occurs when abnormal conditions, such as warm ocean temperatures or acidic water, cause corals to expel their photosynthetic algae, turning them white and making them more susceptible to disease.
- **Climate change** is elevating ocean temperatures globally, leading to more frequent coral bleaching events.
- **El Nino conditions** in the Pacific Ocean, along with elevated ocean temperatures exacerbated by climate change, are contributing to the current mass bleaching event in the Great Barrier Reef.
- The Great Barrier Reef's biggest threat is climate change, and protecting it requires global emissions reduction, best practice management of local issues, and research and development of interventions to boost climate tolerance and resilience for coral reefs.

ASSAM CABINET DECIDES TO DE-NOTIFY PRIME RHINO HABITAT



- The Assam Cabinet has decided to **de-notify the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary**, a prime habitat for **one-horned rhinos**, about 48 km east of Guwahati.
- This decision was taken 26 years after the sanctuary was notified in 1998, making it the first of its kind for any protected area in the country.
- The decision to de-notify the sanctuary was taken because the 1998 notification was made without placing the matter before the Cabinet and the Chief Minister at that time.
- The rights of the affected people, especially those belonging to deprived and marginalized sections of society, were not fully settled.

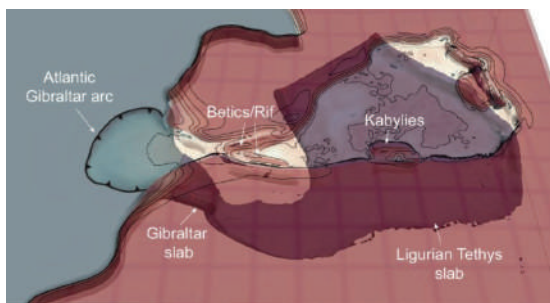
- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is often referred to as ‘**Mini Kaziranga**’ due to its similarity in landscape, flora, and fauna distribution.
- It has the highest concentration of one-horned rhinos on earth, with a population of 107 as per the last census in 2022.
- The Assam Cabinet has formed a committee to examine the pros and cons of the decision to de-notify Pobitora and has asked for a report within six months.

PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA LAYS FOUNDATION STONE FOR 2,880 MW DIBANG MULTIPURPOSE HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH



- The Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone for the **DMHP** recently.
- **Capacity:** It will produce around 2,880 MW of electricity.
- **Location:** Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- Designed as a project under National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and developed over Dibang River (a tributary of Brahmaputra) to be constructed with Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) technique.
- It will be the **highest RCC dam in the World**. It will be 278 meters high and would be the highest Concrete-Gravity dam in India.

THE GIBRALTAR SUBDUCTION ZONE IS INVADING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN



- A recent study from scientists in Portugal has identified a **subduction zone, known as the ‘Ring of Fire’**, beneath the **Gibraltar Strait**, which could potentially swallow the Atlantic Ocean in the next 20 million years.

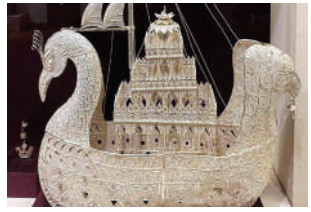
- The subduction zone is currently small, measuring about 125 miles in length, but projections suggest it could expand to around 500 miles in the next 20 million years.
- The **subduction zone is associated with significant seismic activity and earthquake risks**.
- The subduction zone is formed by the African Plate subducting beneath the Eurasian Plate in the Gibraltar Strait.
- Computer simulations suggest that the subduction zone will progress westwards through the Gibraltar Strait, forming a new Atlantic subduction system referred to as the ‘Ring of Fire’.
- The study highlights the possibility of the Atlantic Ocean ‘closing up’ in the distant future, reshaping the ocean’s geography.
- The findings of the study shed light on the dynamic nature of Earth’s tectonic processes and the long-term evolution of ocean basins.

WESTERN GHATS IN GUJARAT RECORD 119% RISE IN SOIL EROSION IN 30 YEARS: IIT-BOMBAY STUDY



- A study conducted by **IIT Bombay** between **1990 and 2020** reveals a significant increase in **soil erosion in the Western Ghats Region (WGR) in India**.
- The study used data from LANDSAT-8, the Digital Elevation Model (DEM), and rainfall records to estimate soil loss rates using the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) method.
- The WGR includes portions of **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat**.
- Soil erosion rates have increased in all states bordering the Western Ghats, with Tamil Nadu and Gujarat experiencing the highest increase of 121 and 119 respectively.
- Goa witnessed a sharp rise of 80 in soil erosion, while Karnataka saw a 56 increase from 1990 to 2020.
- The soil loss rates in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu reached troubling levels of 75.3 and 68.3 tonnes per hectare per year respectively by 2020.

GI TAGS

	- The famous Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi (Silver Filigree) of Odisha has been given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Geographical Indications Registry in Chennai. - It Originated in 3500 BCE in Mesopotamia, known as Telkari work. - Reached Cuttack from Persia via Indonesia, evidence of trade between Kalinga and Indonesia.
	- The Banglar muslin is one of the popular traditional handloom crafts of Bengal. - This finest sort of muslin is made of cotton, which are spun to create threads that maintained tensile strength at counts (above 300 counts and up to 600 counts)
	Narasapur crochet lace products were brought by missionaries to Narsapur, Andhra Pradesh. - Intricate craftsmanship, unique designs, high quality.
	Madhya Pradesh Ratlam's Riyawan Garlic Receives GI Tag. - Riyawan Garlic is renowned for its unique quality and high yield, with each bulb containing five to six cloves. - Known for its pungent and robust flavour, this garlic variety also boasts a higher oil content compared to others.
	Assam Majuli Mask and Majuli Manuscript Painting: Majuli Manuscript Painting and Majuli Mask Making, representing Assam's heritage, were registered as Geographical Indications. - The crafts date back centuries and depict stories from Hindu epics, highlighting the rich cultural heritage of Assam.
	Tripura's traditional tribal attire 'risa' received the Geographical Indication (GI). - Handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment. - Risa is a part of traditional Tripuri attire that comprises three parts – risa, rignai and rikutu.
	HYDERABAD: In a testament to heritage and craftsmanship, the lac bangles from the city were conferred the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. - Their rich history dates back to the Qutub Shahi period, and they are sold in Laad Bazar, making them part of Hyderabad culture.

	• Kutch Rogan Craft is among the products awarded the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. • Kutch Rogan Craft, also known as Rogan painting, is a unique and beautiful art form practiced in the Kutch region of Gujarat, India.
	• Ambaji White Marble comes from the Ambaji region, known for its marble quarries, situated in the state of Gujarat, India. • It is formed through the recrystallization of limestone under the earth's crust due to intense pressure and heat.

SCORPION WITH 8 LEGS AND EYES DISCOVERED IN THAILAND



- Researchers have discovered a **new scorpion species with 8 eyes and 8 legs in Thailand's Kaeng Krachan National Park**.
- The species belongs to the subgenus *Euscorpiops* and has been named *Euscorpiops Krachan*.
- The scorpion is small in size, brownish in colour, and exhibits similar features to other scorpions in the *Euscorpiops* subgenus.
- It is believed to use an ambush or sit-and-wait type of foraging strategy while hunting.

UNESCO ENDORSED THE ADDITION OF 18 NEW GEOPARKS TO THE GLOBAL GEOPARKS NETWORK (GGN)

- The **UNESCO Global Geopark designation** was created in **2015** to recognize geological heritage of

international significance and promote sustainable development.



- The newly designated **UNESCO Global Geoparks** include **Schelde Delta UNESCO Global Geopark in Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands**, which showcases a landscape rich in geological and cultural-historical traces.
- **Wanfenglin Geopark in China** is known for its karst peaks and the exceptionally preserved "Xingyi fauna" fossils, offering insights into the transition of marine life.
- The Schelde Delta UNESCO Global Geopark in Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands demonstrates the effects of climate change and sea level rise, with conservation projects focused on coastal defense and ecological enrichment.
- **Oeste UNESCO Global Geopark in Portugal** features a diverse coastline with geological layers dating back to the late Triassic Period, as well as a rich palaeontological heritage including dinosaur fossils.

PLACES IN NEWS

	Cambodia (Capital: Phnom Penh): - India signed an MoU with Cambodia on biodiversity conservation with special focus on tiger reintroduction in Cambodia. Political Boundaries: - Located on the Indochinese mainland of Southeast Asia. - Bordered by Thailand (west and northwest), Laos (northeast), Vietnam (east and southeast), and the Gulf of Thailand (southwest).
	Mauritius (Capital: Port Louis): - Prime Ministers of India and Mauritius jointly inaugurated a new airstrip and 6 community development projects at Agalega Island in Mauritius. Political Features: - It is an island country in the Indian Ocean, located off the south-eastern coast of Africa. - The nearest neighbor is the French island of Réunion.
	France (Capital: Paris): - The second India-France Strategic Space Dialogue underscored the growing importance of space cooperation in bilateral relations. Political Features: - France lies near the western end of the great Eurasian landmass. - Bordering Nations: Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, and Andorra, England. - Monaco is an independent enclave on the south coast and the island of Corsica in the - The Mediterranean is an integral part of the country. - Bordering Water Bodies: the Mediterranean, the Bay of Biscay, the English Channel, the Strait of Dover.
	Indonesia (Capital: Jakarta): - RBI and Bank Indonesia signed a MoU to promote the use of local currencies in bilateral transactions. Political Boundaries: - A Southeast Asian country, located on the equator, and the largest archipelagic country. - Land Borders: Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, and East Timor - Maritime Borders: Singapore, Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, Thailand and India. - Water Bodies: South China Sea and Pacific Ocean (North), and Indian Ocean (South).



Somalia (Capital: Mogadishu):

- Indian Navy foils further attempts of Somali pirates using hijacked MV Ruen.

Political Boundaries:

- Easternmost country of Africa, on the Horn of Africa.

Land border:

- Kenya and Ethiopia (west), and Djibouti (northwest).

Water border:

- Gulf of Aden (north), Indian Ocean (east).



- External Affairs Minister, **Dr. S. Jaishankar**, paid an official visit to **Malaysia**.
- This visit aimed at strengthening **bilateral cooperation in areas like trade, defence, culture and education etc.** and enhancing strategic partnership between two countries.



- **Sela Tunnel is a road tunnel** at 3,000 metres (9,800 ft) which ensures all-weather connectivity between **Guwahati in Assam and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- This tunnel is the **longest bi-lane tunnel in the world at 13,000 feet**.

Defence and Military Exercises

VERY SHORT-RANGE AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM (VSHORADS)



- DRDO accomplished two successful flight trials of the **Very Short-Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) missile**.
- VSHORADS, a fourth-generation **Man Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD)**, is tailored to neutralise low-altitude aerial threats across limited distances.
- These surface-to-air missiles are compact, lightweight, and easily deployable by individuals or small teams.
- Developed domestically by **DRDO's Research Centre Imarat (RCI) in Hyderabad**, in conjunction with various DRDO facilities and Indian industry collaborators, it represents a significant indigenous achievement.

Feature	Description
Purpose	Provides short-range air defence capabilities to safeguard ground forces and critical assets.
Range	Up to 6 km
Technologies	• Dual-band IIR Seeker • Miniaturised Reaction Control System • Integrated Avionics
Propulsion	Dual-thrust solid motor
Portability	Designed by DRDO for portability, facilitating quick deployment over challenging terrains.

IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES



- A blast occurred at the bustling **Rameshwaram Cafe in Bengaluru's Whitefield area**, resulting in at least nine injuries, possibly caused by an **improvised explosive device (IED)**.
- An IED represents a form of **unconventional explosive weapon** capable of taking various shapes and being triggered in numerous ways.
- Essentially, homemade bombs and IEDs can vary from **small pipe bombs to sophisticated devices capable of inflicting significant damage and casualties**.
- They can be deployed via vehicles, carried by individuals, planted or thrown, delivered in packages, or concealed along roadsides.
- Toxic chemicals or radioactive substances are added to enhance the destructive potential, e.g., depleted Uranium in a **"dirty bomb"**.

INS JATAYU

The Indian Navy is set to commission Naval Detachment Minicoy as INS Jatayu on March 6, 2024, with the Chief of the Naval Staff in attendance.



Aspect	Description
Location	Second Naval base in Lakshadweep, following INS Dweep prakshak in Kavaratti.
Strategic Importance	Strengthens Indian Navy's presence and operational capabilities in the Lakshadweep islands.
Operational Enhancements	Extends operational surveillance, reach, and sustenance capabilities of the Indian Navy.
Capacity Building	Ushers in a new era of capacity building and comprehensive development of the island territories.
Milestone Achievement	Signifies a significant milestone in the Navy's commitment to enhancing security infrastructure in strategically vital Lakshadweep Islands.

YARS MISSILE



- Russia's defence ministry recently announced the successful test firing of the Yars intercontinental ballistic nuclear missile.
- The Yars, also referred to as RS-24 or SS-29, is a Russian-made intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) equipped with multiple independently targetable warheads, enabling it to engage various objectives simultaneously.

YARS MISSILE

Feature	Description
Type	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)
Designation	Also known as RS-24 or SS-29
Propulsion	Three-stage, solid propellant
Warheads	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles (MIRVs)
Range	10,500 km

Length	23 meters
Launch Platforms	Can be launched from a silo or mobile launcher
Launch Weight	49,600 kg
Payload	Up to 10 MIRVs, each containing a 300 kiloton thermonuclear warhead
Maneuverability	Capable of maneuvering during flight and deploying active and passive decoys
Advantages	Offers an advantage against modern missile defense systems due to its maneuverability and decoy capabilities

Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)

Aspect	Description
Definition	Guided missile designed primarily for delivering nuclear warheads over long distances.
Range	Minimum range typically exceeds 5,500 kilometers (3,400 miles). Maximum ranges vary from 7,000 to 16,000 km.
Speed	Much faster than other types of ballistic missiles.
Payload	Designed to carry nuclear warheads, although it could deliver other payloads as well.
Example	Agni-V is an Indian ICBM with a range of over 5,000 km.

GREY WAR ZONE

In discussions concerning **China and Taiwan**, the concept of **'grey zone warfare'** emerges to describe Chinese activities around the island, which China claims as its own.

About Grey Zone Warfare

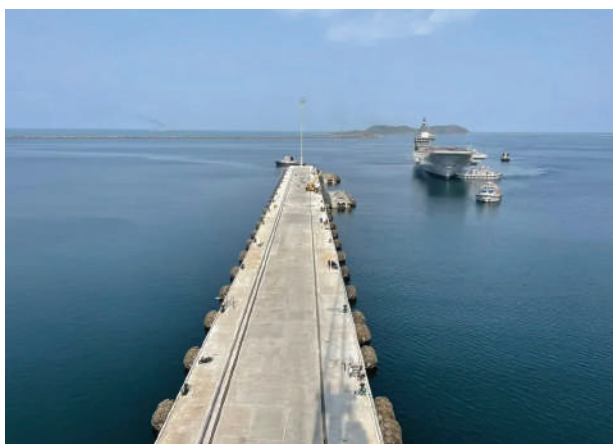
Grey zone warfare denotes a nebulous realm existing **between direct conflict and peace** within international relations. It encompasses the exploitation of operational space **between peace and war to alter the status quo** through coercive actions that typically remain below the threshold necessitating a conventional military response.

Activities associated with grey zone warfare vary, ranging from the utilisation of proxies for kinetic action or altering territorial status quo via coercion to non-kinetic subversive actions such as **cyberattacks, economic coercion, disinformation campaigns, election meddling, and, more recently, the weaponisation of migrants.**

Typical Aspects

- Grey zone elements often operate below the threshold warranting a military Response, frequently employing non-military tools.
- Grey zone activities tend to unfold gradually rather than involve bold, immediate actions to achieve objectives.
- While some actions in this sphere lack attributability, others are openly attributable and justified through extensive legal and political arguments. Aggressors may also seek to garner support from other nations for their Perspective.

PROJECT SEABOARD



- The Defence Minister is set to inaugurate two significant piers and seven towers comprising 320 homes for Navy officers and Defence civilians as part of **Project Seabird at Naval Base Karwar in Karnataka**.
- Project Seabird stands as India's largest naval infrastructure endeavour, entailing the establishment of a **naval base in Karwar, Karnataka**, situated on the west coast of India.

Aspect	Description
Project Name	Naval Base at Karwar, Karnataka
History	• Conceived in the early 1980s by Admiral OS Dawson, Chief of Naval Staff. • Sanctioned in 1985, the foundation stone was laid on October 24, 1986, by Rajiv Gandhi. • Triggered by the post-Indo-Pak War of 1971 scenario, aiming to address congestion issues in Mumbai Harbour for the Western Fleet.
Location	Karwar, Karnataka, on the west coast of India.
Project Size	Spread over approximately 11,000 acres of land.

First Phase (Commissioned in 2005)	• Construction of deep-sea harbour • Breakwaters dredging • Township development • Naval hospital establishment • Dockyard upliftment centre • Ship lift installation.
Phase 2 Development (Commenced in 2011)	• Divided into phases 2A and 2B • Planned expansion to accommodate additional warships • Addition of a new Naval Air Station • Various other projects.
Capacity	Once completed, it is expected to be the largest naval base in the Eastern Hemisphere.
Facilities	Able to accommodate approximately 32 warships 23 submarines, and house multiple aircraft hangers.

SEA DEFENDERS 2024



The United States Coast Guard's (USCG) Bertholf ship reached Port Blair ahead of the 'Sea Defenders-2024' joint exercise.

Aspect	Description
Exercise Name	Joint exercise between the Indian Coast Guard and the United States Coast Guard.
Location	Off the coast of Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
Focus Areas	• Maritime piracy and asymmetric threats • Simulated drone attacks on commercial merchant traffic • Joint maritime search and rescue operations • Major firefighting exercises • Marine pollution response • Counter-drug interdiction exercises • Simulated medical evacuation

Objectives	Enhance readiness in emergency situations, demonstrate international cooperation in addressing maritime challenges, and strengthen the partnership between the Indian and US Coast Guards.
Importance	Highlights the significance of collaboration and coordination among maritime security forces in combating various threats at sea.

ADVANCED MEDIUM COMBAT AIRCRAFT



Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved a project worth ₹15,000 crore for the design and development of the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA).

Aspect	Description
Name	India's fifth-generation multirole fighter jet.
Features	- Advanced stealth features to avoid detection by enemy radar - Large concealed internal fuel tank (6.5-tonne capacity) - Internal weapons bay for various weapons, including indigenous ones
Engine	- AMCA Mk1 variant to be equipped with US-built GE414 engine (90 kN class) - AMCA Mk2 variant to have a more powerful 110 kN engine, developed indigenously by DRDO's GTRE in collaboration with a foreign defense major
Electro-magnetic Signature	Low electro-magnetic signature to evade enemy radar detection
Sensors and Weapons	Equipped with powerful sensors and new weapons for detecting and engaging enemy aircraft

Nodal Agency	Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) under the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)
Manufacturer	State-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)

INS TUSHIL



India's newest naval asset, INS Tushil, commenced its sea trials from **Russia's Baltiysk naval base** recently.

Aspect	Description
Acquisition	First Krivak-III frigate acquired under Project 11356M.
Project 11356M	- Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed between India and Russia in October 2016. - Partnership to purchase/construct four additional Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates (Project 11356M). - Russia to supply two frigates (INS Tushil and INS Tamala), while India to construct the other two domestically. - Technical assistance provided by Russia for setting up production of 11356 project frigates in India.
Features	- Incorporation of "stealth technology" for low radar and underwater noise signatures. - Equipped with Indian-supplied equipment such as surface-to-surface missiles, sonar systems, surface surveillance radar, communication suites, etc. - Also equipped with Russian surface-to-air missiles and gun mounts.
Design and Capabilities	- Designed to combat submarines and warships in brown and blue waters. - Capable of repelling air attacks independently and within formations.

Specifications	- Displacement: 3620 tons - Length: 124.8 meters - Full speed: 30 knots - Cruising range: 4850 miles
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EXERCISE 'BHARAT SHAKTI'



The Prime Minister recently witnessed the tri-service exercise 'Bharat Shakti' in Pokhran, Rajasthan.

Exercise Name	Integrated Tri-Service Firepower and Manoeuvre Exercise
Location	Pokhran, Rajasthan
Purpose	To demonstrate calibrated tactical usage of advanced technology against perceived threats.
Initiative	Grounded in the Aatmanirbharata (Self-reliance) initiative of the nation.
Operational Scope	Simulating realistic, synergized, multi-domain operations to counter threats across various domains.
Indian Army	- T-90 (IM) Tanks - Dhanush and Sarang Gun Systems - Akash Weapons System - Logistics Drones - Robotic Mules - ALH (Advanced Light Helicopter) - Various unmanned aerial vehicles showcasing advanced ground warfare and aerial surveillance capabilities.
Indian Navy	- Naval Anti-Ship Missiles - Autonomous Cargo Carrying Aerial Vehicles - Expendable Aerial Targets
Indian Air Force	- Light Combat Aircraft Tejas - Light Utility Helicopters - Advanced Light Helicopters

AGREEMENT ON PRE-NOTIFICATION OF THE 'FLIGHT TESTING OF BALLISTIC MISSILES'

Pakistan recently called on India to adhere to the timeline specified in the Agreement on pre-notification of flight testing of ballistic missiles, following India's inaugural flight test of the domestically produced Agni-5 missile.

Aspect	Details
Agreement Name	Agreement on Pre-notification of the 'Flight Testing of Ballistic Missiles'
Date Signed	October 3, 2005
Notification Requirement	Both India and Pakistan are required to provide advance notification of any planned flight test of land or sea-launched, surface-to-surface ballistic missiles.
Notification Timing	Notification must be given no less than three days before the commencement of a five-day launch window for the flight test.
Proximity Restrictions	Test launch sites must be outside 40 km, and the impact area must be beyond 75 km of the International Boundary or the Line of Control.
Trajectory Restrictions	The planned trajectory of the ballistic missile must not cross the International Boundary or the Line of Control between India and Pakistan, and a minimum horizontal distance of 40 km must be maintained from these boundaries.
Confidentiality	Bilateral pre-notifications exchanged under the agreement are treated as confidential, unless agreed otherwise.
Communication Channels	Notifications are conveyed through the respective Foreign Offices and High Commissions, following the format annexed to the agreement.
Scope of Agreement	The agreement applies solely to tests conducted with surface-to-surface ballistic missiles launched from land or sea. It does not cover cruise missiles or surface-to-air missiles.
Withdrawal Procedure	Either party may withdraw from the agreement by providing six months' written notice to the other party, indicating its intention to terminate the agreement.

EXERCISE TIGER TRIUMPH



Exercise Tiger Triumph is scheduled on the Eastern Seaboard from 18 to 31 March 2024.

Aspect	Details
Exercise Name	Bilateral Tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise
Participating Countries	India and the United States
Objective	To enhance interoperability for conducting HADR operations and refine Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to facilitate rapid and smooth coordination between the armed forces of both nations.
Harbour Phase	Scheduled from March 18 to March 25, 2024
Activities during Harbour Phase	Training Visits, Subject Matter Expert Exchanges, Sports Events, and Social Interactions
Sea Phase	Following the Harbour Phase, ships with troops embarked will engage in Maritime, Amphibious, and HADR operations in response to simulated scenarios.
Indian Participants	Indian Navy Ships with integral helicopters and landing crafts, Indian Navy aircraft, Indian Army personnel and vehicles, Indian Air Force aircraft and helicopters, and the Rapid Action Medical Team (RAMT) will take part.
US Participants	US Navy Ships with embarked troops from the US Marine Corps and US Army will represent the United States.

IMT TRILATERAL EXERCISE



INS Tir and INS Sujata will participate in the forthcoming edition of India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) TriLateral (TRILAT) Exercise.

Date	Activity	Location
21-24 Mar	Harbour Phase: Planning Conference and Joint Training Activities	Zanzibar (Tanzania)
		Maputo (Mozambique)
25-29 Mar	Sea Phase: Countering Asymmetric Threats, VBSS, Boat Handling, etc.	Offshore

- In 2022, India started the first edition of the Trilateral Maritime Exercise with Tanzania and Mozambique to enhance maritime cooperation in the region.
- The possibility of increasing maritime domain awareness exists through cooperation with the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar.

REUSABLE LANDING VEHICLE (RLV) LEX 02



About Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02

- This landing experiment is the second in the series conducted at the Aeronautical Test Range.
- Following the success of the RLV-LEX-01 mission last year, RLV-LEX-02 demonstrated the **autonomous landing capability of a reusable launch vehicle (RLV) from off-nominal initial conditions** upon release from a helicopter.

Experiment Conducted

- The RLV LEX-02 mission demonstrated **the autonomous landing capability of the reusable launch vehicle** from challenging initial conditions post-release from a helicopter.
- Named Pushpak, the winged vehicle was lifted by an **Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter and released from an altitude of 4.5 km.**
- It autonomously approached the runway with cross-range corrections and landed precisely, using its brake parachute, landing gear brakes, and nose wheel steering system to come to a halt.
- The winged body and all flight systems utilized in RLV-LEX-01 were reused in the RLV-LEX-02 mission after receiving necessary certification and clearances.

Mission Accomplishment

- The mission was executed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) in collaboration with the Liquid Propulsion System Centre (LPSC) and the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU).

ICGS SAMUDRA PAHEREDAR



External Affairs recently visited ICGS Samudra Paheredar in Manila Bay, Philippines, as part of an overseas deployment to ASEAN countries.

Aspect	Details
Length	94.10 meters
Displacement	4,300 tons at maximum displacement
Propulsion	Twin 3,000-kilowatt diesel engines, enhanced by twin shaft generators
Maximum Speed	21 knots
Endurance	6,500 nautical miles at an economical speed, capable of staying at sea for 20 days
Primary Role	Pollution response at sea, equipped with advanced pollution response and control equipment
Equipment	Includes hi-sprint booms, river booms, skimmers, and side sweeping arms for oil spill mitigation
Oil Recovery Capacity	502 kilolitres storage capacity for unhindered oil-recovery operations
Special Features	Integrated platform management system, power management system, high-powered external firefighting system
Helicopter Capacity	Capable of operating one twin-engine ALH/Chetak helicon

INDIA-EFTA TRADE AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT



- India and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) have signed a **Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)**, marking India's first **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** with four developed nations in Europe.
- India and EFTA nations (Switzerland, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein) signed a landmark Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement. It promises \$100 billion investment, 1 million jobs in 15 years.
- This agreement offers significant economic opportunities and promotes free trade and economic integration.

INSURANCE REGULATOR IRDAI RETAINS LIC, GIC RE, NEW INDIA ASSURANCE AS D-SIIs



- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has designated three insurers as **Domestic Systemically Important Insurers (D-SIIs)** for the year 2023-24.
- These insurers are **Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC)**, **General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC Re)**, and **New India Assurance Co Ltd.**
- D-SIIs are insurers of significant size and market importance whose distress or failure could disrupt the domestic financial system.
- D-SIIs are considered **"too big or too important to fail" (TBTF)**, necessitating additional regulatory measures to address systemic risks and moral hazard issues.
- Key regulatory measures for D-SIIs include enhanced corporate governance standards to ensure robustness and transparency in their operations, as well as intensified regulatory scrutiny to mitigate risks and ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

INDIA WORLD'S TOP ARMS IMPORTER BETWEEN 2019-23: SIPRI



- According to the latest data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the world's top arms importer for the period 2019-2023, with a 4.7% increase compared to the previous period. Russia remained India's main supplier, but its share of India's arms imports was less than half for the first time since 1960-1964.
- Nine out of the ten biggest arms importers in 2019-2023 were from Asia, Oceania, or the Middle East. Ukraine became the fourth-largest arms importer globally, receiving major arms transfers from over 30 states.
- European countries saw a significant 94% increase in arms imports between 2014-2018 and 2019-2023, likely influenced by the ongoing war in Ukraine. The demand for air defense systems in Europe has also increased due to Russia's missile campaign against Ukraine.
- The United States remains the world's largest arms supplier, with a 17% growth in arms exports between 2014-2018 and 2019-2023. France emerged as the world's second-largest arms supplier, with a 47% growth in exports.

INDIA JUMPS 14 RANKS ON GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX 2022

- India has made significant progress in bridging the gender divide, as per the Human Development Report 2023-2024 released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



- India has improved its ranking by 14 positions on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022 compared to the previous year. In the GII 2022, India ranked 108 out of 193 countries, with a score of 0.437. This marks a significant improvement from the 2021 ranking of 122 out of 191 countries, with a score of 0.490.
- Over the past decade, India's rank in the GII has consistently improved, indicating steady progress towards achieving gender equality.
- The Gender Inequality Index (GII) is a composite measure that evaluates gender inequality across three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation.
- It takes into account indicators such as maternal mortality ratio, adolescent birth rate, percentage of parliamentary seats held by women, population with secondary education by gender, and labor force participation by gender.
- India has made remarkable progress in human development since 1990, with increases in life expectancy, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, and per-capita gross national income (GNI).

"A DECADE OF SCIENCE - TECHNOLOGY PANORAMA FOR AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT" - REPORT LAUNCHED

- The "A Decade of Science - Technology Panorama for AtmaNirbhar Bharat" report was revealed by Dr. Jitendra Singh at Vigyan Bhavan, highlighting strides in science and tech over the past decade.
- Comprehensive overview of India's technological advancements over the past decade.



- Initiatives aimed at systematic capability building and pushing the frontiers of research for future preparedness.
- Enabling research and development in areas of national priorities and aligning scientific endeavors with developmental goals.
- Showcasing the impact of technological advancements on the lives of citizens and contributing to socio-economic development.
- Progress and achievements in key sectors including Energy, Exploration, Public Service, Agriculture, Livestock, Biotechnology, and Health.
- Assessment of the impact of science on India's socio-economic objectives, beyond traditional metrics like papers and patents.
- India's emergence as a global leader in science and technology, highlighting achievements and contributions on the international stage.
- Emphasis on the importance of industry-government partnerships in driving innovation and success in key national missions.

INDIA 'ONE OF THE WORST AUTOCRATISERS': V-DEM REPORT ON DEMOCRACY



- The V-Dem Institute's Democracy Report 2024 highlights India's descent into electoral autocracy since 2018, with a decline in freedom of expression, media independence, civil liberties, and attacks on civil society and opposition.
- India's transition to an electoral autocracy signifies a departure from robust democratic principles, with

multiparty elections coexisting amidst significant deficiencies in fundamental rights and electoral integrity.

- Historical parallels are drawn to the authoritarian measures witnessed during the state of emergency in 1975 under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.
- It reveals that in 2023, 42 countries experienced autocratization, with 71% of the world's population residing in autocracies.
- Eastern Europe and South Central Asia witnessed the sharpest decline in democracy, while Latin America and the Caribbean showed positive trends. Freedom of expression, clean elections, and freedom of association/civil society emerged as the most affected components in autocratizing countries.
- Out of 60 countries holding elections in 2024, more than half were experiencing democratic decline, indicating a concerning trend in electoral integrity and democratic health.

INDIA RANKED 134 OUT OF 193 COUNTRIES ON UNITED NATIONS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX FOR 2022



- India's position in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) for 2022 improved slightly, ranking 134 out of 193 countries with an HDI value of 0.644.
- India experienced a significant increase in its HDI value between 1990 and 2022, reflecting advancements in life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita.
- India has shown progress in reducing gender inequality, ranking 108 out of 166 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022. However, there remains a significant gender gap in the labour force participation rate.
- India's neighbours vary in their human development achievements, with Sri Lanka and China ranked higher in the HDI index, while Nepal and Pakistan have lower rankings.

INDIA RANKS 62ND ON THE DHL CONNECTEDNESS INDEX



- **India's position on the DHL Global Connectedness Index** has risen from 67th in 2022 to **62nd in 2023**, highlighting its increasing significance in the global economy.
- Singapore, the Netherlands, and Ireland are the most connected countries globally, indicating their robust participation in international trade and commerce.
- Europe is the most globally connected region, followed by North America, the Middle East (West Asia), and North Africa.
- There is a global rise in corporate globalization, with more companies expanding their international presence and generating higher revenues from overseas markets.
- **India ranks 9th globally in the breadth of its merchandise trade, showcasing its extensive reach in international import-export activities.**

WMO REPORT HIGHLIGHTS RECORD-BREAKING CLIMATE CHANGE INDICATORS IN 2023



- The **WMO's 2023 report** reveals record-high greenhouse gas levels, surface temperatures, ocean heat, acidification, sea-level rise, and glacier retreat.

- **Greenhouse gas levels**, including carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide, reached record-high levels in 2023, exceeding pre-industrial levels by significant margins.
- **Surface temperatures in 2023** were the warmest on record, surpassing previous record years by a considerable margin. The past nine years (2015-2023) ranked as the warmest on record.
- **Global glaciers** experienced a significant loss in mass balance, particularly in western North America and Europe. Switzerland's glaciers lost around 10% of their remaining volume in two years.
- **Ocean acidification continued to worsen**, reaching its lowest levels in at least 26,000 years. This poses severe threats to marine ecosystems, biodiversity, habitats, and fisheries.
- **Ocean heat content in 2023** reached unprecedented levels, with the highest amount of heat stored in the oceans.

BIHAR'S BEGUSARAI, 'WORLD'S MOST POLLUTED CITY IN 2023'; INDIA RANKS 3RD GLOBALLY: SWISS REPORT



- The city of **Begusarai in Bihar, India**, is ranked as the **most polluted city in the world**, according to the **World Air Quality Report 2023**.
- Out of the top 100 most polluted places globally, 83 are from India. Guwahati is the second most polluted city, followed by Delhi and Mullanpur.
- **India ranks third among the five most polluted countries**, with a PM2.5 level of 54.4 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which is more than 10 times higher than the WHO annual guideline.
- The South Asia region, including India, is the most impacted region with the top 10 most polluted cities worldwide. Climate conditions and trans-boundary haze contribute to rising PM2.5 levels in South-East Asia.
- **French Polynesia has the cleanest air**, while **Bangladesh and Pakistan are the most polluted countries**. Africa remains the most under-represented continent in terms of access to air quality data.

WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2024: FINLAND TOPS HAPPINESS RANKINGS FOR 7TH YEAR, AFGHANISTAN RANKS LAST



- The **World Happiness Report** is an annual survey conducted by the United Nations, ranking countries based on factors like life satisfaction, GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption.
- **Finland** has been named the **happiest country in the world for the seventh year in a row**, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden.
- **Afghanistan is ranked as the unhappiest country** due to the humanitarian crisis it has been facing since the Taliban regained control in 2020.
- **India ranked 126 in the happiness index**, with factors like marital status, social engagement, physical health, and satisfaction with living arrangements influencing life satisfaction among older Indians.

HURUN RESEARCH INSTITUTE REPORT: MUMBAI BEATS BEIJING TO EMERGE AS THE NEW BILLIONAIRE HUB OF ASIA



- **Mumbai has overtaken Beijing** as **Asia's billionaire capital**, with 92 billionaires, reflecting India's rising prominence in global wealth distribution.
- The **Hurun rich list** includes **3,279 individuals from 73 countries**, highlighting the global distribution of wealth.
- The report's rankings are based on individuals' shareholdings in listed entities as of January 15, with wealth valuation derived from comparisons with listed equivalents for non-listed companies.

EMPLOYMENT SCENARIO IN INDIA GRIM, SAYS ILO REPORT



- The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** in collaboration with the **Institute of Human Development (IHD)** has released the '**India Employment Report 2024**', shedding light on the challenges faced by the Indian job market as the financial year comes to a close.
- **Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran** unveiled the report, which outlines significant shifts in employment patterns and trends in education levels among the unemployed, spanning two decades up to 2022.

India and The World

INDIA AND DOMINICAN REPUBLIC SIGN PROTOCOL FOR JOINT ECONOMIC AND TRADE COMMITTEE



- India and Dominican Republic signed Protocol for the **establishment of the Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO)** between India and the Dominican Republic.
- The agreement for the establishment of JETCO was approved after **25 years of diplomatic relations** between the two countries, representing a significant milestone in **enhancing the current economic and commercial ties**.
- **Aims:**
 - ♦ To **enhance and advance collaboration in trade, services, industrial technology, and other sectors** through technical assistance, training programmes, and capacity building initiatives.
- It will address the issues encountered by the trade and industry sectors, while also **facilitating the exchange of knowledge and best practices** between the two nations.
- India's **main source of gold imports is the Dominican Republic**, whereas a **significant portion of its exports** includes pharmaceuticals, maritime items, motor cars, and two and three wheelers.

INDIA, BRAZIL HOLD FIRST '2+2' DEFENCE AND FOREIGN MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE



- India and Brazil conducted their first '**2+2**' **defence and foreign ministerial dialogue**.
- They expanded cooperation in **areas of energy, critical minerals, technology and counter-terrorism**.
- **About 2+2 Dialogue:**
 - ♦ The '**2+2**' **defence and foreign ministerial dialogue** involves the participation of the **defence and foreign ministers of two countries**, along with their respective counterparts, to discuss strategic and security-related issues, as well as diplomatic matters.
- India has conducted '**2+2**' dialogues with the following countries: **the US, Australia, Japan, and Russia**.

INDIAN FIRM TO BUILD SRI LANKA POWER PROJECT



- Sri Lanka **Sustainable Energy Authority**, the Government of Sri Lanka, and Indian company **U-Solar Clean Energy Solutions** signed the contract for building **“Hybrid Renewable Energy Systems” in Delft or Neduntheevu, Nainativu and Analaitivu islands** off Jaffna peninsula in the island’s north.
- After previously expressing opposition to a **Chinese energy initiative in northern Sri Lanka**, which is located just 50 km away from Tamil Nadu, India is now planning to carry out a hybrid power project in three islands near the Jaffna peninsula. This project will be funded by a \$11-million grant.
- The process involves the **creation of hybrid renewable energy systems**, which integrate several energy sources such as solar, wind, battery power, and standby diesel power systems.
- The project seeks to meet the energy requirements of the residents of the three islands. The system comprises **530 kilowatts (kW) of wind power, 1,700 kW of solar power, 2,400 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of battery power, and a 2,500 kW** standby diesel power system.

MOU and Agreements

INDIA AND NICARAGUA SIGNS HISTORIC MOU ON PHARMACOPOEIA RECOGNITION



- India and Central American nation Nicaragua signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Pharmacopoeia on **Cooperation in the field of the regulation of medicines**.
- In this regard, Nicaragua has become the first country in the Spanish speaking world to recognise Indian Pharmacopoeia.

What is Pharmacopoeia?

- A pharmacopoeia is a **book containing directions for the identification of compound medicines**, and published by the authority of a government or a medical or pharmaceutical society.
- Descriptions of preparations are called **monographs**.
- In a broader sense it is a **reference work for pharmaceutical drug specifications**.

About Indian Pharmacopoeia

- Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission is an autonomous institution of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** which sets standards for all drugs that are manufactured, sold and consumed in India.
- Its basic function is to **update regularly the standards of drugs commonly required for treatment of diseases** prevailing in this region. It publishes official documents **for improving Quality of Medicines** by way of adding new and updating existing monographs in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).

RBI SIGNS MOU WITH BANK INDONESIA



- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Bank Indonesia (BI) entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the aim of facilitating the **adoption of domestic currencies** for bilateral transactions.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed in order to develop a framework aimed at **promoting the effective use of local currencies**, namely the Indian rupee and the Indonesian rupiah, for cross-border transactions.
- This framework **facilitates the ability of exporters and importers** to generate invoices and make payments in their respective native currencies, hence fostering the establishment of a foreign exchange market between the **Indian Rupee (INR)** and the **Indonesian Ringgit (IDR)**.

INDIA AND SINGAPORE TO COLLABORATE ON LAW AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION



- India and Singapore signed a **Memorandum of Understanding on Law and Dispute Resolution** at the 10th India-South Korea Joint Commission Meeting (JCM).
- India aims to **broaden its strategic alliance with South Korea** by venturing into fresh domains such as critical and **emerging technologies, semiconductors, and green hydrogen**, in order to enhance the modernity of the bilateral relations.

CBI, EUROPOL SIGN WORKING ARRANGEMENT FOR COOPERATIVE RELATIONS



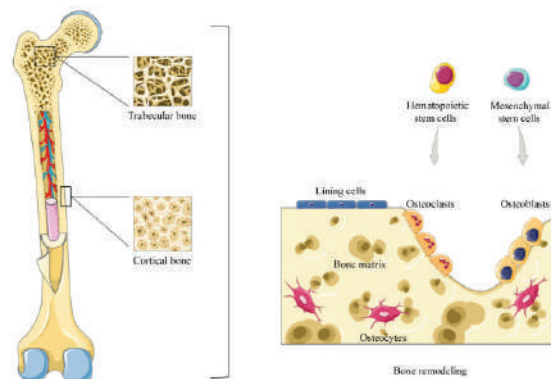
- The **Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)** and **European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)** signed a Working Arrangement for **establishing cooperative relations** between the law **enforcement authorities** of these two organisations.
- It promotes direct cooperation between both organizations to build on their respective mandates, strategies and to **explore the potential for synergies**.
- It will enable **wide cooperation between all law enforcement agencies in India and all law enforcement agencies of 27 European countries** that Europol represents as well as third countries and organizations associated with Europol.
- This will enhance cooperation in **jointly tackling various forms of crime** including organized crime, financial crimes, **terrorism, cybercrime, human and drug trafficking and money laundering**.

IIT KANPUR SIGNS MOU WITH CANADA'S CONLIS



- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been entered into by the **Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur** and **Conlis Global Inc.** for the purpose of **licencing a revolutionary technology for bone repair and regeneration**.
- Conlis Global is a biotechnology company headquartered in Canada that facilitates the transition of products from the research and development phase to the commercial market.

About Bone Repair and Regeneration



- Bone repair and regeneration are **crucial processes in the field of regenerative medicine**, especially for conditions like **bone fractures, osteoporosis, and skeletal abnormalities**.
- These processes involve a series of well-orchestrated events, including **inflammation, bone production, and bone remodeling**.
- Stem cells, particularly **Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSCs)**, play a significant role in bone repair due to their self-renewal, multi-potentiality, and immune-modulatory effects.

SUPREME COURT ORDERS COMPENSATION FOR ARMY NURSE FIRED OVER MARRIAGE

- Describing it as a clear instance of gender bias, the Supreme Court has instructed the Centre to **provide a compensation of ₹60 lakh to a military nurse** who was dismissed from her position in 1988 due to her marriage.
- The highest court ruled that the discharge of **Lt. Selina John from the Military Nursing Service (MNS)** was unlawful.

About the Case

- Selina John was selected for Military Nursing Service in 1982 and joined as a trainee at Army Hospital, Delhi.
- Former permanent commissioned officer Lt. Selina John, of the MNS, was released from employment in 1988 on grounds of her marriage under Army Instruction No. 61 of 1977 titled "Terms and Conditions of Service for the Grant of Permanent Commissions in the Military Nursing Service" – was later withdrawn by a letter dated August 29, 1995.
- She approached the **Armed Forces Tribunal, Regional Bench, Lucknow**, which called the **termination "illegal"** and directed her reinstatement with back wages.
- However, the Central government then moved the SC to challenge this order (**'Union of India & Others vs. Ex. Lt. Selina John'**).
- **Cases when SC acted in favour of women officers in the military:** On February 17, 2020, a bench of then Supreme Court Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice Ajay Rastogi upheld the demands of women in the SSC (**'Secretary, Ministry of Defence vs. Babita Puniya'**). The court said that seeking a Permanent Commission or a full-length career was **"justified"**.

What is Military Nursing Service?

- The MNS is an **integral part of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)**, which includes the Army Medical Corps (AMC) and Army Dental Corps (ADC). AFMS personnel serve in India's medical establishments and its officers have played a role in United Nations peacekeeping missions abroad.

- MNS members have been serving the nation, including in extremely difficult situations like unfavourable weather conditions at high altitudes.

ASSAM DECIDES TO REPEAL MUSLIM MARRIAGES ACT

- Prior to the legislation similar to Uttarakhand's bill on the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), the Assam government has repealed the **Assam Muslim Marriages and Divorces Registration Act of 1935**.
- The act was enacted in 1935, the Act lays down the process for registration of Muslim marriages and divorces. A 2010 amendment replaced the **word 'voluntary' in the original Act with 'compulsory'**, making registration of Muslim marriages and divorces compulsory in the state of Assam.
- The law established an unofficial procedure for **registering marriages**, which created the possibility of abuse by kazis (officials registered with the government who are responsible for performing marriages).
- It was claimed that the decision will help the **government prevent child marriages in the state**.

PRESS AND REGISTRATION OF PERIODICALS ACT 2023 COMES INTO EFFECT

- The registration of periodicals shall be governed by the provisions of the **Press and Registration of Periodicals Act (PRP Act), 2023** and the Press and Registration of Periodicals Rules.
- The **office of Press Registrar General of India – PRGI** (erstwhile Registrar of Newspapers for India - RNI) will carry out the purposes of the new Act.
- The Act provides for an **online system for facilitating the registration** of newspapers and other periodicals in the country.
- The Act defines a periodical as **"any publication including a newspaper** which is published and printed at regular intervals containing public news or comments on public news but does not include a book or a journal of scientific, technical, and academic nature".
- Therefore, **"book, or a journal including a book or journal of scientific, technical and academic nature"** does not require registration with PRGI.

About Press Sewa Portal

- Minister of Information and Broadcasting, had launched the **Press Sewa Portal (presssewa.prgi.gov.in)**, the online portal of the Press Registrar General, for receiving various applications as mandated by the new Act.
- Online applications through the portal will include:
 - All for the intimation by the printer of a periodical,
 - application for registration** of facsimile edition of a foreign periodical,
 - application by a publisher for obtaining a certificate of registration of a periodical, application for revision of certificate of registration,
 - application for transfer of ownership of periodicals,
 - furnishing annual statement by the publisher of a periodical, and
 - procedure for desk audit for **verification of circulation of a periodical**.
- The Press Sewa Portal ensures **paperless processing and offers services**.
- All applications for registration of periodicals shall be made in online mode through the Press Sewa Portal only.

CROSS-VOTING IN RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS



- The Rajya Sabha elections were held in the States of **Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka**.
- It witnessed cross-voting by MLAs belonging to different parties which has raised concerns about the sanctity of the election process.
- Article 80 of the Indian Constitution** states that Rajya Sabha members are indirectly elected by state legislators.
- Traditionally, **Rajya Sabha elections witnessed minimal contention** but the trend shifted in 1998 when cross voting incidents began to surface, indicating a change in political strategies.



THE SUPREME COURT OVERTURNED ITS RULING IN JMM (JHARKHAND MUKTI MORCHA) BRIBERY CASE OF 1998

- The Supreme Court ruled that **lawmakers are not protected from being charged with bribery** for their actions and statements made in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies.
- The SC has overruled its own 1998 judgement in *P V Narasimha Rao v State (CBI/Spe)*, where a five-judge bench, in a 3-2 verdict, held that legislators were immune from prosecution for taking such bribes.

About the Case

- Ajoy Mukhopadhyay of the CPI(M) presented a Lok Sabha no-confidence motion against Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao on July 26, 1993, amid economic and political turmoil. Rao's Congress party had 251 MPs, 13 short of a majority in the 528-member Lok Sabha. The motion failed by 265 votes to 251 on the day of the vote, keeping Rao and Congress in power.
- Later it emerged that **Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MPs had accepted massive bribes from Rao** to vote against the no-confidence motion.
- As the matter went to Supreme Court, Justice Barucha and Justice Rajendra Babu, held that the bribe takers who cast their vote against the no-confidence motion were immune from criminal prosecution under **Article 105(2)**.

What is Article 105

- Article 105(2) of the Constitution states: **"No member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in the Legislature or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of a House of such a Legislature of any report, paper, votes or proceedings"**.

CHAKSHU FACILITY AND THE DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM (DIP)

- **Department of Telecommunications (DoT) two portals:** Chakshu Facility and the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) was launched.



- 'Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)' for coordination among the stakeholders to curb misuse of telecom resources in **cyber-crime and financial frauds**, and 'Chakshu (चक्षु)' facility on **Sanchar Saathi portal** (<https://sancharsaathi.gov.in>), a pioneering initiative empowering citizens to proactively report suspected fraud communication.

About Chakshu (चक्षु) facility on Sanchar Saathi portal

- **Chakshu (चक्षु)** is the latest addition to the **citizen centric facilities** already available on the Sanchar Saathi portal of DoT.
- 'Chakshu' facilitates citizens to **report suspected fraud communication received** over call, SMS or WhatsApp with the intention of defrauding like KYC expiry or update of bank account / payment wallet / SIM / gas connection / electricity connection, sextortion, impersonation as government official / relative for sending money, disconnection of all mobile numbers by **Department of Telecommunications** etc.
- In case, a citizen is already a victim of cyber-crime or financial fraud, it is **advised to report at cyber-crime helpline number 1930** or website <https://www.cybercrime.gov.in> of Government of India.

About Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP)

- Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) developed by the **Department of Telecommunications** is a secure and integrated platform for **real time intelligence sharing**, information exchange and coordination among the stakeholders i.e. Telecom Service Providers (TSPs), law enforcement agencies (LEAs), banks and financial institutions (FIs), social media platforms, identity document issuing authorities etc.
- It contains information regarding the cases detected as misuse of telecom resources. The shared information

could be useful to the stakeholders in their respective domains.

- **Work as:** backend repository for the **citizen-initiated requests on the Sanchar Saathi portal** for action by the stakeholders.
- **Accessible:** Stakeholders over secure connectivity and the relevant information is shared based on their respective roles. Platform is not accessible to citizens.

SPECIAL COVER RELEASED TO COMMEMORATE SUCCESSFUL JOURNEY OF 2ND PHASE OF DAK KARMAYOGI PROJECT

- The Department of Posts, Government of India released of a Special Cover commemorating successful journey of Dak Karmayogi Project.

About Dak Karmayogi Project

- The Dak Karmayogi is an **e-learning platform to enhance the competencies of about 4 lakh Gramin Dak Sevaks** and Postal Department employees.
- This portal has been developed '**In-House**' under the vision of Mission Karmayogi.
- Dak Karmayogi' portal aims to **enhance the competencies of about 4 lakh Gramin Dak Sevaks** & Departmental employees by enabling the trainees to access the **uniform standardized training content online** or in blended campus mode to enable them to effectively deliver a number of G2C services for enhanced customer satisfaction.

HOLISTIC PROGRESS CARD LAUNCHED BY NCERT



- The **Holistic Progress Card (HPC)** has been developed by **PARAKH**, the national assessment regulator established under the National Council for Educational and Research Training (NCERT).
- The objective of the HPC is to **synchronise and enhance diverse proficiencies** among students in schools. These competencies have been specifically developed to foster the whole development of school students.
- The **new assessment format will measure progress in interpersonal relationships, self-reflection,**

creativity, communication skills and emotional intelligence in classrooms.

- The High-Performance Computing (HPC) has been suggested as a potential substitute for conventional school report cards.
- PARAKH is now engaged in the **digitization of the assessment process**, with the aim of providing schools, students, and parents with convenient access to the HPC.

About PARAKH

- PARAKH has been set up as the **organisation under NCERT**.
- PARAKH will act as a common platform for interaction of all concerned stakeholders in order to **develop a holistic approach** that ensures a fair assessment system which promotes equity in performance and equivalence in assessment of students.



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA NOTIFIED CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT RULES



- The **notification of the Rules under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA-2019)** will be issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- The Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 will facilitate the process of granting Indian citizenship to

those who meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the Citizenship Act of 2019.

- The **CAA, 2019 is an Indian law that provides a path to Indian citizenship** for migrants belonging to six religious minorities: **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian** from **Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan**.
- An illegal immigrant entered India without legitimate travel documentation or exceeds the allowed duration, perhaps subject to legal action, expulsion, or imprisonment are illegal immigrants.
- Individuals belonging to these specific communities who **migrated to India on or prior to December 31, 2014**, would not be classified as undocumented immigrants, hence presenting an opportunity for the process of naturalisation. However, it exempts the Muslim community.
- The amendments however, for illegal migrants will not apply to **certain tribal (under Sixth Schedule) areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura**, as well as states regulated by the "Inner Line" permit under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations 1873.

NITI AAYOG LAUNCHED 'NITI FOR STATES' PLATFORM

- Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Minister of Communications, Railways, and Electronics & Information Technology, launched the **'NITI for States'** platform, a **comprehensive digital initiative designed to empower states and union territories (UTs)** in their pursuit of national development goals.
- NITI for States offers a **centralised repository of valuable resources**, including best practices, policy documents, datasets, and **NITI Aayog publications**, spanning various sectors and cross-cutting themes like gender and climate change.
- Its **user-friendly interface ensures inclusivity** and empower officials across diverse regions to effectively utilise the platform's extensive knowledge base.



DIGITAL CRIMINAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CCMS) PLATFORM



- A unique digital **Criminal Case Management System (CCMS)**, designed by the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** was launched.
- NIA's 2 new branch offices in **Jammu and Kochi** and a residential complex in Raipur was also launched.
- A **mobile app 'Sankalan'** – A compendium of **New Criminal Laws by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** was also launched.

About Criminal Case Management System (CCMS)

- The newly developed Criminal Case Management System will enable the **NIA personnel to better coordinate in terrorism and organized crime cases**, thereby improving justice delivery.
- The new stand-alone version of CCMS has been **developed by NIA as a user-friendly and easy-to-deploy**, customizable, browser-based software to help the State Police forces in their investigations and prosecution.
- The system will **organise, integrate and digitalise the data generated during investigations**, such as case documents, extracted data, collected evidence, and the charge sheets presented to the court.

About Sankalp App

- Sankalan app has been designed for **navigating through new criminal laws as a bridge between old and new criminal laws**.
- This app will work as a comprehensive guide for all stakeholders.
- It will work in offline mode as well and its availability has been ensured in far-flung areas so that all stakeholders can have access to desired information around the clock.

Schemes in news

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LAUNCHES ADITI SCHEME



- Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh launched **Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI)** scheme to promote innovations in **critical and strategic defence technologies**.
- The start-ups are eligible to receive grant-in-aid of up to **₹25 crore** for their **research, development**, and innovation endeavours in defence technology.
- **Cost:** ₹750 crore for the period 2023-24 to 2025-26.
- **Under:** iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) framework of Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence.
- **Aims:** To develop about **30 deep-tech critical and strategic technologies** in the proposed time frame.
- It also envisages to create a **'Technology Watch Tool'** to bridge the gap between the expectations and requirements of the modern Armed Forces and the capabilities of the defence innovation ecosystem
- In the **first edition of ADITI, 17 challenges** – Indian Army (3), Indian Navy (5), Indian Air Force (5) and Defence Space Agency (4) - have been launched.

DEFENCE INDIA START-UP CHALLENGE

- The Defence India Start-up Challenge witnessed the launch of the **11th edition of Defence India Start-up**

Challenge (DISC), beginning a new chapter in the **collaboration between the defence establishment and the start-up ecosystem**.



- The **DISC 11** introduces **22 problem statements** - Indian Army (4), Indian Navy (5), Indian Air Force (5), Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited (7) and Hindustan Shipyard Limited (1) - aimed at **addressing critical defence challenges, inviting innovators to propose innovative solutions** that can enhance the country's defence capabilities and contribute to national security.

INDIRA GANDHI PYARI BEHNA SUKH SAMMAN NIDHI YOJNA BY HIMACHAL PRADESH GOVERNMENT

- Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu launched **Indira Gandhi Pyari Behna Sukh Samman Nidhi Yojna**.
- Under the scheme, the government will give Rs 1,500 per month to women in the age group of **18 to 60 years** from the 2024-25 financial year.

CABINET APPROVES UTTAR POORVA TRANSFORMATIVE INDUSTRIALIZATION SCHEME, 2024

- The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister of India approved the proposal of the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade for **Uttar Poorva Transformative Industrialization Scheme, 2024 (UNNATI - 2024)**.



**DEPARTMENT FOR PROMOTION OF
INDUSTRY AND INTERNAL TRADE
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

- This will be a Central Sector Scheme which is aimed at developing industries and generating employment in the North East Region, seeks to **create productive economic activity in manufacturing and services**.
- **Objective:** to generate gainful employment, leading to the overall **socio-economic development of the region**.
- It is set to be **effective from the date of notification and will run until March 31, 2034**, inclusive of eight years of committed liabilities.
- **Cost:** The financial outlay of the proposed scheme is **₹10,037 crore** for the scheme period from the date of notification for **10 years**. (Additional 8 years for committed liabilities).
- The scheme is proposed to be divided into two parts:
 - ♦ **Part, A** caters to the incentives to the eligible units (₹9737 crores)
 - ♦ **Part B**, is for implementation and institutional arrangements for the scheme. (₹300 Crore).
- DPIIT will implement the scheme in **cooperation with the states**.
- Implementation will be overseen by following committees at the national and state levels:
 - The Steering Committee
 - State Level Committee
 - Secretary Level Committee

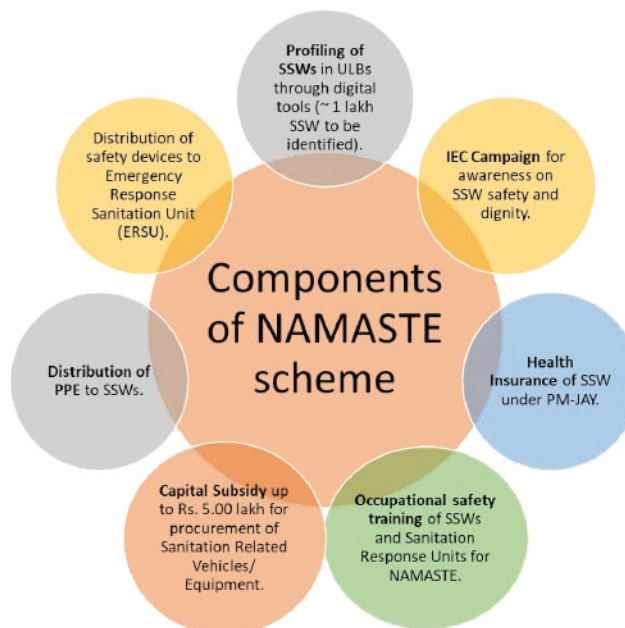
THE NATIONAL ACTION FOR MECHANIZED SANITATION ECOSYSTEM (NAMASTE SCHEME)

- The **National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem or the NAMASTE Scheme** is a testament to the Government's human-centric approach where **no sanitation workers have to manually engage in the hazardous task of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations**.
- Jointly initiated by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** and the **Ministry of Housing and**

Urban Affairs.



- The NAMASTE scheme will be implemented by the **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)**.
- **Period:** **Three years** from FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26.
- **Cost:** **349.73 crores**.
- The scheme has a range of entitlements for Sewer and septic tank workers or the SSWs.
- The SSW will be profiled through a **digital application and will be provided with PPE kits, access to safety devices, occupational safety training**, health insurance coverage and livelihood opportunities in the sanitation sector through subsidized sanitation-related vehicles/machinery.
- Through proper capacity building they will be encouraged to take up their own **sanitation enterprise (sanipreneur)**.
- Over a lakh SSWs will be profiled across 4800 Urban Local Bodies in India.



'MAHTARI VANDANA YOJANA' SCHEME LAUNCHED IN CHHATTISGARH



- The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the **Mahatari Vandana Yojana**, to provide **financial assistance to the women of Chhattisgarh**.
- PM Modi disbursed the first installment under the Scheme and boosted women empowerment in the state.
- The scheme has been launched in Chhattisgarh to **provide financial assistance of Rs 1000 per month to eligible married women** of the state as monthly **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)**.
- It has been envisioned to ensure economic empowerment of women, provide them financial security, promote gender equality and strengthen the decisive role of women in the family.
- **Beneficiaries:** All eligible married women of the state who are **above 21 years of age as of January 1, 2024**. **Widows, divorced, and deserted women will also be eligible for this scheme.**
- Around **70 lakh women will benefit** from the scheme.

PLI SCHEME FOR PENICILLIN G PRODUCTION



- After a 30-year break, India will **resume the production of the narrow spectrum antibiotic benzylpenicillin** or Penicillin G.
- Production of PenG, used to **treat tetanus, strep infections, syphilis, pneumonia & more.**

- Its production was **stopped in India in the 1990s after cheaper alternatives** like paracetamol began to be available in global market.
- Its production is set to resume under the central government's **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** scheme that was launched to promote domestic manufacturing.

What is Penicillin G?

- Penicillin G is a penicillin **beta-lactam antibiotic used in the treatment of bacterial infections.**
- They work by killing the bacteria or preventing their growth.

About PLI Scheme

- The PLI scheme aims to aid the **biomedical and pharmaceutical industry** by providing financial support for incremental sales by companies for more than five years.
- The budget for the scheme is **₹3,420 crore for the years 2020 to 2028.**
- The PLI scheme for bulk drugs:
 - ♦ It will lead to **reduced import dependence** and better supply chain resilience.
 - ♦ **Enhanced bulk drug production** capacity through the PLI scheme positions India to not just become a producer of finished formulations, but also a prominent supplier of raw materials.
 - ♦ It helps **Indian companies develop capabilities and technology** for manufacturing of complex APIs.
- PLI scheme for medical devices:
 - ♦ Medical devices industry is considered as **one of India's sunrise sectors.**
 - ♦ India is amongst world's **fastest emerging Medical Device market.**
- The market for medical device industry in India is currently estimated to be of the size of US\$11 billion and it is expected to cross US\$30 billion mark by 2050.
- Under the scheme, **financial incentive is given to selected companies at the rate of 5% of incremental sales** of medical devices manufactured in India.
- The PLI scheme **encourages manufacturers to invest in R&D activities** to develop innovative products and technologies.

REVAMPED PHARMACEUTICALS TECHNOLOGY UPGRADATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME

- The Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers announced the **Revamped Pharmaceuticals Technology Upgradation Assistance (RPTUAS) Scheme.**



- It aims to **upgrade the technological capabilities of our pharmaceutical industry** and ensure its alignment with the global standards.
- The revised guideline aims to support the pharmaceutical industry's up-gradation to the Revised Schedule-M & WHO-GMP standards, enhancing the quality and safety of pharmaceutical products manufactured in our country.

Key Features of the Revised Scheme

- **Broadened Eligibility Criteria:** Reflecting a more inclusive approach, eligibility for the PTUAS has been expanded beyond Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to **include any pharmaceutical manufacturing unit with a turnover of less than 500 crores** that requires technology and quality upgradation.
- **Flexible Financing Options:** Emphasizing **subsidies on reimbursement basis, over traditional credit-linked approach**. This flexibility is designed to diversify the financing options of the participating units, facilitating a more widespread adoption of the scheme.
- **Comprehensive Support for Compliance with New Standards:** It supports a **broad range of technological upgrades**. Eligible activities include improvements such as HVAC systems, water and steam utilities, testing laboratories, stability chambers, clean room facilities, effluent treatment, waste management etc. ensuring comprehensive support for participating units.
- **Dynamic Incentive Structure:** Pharmaceutical units with the following average turnover for the **last three years will be eligible for incentive subject to a maximum of ₹1.00 crore per unit:**
 - (i) Turnover less than ₹50.00 crore 20% of investment under eligible activities.
 - (ii) Turnover from ₹50.00 crore to less than ₹250.00 crore 15% of investment under eligible activities.
 - (iii) Turnover from ₹250.00 crore to less than ₹500.00 crore 10% of investment under eligible activities.

- **State Government Scheme Integration:** Allows integration with state government schemes, enabling units to benefit from additional top-up assistance. This collaborative approach aims to maximize support for the pharmaceutical industry in their technology upgradation efforts.
- **Enhanced Verification Mechanism:** The scheme introduces a robust verification mechanism through a **Project Management Agency**, ensuring transparency, accountability and the efficient allocation of resources.

NITI AAYOG LAUNCHES 'VOCAL FOR LOCAL' INITIATIVE FOSTERING GRASSROOTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-RELIANCE



- NITI Aayog launched the **'Vocal for Local'** initiative under its **Aspirational Blocks Programme**.
- **Aim:** To encourage a spirit of self-reliance among the populace of Aspirational Blocks, propelling them towards sustainable growth and prosperity.
- Indigenous local products from **500 Aspirational Blocks have been mapped** and consolidated under Aakanksha.
- **Akanksha is an umbrella brand which could be supplemented into multiple sub-brands** that have a potential to create an international market.
- A dedicated window for Aspirational Blocks Programme under the brand name **'Aakanksha' on GeM portal has been established**.
- The partners will also provide technical and operational support for the **facilitation of e-commerce onboarding, establishing linkages**, financial/digital literacy, documentation/certification and skill enhancement among others.

PRASAR BHARTI - SHARED AUDIO VISUALS FOR BROADCAST AND DISSEMINATION (PB-SHABD)



PB-SHARED AUDIO-VISUALS FOR BROADCAST AND DISSEMINATION

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting launched **PB-SHABD**, a news sharing service from **Prasar Bharati** and websites of **DD News** and **Akashvani News** as well as updated News on Air mobile app at an event in National Media Centre, New Delhi.
- PB SHABD platform has been designed to **provide daily news feeds in video, audio, text, photo and other formats** to the subscribers from media landscape.
- The service would provide users with **up-to-date news from various regions of the country**, utilising the extensive network of Prasar Bharati reporters, correspondents, and stringers.



ELECTRIC MOBILITY PROMOTION SCHEME 2024 (EMPS 2024)



- The Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme 2024 is being introduced by **Ministry of Heavy Industries, Government of India** to further accelerate the adoption of EVs in the country.
- This is a fund limited scheme with a total outlay of **₹500 crore** for the period of 4 months from **1st April 2024 till 31st July 2024**.
- It aims to **encourage faster adoption of electric two-wheeler (e-2W) and three-wheeler (e-3W)** and provide further impetus to the green mobility and development of electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing eco-system in the country.
- **Eligible EV categories:**
 - ♦ Two Wheelers (electric) (e-2W)
 - ♦ Three-wheeler (electric) including registered e-rickshaws & e-carts and L5 (e-3W)
- The scheme is applicable mainly to those **e-2W and e-3Ws registered for commercial purposes**.
- Privately or corporate owned registered e-2W will also be eligible under the scheme.
- The Scheme aims to **support 3,72,215 EVs including e-2W (3,33,387) and e-3W (38,828 including 13,590 rickshaws & e-carts and 25,238 e-3W in L5 category)**.
- To encourage advance technologies, the benefits of incentives will be extended to only those vehicles which are fitted with advanced battery.

Summit and Conferences

66TH MEETING OF NETWORK PLANNING GROUP (NPG)

- The 66th session of the Network Planning Group (NPG) convened in New Delhi, chaired by the **Additional Secretary of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade**.
- The meeting assessed three projects from the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)** and two from the **Ministry of Railways (MoR)**.

Feature	Description
Purpose	Responsible for unified planning and integration of proposals related to connectivity infrastructure.
Composition	Headed by Network Planning Division heads from all connectivity infrastructure Ministries & Departments.
Support	Assists the Empowered Group of Secretaries (EGoS) in fulfilling its mandate.
Stakeholder Interaction	Facilitates regular interactions among stakeholders involved in connectivity infrastructure planning.
Guidance	Guides all departments/ministries responsible for creating economic zones and connectivity infrastructure during the planning phase.
Objective Alignment	Adheres to parameters/prescribed norms of the overall National Master Plan, aiming for efficient operation and minimising disruptions in infrastructure projects.
Key Responsibilities	• Integration of networks • Optimisation through modification/expansion/new network creation • Avoidance of duplication of works • Reduction of logistics costs through detailed micro-planning.

“OPEC+ EXTENDS VOLUNTARY OIL OUTPUT CUTS, SPEARHEADED BY SAUDI ARABIA AND RUSSIA, TO BOLSTER PRICES AMID ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY”

- **Saudi Arabia and Russia** are leading the efforts within **OPEC+** to extend voluntary oil output cuts.
- These output cuts were initially announced in 2023.
- The extension aims to support and stabilise oil prices, particularly in response to ongoing economic uncertainty.

Aspect	Description
Purpose	Group of oil-exporting countries that convenes regularly to determine global crude oil sales.
Origin	Formed in late 2016 to establish a cooperative framework between OPEC and non-OPEC nations for oil market stability.
Objective	Collaborative effort to adjust crude oil production levels to stabilize the global oil market.
Market Influence	Controls approximately 40% of global oil supplies and over 80% of proven oil reserves.
Core Members	Primarily consists of OPEC nations, predominantly from the Middle East and Africa.
Additional Members	Includes non-OPEC countries: Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mexico, Malaysia, South Sudan, Sudan, Oman.

GROUP OF FRIENDS (GOF)

- India, as the leader of the **Group of Friends (GOF)** consisting of **40 member** states, called for a meeting to deliberate on strategies to enhance legal frameworks to combat crimes directed at peacekeepers.
- India spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends (GOF) in 2022 during its **presidency of the UN Security Council**.
- The GOF, co-chaired by **India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco, and Nepal**, comprises 40 member states.
- In a recent development, India initiated a new database on the Unite Aware platform to document crimes against peacekeepers and oversee accountability endeavours, highlighting the collective commitment of member states, under India's leadership, to safeguard the well-being and integrity of peacekeepers worldwide.

INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUSLY DEVELOPED HYDROGEN FUEL CELL FERRY

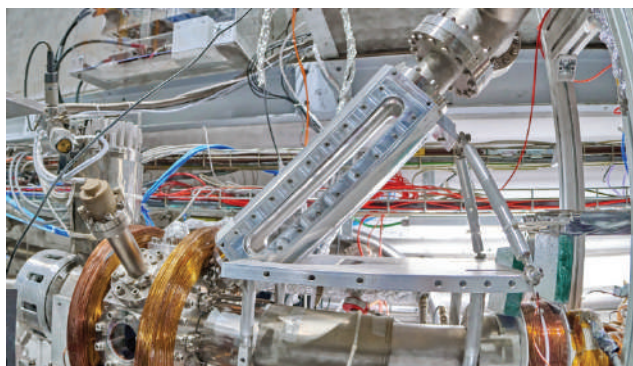


- India's first indigenously made **hydrogen fuel ferry** was virtually inaugurated by PM Modi.
- **Manufactured by:** Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)
- **Deployed for:** service at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Built cost:** Rs 18 crore.
- The ferry will be handed over to the **Inland Waterways Authority of India** by the CSL after rigorous trials.
- The **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways met 75 per cent** of the project cost.
- The vessel is equipped with five hydrogen cylinders capable of containing **40 kg of hydrogen**, enabling it to sustain activities for a duration of eight hours.
- The yacht is equipped with a **3-kilowatt solar panel**.
- This vessel uses a **50-kW PEM (proton-exchange membrane) fuel cell, with Lithium-Ion Phosphate batteries**.
- The hydrogen fuel cell system was developed by **KPIT Technologies, Pune**, in collaboration with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research Labs, under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology.
- The Hydrogen fuel cell vessel is a **24-meter-long catamaran, which can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area**. The accommodation area has been constructed with high-quality fiberglass reinforced plastic, similar to metro train coaches.
- Hydrogen fuel cell vessels **do not rely on traditional batteries** as the main repository of electrical energy.
- The vessels are **powered by hydrogen fuel, which is stored in cylinders**.

Advantages of the Hydrogen Cell Fuel

- The hydrogen fuel cell-powered vessel has **zero emission, zero noise and is energy-efficient**, which makes it more environment-friendly.
- The ferry requires **less maintenance than combustion vessels** as there are no moving parts.

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION OF PHYSICISTS ACHIEVES FIRST SUCCESSFUL LASER COOLED POSITRONIUM



- For the first time, International collaboration of researchers has successfully demonstrated the **laser cooling of Positronium, a short-lived hydrogen-like atom** that provides an ideal testing ground for bound-state quantum electrodynamics.
- **Performed by:** The Antihydrogen Experiment: Gravity, Interferometry, Spectroscopy (**AEGIS**)
- **At:** European Organisation for Nuclear Research (**CERN**).
- **AEGIS is an experiment at CERN** that studies the **effects of gravity on antimatter**.
- The experiment's primary goal is to **directly measure the gravitational acceleration of Earth on antihydrogen**.
- It is a **collaboration between physicists from Europe and India**.

About Positronium

- Positronium, comprising a bound electron (e^-) and positron (e^+), is a **fundamental atomic system**.
- **Positronium is composed of an electron and its antimatter counterpart, a positron.**

- Because of its **extremely short lifespan**, it undergoes **disintegration** with a half-life of 142 nanoseconds.
- The particle has a mass that is **twice the mass of an electron** and is considered a pure leptonic atom, which is a unique characteristic.

FIRST INDIA-SPECIFIC AI MODEL TO DETERMINE THE AGE OF THE FOETUS



- Researchers at **Indian Institute of Technology Madras(IIT Madras)** and **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad** have developed the **first India-specific Artificial Intelligence (AI) model** which aim to **determine the age of a foetus in a pregnant woman in the second and third trimesters precisely**.
- Accurate '**Gestational Age**' (GA) is necessary for the appropriate care of pregnant women and for **determining precise delivery dates**.
- Called '**Garbhini-GA2**', this is the first late-trimester GA estimation model to be **developed and validated using Indian population data**.
- GARBH-Ini is a **flagship programme of DBT**, and the development of these population-specific models for estimating gestational age is a commendable outcome. These models are being validated across the country.
- The **BRIC-THSTI** is an institute under the Biotechnology Research and Innovation Council (BRIC), Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- **Benefits of this GA model are:**
 - ♦ The newly developed 'Garbhini-GA2' **accurately estimates the age of a foetus** for the Indian population, reducing error by almost three times.
 - ♦ It can **improve the care delivered** by obstetricians and neonatologists, thus **reducing maternal and infant mortality rates in India**.

INDIA'S FIRST SEMICONDUCTOR FABRICATION BY TATA GROUP AND TAIWAN

- **Tata Electronics, in collaboration with Powerchip Taiwan**, Taiwanese partner, will establish **India's first Semiconductor manufacturing unit**.
- The unit is scheduled to manufacture its first chip in the **Dholera Special Investment Region (SIR)** by December 2026.
- The unit will get "**100 per cent green power**" and **100 MLD (million litres per day) of water sourced** from the river Narmada.
- Investment cost of the unit is around ₹90,000 crore.
- The chips manufactured at Dholera will serve a wide variety of industries ranging from power electronics to defence electronics.
- The facility will **produce 28, 50 and 55 nanometre chips**.
- The semiconductor unit of **Tata in Assam will be focused on electric vehicles and automobile sector**. "The technology that will be used in India is indigenous
- Two other semiconductor projects namely, the **CG Power project at Sanand** and **Tata Electronics project at Morigaon in Assam** will also be opened.
- Micron Technologies, which is the **first semiconductor producer to set up a base at Sanand in Gujarat**, is expected to manufacture the first chip by December 2024 and the Micron's memory chips will cater to all devices, including mobile phones, laptops and computers. The CG Power's unit and Japan's Renesas Electronics will produce "**highly-specialised chips**" which could be used in satellites, rockets and other niche products.

GENOME INDIA PROJECT



- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) announced the **completion of the '10,000 genome' project** — an attempt to create a reference database of whole-genome sequences out of India.
- In 2006, India successfully sequenced a **full human genome**, establishing a **comprehensive database** that precisely represents the diverse population of the country.

- This achievement is considered **crucial for studying genetic variations specific to different population groups in India**, and utilising this knowledge to develop customised drugs and therapies.
- The **United Kingdom, China, and the United States** are among the countries that have programmes to sequence at least **1,00,000 of their genomes**.
- A collaboration of 20 scientific institutions nationwide facilitated the collection of blood samples, sequencing of the genome, development of a technique, and storage of the data.

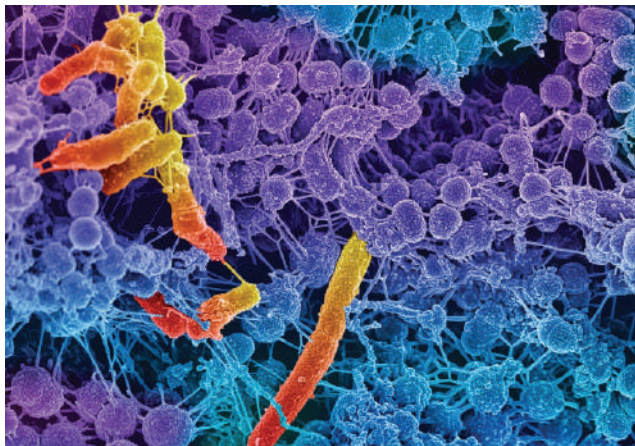
What is a Genome?

- A genome is the **whole set of genetic material in an organism**, consisting of DNA molecules that contain a specific sequence of chemical bases. This sequence of bases serves as the instructions for the formation, growth, and functioning of all living things, and ultimately determines their traits.

What is Genome Sequencing?

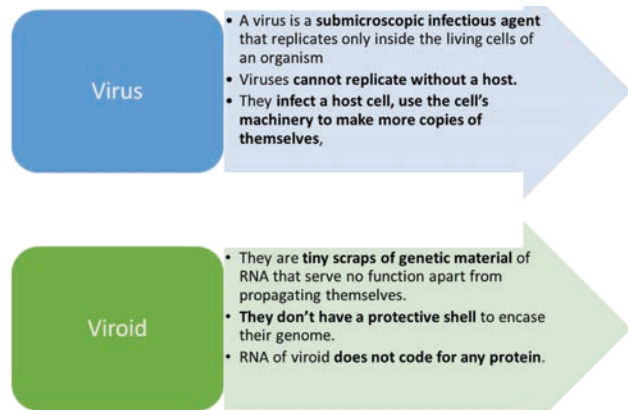
- Genome sequencing **refers to the procedure of ascertaining the entire DNA sequence of an organism's genome**. It entails determining the sequence of nucleotides (A, T, C, G) that compose the DNA molecule in each of an organism's chromosomes.

OBELISKS: A NEW LIFE FORM FOUND IN HUMAN GUT



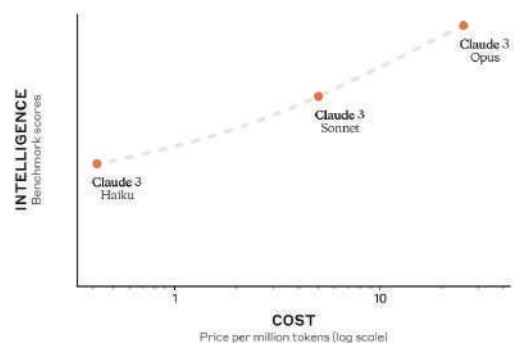
- Scientists at Stanford University have discovered an **unusual life form called "obelisks"** that exists **between viruses and viroids**. These obelisks were found in bacteria found in the human gut.
- The discovery is derived on the data acquired using **Next-generation sequencing (NGS)**, a technique that enables researchers to simultaneously assess genomic sequences from several organisms in fragmented segments.
- Obelisks are **Viruses like biological entities hiding inside the human mouth and gut**.

- They represent their class of distinct organisms between Viruses & Viroids.
- Obelisks are highly symmetrical, rod-like structures resembling the iconic monuments (Obelisk).
- **Genetic Makeup:**
 - ♦ They have only **around 1,000 characters (nucleotides) in size**.
 - ♦ Like viroids, obelisks have a circular single-stranded RNA genome and no protein coat.
 - ♦ But, like viruses, their genomes contain genes predicted to code for proteins.
 - ♦ They encode a **single major protein known as 'obulin'**.



CLAUDE 3

Claude 3 model family



- Recently, Anthropic, an Artificial Intelligence start-up, announced its latest family of **AI models called Claude 3**.
- The **chatbot is capable of handling text, voice chats, and documents and respond contextually faster** than its contemporaries.
- **Claude 3 Haiku, Sonnet, and Opus are three advanced AI models** in the family.
- Each model **balances intelligence, speed, and cost** based on its application case, giving increasingly powerful performance.

- In the new releases, **Claude 3 Opus is the most powerful**, Sonnet is the medium model that is capable and price competitive, and Haiku is relevant for quick response use cases.
- All Claude 3 models show increased capabilities in analysis and forecasting, nuanced content creation, code generation, and conversing in **non-English languages like Spanish, Japanese, and French**.

SARBANANDA SONOWAL INAUGURATES FIRST MADE-IN-INDIA ASTDS TUG

- Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of MoPSW & AYUSH inaugurated the **60T bollard pull tug named 'Ocean Grace' and the Medical Mobile Unit (MMU)**.
- The Ocean Grace is the first made in India **ASTDS Tug developed by the Cochin Shipyard Limited under MoPSW**.
- The Medical Mobile Unit (MMU) is part of port's commitment to corporate social responsibility.
- **Weight:** 60 tonnes bollard pull
- The first ASTDS tug is powered by **NIGATA main engines and a Power Z-Peller ZP Propulsion engine**.
- **Designed for:** Optimal efficiency and reliability, guaranteeing seamless navigation and proficient vessel assistance, especially for large vessels like VLCCs and ULCCs.
- The Mobile Medical Unit dedicated will offer a wide range of healthcare services
- There are **53 Sagarmala Projects worth ₹54,500 Crores** in the state of Odisha.
- The goal of the Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP) is to convert at least 50% of all tugs into Green Tugs by 2030 and to have Green Tugs operating at all major ports.

KERALA SCHOOL LAUNCHES INDIA'S FIRST AI TEACHER, 'IRIS'



- Kerala, known for its advancements in education, has recently implemented its **inaugural generative AI teacher, Iris**.
- **Developed:** In partnership with **Makerlabs Edutech Private Limited**.
- **Iris, a humanoid, was introduced to KTCT Higher Secondary School** in Thiruvananthapuram with the purpose of improving the educational experience for students.
- Built under the **Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) project initiated by NITI Aayog**, Iris boasts a range of features aimed at revolutionising traditional teaching methods.
- **Features:**
 - ♦ Ability to speak three languages
 - ♦ Tackle complex questions
 - ♦ A personalised learning journey for each student.
 - ♦ Voice assistance
 - ♦ Interactive learning modules
 - ♦ Manipulation capabilities
 - ♦ Mobility

ISRO'S SECOND ROCKET LAUNCHPORT IN TAMIL NADU'S KULASEKARAPATTINAM



- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the **second rocket launchport of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** at Kulasekarapattinam.
- It is situated at a **geographically advantageous location** in coastal Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district.
- The facility costs **₹986 crore**.
- It will be extensively and exclusively used for commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches in the future.
- To ensure that ISRO's first launchport, the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR** in Sriharikota, is **not overburdened with a high number** of launches, the space agency has decided to build another facility.
- At present, the trajectory taken by all launches from SHAR exhibits an extended duration due to the necessity of traversing an eastward path over Sri Lanka prior to commencing the southerly flight.

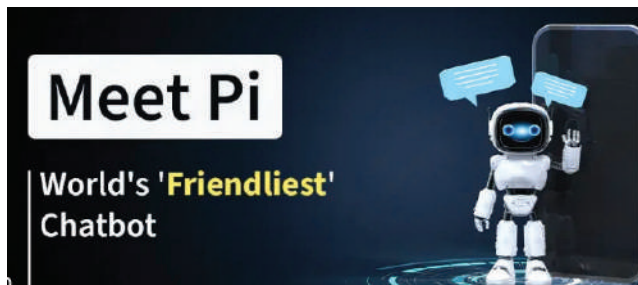
- This results in the consumption of extra fuel.
- Nevertheless, future launches from Kulasekarapattinam, situated several kilometres west of Colombo, would not have the same requirement. This would enable a direct southerly flight and conserve the already scarce fuel onboard SSLV.

CSPACE: KERALA STATE-OWNED OTT PLATFORM



- Kerala has launched the **first government-owned OTT platform 'CSpace'**.
- It is a pioneering initiative that gives prominence to films with artistic and cultural value without hurting the mainstream film industry.
- It only stream films that are already released in theatres signifies that this is not a move that will harm the interests of the film industry.
- The platform, which operates **on pay per view basis**, allows viewers to watch a **feature film for ₹75 and shorter contents for much lesser price**.
- Exactly half of the amount charged goes to the content provider.
- Viewers can download **CSpace app from Play Store and App Store**.

PI, THE WORLD'S 'FRIENDLIEST' CHATBOT



- **Inflection AI** has launched its latest LLM, Inflection 2.5, an upgrade to its model that powers its **friendly chatbot Pi personal assistant**.
- Inflection AI, a California-based AI startup.

About Pi Chatbot

- Pi is an artificial intelligence chatbot that facilitates **profound and significant talks**.
- The launch of Pi coincided with a period of global fascination with OpenAI's remarkable ChatGPT. Although ChatGPT provided replies that resembled those of a human, Pi exhibited a very distinct level of energy. Pi possesses a higher degree of compassion and has been marketed as a chatbot with a distinct personality. Inflection AI referred to it as a chatbot that is "supportive, intelligent, and available at all times."
- While ChatGPT and Gemini primarily served as personal assistants with practical applications in professional settings, Pi functions similar to a friend for individuals and is available for free usage.
- The chatbot is equipped with a **voice feature that offers six various voices**.

KARNATAKA BANS USE OF RHODAMINE-B



- The Karnataka government recently "banned" the use of **harmful colouring agents in gobi manchurian and cotton candy**.
- The violation will attract imprisonment of up to **7 years and fine of up to ₹10 lakhs**.
- The action has been taken as the consumption of snacks containing these artificial colours through food colouring agent Rhodamine-B that poses long-term health risks, including cancer.
- Of 171 samples of gobi manchurian collected, **64 were found to be safe** while as many as 106 were found to be unsafe. Meanwhile, a total of 25 cotton candy samples were collected, of which, 10 were found to be safe and 15 unsafe.
- **Tartrazine, Carmoisine, Sunset Yellow and Rhodamine-1B** were some of the **artificial colours** found to be used in the samples.

What is Rhodamine-B?

- It is a chemical colour used in **dyeing clothes, paper, leather, printing, and plastics**.
- It is **not one of the permitted food colouring agents** under the country's food safety regulation.

ISRO SUCCESSFULLY LANDS PUSHPAK REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE



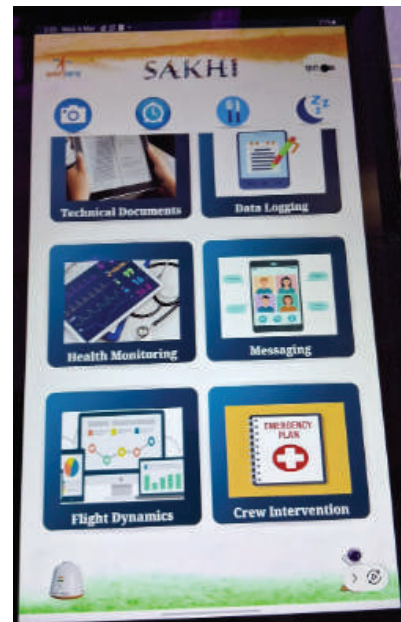
- The **Indian Research Space Organisation (ISRO)** achieved success with the **Pushpak Reusable Landing Vehicle (RLV) LEX 02 experiment** in Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- This was the **second helicopter-released autonomous landing mission**.
- From 4.5 km altitude, an **Indian Air Force Chinook lifted Pushpak**, which autonomously adjusted and landed accurately.
- ISRO demonstrated its indigenous capabilities by **testing high-speed landing scenarios** to validate space mission technologies.
- The mission was accomplished by **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)** along with the **Liquid Propulsion System Centre (LPSC)** and the ISRO Inertial Systems Unit (IISU).

About Reusable Landing Vehicle

- The RLV being constructed by ISRO consists of a couple of stages for propelling the vehicle into orbit. After the **initial fuel use in the first stage has been depleted**, the vehicle will release it and proceed with the subsequent stage. After its removal, the initial phase will re-enter the atmosphere and autonomously settle at a predetermined destination. After undergoing necessary maintenance, the item will **become accessible for reuse**.

SAKHI APP TO ASSIST GAGANYAAN SPACE MISSION CREW

- The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facility located in Thumba, has created a **versatile 'SAKHI app'** designed to **assist astronauts on their Gaganyaan space flight mission**.
- It refers to 'Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction' (SAKHI)



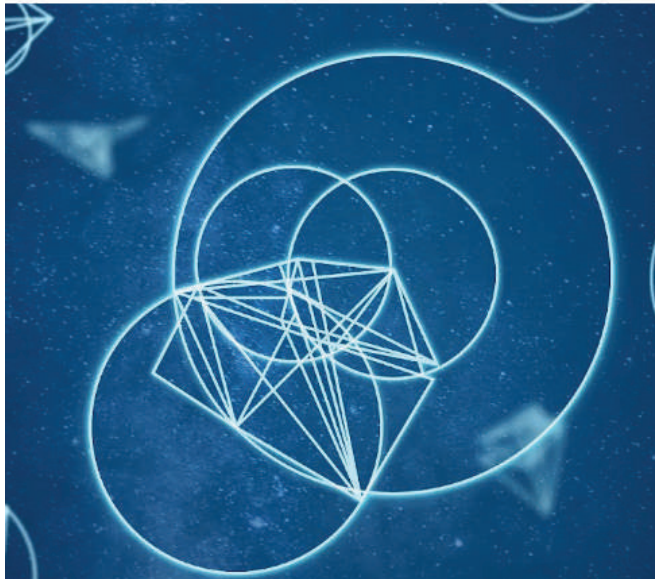
- During the mission, the **app will perform a range of tasks** such as looking up vital technical information or communicating with one another for Gaganyaan Crew.
- **Its features include:**
 - ♦ **Health Monitoring:** It will provide information on key parameters like blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen saturation & invaluable insights into the **crew's physical condition throughout the mission**.
 - ♦ It will also **remind them about their hydration and dietary schedules** and sleep patterns.
 - ♦ Astronauts can use the app to maintain a log on the mission in multiple formats including **voice records, texts and images**.
 - ♦ It will keep the crew connected with the onboard computer and ground-based stations, guaranteeing a seamless communication link.

INDIA'S FASTEST AND INDIGENOUS IP/MPLS ROUTER



- The Union Minister for Communications, Electronics and Information Technology, inaugurated **India's fastest and indigenously developed IP/MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) router in Bengaluru.**
- MPLS is a routing technique in telecommunications networks that directs data from one node to the next, based on labels rather than network addresses.
- Capacity of the router: **2.4 TBPS.**

SIMA, GOOGLE DEEPMIND'S NEW AI AND ALPHAGEOMETRY



- Google DeepMind unveiled its most recent artificial intelligence gaming agent, SIMA, also known as **Scalable Instructable Multiworld Agent.**
- The AI possesses the capability to execute tasks within various video game environments by adhering to **natural language instructions.**
- Google's latest artificial intelligence is capable to engage in video games with you.
- It also introduced **AlphaGeometry, an AI system that solves complex geometry problems at a level approaching a human Olympiad gold-medalist** - a breakthrough in AI performance.
- In a benchmarking test of 30 Olympiad geometry problems, AlphaGeometry solved 25 within the standard Olympiad time limit.
- For comparison, the previous state-of-the-art system solved 10 of these geometry problems, and the average human gold medalist solved 25.9 problems.

'STATIO SHIV SHAKTI': CHANDRAYAAN-3 VIKRAM'S LANDING SITE NAME

- The **International Astronomical Union (IAU)**, has officially approved the **namings of the landing site**

for Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander as 'Statio Shiv Shakti'.



- The choice to call the landing location 'Shiva Shakti' was announced on March 19, 2024, subsequent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement on August 26, 2023.
- According to PM Modi, **Shiva represents a resolution for the well-being of humanity, while Shakti provides us with the power to achieve those resolutions.**
- The Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature, a compilation of planetary names sanctioned by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), provides a definition for **'Statio Shiv Shakti' as a compound term derived from Indian mythology that symbolises the dual nature of men (Shiva) and women (Shakti).**
- The name of 'Statio Shiv Shakti' signifies a significant achievement in India's endeavour to explore outer space. India's Chandrayaan-1's moon impact probe (MIP) made contact with the lunar surface on November 14, 2008, fifteen years before Chandrayaan-3's soft-landing.
- The location of the impact was designated as **'Jawahar Point' or 'Jawahar Sthal'.**

WHO LAUNCHES COVINET



- WHO has launched a **new network for coronaviruses, CoViNet**, to facilitate and coordinate global expertise and capacities for **early and accurate detection, monitoring and assessment of SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV and novel coronaviruses** of public health importance.

- CoViNet is a network of global laboratories with **expertise in human, animal and environmental coronavirus surveillance**.
- The WHO Coronavirus Network (CoViNet) aims to bring together surveillance programs and reference laboratories to support enhanced epidemiological monitoring and laboratory (phenotypic and genotypic) assessment of **SARS-CoV-2, MERS-CoV and novel coronaviruses of public health importance**.

H5N1 BIRD FLU



- A highly contagious variant of **avian influenza, known as H5N1**, has been rapidly spreading worldwide, presenting a **fundamental danger to avian species and the natural environment**.
- For the first time in history, the **illness has also spread to mainland Antarctica**.
- Since 2020, the virus has spread to **over 80 countries, leading to the euthanasia of millions of hens and turkeys** at commercial poultry farms. Additionally, it impacted a multitude of avian species, including gulls and terns, resulting in the demise of thousands of them.
- The most concerning indication, however, is the **swift dissemination of influenza** — formerly primarily limited to avian species — among mammals.
- For example, a **significant number of seals and sea lions** across various regions of the globe have become the target of the H5N1 disease.

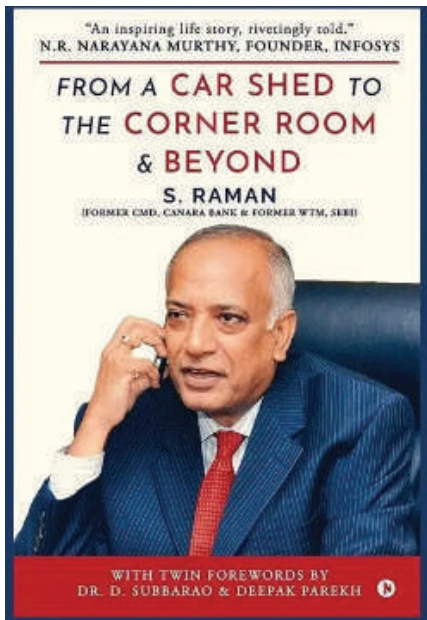
About H5N1

- H5N1 is a type of influenza virus that **causes a highly infectious, severe respiratory disease in birds** called avian influenza (or “bird flu”).
- The currently circulating **type of H5N1 has descended from a virus** that caused an outbreak on a goose farm in **Guangdong, China, in 1996**.

Books and Authors

FROM A CAR SHED TO THE CORNER ROOM & BEYOND

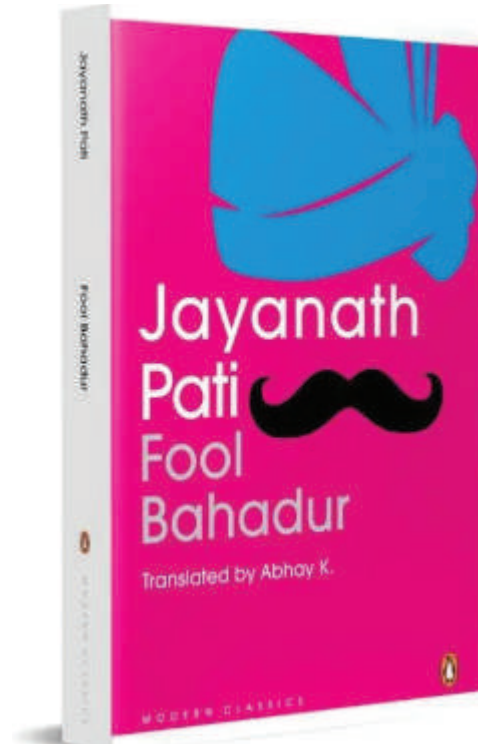
- S. Raman's autobiography, "From A Car Shed To The Corner Room & Beyond", offers a first-person account of his remarkable journey from a clerk at SBI to becoming the Chairman and Managing Director of Canara Bank and a full-time Member of SEBI.
- The book explores the intricate dance between personal integrity, professional challenges, and systemic issues in the financial world.



'PHOOL BAHADUR'

- The Dibrugarh University International Literary Festival, held from March 19th to March 21st, 2024, marked a significant milestone with the launch of an exceptional literary work: the English translation of the first Magahi novel, 'Phool Bahadur'.
- This translation, undertaken by the esteemed writer Abhay K from Nalanda, Bihar, has brought a long-overlooked piece of literature to a wider audience.

- 'Phool Bahadur' holds a special place in literary history as the inaugural Magahi novel, initially penned by Jayanath Pati and published in 1928.

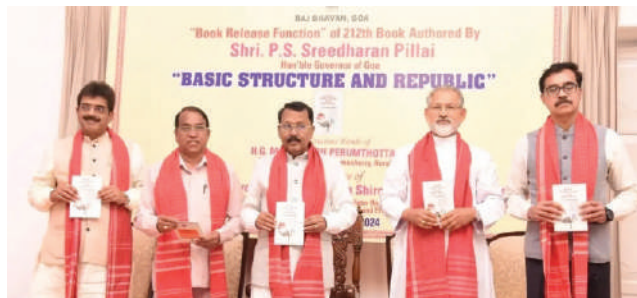


THE GEMS OF INDIAN ART

- The launch of "The Gems of Indian Art" represents a significant milestone in India's art scene, as it documents Harish Khullar's remarkable collection of 20th-century Indian modern and contemporary art.
- This nearly 300-page book was unveiled by Ministers Shri Nitin Gadkari, Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, and Shri S.P.S. Baghel, underscoring its importance and impact on the cultural landscape.
- Harish Khullar's collection is widely acclaimed nationally and internationally for its exceptional quality and prestigious provenance.



- The unveiling of “Basic Structure and Republic” underscores Governor Sreedharan Pillai’s prolific literary career and his continued dedication to intellectual discourse.
- As his 212th publication, this latest work further solidifies his position as a prominent voice in the realm of literature and political thought.



BASIC STRUCTURE AND REPUBLIC

- In a significant event held at the Durbar Hall (Old) of Raj Bhavan, Governor Shri P. S. Sreedharan Pillai unveiled his latest literary work titled “Basic Structure and Republic,” marking his 212th publication.

PRO KABADDI LEAGUE SEASON 10, PUNERI PALTAN CLINCHES MAIDEN TITLE



- **Puneri Paltan** emerged as the champions of the 10th edition of the Pro Kabaddi League (PKL), defeating Haryana Steelers in the final with a score of 28-25.
- Pankaj Mohite was a standout performer for Puneri Paltan, scoring nine raid points, including a crucial super raid.
- Haryana Steelers' defense let them down in the crucial moments of the final, contributing to their three-point defeat.
- The Steelers' journey to the final was commendable, especially after finishing fifth in the standings and overcoming a heavy defeat in their season opener.
- Ashu Malik from Dabang Delhi KC was awarded the Best Raider of PKL Season 10, accumulating 276 raid points.
- Mohammadreza Shadlouei of Puneri Paltan was recognized as the Top Defender, with 99 tackle points.

SHIMLA, A GORGEOUS TOWN, WILL HOST THE FIRST-EVER ASIAN RIVER RAFTING CHAMPIONSHIPS



- The **first-ever Asian River Rafting Championships** took place in **Shimla**, India, from March 4th to 9th, 2024, on the **Sutlej River** near **Basantpur** in the **Sunni** region.
- Around 20 national and international teams participated, including teams from Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Iraq, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Indonesia.
- The Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, officially opened the championships and emphasized the government's commitment to fostering adventure tourism in the state.
- He highlighted previous successful events, such as a river rafting marathon in Nadaun and a paragliding championship in Junga, both in collaboration with private companies.

KHELO INDIA MEDAL WINNERS ELIGIBLE FOR GOVERNMENT JOBS



- The **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** and the **Department of Sports** have introduced reforms in recruitment, promotion, and incentives for athletes, aiming to nurture sporting talent and provide a career path in sports.
- Medal winners at the Khelo India Games are now eligible for government jobs, aligning with the vision of creating a robust sports ecosystem and secure career opportunities for young athletes.
- The updated guidelines offer enhanced incentives, transparency, and inclusivity, recognizing athletes excelling in the Khelo India Games and events organized by the School Games Federation of India for government employment opportunities.

SANSAD KHEL MAHAKUMBH 3.0 INAUGURATED IN BILASPUR, HIMACHAL PRADESH



- Union Minister Anurag Singh Thakur inaugurated the Sansad Khel Mahakumbh 3.0 at the Luhnu Cricket Ground in Bilaspur, inspired by PM Modi's 'Kheloge Toh Khilaoge' initiative.
- The event aims to provide a platform for players from the Hamirpur parliamentary constituency to showcase their talent, with a target of 75,000 participants.
- Around 300 MPs across the country are organizing MP Khel Mahakumbh in their respective areas, promoting sports and discouraging drug use among the youth.
- The second edition of MP Khel Mahakumbh was held in Basti, Uttar Pradesh, with over 45,700 youth participating, including over 1000 girls.
- The event included 7 sports disciplines, with participants from over 800 panchayats and 5000 villages. Over ₹50 lakh in prize money was awarded.

MINISTER HARDEEP S PURI INAUGURATES 5TH ONGC PARA GAMES



- The 5th ONGC Para Games were inaugurated by Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of Petroleum Natural Gas and Housing Urban Affairs, at Thyagaraj Stadium in New Delhi.
- The event celebrated the determination and resilience of para-athletes.

- India has demonstrated para-sports excellence with 19 medals at the Tokyo Paralympics 2020 and 111 medals at the Asian Para Games 2023.
- The ONGC Para Games were conceptualized in 2017 to foster inclusivity for specially-abled employees. Over the years, the event has seen significant growth in participation and diversity.
- Many para-athletes from the event have gone on to represent India at the Paralympics.

KHELO INDIA RISING TALENT IDENTIFICATION WILL TAKE SPORTS TO THE DOORSTEP OF ASPIRING CHAMPIONS



- The KIRTI (Khelo India Rising Talent Identification) program was inaugurated by the Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports, Shri Anurag Singh Thakur, in Chandigarh.
- It aims to identify talented athletes between the ages of 9 and 18 years who are currently enrolled in schools across the country.
- Neeraj Chopra, the Olympic and World Javelin Throw Champion, has praised the initiative of the Union Sports Ministry in launching the KIRTI program, believing that it can create a balance between sports and studies.
- KIRTI will conduct 20 lakh assessments throughout the year to identify talent through Talent Assessment Centres.
- It aims to reach the next level in global sports and provide a common platform for athletes to showcase their abilities.
- The program focuses on ten sports disciplines, including archery, athletics, boxing, football, hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho, volleyball, weightlifting, and wrestling.
- It is part of the Khelo India initiative, which aims to cultivate a sporting culture and advance athletic excellence in India.

CARLOS ALCARAZ TOPS DANIIL MEDVEDEV TO REPEAT AS INDIAN WELLS CHAMPION

- Carlos Alcaraz of Spain defeated Daniil Medvedev of Russia in straight sets to win the Indian Wells ATP tournament, becoming the first player to win back-to-back titles since Novak Djokovic.



- Alcaraz had a slow start to the 2023 season, including an early exit at the Australian Open and an ankle injury, but his victory at Indian Wells provided a much-needed boost.
- The match featured entertaining rallies with passing shots, drop shots, volleys, and lobs. Alcaraz even managed to retrieve a lob that initially looked like it would go past him.
- Medvedev was hindered by an ankle injury, similar to last year's Indian Wells final against Alcaraz.

NAYANA JAMES LANDS GOLD WITH GIANT LEAP AT INDIAN OPEN JUMPS COMPETITION



- **Nayana James** from **Kerala** recorded a personal best mark of 6.67m in the women's long jump event at the **3rd Indian Open Jumps Competition**, securing the **gold medal**.
- Nayana's jump of 6.67 m was nearly seven years after her previous personal best of 6.55 m.
- No athlete threatened the 2024 Paris Olympics qualification mark on the day.
- Nayana's distance was 16 cms off Anju Bobby George's National record and 19 cms behind the Paris mark.

SATHIYAN WINS FIRST-EVER WTT FEEDER TITLE

- **Indian star paddler G. Sathiyam** became the first-ever Indian to win a men's singles trophy at a **WTT Feeder Series event**, defeating **Manav Thakkar** in the final.
- Sathiyam had an impressive journey to the final, defeating opponents like Harmeet Desai and Chuang Chih-Yuan.



- This victory marks Sathiyam's first success at a WTT event and his first singles title at an international ranking event since the ITTF Czech International Open 2021.

HARYANA CROWNED CHAMPION AT BOXING SUB JUNIOR NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP



- **Haryana** clinched the team titles in both the boys and girls categories at the **Boxing Sub Junior National Championship**, with a combined haul of **19 medals**.
- In the girls section, Haryana successfully defended its title and finished on top with 64 points, winning 7 gold, 1 silver, and 2 bronze medals.
- Haryana boxers stamped their authority with a dominating display, winning 6 out of 7 bouts with unanimous 5-0 decisions.
- Arunachal Pradesh's Hillang secured the most promising boxer award in the girls category.

SHARFUDDOULA BECOMES FIRST BANGLADESHI ON ICC ELITE UMPIRE PANEL



- **Sharfuddoula** has become the **first Bangladeshi umpire** to be appointed to the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires.
- The decision to elevate Sharfuddoula was taken by a selection panel composed of ICC General Manager - Cricket, Wasim Khan (Chair), Sanjay Manjrekar, Tony Hill, and Mike Riley.

IPS OFFICER DALJIT SINGH CHAUDHARY APPOINTED AS NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NSG



- **Daljit Singh Chaudhary**, a 1990 batch IPS officer, has been appointed as the **Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG)**.
- The NSG operates under federal jurisdiction, specializing in counter-terrorism and anti-hijacking operations.
- The NSG is trained rigorously to handle high-risk situations and is deployed selectively for extraordinary circumstances sanctioned by the government.

IPS OFFICER ANURAG AGARWAL APPOINTED HEAD OF PARLIAMENT SECURITY



- **Anurag Agarwal**, a seasoned IPS officer, has been appointed as the **new head of Parliament security in India**.
- Agarwal brings extensive experience in law enforcement and internal security to his new role as the joint secretary (security) of the Parliament House complex.

The appointment of Agarwal comes after a recent security breach in the Parliament House complex, highlighting the need for stringent protective measures.

MEET SUMAN KUMARI, BSF'S FIRST WOMAN SNIPER



- **Sub-Inspector Suman Kumari** has become the **first woman sniper of the Border Security Force (BSF)** after completing an eight-week intensive sniper course at the Central School of Weapons and Tactics (CSWT) in Indore.
- She achieved the prestigious 'instructor grade' and is now posted as a sniper instructor.
- Suman Kumari's achievement is seen as an inspiration for other female recruits, encouraging them to explore and excel in similar military roles.

RAJENDRA PRASAD GOYAL ASSUMES ADDITIONAL CHARGE AS CHAIRMAN AND MD OF NHPC LIMITED



- **Rajendra Prasad Goyal** has recently assumed the additional charge of Chairman and Managing Director of **NHPC Limited**, a premier hydropower company in India.
- Goyal's journey within NHPC started in 1988 as a Finance Professional and he has showcased remarkable growth over the years.
- Goyal holds key leadership roles in several NHPC subsidiaries and serves as the Chairman in NHDC Limited, Chenab Valley Power Projects Pvt. Ltd., Ratle Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd., and Loktak Downstream Hydroelectric Corporation Ltd.

INDIA WILL TARGET 30 MEDALS IN PARIS PARALYMPICS: NEW PCI PRESIDENT JHAJHARIA



- **Devendra Jhajharia** was elected as the new **President of the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI)**, succeeding **Deepa Malik**.
- Jhajharia won gold in 2004 Athens and 2016 Rio Paralympics in the F46 disability category.
- He was the sole candidate for the PCI president post, and all new office bearers were elected unopposed.
- Jhajharia is also contesting in the Lok Sabha elections from Churu, Rajasthan, on a BJP ticket.
- New office bearers include vice presidents, secretary general, treasurer, joint secretaries, and executive committee members.
- Jhajharia's achievements include a silver medal in the Tokyo Paralympics 2021, world championships gold in 2013, and being the first Indian para-athlete to receive the Padma Bhushan.
- PCI faced suspension for not holding elections on time, which was lifted on March 5 after initiating the election process.
- PCI was founded on August 7, 1994, with headquarters in New Delhi, Delhi.

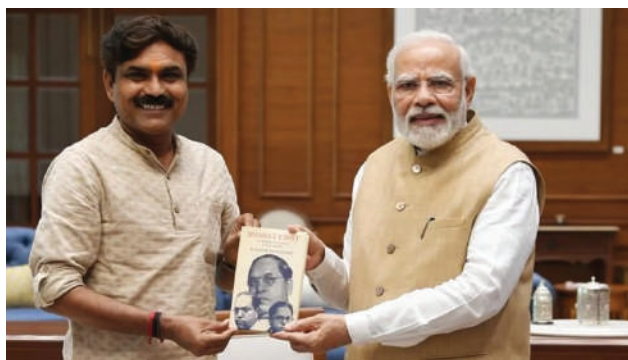
SHRI AS RAJEEV APPOINTED AS VIGILANCE COMMISSIONER IN THE CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION

- **AS Rajeev** was appointed as **Vigilance Commissioner in Central Vigilance Commission** by the **President of India**.



- Rajeev took oath as Vigilance Commissioner on March 11, 2024, before the authorized Central Vigilance Commissioner.
- Rajeev boasts a distinguished banking career spanning over 38 years across Syndicate Bank, Indian Bank, Vijaya Bank, and Bank of Maharashtra.
- Transformed Bank of Maharashtra during his tenure as MD & CEO, elevating it from a small-sized to a robust mid-sized bank.
- Served in key roles such as Nominee Director in EXIM Bank, New India Assurance Co Ltd, and NPCI, along with Vice Chairman of Indian Banks Association.

SHRI KISHOR MAKWANA ASSUMES CHARGE OF CHAIRMAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCHEDULED CASTES (NCSC)



- **Kishor Makwana** appointed **Chairman** of the **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** in New Delhi.
- Shri Luv Kush Kumar also joins NCSC as a Member.
- Commitment to safeguarding SC community's interests emphasized by Shri Makwana.
- Proactive approach pledged for justice and harmony within the SC community.
- Diverse background of Shri Makwana highlighted, including his political and literary achievements.

- Presidential appointment marks Makwana's assumption of the NCSC Chairmanship.
- Makwana's leadership aims for justice, prevention of atrocities, and socio-economic development for SCs.
- **National Commission for Scheduled Castes** founded on **February 19, 2004**.

GYANESH KUMAR, SUKHBIR SINGH SANDHU NAMED NEW ELECTION COMMISSIONERS



- **Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** have been appointed as new Election Commissioners by the three-member committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The appointments were made after the resignation of Election Commissioner Arun Goel, leaving the Election Commission panel with only the Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar.
- The selection panel for the Election Commissioners now includes the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and a designated Union Cabinet minister, with the Chief Justice of India no longer being a part of it.

PARA ARCHER SHEETAL DEVI BECOMES THE NATIONAL ICON FOR DISABLED OF ECI



- Exhibition cricket match organized by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** and the **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)** to promote voter education and inclusivity.

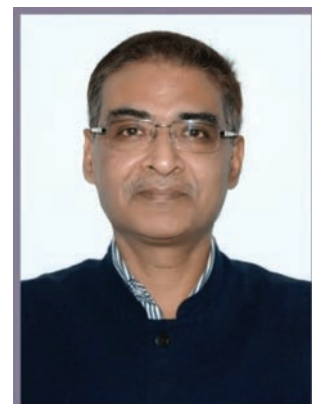
- Match played between the **Indian Deaf Cricket Association (IDCA)** Team and the **Delhi District Cricket Association (DDCA)** team.
- **Sheetal Devi** was announced as the **National Icon in the PwD category**.
- Presence of Chief Election Commissioner Shri Rajiv Kumar and Election Commissioners Shri Gyanesh Kumar and Shri Sukhbir Singh Sandhu at the event.
- Nikhil Chopra, a former Indian cricketer, was the special guest.

RETIRED BUREAUCRAT NAVNEET SEHGAL APPOINTED AS PRASAR BHARATI CHAIRPERSON



- **Navneet Kumar Sehgal** has been appointed as the new chairperson of the **Prasar Bharati Board** after a vacancy of four years.
- Navneet Sehgal is a retired IAS officer of the 1988 batch from the Uttar Pradesh cadre and has been closely associated with UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath.
- **Prasar Bharati** is **India's largest public broadcasting agency**, established by the **Prasar Bharati Act of 1990**. It includes **Doordarshan Television Network** and **All India Radio**.
- Prasar Bharati launched **PB-SHABD**, a news-sharing service for registered entities to access news feeds from its network of reporters.

SENIOR BUREAUCRAT RAHUL SINGH HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS THE NEW CHAIRPERSON OF THE CBSE



- **Rahul Singh** has been appointed as the **new chairperson** of the **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)** as part of a senior-level bureaucratic reshuffle.
- **Nidhi Chhibber**, the previous chairperson of CBSE, has been named **Advisor in the Niti Aayog**.
- Rahul Singh is currently serving as Additional Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
- The CBSE is expected to continue its efforts in providing quality education and ensuring efficient conduct of examinations under Rahul Singh's leadership.

P&G INDIA NAMES KUMAR VENKATASUBRAMANIAN AS NEW CEO



- **Kumar Venkatasubramanian** has been appointed as the new CEO of PG India, effective from May 1, 2024. LV Vaidyanathan, the outgoing CEO, will be leaving the company to pursue personal interests after serving PG for 28 years.
- In his current role as CEO of PG Australia and New Zealand, Venkatasubramanian has been responsible for delivering record metrics driven by category growth and strong retailer partnerships. He has also championed equality and inclusion, expanding impactful programs for employees and the community.

MR ASHWANI KUMAR UNANIMOUSLY ELECTED AS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF FIEO



- **Ashwani Kumar**, Partner at Victor Forgings in Jalandhar, has been elected as the new President of the **Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO)**.

- Federation of Indian Export Organisations is the apex trade promotion organization in India set up by the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, and the private trade and industry segment in **1965**.
- The organization is responsible for representing and assisting Indian entrepreneurs and exporters in foreign markets.

SIMON HARRIS SET TO BE IRELAND'S YOUNGEST PM



- **Simon Harris**, a member of Fine Gael, is the sole candidate in the race to become **Ireland's next prime minister** following the departure of Leo Varadkar.
- He is set to become the **youngest prime minister in Ireland's history**.
- Harris has served as Ireland's health minister from 2016 to mid-2020, playing a crucial role in managing the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- He currently holds the position of minister for further and higher education.

LUIS MONTENEGRO NAMED PORTUGAL'S PRIME MINISTER



- **Luis Montenegro**, leader of the center-right Democratic Alliance (AD), has been appointed as the **new prime minister in Portugal** after eight years of Socialist rule.
- Montenegro's minority government faces challenges due to his refusal to ally with the far-right Chega party.

HANSHA MISHRA APPOINTED AS DIRECTOR IN UPSC



- **Hansha Mishra**, an officer of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IAAS), has been appointed as **Director in the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)**.
- Her appointment was recommended by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India and approved by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).
- The UPSC is responsible for conducting examinations for recruitment to various civil services in the Indian government, including the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

JUSTICE RITU RAJ AWASTHI SWORN IN AS JUDICIAL MEMBER, LOKPAL OF INDIA



- **Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Pankaj Kumar, and Ajay Tirkey** have been sworn in as **new members of the Lokpal (ombudsman) in India**.
- Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi served as the Chairperson of the 22nd Law Commission of India and was previously the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court. Pankaj Kumar is a 1986 batch IAS officer from Gujarat cadre, and Ajay Tirkey is a 1987 batch IAS officer from Madhya Pradesh cadre.
- The institution of the **Ombudsman was first established in Sweden in 1809** and gained popularity globally after being adopted by **New Zealand and Norway in 1962**.

SADANAND VASANT DATE HAS BEEN APPOINTED AS THE NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NIA



- **Sadanand Vasant Date** has been appointed as the new Director General of the **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** until his superannuation on December 31, 2026, or until further orders.
- **Piyush Anand** has been appointed as the head of the **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** for two years or until further orders. He replaced the incumbent NDRF chief Atul Karwal.
- **Rajeev Kumar** has been appointed as the Director General of the **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD)**, replacing the outgoing chief Balaji Srivastava.
- These appointments aim to enhance coordination and address emerging security challenges in India.
- The reshuffle reflects the government's commitment to modernization and innovation in policing and disaster response.

TIGER WOODS WINS BOB JONES AWARD, HIGHEST USGA HONOR



- **Tiger Woods** has been selected to receive the **Bob Jones Award**, the highest honor bestowed by the **United States Golf Association (USGA)**.
- The award recognizes Woods' dedication to sportsmanship, respect for the traditions of the game, and significant charitable endeavors.
- Woods' on-course achievements, including 15 major championships and 82 PGA Tour victories, are widely celebrated.

- The Bob Jones Award acknowledges Woods' impact on the sport beyond his on-course achievements.
- Woods' commitment to fair play and respect for the game aligns with the values embodied by Bob Jones, a respected figure in golf.

YATIN BHASKAR DUGGAL WINS FIRST PRIZE IN NATIONAL YOUTH PARLIAMENT FESTIVAL 2024



- **Yatin Bhaskar Duggal from Haryana** won the National Youth Parliament Festival, 2024, and was awarded the first prize.
- The **second prize** was awarded to **Vaishna Pitchai from Tamil Nadu**, and the **third prize** went to **Kanishka Sharma from Rajasthan**.
- The event showcased the diversity and talent of participants from various states.
- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla emphasized the role of youth in realizing the vision of a developed India by 2047, called 'Viksit Bharat.'
- Union Minister Anurag Thakur praised the youth's resolute voice and highlighted India's progress in various sectors under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Thakur emphasized the positive use of technology and the preservation of India's cultural heritage. He encouraged the youth to leverage platforms like YouTube for effective dissemination of government policies.
- Thakur also stressed the importance of team-led leadership approaches and networking for personal and professional growth.

INDIA RECEIVES 'MEASLES AND RUBELLA CHAMPION' AWARD FOR EXEMPLARY EFFORTS IN MEASLES AND RUBELLA DISEASE PREVENTION

- **India** has been awarded the '**Measles and Rubella Champion**' Award by The Measles and Rubella Partnership for its efforts in preventing measles and rubella diseases.



- The award recognizes India's commitment to public health and outstanding leadership in curbing the spread of measles and rubella among children.
- India has made remarkable progress in reducing measles and rubella cases and preventing outbreaks through various interventions, including MR vaccination campaigns, innovative strategies to reach underserved populations, robust surveillance systems, and effective public-awareness initiatives.
- Measles and Rubella are vaccine-preventable diseases, and the MR Vaccine is part of India's Universal Immunization Programme since 2017.
- As a result of India's efforts, 50 districts have not witnessed any measles case, and 226 districts have not reported rubella cases over the past 12 months.

MISS WORLD 2024 IS KRYSTYNA PYSZKOVÁ OF CZECH REPUBLIC; WINS THE 71ST MISS WORLD CROWN



- **Krystyna Pyszkova from the Czech Republic** was crowned as the new Miss World 2024 in Mumbai, India.
- The previous Miss World 2022, Karolina Bielawska from Poland, crowned her successor.
- The event celebrated womanhood and diversity, featuring stunning outfits designed by Indian designer Archana Kochhar.
- Nita Ambani received the Miss World Humanitarian Award for her work at the Reliance Foundation.

- The panel of judges included Bollywood actors Kriti Sanon and Pooja Hegde.
- The event was co-hosted by former Miss World Megan Young and Indian film director Karan Johar.
- Indian singers Shaan, Neha Kakkar, and Tony Kakkar performed at the event.
- Sini Shetty represented India, the country that last won the Miss World title in 2017 with Manushi Chhillar.

AMITAV GHOSH AWARDED ERASMUS PRIZE FOR HIGHLIGHTING CLIMATE CRISIS



- Amitav Ghosh has been awarded the Erasmus Prize 2024 for his contribution to the theme “imagining the unthinkable” and exploring the global crisis of climate change through his literary works.
- Ghosh’s work focuses on giving justice to the existential threat of climate change by making an uncertain future palpable through compelling stories about the past. He believes that the climate crisis is a cultural crisis resulting from a lack of imagination.
- Ghosh’s vast body of work includes historical novels and journalistic essays that transcend boundaries and periods with literary eloquence.

SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI AWARDS 2022-23 ANNOUNCED



- The Sangeet Natak Akademi Awards for the years 2022 and 2023 were conferred to 94 eminent artists in the field of performing arts, recognizing their exceptional contributions to India’s cultural heritage.

- The Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship (Akademi Ratna) was bestowed upon 7 eminent artists who have made outstanding contributions to the field of performing arts and achieved exceptional mastery in their respective disciplines.
- The Sangeet Natak Akademi is the apex body in the field of performing arts in India, **established in 1953**. It plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting the country’s vast intangible cultural heritage expressed through music, dance, and drama.
- The Akademi’s primary mandate is to preserve, promote, and develop the diverse performing arts traditions of India, including classical, folk, and tribal forms. It organizes festivals, seminars, workshops, and exhibitions to showcase and celebrate India’s rich cultural heritage.
- The Akademi also provides scholarships, fellowships, and financial assistance to artists and scholars in the field of performing arts.

RATAN TATA AWARDED PV NARASIMHA RAO MEMORIAL AWARD FOR PHILANTHROPY WORK



- **Ratan Tata**, former chairman of Tata Sons, has been awarded the prestigious **PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award** for his outstanding philanthropic contributions.
- The PV Narasimha Rao Memorial Award is named after the former Prime Minister of India and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication to social welfare and humanitarian causes.

RAKSHA MANTRI TROPHY FOR ARMED FORCES MEDICAL SERVICES’ BEST & SECOND BEST COMMAND HOSPITALS FOR YEAR 2022 GIVEN AWAY

- The **Raksha Mantri Trophy** for the **Best and Second Best Command Hospitals of the Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS)** for the year 2022 was awarded in New Delhi.
- The Command Hospital (Southern Command), Pune was judged as the Best Command Hospital, while the

Command Hospital (Central Command), Lucknow was the Second Best for 2022.



- The Raksha Mantri Trophy was instituted in 1989 to recognize excellence in healthcare services by Armed Forces Hospitals and foster a spirit of competition among them.
- The award recognizes high standards of healthcare delivery to armed forces personnel and their families, driving AFMS hospitals to continuously improve and maintain exceptional levels of medical services and patient care.
- Winning the Raksha Mantri Trophy is a prestigious honor for AFMS hospitals and promotes a culture of excellence within the AFMS network of hospitals across India.

COP28 PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE PRAISES INDIA FOR ITS ENERGY TRANSITION VISION



- **Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, President of COP28**, received the CERAWEEK Leadership Award for his extraordinary leadership in delivering the UAE Consensus, a groundbreaking agreement that outlines pathways for countries and industries to transition to sustainable energy systems and keep global warming within 1.5degC.
- The UAE Consensus achieved during COP28 secured commitments from participating countries to transition

away from fossil fuels, set renewable energy targets, and promote an inclusive approach.

- Dr. Al Jaber launched the Oil and Gas Decarbonization Charter (OGDC) during COP28, with significant support from 52 companies representing almost 40% of global oil production. These companies have committed to achieving net-zero emissions, eliminating routine flaring, and reducing methane emissions.

PM MODI HONoured WITH BHUTAN'S HIGHEST CIVILIAN AWARD' ORDER OF THE DRUK GYALPO'



- **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has become the first non-Bhutanese recipient of the '**Order of the Druk Gyalpo**', Bhutan's highest civilian award.
- The award was presented to PM Modi by Bhutan's King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck during his state visit to Thimphu.
- The 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' is a lifetime achievement award and is considered the pinnacle of Bhutan's honor system.
- Only four eminent personalities, including PM Modi, have received this award since its establishment.

ISRO HONoured WITH AVIATION WEEK LAUREATES AWARD FOR CHANDRAYAAN-3



- The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** has been honored with the **Aviation Week Laureates Award** for its achievements in the **Chandrayaan-3** mission.
- The Chandrayaan-3 mission was launched on July 14, 2023, using the GSLV-Mark III (LVM-3) heavy-lift rocket. It consists of a lander named Vikram and a rover named Pragyan.
- The mission objectives include demonstrating a safe and soft landing on the lunar surface, rover exploration, and conducting in-situ scientific experiments.
- The lander, Vikram, is 2 meters tall and weighs over 1,700 kg. It carries a 26-kg lunar rover named Pragyan, which will conduct spectrometer analysis of the lunar surface's mineral composition.
- The landing and deployment of the lander and rover are scheduled for August 23, 2023. They are designed to operate for one lunar day, equivalent to 14 Earth.

Important Days

World Health Day



- “**Embracing health equity and empowering communities**” is the theme for World Health Day 2024.
- It is a global health awareness day celebrated annually on **April 7th** under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization (WHO) and related organisations.
- This theme underscores all individuals’ **fundamental right to health and emphasises the importance of addressing disparities in healthcare access** and outcomes worldwide.
- World Health Day 2024 aims to promote collaborative efforts towards achieving universal health coverage and ensuring everyone can enjoy the highest attainable physical and mental health standards by focusing on community empowerment and inclusivity.

The International Day of Human Space Flight



- The International Day of Human Space Flight, observed annually on **April 12th**, commemorates the historic milestone of **Yuri Gagarin’s first human space flight**.
- Established by the United Nations General Assembly on **April 7, 2011, just ahead of the 50th anniversary of this landmark event**, it highlights the significance of space exploration for humanity.
- The theme for the 2024 celebration, “**Encouraging scientific curiosity**”, underscores the importance of fostering inquisitiveness and exploration, promoting the peaceful and sustainable exploration and utilisation of outer space.

Ambedkar Jayanti



- **Ambedkar Jayanti**, also known as Bhim Jayanti, is celebrated on **April 14th** to honour the legacy of B. R. Ambedkar, a prominent Indian politician and social reformer.
- Born on **April 14, 1891**, this day is a tribute to his contributions to Indian society.
- In some parts of India, his birthday is recognised as ‘**Equality Day**’, symbolising his tireless efforts towards social justice and equality for all.

World Heritage Day	• World Heritage Day, also recognised as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, is an annual global observance observed on April 18th. • This day is marked by various activities worldwide, such as visits to monuments and heritage sites, conferences, round table discussions, and the publication of newspaper articles, all aimed at promoting awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage. • This year's theme is "Connections, Routes and Networks".
National Civil Service Day 	• April 21st was designated as Civil Services Day because it commemorates the significant event in 1947 when Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. • The first Home Minister of India, delivered the inaugural address to the probationers of Administrative Services Officers.
Earth Day 	• Earth Day, an annual event on April 22nd, serves as a platform to showcase solidarity for environmental conservation. • Originating on April 22, 1970, it has evolved into a global movement coordinated by Earthday.org, engaging over 1 billion individuals across more than 193 countries. • The official theme for 2024, "Planet vs. Plastics", underscores the urgent need to address plastic pollution and safeguard the health of our planet.

Practice Set

1. With reference to ADITI Scheme consider the following statements:

1. The scheme has been launched by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.
2. The scheme aims to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

2. With reference to the recently launched NAMASTE scheme, consider the following statements:

1. The scheme is aimed at ensuring the safety and dignity of sanitation workers in urban India.
2. It is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
3. The scheme will be implemented for a period of three years from FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26.

How many of the above statements is/are correct?

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

3. Recently, Mahatari Vandana Yojana to provide financial assistance to the women was launched in which state?

- (a) Himachal Pradesh
(b) Chhattisgarh
(c) Odisha
(d) Jharkhand

4. Recently in news, which ministry has launched PM-SHABD, a news sharing service?

- (a) Ministry of Education
(b) Ministry of Cooperation
(c) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
(d) Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

5. Recently, India held its first '2+2' defence and foreign ministerial dialogue with which country?

- (a) Sri Lanka (b) Bangladesh
(c) Mexico (d) Brazil

6. Recently, India signed an agreement for the establishment of the Joint Economic and Trade Committee (JETCO) with which country?

- (a) Haiti (b) Dominican Republic
(c) Cuba (d) Bahamas

7. Consider the following statements:

1. India and Nicaragua has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Pharmacopoeia.
2. Nicaragua has become the first country in the Spanish-speaking world to recognise Indian Pharmacopoeia.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

8. Consider the following statements with reference to hydrogen fuel ferry:

1. India's first indigenously developed hydrogen fuel cell ferry is manufactured by the Cochin Shipyard.
2. It has the capacity to accommodate 50 people and is powered by a 50-kilowatt PEM fuel cell

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

9. What is the name of the first India-specific AI model developed to determine the age of the foetus in pregnant women during the second and third trimesters?

- (a) Garbhini-GA2 (b) Garbhvati-GA2
(c) Grihani-GA3 (d) Garbhini-GA4

10. Which of the following statements about 'Iris', India's first AI teacher, is correct?

- (a) Iris can handle questions in only one language
(b) Iris is a passive presence in the classroom without interactive capabilities.
(c) Iris is equipped with a 4-wheel chassis for mobility.
(d) Iris is designed to replace human teachers entirely.

11. How many of the following statements about ISRO's launchport in Tamil Nadu's Kulasekarapattinam is correct?

1. It is the second rocket launchport of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)
2. It is situated at a geographically advantageous location in coastal Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district.
3. It will be extensively and exclusively used for commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches.

Select the correct answer from the codes given below:

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

12. Recently seen in news, Tartrazine, Carmoisine, Sunset Yellow and Rhodamine-1 are a type of:
- Natural hair colour
 - Artificial dye colour
 - Rare Earth elements
 - Mineral found in foods
13. Which of the following statements are not true regarding the SAKHI app?
- SAKHI stands for Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction.
 - It is designed by Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)
 - It provides real-time health monitoring for astronauts, including tracking parameters like blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen saturation.
 - It primarily focused on enhancing astronauts' entertainment options during the mission
14. With reference to naming of the landing site for Chandrayaan-3's Vikram lander as 'Statio Shiv Shakti', consider the following statements:
- Shiva represents a resolution for the well- being of humanity.
 - Shakti provides us with the power to achieve those resolutions.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
15. With reference to recently launched Chakshu facility, consider the following statements:
- 'Chakshu' is an initiative empowering citizens to proactively report suspected fraud communication.
 - It is launched by Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- 1 only
 - 2 only
 - Both 1 and 2
 - Neither 1 nor 2
16. Which of the following statements are true regarding the Digital Criminal Case Management System (CCMS) Platform:
- It aims to standardize investigations and compile terror-related data across India.
 - It is designed to facilitate coordination among law enforcement agencies and improve the efficiency of investigations.
 - The platform is developed by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- Select the correct answer from the codes given below:
- 1 and 2 only
 - 2 and 3 only
 - 3 only
 - 1 only
17. Which of the following personalities has been appointed as the Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG)?
- Anurag Agarwal
 - Daljit Singh Chaudhary
 - Rajendra Prasad Goyal
 - AS Rajeev
18. How many Election Commissioners are there in the Election Commission of India after the appointment of Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu?
- 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
19. In the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2022, what was the rank of India among 193 countries?
- 100
 - 108
 - 115
 - 120
20. Which of the following prestigious award has Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received from Bhutan, making him the first non- Bhutanese recipient?
- Order of the Golden Dragon
 - Order of the Thunder Dragon
 - Order of the Dragon King
 - Order of the Druk Gyalpo
21. Which of the following statements about Human Development Index is not correct?
- India's position in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) for 2022 improved slightly, ranking 130 out of 193 countries.
 - The HDI is a measure of human development that takes into account factors such as life expectancy, education, and per capita income.
 - The Human Development Index (HDI) is an index that is published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
 - The Human Development Index (HDI) was introduced by the U.N. in 1990.
22. Match the List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the code given below:

	List-I (GI Tag Products)		List-II (States)
A.	Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi	1.	Madhya Pradesh
B.	Banglar muslin	2.	Odisha
C.	Riyawan Garlic	3.	West Bengal
D.	Majuli Mask and Majuli Manuscript Painting	4.	Assam

- A-1, B-2, C-3, D-4
- A-2, B-3, C-1, D-4
- A-4, B-3, C-1, D-2
- A-3, B-2, C-4, D-1

23. Consider the following statements:
1. Sheetal Devi, a para archer, has been appointed as the national icon for the disabled by the Election Commission of India (ECI).
 2. Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu have been appointed as new Election Commissioners.
- Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
24. Who has been sworn in as a new member of the Lokpal (ombudsman) in India alongside Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and Pankaj Kumar?
- (a) Ajay Tirkey (b) Pawan Kumar
(c) Sunita Sharma (d) Anil Rajput
25. Which of the following region is famous for Ambaji White Marble quarries?
- (a) Gujarat (b) Rajasthan
(c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Maharashtra
26. Which of the following pairs of GI tag products and their states is not correctly matched?
- (a) Risa - Tripura
(b) Lac bangles - Hyderabad
(c) Rogan Craft - Gujarat
(d) Narasapur crochet lace - Meghalaya
27. In which of the following states the Dibang Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project located?
- (a) Arunachal Pradesh
(b) Assam
(c) Manipur
(d) Meghalaya
28. Consider the following statements:
1. India ranked 126th out of 146 countries.
 2. Denmark has been named the happiest country in the world for the seventh year in a row.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
29. Consider the following statements about Prasar Bharati Board:
1. Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency, established by the Prasar Bharati Act of 1988.
 2. It includes Doordarshan Television Network and All India Radio.
 3. Navneet Kumar Sehgal has been appointed as the new chairperson of the Prasar Bharati Board after a vacancy of four years.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 and 2 (b) 2 and 3
(c) 1 and 3 (d) 1, 2 and 3
30. Which of the following player won the Indian Wells ATP tournament defeating Daniil Medvedev in straight sets?
- (a) Novak Djokovic (b) Rafael Nadal
(c) Carlos Alcaraz (d) Roger Federer
31. Consider the following statements about Shela Tunnel:
1. Sela Tunnel is a road tunnel ensures all- weather connectivity between Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh.
 2. This tunnel is the longest bi-lane tunnel in the world at 13,000 feet.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
32. Consider the following statements:
1. As per the SIPRI report, India was the world's top arms importer for the period 2019-2023.
 2. SIPRI stands for Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
33. Which of the following neighbouring countries is the Gorsam Kora Festival related to?
- (a) Bhutan (b) Nepal
(c) China (d) Myanmar
34. Consider the following statements about Kochrab Ashram:
1. Founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1915 upon his return to India from South Africa.
 2. It was initially named Satyagraha Ashram.
- Which of the above statements is correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above
35. Usha Mehta's main role in the Indian independence movement was
- (a) In establishing an underground radio station during the Quit India Movement
(b) In the leadership of the mass movement in Lucknow during the protest against Simon Commission.
(c) Leading a contingent of Azad Hind Fauj.
(d) As a participant in the first Round Table Conference.
36. In which region of India did the dance form "Mohiniyattam" develop?
- (a) Tamil Nadu (b) Kerala
(c) Odisha (d) Manipur
37. Recently, the Indian Navy commissioned INS Jatayu at which of the following places?
- (a) Lakshadweep (b) Andaman and Nicobar
(c) Karwar (d) Visakhapatnam
38. Which of the following countries is Yars Missile related to?
- (a) India (b) Russia
(c) Malaysia (d) Nepal

39. Which of the following regions is associated with the 'Project Seabird' initiated by the Ministry of Defence, India?
- (a) Lakshadweep (b) Maldives
(c) Karnataka (d) Tamil Nadu
40. With which country will the Indian Coast Guard organize an exercise called 'Sea Defenders-2024'?
- (a) France (b) Germany
(c) Russia (d) USA
41. Which of the following features are present in INS Tushil?
1. Incorporation of "stealth technology" for low radar and underwater noise signatures.
 2. Equipped with Indian-supplied equipment such as surface-to-surface missiles,
 3. Sonar systems,
 4. Surface surveillance radar
- (a) 1 and 2 only (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
(c) All of the above (d) 1, 3 and 4 only
42. Which of the following locations was the tri- service exercise 'Bharat Shakti' held?
- (a) Pokharan (b) Umroi
(c) Goa (d) Andaman
43. Consider the following statements regarding Exercise 'Tiger Triumph':
1. It is a tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise.
 2. It is conducted between India, the United States and Japan.
- Which of the statements given above are incorrect?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
44. Consider the following statements about India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) TriLateral (TRILAT) Exercise:
1. It was started in the year 2022.
 2. The 2024 edition of IMT Trilateral exercise was conducted in Mozambique and Tanzania.
- Which of the above statements are true?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None
45. Recently in news, the Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samudra Prahari is a type of:
- (a) Search and rescue operations vessel
(b) Drug Smuggling prevention vessel
(c) Anti-piracy mission vessel
(d) Pollution control vessel
46. Which organisation sponsors and celebrates the World Health Day every year on 7 April?
- (a) International Health Organization
(b) United Nations Development Programme
(c) Food and Agriculture Organization
(d) World Health Organisation
47. Consider the following statements with reference to B.R. Ambedkar:
1. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated every year on 14th April.
 2. "The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution", "The Untouchables, Who Are They, and Why They Became Untouchables", "The Annihilation of Caste" are some of the books written by him.
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) Neither 1 nor 2
48. Consider the following statements about Group of Friends:
1. There are 40 members in this group.
 2. India spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends (GOF) in 2022.
- Which of the above statements are true?
- (a) 1 only (b) 2 only
(c) Both 1 and 2 (d) None of the above
49. Consider the following countries:
1. Azerbaijan
 2. Bahrain
 3. Brunei
 4. Indonesia
- How many of the above countries are members of the 'Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Plus' (OPEC+) group?
- (a) Only one (b) Only two
(c) Only three (d) All four
50. From A Car Shed To The Corner Room & Beyond is written by:
- (a) S Raman (b) Suzanna Arundhati Roy
(c) Amitabh Ghosh (d) None

Answer Key

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. (b) | 2. (c) | 3. (b) | 4. (c) | 5. (d) | 6. (b) | 7. (c) | 8. (c) | 9. (a) | 10. (c) |
| 11. (c) | 12. (b) | 13. (d) | 14. (c) | 15. (c) | 16. (a) | 17. (b) | 18. (c) | 19. (b) | 20. (d) |
| 21. (a) | 22. (b) | 23. (d) | 24. (a) | 25. (a) | 26. (d) | 27. (a) | 28. (a) | 29. (b) | 30. (c) |
| 31. (b) | 32. (c) | 33. (a) | 34. (c) | 35. (a) | 36. (b) | 37. (a) | 38. (b) | 39. (c) | 40. (d) |
| 41. (c) | 42. (a) | 43. (b) | 44. (c) | 45. (d) | 46. (d) | 47. (c) | 48. (c) | 49. (c) | 50. (a) |

Solution

1. (b) Explanation:

- The Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme **aims to promote innovations in critical and strategic defence technologies.**
- The start-ups are eligible to receive grant-in-aid of up to ₹25 crore for their research, development, and innovation endeavours in defence technology.
- **Cost:** ₹750 crore for the period **2023-24 to 2025-26.**
- **Under: iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** framework of **Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence.**
- It's objective is to develop about **30 deep- tech critical and strategic technologies** in the proposed timeframe.

2. (c) Explanation:

- The **National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem or the NAMASTE Scheme** is a testament to the Government's human-centric approach where no sanitation workers have to manually engage in the **hazardous task of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations.**
- It is **jointly initiated by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.**
- The NAMASTE scheme will be **implemented by the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC).**
- **Period: Three years from FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26** with the cost of 349.73 crores.

3. (b) Explanation:

- The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi launched the **Mahatari Vandana Yojana**, to provide **financial assistance to the women of the State.**
- PM Modi disbursed the first installment under the Scheme and **boosted women empowerment in Chhattisgarh.**
- The scheme has been launched in Chhattisgarh to provide financial assistance of ₹1000 per

month to eligible married women of the state as a monthly Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

- **All eligible married women of the state who are above 21 years of age** as of January 1, 2024. Widows, divorced, and deserted women will also be eligible for this scheme.

4. (c) Explanation:

- **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting launched PB-SHABD, a news sharing service** from Prasar Bharati and websites of DD News and Akashvani News as well as updated News on Air mobile app at an event in National Media Centre, New Delhi.
- PB SHABD platform has been designed to **provide daily news feeds in video, audio, text, photo and other** formats to the subscribers from media landscape.
- The service would provide users with **up-to-date news from various regions of the country**, utilising the extensive network of
- Prasar Bharati reporters, correspondents, and stringers.

5. (d) Explanation:

- **India and Brazil conducted their first '2+2' defence and foreign ministerial dialogue.**
- They expanded cooperation in areas of energy, critical minerals, technology and counter-terrorism.
- **About 2+2 Dialogue:** The '2+2' defense and foreign ministerial dialogue **involves the participation of the defence and foreign ministers of two countries**, along with their respective counterparts, to discuss strategic and security-related issues, as well as diplomatic matters.
- India has conducted '2+2' dialogues with the following countries: **the US, Australia, Japan, and Russia.**

6. (b) Explanation:

- The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MIREX) of the Dominican Republic** in Santo Domingo saw the **signing of the protocol for the establishment of the Joint Economic and**

Trade Committee (JETCO) between India and the Dominican Republic.

- The agreement for the establishment of JETCO was approved after 25 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries, representing a significant milestone in enhancing the current economic and commercial ties.
- It aims to enhance and advance collaboration in trade, services, industrial technology, and other sectors through technical assistance, training programmes, and capacity building initiatives.

7. (c) Explanation:

- **India and Central American nation Nicaragua signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Pharmacopoeia** on Cooperation in the field of the regulation of medicines.
- In this regard, **Nicaragua has become the First Country in the Spanish speaking world to recognise Indian Pharmacopoeia.**
- A pharmacopoeia is a book containing directions for the **identification of compound medicines**, and published by the authority of a government or a medical or pharmaceutical society.
- **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission is an autonomous institution of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** which sets standards for all drugs that are manufactured, sold and consumed in India.

8. (c) Explanation:

- India's first indigenously made **hydrogen fuel ferry** was virtually inaugurated by PM Modi.
- **Manufactured by:** Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)
- **Deployed for:** service at Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Built cost:** ₹18 crore.
- The ferry will be handed over to the **Inland Waterways Authority of India** by the CSL after rigorous trials.
- This vessel uses a **50-kW PEM (proton-exchange membrane) fuel cell**, with **Lithium-Ion Phosphate batteries**.
- It is a **24-meter-long catamaran, which can carry 50 people in its air-conditioned passenger area.**

9. (a) Explanation:

- The **first India-specific Artificial Intelligence (AI) model named Garbhini-GA2** has been developed by researchers at **Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras)** and **Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (THSTI), Faridabad.**

- It aims to **determine the age of a foetus in a pregnant woman** in the **second and third trimesters precisely.**
- Accurate **'Gestational Age' (GA)** is necessary for the appropriate care of pregnant women and for **determining precise delivery dates.**
- Called **'Garbhini-GA2'**, this is the first late-trimester GA estimation model to be **developed and validated using Indian population data.**
- GARBH-Ini is a flagship programme of DBT, and the development of these population-specific models for estimating gestational age is a commendable outcome. These models are being validated across the country.

10. (c) Explanation:

- Kerala, known for its advancements in education, has recently implemented its **inaugural generative AI teacher, Iris.**
- **Developed:** In partnership with **Makerlabs Edutech Private Limited.**
- **Iris, a humanoid, was introduced to KTCT Higher Secondary School** in Thiruvananthapuram with the purpose of improving the educational experience for students.
- Built under the **Atal Tinkering Lab (ATL) project initiated by NITI Aayog**, Iris boasts a range of features aimed at revolutionising traditional teaching methods.
- **Features:**
- **Ability to speak three languages**
- **Tackle complex questions**
- A personalised learning journey for each student.
- Voice assistance
- Interactive learning modules
- **Manipulation capabilities**
- Mobility

11. (c) Explanation:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone of the **second rocket launchport of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** at Kulasekarapattinam.
- It is situated at a **geographically advantageous location** in coastal Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district.
- The facility costs **₹986 crore.**
- It will be extensively and exclusively used for **commercial, on-demand, and small satellite launches in the future.**
- To ensure that ISRO's first launchport, the **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR**

in Sriharikota, is **not overburdened with a high number** of launches, the space agency has decided to build another facility.

- At present, the trajectory taken by all launches from SHAR exhibits an extended duration due to the necessity of traversing an eastward path over Sri Lanka prior to commencing the southerly flight.
- This results in the consumption of extra fuel. Nevertheless, future launches from Kulasekarapattinam, situated several kilometres west of Colombo, would not have the same requirement. This would enable a direct southerly flight and conserve the already scarce fuel onboard SSLV.

12. (b) **Explanation:**

- The Karnataka government recently “banned” the use of **harmful colouring agents in gobhi manchurian and cotton candy**.
- The violation will attract imprisonment of up to 7 years and fine of up to ₹10 lakhs.
- The action has been taken as the consumption of snacks containing these artificial colours through food colouring agent Rhodamine-B that poses long-term health risks, including cancer.
- Of 171 samples of gobi manchurian collected, 64 were found to be safe while as many as 106 were found to be unsafe. Meanwhile, a total of 25 cotton candy samples were collected, of which, 10 were found to be safe and 15 unsafe.
- **Tartrazine, Carmoisine, Sunset Yellow and Rhodamine-1B** were some of the **artificial colours** found to be used in the samples.
- **What is Rhodamine-B?**
- It is a chemical colour used in **dyeing clothes, paper, leather, printing, and plastics**.
- It is **not one of the permitted food colouring agents** under the country’s food safety regulation.

13. (d) **Explanation:**

- The Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) facility has created a **versatile ‘SAKHI app’** designed to **assist astronauts on their Gaganyaan space flight mission**.
- It refers to **‘Space-borne Assistant and Knowledge Hub for Crew Interaction’ (SAKHI)**.
- During the mission, the **app will perform a range of tasks** such as looking up vital technical information or communicating with one another for Gaganyaan Crew.
- Its features include:

- **Health Monitoring:** It will provide information on key parameters like blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen saturation & invaluable insights into the **crew’s physical condition throughout the mission**.
- It will also **remind them about their hydration and dietary schedules** and sleep patterns.
- Astronauts can use the app to maintain a log on the mission in multiple formats including **voice records, texts and images**.
- It will keep the crew connected with the onboard computer and ground-based stations, guaranteeing a seamless communication link.

14. (c) **Explanation:**

- The **International Astronomical Union (IAU)**, has officially approved the **naming of the landing site for Chandrayaan-3’s Vikram lander as ‘Statio Shiv Shakti’**.
- The choice to call the landing location ‘Shiva Shakti’ was announced on March 19, 2024, subsequent to Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s statement on August 26, 2023.
- According to PM Modi, **Shiva represents a resolution for the well-being of humanity, while Shakti provides us with the power to achieve those resolutions**.
- The Gazetteer of Planetary Nomenclature, a compilation of planetary names sanctioned by the International Astronomical Union (IAU), provides a definition for **‘Statio Shiv Shakti’ as a compound term derived from Indian mythology that symbolises the dual nature of men (Shiva) and women (Shakti)**.

15. (c) **Explanation:**

- **Department of Telecommunications (DoT) two portals: Chakshu Facility and the Digital Intelligence Platform (DIP) was launched.**
- Chakshu (चक्षु) is the latest addition to the citizen centric facilities already available on the Sanchar Saathi portal of DoT.
- ‘Chakshu’ facilitates citizens to report suspected fraud communication received **over call, SMS or WhatsApp with the intention of defrauding like KYC expiry** or update of bank account / payment wallet / SIM / gas connection / electricity connection, sextortion, impersonation as government official / relative for sending money, disconnection of all mobile numbers by Department of Telecommunications etc.

16. (a) **Explanation:**

- A unique digital **Criminal Case Management System (CCMS), designed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA)** was launched.

- The newly developed Criminal Case Management System will **enable the NIA personnel to better coordinate in terrorism and organized crime cases**, thereby improving justice delivery.
- The new stand-alone version of CCMS has been developed by NIA as a **user-friendly and easy-to-deploy, customizable, browser-based software** to help the State Police forces in their investigations and prosecution.
- The system will **organise, integrate and digitalise the data generated during investigations**, such as case documents, extracted data, collected evidence, and the charge sheets presented to the court.

17. (b) **Explanation:**

- Daljit Singh Chaudhary, a 1990 batch IPS officer, has been appointed as the **Director General (DG) of the National Security Guard (NSG)**.
- The NSG operates under federal jurisdiction, specializing in counter-terrorism and anti-hijacking operations.

18. (c) **Explanation:**

- **Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** have been appointed as new Election Commissioners by the **three-member committee** led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The appointments were made after the resignation of Election Commissioner Arun Goel, leaving the Election Commission panel with only the Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar.

19. (b) **Explanation:**

- **India has improved its ranking by 14 positions** on the **Gender Inequality Index (GII) 2022** compared to the previous year.
- In the **GII 2022, India ranked 108 out of 193 countries**, with a score of 0.437.
- The **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** is a composite measure that evaluates gender inequality across three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation.

20. (d) **Explanation:**

- **Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi** has become the first non-Bhutanese recipient of the **‘Order of the Druk Gyalpo’, Bhutan’s highest civilian award**.
- The ‘Order of the Druk Gyalpo’ is a lifetime achievement award and is considered the pinnacle of Bhutan’s honor system.

21. (a) **Explanation:**

- **India’s position** in the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) for 2022 improved slightly, ranking **134 out of 193 countries**.
- The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is an index that is published by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- The HDI is a measure of human development that takes into account factors such as **life expectancy, education, and per capita income**.
- The **Human Development Index (HDI)** is a measurement system used by the **United Nations** to evaluate the level of individual human development in each country. It was introduced by the U.N. in 1990.

22. (b) **Explanation:**

- The famous **Cuttack Rupa Tarakasi (Silver Filigree)** of **Odisha** has been given the **Geographical Indication (GI)**.
- The **Banglar muslin** is one of the popular traditional handloom crafts of **Bengal**.
- **Madhya Pradesh Ratlam’s Riyawan Garlic** Receives GI Tag.
- Riyawan Garlic is renowned for its unique quality and high yield, with each bulb containing five to six cloves.
- **Assam Majuli Mask and Majuli Manuscript Painting:** Majuli Manuscript Painting and Majuli Mask Making, representing **Assam’s heritage**, were registered as **Geographical Indications**.

23. (d) **Explanation:**

- **Sheetal Devi** was announced as the **National Icon in the PwD category**.
- **Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu** have been appointed as new Election Commissioners by the **three-member committee** led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

24. (a) **Explanation:**

- **Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi, Pankaj Kumar, and Ajay Tirkey** have been sworn in as new members of the **Lokpal (ombudsman)** in India.
- The institution of the **Ombudsman was first established in Sweden in 1809** and gained popularity globally after being adopted by **New Zealand and Norway in 1962**.

25. (a) **Explanation:**

- **Ambaji White Marble** comes from the Ambaji region, known for its marble quarries, situated in the state of **Gujarat, India**.

- It is formed through the recrystallization of limestone under the earth's crust due to intense pressure and heat.

26. (d) **Explanation:**

- **Narasapur crochet lace** products were brought by missionaries to Narsapur, **Andhra Pradesh**.
- Intricate craftsmanship, unique designs, high quality.
- **Tripura's traditional tribal attire 'risa'** received the Geographical Indication (GI).
- Handwoven cloth used as a female upper garment.
- Risa is a part of traditional **Tripuri** attire that comprises three parts – **risa, rignai and rikutu**.
- **HYDERABAD:** In a testament to heritage and craftsmanship, the **lac bangles** from the city were conferred the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**.
- **Rogan Craft of Kutch, Gujarat** is among the products awarded the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**.

27. (a) **Explanation:**

- The Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone for the **Dibang Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project** recently.
- **Capacity:** It will produce around **2,880 MW** of electricity.
- **Location:** Lower **Dibang Valley** district of **Arunachal Pradesh**.
- Designed as a project under National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and developed over **Dibang River (a tributary of Brahmaputra)** To be constructed with **Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC)** technique.
- It will be the **highest RCC dam in the World**.

28. (a) **Explanation:**

- **India** ranked **126th** out of 146 countries.
- **Finland** has been named the **happiest country in the world for the seventh year in a row**, followed by **Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden**.
- **Afghanistan** is ranked as the **unhappiest country**.

29. (b) **Explanation:**

- **Navneet Kumar Sehgal** has been appointed as the new chairperson of the **Prasar Bharati Board** after a vacancy of four years.
- **Prasar Bharati** is **India's largest public broadcasting agency**, established by the **Prasar Bharati Act of 1990**.
- It includes **Doordarshan Television Network** and **All India Radio**.

30. (c) **Explanation:**

- **Carlos Alcaraz of Spain** defeated **Daniil Medvedev of Russia** in straight sets to win the Indian Wells ATP tournament, becoming the first player to win back-to-back titles since Novak Djokovic.

31. (b) **Explanation:**

- **Sela Tunnel** is a road tunnel at 3,000 metres (9,800 ft) which ensures all-weather connectivity between **Guwahati in Assam** and **Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh**.
- This tunnel is the **longest bi-lane tunnel in the world at 13,000 feet**.

32. (c) **Explanation:**

- According to the latest data from the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**, **India** was the **world's top arms importer** for the period **2019-2023**, with a **4.7% increase** compared to the previous period.

33. (a) **Key Concept:**

- **The Gorsam Kora festival**, symbolising the enduring friendship between India and Bhutan, commenced on 7th March and concluded on 10th March this year.

• **Explanation:**

Gorsam Kora Festival	• The festival is held at Gorsam Chorten, a 93-foot-tall Stupa constructed in the 13th century AD by a local monk, Lama Pradhar. • It served as the first rest stop for the 14th Dalai Lama upon fleeing Tibet in 1959.
History	• The Gorsam Kora festival is steeped in history, centered around the Gorsam Chorten. • It is older than the Tawang Monastery and has historical significance as the first refuge for the Dalai Lama upon his escape from Tibet.

34. (c) **Explanation:**

- It was founded by **Mahatma Gandhi in 1915** upon his return to **India from South Africa**.
- Initially named Satyagraha Ashram, it was established based on Gandhi's philosophy of achieving India's independence through nonviolent means.
- Gopal Krishna Gokhale urged Gandhi to return to India, recognizing his skills as a community organizer.

- Gandhi chose Ahmedabad as his base, believing he could best serve the nation through the Gujarati language. He started living in **Kochrab village on May 20, 1915**.
- Initially, a bungalow was provided by lawyer Jeevanlal Desai, but Gandhi soon transformed it into Satyagraha Ashram.
- The colonial-style building features a white-washed façade and includes hostels and kitchens.

35. (a) Explanation:

- Gandhiji and other Congress leaders were arrested on August 9, 1942, as soon as the Quit India Movement began.
- Usha Mehta established an underground radio station in Bombay.
- Ram Manohar Lohia, Jaiprakash Narayan, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali and Sucheta Kripalani led the movement underground.

36. (b) Explanation:

- Mohiniyattam (Mohiniattam) is a classical dance form of Kerala in South India.
- Mohiniyattam gets its name from the word 'Mohini', the feminine form of Lord Vishnu; the word means 'dance of Mohini'.
- Mohiniyattam is based on Natya Shastra's lasya style. It has delicate movements and more feminine facial expressions.
- The movements are gentle and glide-like. They do not have terse rhythmic steps.
- More emphasis is on facial expressions and hand gestures.
- There are features borrowed from other dance forms of Kerala like the Nangyar Koothu and the Thiruvathirakkali.
- It is traditionally performed only by women. Kathakali, on the other hand, was confined to men, although, in modern times, women also take it up.
- Dr. Sunanda Nair became the first in India to acquire a Master's degree in Mohiniyattam.

37. (a) Explanation:

- **Lakshadweep:** The Indian Navy commissioned INS Jatayu, at Minicoy island in the Lakshadweep Islands, its second base in Lakshadweep after INS Dweepakshak in Kavaratti.
- The Navy commissioned its first MH-60R multi-role helicopter squadron INAS 334 'Seahawks' at Kochi, a major capability boost for its rotary fleet and its anti-submarine warfare capabilities.

38. (b) Explanation:

- **Yars missile is related to Russia.**

- Russia's defence ministry recently announced the successful test firing of the Yars intercontinental ballistic nuclear missile.
- The Yars, or RS-24 or SS-29, is a Russian-made intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) equipped with multiple independently targetable warheads, enabling it to engage various objectives simultaneously.

39. (c) Explanation:

- The Indian Defence Minister inaugurated a number of infrastructure projects at the Indian Navy's strategically located base in **Karnataka's Karwar**.
- **Project Seabird is a naval infrastructure project for the creation and development of a naval base at Karwar (Karnataka) on the west coast of India.**
- These projects, developed under Project 'Seabird,' aim to enhance India's long-term security interests in the Indian Ocean region.
- The first phase of Project Seabird was designed to accommodate 10 ships and was successfully concluded in 2011. The Cabinet Committee on Security has approved Phase-IIA of the project recently.



40. (d) Explanation:

- Indian Coast Guard will conduct joint exercise 'Sea Defenders-2024' with the US Coast Guard to strengthen bilateral cooperation.
- This joint exercise will be conducted off the coast of Port Blair on 09-10 March 2024.

41. (c) Explanation:

- India's newest naval asset, INS Tushil, commenced its sea trials from Russia's Baltiysk naval base recently.

Aspect	Description
Acquisition	First Krivak-III frigate acquired under Project 11356M.

Project 11356M	- Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) signed between India and Russia in October 2016. - Partnership to purchase/construct four additional Admiral Grigorovich class frigates (Project 11356M). - Russia to supply two frigates (INS Tushil and INS Tamala), while India to construct the other two domestically. - Technical assistance provided by Russia for setting up production of 11356 project frigates in India.
Features	- Incorporation of "stealth technology" for low radar and underwater noise signatures. - Equipped with Indian-supplied equipment such as surface-to-surface missiles, sonar systems, surface surveillance radar, communication suites, etc. - Also equipped with Russian surface-to-air missiles and gun mounts.
Design and Capabilities	- Designed to combat submarines and warships in brown and blue waters. - Capable of repelling air attacks independently and within formations.

Specifications	- Displacement: 3620 tons - Length: 124.8 meters - Full speed: 30 knots - Cruising range: 4850 miles
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42. (a) Explanation:

- The Prime Minister recently witnessed the tri-service exercise 'Bharat Shakti' in Pokhran, Rajasthan.

Exercise Name	Integrated Tri-Service Firepower and Manoeuvre Exercise
Location	Pokhran, Rajasthan
Purpose	To demonstrate calibrated tactical usage of advanced technology against perceived threats.
Initiative	Grounded in the Aatmanirbhara (Selfreliance) initiative of the nation.
Operational Scope	Simulating realistic, synergized, multidomain operations to counter threats across various domains.

43. (b) Explanation:

Tiger Triumph exercise commenced on the Eastern seaboard on Monday and will continue till March 31, 2024.

Statement 1 is correct: Tiger Triumph – 24 is a bilateral tri-Service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise between India and the United States.

- It is scheduled to take place on the Eastern Seaboard from March 18 to 31, 2024.

Statement 2 is incorrect: it is conducted with India and the United States.

- This exercise, aimed at enhancing readiness and cooperation between the two forces, is part of the ongoing partnership between India and the US.

44. (c) Explanation:

INS Tir and INS Sujata will participate in the forthcoming edition of India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) TriLateral (TRILAT) Exercise.

Date	Activity	Location
21-24 Mar	Harbour Phase: Planning Conference and Joint Training Activities	Zanzibar (Tanzania)
		Maputo (Mozambique)
25-29 Mar	Sea Phase: Countering Asymmetric Threats, VBSS, Boat Handling, etc.	Offshore

- In 2022, India started the first edition of the Trilateral Maritime Exercise with Tanzania and Mozambique to enhance maritime cooperation in the region.
- The possibility of increasing maritime domain awareness exists through cooperation with the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre in Madagascar.

45. (d) **Explanation:**

Key Concept: The Indian Coast Guard Ship (ICGS) Samudra Prahari was deployed on an overseas mission encompassing ASEAN nations.

Explanation:

- The **Indian Coast Guard Ship Samudra Prahari, a Pollution Control Vessel.**
- This deployment is part of India's ASEAN Marine Pollution Response initiatives, **demonstrating the Indian Coast Guard (ICG)'s Pollution Response capabilities** and commitment to addressing marine pollution and building regional capacity.
- The ship was called in **Bangkok, Ho Chi Minh, and Jakarta during deployment.**
- The system is equipped with tanks and inflatable barges specifically designed for the **containment and storage of oil spills.**
- The vessel has the ability to **conduct oil recovery operations** without any obstacles, and it has a storage capacity of 500 kiloliters.
- To **reduce the impact of oil spills in the Exclusive Economic Zone**, it is equipped with the most cutting-edge pollution response and control equipment available.

46. (d) **Explanation:**

- The idea for World Health day originated from the **First Health Assembly held by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948**, which was the same year the WHO was established.
- The First World Health Assembly decided to celebrate **World Health Day on April 7 of each year, starting from 1950.**

- This day serves as an opportunity for the WHO to **draw global attention to a specific health theme** each year and highlight a priority area of concern for global health.
- Over the years, **World Health Day has shed light on crucial health issues such as mental health**, maternal and child care, climate change, and more, aiming to raise awareness and promote action on these important aspects of global health.

47. (c) **Explanation:**

- **B.R. Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated every year on 14th April** and marks the birthday of **B.R. Ambedkar**, celebrating his contributions as a politician and social reformer.
- He was an Indian **jurist, economist, social reformer and political leader** who **headed the committee drafting the Constitution of India** from the Constituent Assembly debates.
- He served as **Law and Justice minister in the first cabinet of Jawaharlal Nehru**, and inspired the Dalit Buddhist movement after renouncing Hinduism.
- Some famous books written by B.R. Ambedkar include: *"The Problem of the Rupee: Its Origin and Its Solution"*, *"The Untouchables, Who Are They, and Why They Became Untouchables"*, *"The Annihilation of Caste"*.

48. (c) **Explanation:**

- India, as the leader of the **Group of Friends (GOF)** consisting of **40 member states**, called for a meeting to deliberate on strategies to enhance legal frameworks to combat crimes directed at peacekeepers.
- India spearheaded the establishment of the Group of Friends (GOF) in 2022 during its **presidency of the UN Security Council.**
- The GOF, co-chaired by **India, Bangladesh, Egypt, France, Morocco, and Nepal**, comprises 40 member states.

49. (c) **Explanation:**

Over the past few years, OPEC+ meetings have focused on reducing oil production to help stabilize oil prices after the COVID-19 pandemic, which dramatically reduced demand and led to significantly lower oil prices. More recently, on April 2, 2023, OPEC+ members agreed to cut oil production by 1.2 million b/d until the end of 2023.

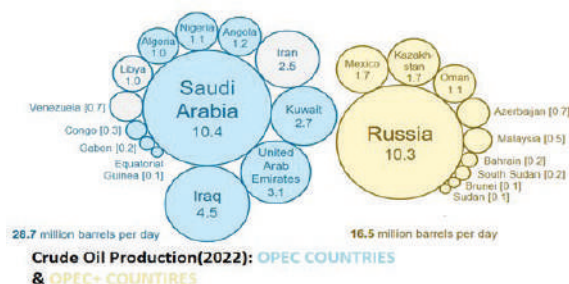
About OPEC+:

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, also known as OPEC, was formed in 1960 by Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. The organization has since expanded to 13 members.

OPEC regularly meets to set oil production targets and coordinate output to help manage global oil prices for the entire group.

In 2016, largely in response to dramatically falling oil prices driven by significant increases in U.S. shale oil output, OPEC signed an agreement with 10 other oil-producing countries to create what is now known as OPEC+. **OPEC-plus countries include:**

- **Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan, and Sudan.**



50. (a) **Explanation:**

- S. Raman's autobiography, "From A Car Shed To The Corner Room & Beyond," offers a first-person account of his remarkable journey from a clerk at SBI to becoming the Chairman and Managing Director of Canara Bank and a full-time Member of SEBI.
- The book explores the intricate dance between personal integrity, professional challenges, and systemic issues in the financial world.



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