

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 2
FEBRUARY
2023

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- FOUR-POINT FORMULA ON KASHMIR ISSUE
- NO BAR ON CONTESTING TWO SEATS IN ONE POLL: SC
- PUNISH TO REFORM: RAJASTHAN'S OPEN PRISON MODEL
- JAMMU, VILLAGE DEFENCE AND GOVERNANCE
- THE ROLE OF LABOUR UNIONS IN EMERGING SECTORS
- SC ON ALDERMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

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- Follow on Public Offer (FPO)
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- Global Climate Resilience Fund
- Naval LCA lands on INS Vikrant
- Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy
- Gaganyaan Mission

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- China's balloon & boundaries of international law

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— **Disclaimer** —

The current affairs articles are segregated from prelims and mains perspective, such separation is maintained in terms of structure of articles. Mains articles have more focus on analysis and prelims articles have more focus on facts.

However, this doesn't mean that Mains articles don't cover facts and PT articles can't have analysis. You are suggested to read all of them for all stages of examination.

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SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOUR-POINT FORMULA ON KASHMIR ISSUE

CONTEXT:

Pakistan's former president General Pervez Musharraf, who proposed a "four-point solution" for the Kashmir dispute, has died aged 79.

Background:

- Pakistan's former **President General Pervez Musharraf** visited India at Agra Summit held in 2001 during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government.
- The visit was considered one of the most important meetings between Indian and Pakistani leaders in the recent history.
- During the Summit, a **90-minute one-on-one session** was held, where the two leaders discussed the **Kashmir issue**, cross-border terrorism, nuclear risk reduction, the release of prisoners of war, and commercial ties.
- Musharraf proposed a "**four-point solution**" for the Kashmir dispute.
- The 'Manmohan-Musharraf four-point formula' refers to a series of opaque negotiations between India and Pakistan, on equally opaque terms, which have never been formally disclosed by either government.

What was the Four-point Formula for Kashmir issue?

The Four-point Formula contained 11 or 12 important ingredients, including "substantial demilitarisation beginning with major urban centers with an agreement to keep troops to a minimum along the LoC; this was done, inter alia, also to protect Kashmiris' human rights".

- **Demilitarisation or phased withdrawal of troops:**
 - ▶ Millions of troops, on both sides of the **Line of Control (LoC)**, are stationed in Kashmir.
 - ▶ According to Musharraf, both **India and Pakistan** would have scaled back its troops in the region for a lasting peace.
 - ▶ Whether this would be gradual, phased withdrawal or not had to be worked out by the two sides.
- **No change of borders of Kashmir:** It called for allowing people of Jammu & Kashmir to move freely across the **Line of Control (LoC)**.
 - ▶ The LoC is effectively a **ceasefire line**, which both sides accepted in the **Shimla Agreement of 1972**.



- ▶ However, neither India nor Pakistan accepts it as the International Border. Both nations claim all of Kashmir.
 - ▶ If Musharraf's plan were to be accepted, India would have to accept Pakistan's sovereignty over **Pakistan Occupied Kashmir** (which Pakistan refers to as its province of Azad Kashmir) and in return, Pakistan would accept **Indian suzerainty** over the part of Jammu and Kashmir on India's side of the LoC.
 - ▶ The ceasefire line would then become the **International Border** and both sides would give up claims over the other **half of Kashmir**.
 - ▶ However, **the people of Jammu and Kashmir** would be allowed to **move freely** to the other half of the region.
 - **Self-governance without independence:**
 - ▶ Pakistan has long been an advocate of what it calls '**Kashmiri self-determination**' but Musharraf was willing to give that up in favour of a greater measure of autonomy.
 - ▶ Vajpayee would likely not have too many objections with this clause of the agreement because the Indian Constitution already **allows autonomy for J&K under Article 370**.
 - **A joint supervision mechanism in Jammu and Kashmir involving India, Pakistan and Kashmir:**
 - ▶ Musharraf's decision to include **local Kashmiri leadership** in the supervision mechanism would have given him a greater chance at selling a potential Musharraf-Vajpayee accord to the people back home in Pakistan.
- India's response to the idea:**
- There aroused certain differences **to 4 point formula** on part of India.
 - India Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh**, however, excluded any consideration of such proposals by

emphasizing that the state of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and there would be no redrawing of the international boundaries or rearrangement of regions that would blow of communal dimensions.

- The Indian claim over the **whole area of Jammu and Kashmir**, including Pakistani administered Kashmir, was repeated in March 2006.

- The doctrine of open borders or soft borders was explained by **Manmohan Singh** as “making LoC a porous border so that there could be free flow of ideas and people between the two parts of Kashmir which will, according to him, one day make LoC irrelevant.”

- Demilitarization is also not agreeable for India because they consider it as their **domestic security** related issue.
- Apart from differences over demilitarization, major obstacle in making LoC beside the point is that India considers this decision should be the eventual solution of the Kashmir dispute whereas Pakistan considers this as one of the very important confidence-building measure.
- Accepting LoC as ultimate solution to the issue means Pakistan completely gives up its case on Kashmir.

Treaties between India and Pakistan

- **Karachi Agreement** – After the first **Indo-Pakistan War** in **1947**, Karachi Agreement was entered in **1949** which made a **Ceasefire line** in the State of Jammu and Kashmir known as **Line of Control**.
- **Liaquat-Nehru Pact: Signed on 8 April 1950, it was a bilateral treaty between India and Pakistan in which refugees were allowed to return to dispose of their property, abducted women and looted property were to be returned, forced conversions were unrecognized, and minority rights were confirmed.**
- **Indus Water Treaty** –The Treaty was signed on **18 September 1960** which divided the rivers between India and Pakistan (Indus, Beas, Sutlej, Ravi, Chenab and Jhelum).
- **Tashkent Declaration** – To settle the war of 1965, Tashkent Declaration was signed on **10 January 1966** in the capital of Uzbekistan, **Tashkent**. In this Declaration, both nations agreed to restore all their previous economic relations and agreed to get back to their previous positions as it was before the War. They also agreed to work on their **Bilateral and Diplomatic relations**.
- **Simla Agreement** – After the **Indo-Pakistan** war which resulted in **independence of Bangladesh** in 1971, peace Treaty was signed between both of these countries in **1972** in Shimla.

NO BAR ON CONTESTING TWO SEATS IN ONE POLL: SC

CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court refused to set aside a provision in the election law which allows candidates to contest polls from two constituencies simultaneously.

About the case:

- A petition has argued in the Supreme Court to declare **Section 33(7) of the Representation of People Act** invalid and ultra vires.
- In response to it, the SC has mentioned that it is a matter of **political democracy** and it is the authority of **Parliament** to take a call on the matter.

Section 33(7) of the Act allows a person to contest a general election or a group of by-elections or biennial elections from two constituencies.

Government stand on the issue:

- In 2018, the government objected to the petition in court.
- It had argued that the **law cannot curtail the right of a candidate** to contest elections and curtail the polity's choice of candidates.
- The government had further told the Supreme Court that the **one-candidate-one-constituency restriction** would require a legislative amendment.

Concern associated:

- When a person contests an election from **two constituencies** and wins from both, then he/she vacates the seat in one of the two constituencies.
- The consequence is that a by-election would be required from one constituency involving avoidable expenditure on the conduct of that by-election.

Suggestions:

To address the concerns associated with elections from two constituencies, a poll body has given the following suggestions:

- The poll body had even suggested that a candidate should deposit an amount of **Rs 5 lakh for contesting in two constituencies** in an Assembly election or **Rs.10 lakh in a general election**.
- The amount would be used to cover the expenses for a by-election in the eventuality that he or she was victorious in both constituencies and had to relinquish one.

Features of the Representation of People Act, 1951:

- Only a qualified voter is eligible to contest elections to the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- For seats that are reserved for the Scheduled Caste and Tribe communities, only candidates belonging to those categories can contest the elections.
- A person found guilty of any of the following shall be disqualified for a period of 6 years to contest elections after release from jail:
 - ▶ Promoting hatred and enmity between classes
 - ▶ Influencing elections
 - ▶ Bribery
 - ▶ Rape or other grave crimes against women
 - ▶ Spreading religious disharmony
 - ▶ Practising untouchability
 - ▶ Importing or exporting prohibited goods
 - ▶ Selling or consuming illegal drugs as well as other chemicals
 - ▶ Engaging in terrorism in any form
 - ▶ Have been imprisoned for at least two years
- The candidate can also be disqualified if he/she has engaged in **any corrupt practice** or excluded from related government contracts.
- Disqualification can also result **if the candidate fails** to declare his/her assets. The candidate must declare his/her assets and liabilities within ninety days from his/her oath-taking day.
- The **Act requires all political parties** to be registered with the Election Commission. Any change in the name and/or address of the party should be intimated to the Commission.
- A party **can take donations** from any individual or company within India, but not government-owned ones. And, contributions from foreign entities are not allowed.
- Every political party must report a donation of over Rs.20, 000 received from any person or company.
- A party that gets a minimum of 6 per cent of the valid votes for assembly elections in more than four states or wins at least 2 per cent of seats in Lok Sabha from at least three states is recognized as a National Party.
- A party that gets a minimum of 6 per cent of the votes in the state assembly elections or wins at least 3 per cent of total seats in the state assembly will be a state political party.
- Candidates should deposit Rs.25000 as security for the Lok Sabha elections and Rs.12500 for all other elections. Candidates belonging to the SC/ST communities get a 50% reduction in the security deposit

PUNISH TO REFORM: RAJASTHAN'S OPEN PRISON MODEL

CONTEXT:

The open prison model adopted in Rajasthan, with convicts staying on community land without high walls or strict surveillance, has promoted a reformative form of punishment and succeeded in transforming the lives of inmates.

What is Open Prison?

- Open prisons have relatively **less stringent rules** as compared to controlled jails.
- They go by many names like **minimum-security prisons, open-air camps** or **prisons without bars**.
- The fundamental rule of an open prison is that the jail has minimum security and functions on the self-discipline of the inmates.
- The jail does not confine them completely but requires them to earn their living to support their families, living with them inside the jail.
- Prisoners can move out of prison for their work and are supposed to come back to the prison campus after their working hours.
- Every state in India has a prison law, like the Rajasthan Prisoners Rules and Andhra Pradesh Prison Rules, 1979.

- Seventeen states are reported to have functional open jails with Rajasthan having 31 such prisons, the highest that any state has.

- The **United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners**, popularly known as the **Nelson Mandela Rules**:

- It laid down the objectives of open prisons stating that such prisons provide no physical security against escape but rely on the self-discipline of the inmates, providing the conditions most favourable to the rehabilitation of carefully selected prisoners.

Right to Life and Personal Liberty for Prisoners

- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court in various cases has declared the right to medical care comes under the ambit of Article 21 of the Constitution
 - ▶ Article 21 of the Constitution also guarantees the right to personal liberty and thereby prohibits any

inhuman, cruel or degrading treatment to any person whether he is a national or foreigner.

- **Article 39A:** Article 39A of the Constitution of India deals with the obligation of the State to provide free Legal Aid to such accused prisoners both in the prison and outside, as they are unable to engage a lawyer due to a lack of means to defend themselves in the Court for the criminal charges brought against them.

Benefits of open prison:

- It will reduce overcrowding and operational costs of the prison administration.
- It will reduce the psychological pressure and lack of confidence among prisoners when they assimilate into society.
- It goes with the repeated call to develop a humane attitude and reformative approach towards the offenders in society.

Issues faced by prisoners:

- Overcrowding.
- Prolonged detention of under-trial prisoners
- A poor man remains in jail for over a year without trial for minor offences such as theft.
- Many inmates can't even afford the bail amount.
- Unsatisfactory living conditions.
- Lack of treatment Programs.
- The allegations of the indifferent and even inhuman approaches of prison staff have repeatedly attracted the attention of critics over the years.

JAMMU, VILLAGE DEFENCE AND GOVERNANCE

CONTEXT:

The revival of Village Defence Guards can be a feasible solution for the empowerment of local bodies as Panchayats are most suited to understand local dynamics in a conflict zone.

Increased terrorism in the Jammu region

- There have been several terror-related incidents in the region of the Jammu division over the last year.
- According to the **South Asia Terrorism Portal**, there were infiltration attempts, recoveries of war-like stores, explosions followed by gunshots at the house of a local MLA, a neutralisation of hideouts, and the nabbing of suspects in **Rajouri and Poonch of Jammu division**.

Revival of Village Defence Committees (VDC):

- The government had issued instructions to **operationalize VDC (Village Defence Guards)** in August 2022, which have already played a crucial role in containing militancy in the Jammu division, after being set up in the mid-1990s.
- Pockets with a VDC presence were those in remote areas; their difficult terrain and a meagre presence of security forces made chances of successful operations remote.

Empowering Local Institutions for enhanced security in Jammu region:

- The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) **Panchayati Raj Act of 1989** amended in 2020 paved the way for the setting up of the District Development Council.
 - ▶ This completed the three-tier local governance structure and reinforced the other two bodies, at the Panchayat and block levels.
- Panchayats are most suited to understanding local dynamics in a conflict zone that changes rapidly from one sub-region to the other.
 - ▶ The compulsory functions of Panchayats could be entrusted with the task of assisting the local police in an institutionalised manner. This will create advantages such as expanding the stakeholdership of the local population in security matters and a quality check on the character of VDC cadres.

THE ROLE OF LABOUR UNIONS IN EMERGING SECTORS

CONTEXT:

There have been many reports of lay-offs in the last few months, especially in emerging sectors. Lay-offs have been taking place not only in India, but in major economies like the U.S. too.

Background:

- At the global level, **Alphabet, Amazon, Meta, Microsoft, Twitter and Apple**, among others, have let go of employees. Amazon cited an uncertain economy and rapid hires in the past as reasons for retrenchment.
- Unionisation attempts in these giant companies have caught our imagination. Amazon workers at the warehouse at Staten Island called JFK8 succeeded

in forming the Amazon Labour Union under the leadership of Chris Smalls, who had been fired from the company.

Scenario in India:

- Lay-offs, such as by **Tata Consultancy Services in 2015**, have led to the **birth of labour unions** in this sector in India.
- Bad human resource policies and practices, too, have provoked or prompted workers to unionise.
- But the rate of formation of unions and the union activities in this industry (on the supply side) do not instill confidence in the minds of employees.

Role of Trade unions in emerging sectors:

- Compared to conventional industries such as manufacturing, public utilities, and conventional financial sectors such as traditional banking and insurance, forming unions in modern and emerging sectors is much more difficult.
- It is believed that **IT employees** do not need trade unions as they have **competitive compensation pay** packages, supposedly good conditions of work and a mechanism to address grievances. And so, they stay on and are loyal to the company and the industry.
- If these conditions are violated, they **switch to other organisations** as they have the required skill sets (exit); hence, **labour turnover** in this sector has been rather high.
- They do not **collectively bargain or strike** or **resort to legal action as middle-class employees** who go to court would be stigmatised (voice). And many survive by simply keeping quiet (loyalty).

What is the Framework Regarding Labours in India?

- **Constitutional Framework:** Under the Constitution of India, Labour as a subject is in the Concurrent List and, therefore, both the Central and the State governments are competent to enact legislations subject to certain matters being reserved for the Centre.
- **Judicial Interpretation:** In the case of **Randhir Singh vs Union of India**, the Supreme Court stated that "Even though the principle of 'Equal pay for Equal work' is not defined in the Constitution of India, it is a goal which is to be achieved through Article 14, 16 and 39 (c) of the Constitution of India.
 - ▶ **Article 14:** It provides for equality before the law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

- ▶ **Article 16:** It talks about the right of equal opportunity in the matters of public employment.
- ▶ **Article 39(c):** It specifies that the economic system should not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the detriment of the entire society.
- **Legislative Framework:** There have been several legislative and administrative initiatives taken by the government to improve working conditions and simplify labour laws. Most recent is the consolidated sets of 4 labour codes which are yet to be implemented.
- **Labour Codes:**
 - ▶ Code of Wages, 2019
 - ▶ Industrial Relations Code, 2020
 - ▶ Social Security Code, 2020
 - ▶ Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020
 - ▶ The implementation process is delayed as states are yet to finalise their rules under these codes.

- The **Madras Labour Union, set up in 1918**, is considered the first trade union in India to be formed systematically.
- Today, there are more than 75,000 registered and an unaccounted number of unregistered trade unions scattered across a large spectrum of industries in India.

Trade union Act:

- Trade unions in India are governed by the **Trade Unions Act (TU Act)**. The TU Act legalizes the formation of trade unions and provides adequate safeguards for trade unions' activities.
- It defines a "trade union" as "any combination, whether temporary or permanent, formed primarily for the purpose of regulating the relations between workmen and employers or between workmen and workmen, or between employers and employers, or for imposing restrictive condition on the conduct of any trade or business, and includes any federation of two or more trade unions."
- The TU Act is administered by the Ministry of Labour through its **Industrial Relations Division (IRD)** as well as by state governments.
- The IRD is concerned with improving the institutional framework related to settlement of disputes and amendment of labour laws regarding industrial relations; state governments are concerned with monitoring adherence to the law by all involved parties.

SC ON ALDERMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

CONTEXT:

Recently, the Supreme Court mentioned that the Constitution does not allow nominated members of a municipality the right to vote in meetings, while issuing notice to the Lieutenant Governor and the pro tem presiding officer of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

Nominated members of Municipal Corporation:

- The **General Body of a Municipality or Municipal Corporation** constitutes of elected representatives called Councillors.
- Councillors can **nominate eminent personalities** of the city to become the members of this body.
- These nominated members are **called 'Aldermen'**.

Constitutional backing:

- Article 243U of the Constitution mandates that elections to constitute a municipality should be completed well in time.
- The **pro tem presiding officer** has allowed **nominated members to vote** in direct violation of **Article 243R (2)(iv) of the Constitution**, as pro tem presiding officer must be the Senior most member of the council (which is not the case in Delhi).
- Section 76 of the **Delhi Municipal Corporation Act of 1957**, the Mayor, or in his absence the Deputy Mayor, has to preside over **every meeting of the corporation**, the simultaneous holding elections of **Mayor, Deputy Mayor and members of the Standing Committees** is directly contrary to the provisions of the statute.

Municipal body:

- The system of **Municipalities or Urban Local Governments** was constitutionalised through the **74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992**.
- The provisions in this amendment are included in Part IXA which came into force on June 1, 1993. Therefore, it gave a constitutional foundation to the local self-government units in urban areas.

Elections to Municipalities: The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats and municipalities shall be vested in the State Election Commissions.

VIOLENCE AND LEFT-WING EXTREMISM (LWE) IN INDIA

CONTEXT:

While chairing the meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee on LWE, the Home minister has highlighted that the number of deaths of civilians and security forces was less than 100 as compared to year 2021.

Background:

- Since a crackdown on Maoists started in 2005 in **Left Wing Extremism (LWE)** affected states, many states have largely tackled the problem.
- The implementation of a **socio-economic agenda**, coupled with effective police action and field-level intelligence, led to the decline in Maoist activity in those states.
- The number of districts declared LWE-affected is today just 90, down from over 200 in the early 2000s.
- However, **Naxals** still have a stronghold in many tribal areas of Chhattisgarh.

The Numbers:

- The civilians and security personnel killed in LWE incidents declined to 98 in 2022 from 1,005 in 2010. The number of districts affected dropped **from 90 to 45**.
- Since 2019, the armed forces had established **175 new camps** to plug the security vacuum in the LWE-infested zones.

SAMADHAN approach is need of the hour for 'Hard' approach:

- S – Smart Leadership
- A - Aggressive strategy
- M - Motivation and training
- A - Actionable intelligence
- D - Dashboard Based key performance indicators
- H - Harnessing technology
- A - Action plan for each theatre
- N - No access to financing

Government Interventions:

As part of the goal to ensure all-round development in the affected areas, several special schemes were being implemented apart from the flagship programmes of the Central government.

- Construction of 17,462 km of roadways had been sanctioned to improve **road connectivity**, of which work on about 11,811 km had been completed.
- 142 **Eklavya Residential Model Schools** were sanctioned in 21 years prior to 2019, while in the past three years, 103 have been sanctioned.
- So far, 245 **Eklavya schools** had been sanctioned in 90 **LWE-affected districts** and 121 of them were now functional.
- The government also facilitated the opening of 1,258 bank branches and 1,348 ATMs in the worst hit districts, besides 4,903 post offices.
- The skill development scheme's scope was increased from 34 to 47 districts.

Steps taken for Soft Approach:

- **Interaction:** Bridge the gaps between security forces and locals through personal interaction.
- **Aspirational District Program:** Monitoring of Aspirational districts in 35 LWE affected districts.
- **Media Plan:** Activities like **Tribal Youth Exchange programs** are organized and radio jingles, documentaries, pamphlet distribution, etc. are being conducted.
- **Schemes & Policies:** Various schemes like **Roshni** have been used to improve **skill development**.
 - ▶ **Universal Service Obligation Fund** supported the Scheme of **Mobile Services** to increase mobile connectivity.
 - ▶ Effective implementation of provisions of **PESA, 1996** on priority.
 - ▶ **Surrender and Rehabilitation policy** for Naxalites in affected areas.
 - ▶ Facilities of **residential schools** to children (e.g. Choolo Aasman, Pota Cabins, Nanhe Parinde) as well as focus on sports infrastructure.
 - ▶ **National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGA)** is being implemented in 330 districts affected by Naxalism for demand-driven wage employment.

Steps taken for Hard Approach:

- **Police Modernization Scheme** and fortification of police stations in areas affected by Naxal movements. Central assistance in the training of State Police.
- **National Policy and Action Plan 2015:** a multi-dimensional strategy in the areas of development, security, upholding rights & entitlement of local communities, etc.
- **Special Infrastructure Fund Scheme** to the States of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Odisha to set up a Special Task Force to combat LWE.
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967** was amended recently to strengthen the punitive measures.
- **Security Related Expenditure (SRE) Scheme:** Under the scheme, the Central Government reimburses any expenditure related to LWE affected areas to the State Governments.

PRIMARY AGRICULTURAL CREDIT SOCIETIES

CONTEXT:

The Budget has announced Rs.2, 516 crore for computerisation of 63,000 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) over the next five years.

The budget aims to bring greater **transparency and accountability** in their operations and enabling them to diversify their business and undertake more activities.

What are Primary Agriculture credit societies (PACS)?

- PACS are village level **cooperative credit societies** that serve as the last link in a three-tier cooperative credit structure headed by the **State Cooperative Banks (SCB)** at the state level.
- Credit from the SCBs is transferred to the **district central cooperative banks**, or DCCBs, that operate at the district level.

The DCCBs work with PACS, which deal directly with farmers.

Why are they significant?

- Since these are cooperative bodies, individual farmers are members of the PACS, and office-bearers are elected from within them. A village can have **multiple PACS**.

PACS in the country:

- There are about **95,000 PACS in the country** of which only 65,000 are active at present.
- According to the union home minister, all Panchayats must have one such body by 2027.
- This will be helpful in **promoting farming and dairy activities** at the grassroots level.
- The cooperation ministry is working on a plan to set up multi-purpose PACS in Panchayats over the next five years.

- PACS are involved in **short term lending** — or what is known as **crop loan**.
- At the start of the cropping cycle, **farmers avail credit** to finance their requirement of seeds, fertilisers etc.
- Banks extend this credit **at 7 per cent interest**, of which 3 per cent is subsidised by the Centre, and 2 per cent by the state government.
- Effectively, farmers avail the **crop loans at 2 per cent interest**

NABARD's annual report of 2021-22 shows that **59.6 per cent of the loans** were extended to the **small and marginal farmers**.

Functions of PACS:

- Maintaining the supply of the hired light machinery for agricultural purposes.
- To arrange for supplying of agricultural inputs. Examples -are seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, kerosene, etc.
- It will carry out activities like the sale of gas and petrol and the storage and marketing of dairy and farm products to alleviate poverty and empower women.
- It helps its members by providing marketing facilities that could enhance the sale of their agricultural products in the market at the proper prices.
- Generating optimum financial benefits for people engaged in animal husbandry and allied sectors.

Importance of Digitisation:

- While **SCBs and DCCBs** are connected to the **Core Banking Software (CBS)**, PACS are not.
- Some PACS use their **own software**, but a compatible platform is necessary to bring about uniformity in the system.
- **Computerisation of PACS** has already been taken up by a few states, including Maharashtra.

The **Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank** has plans to directly lend to PACS in districts where the DCCBs are either financially weak or have lost their banking licence.

JUST ENERGY TRANSITION PARTNERSHIP (JET-P)

Context:

After South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam, **India is considered the next candidate for a JET-Partnership**. **India's G-20 presidency could potentially be an opportune moment to forge a deal.**

Just Energy Transition Partnership (JET-P) is emerging as the key mechanism for **multilateral financing by developed countries** to support an **energy transition in developing countries**.

About:

- The partnership has taken on particular significance following the insertion of the phrase '**phase-down**' of coal in the **Glasgow Pact**.
- However, India must develop a coherent domestic just **energy transition (JET) strategy** in order to negotiate a financing deal that addresses its unique set of socio-economic challenges.

Energy transitions and developing countries:

- Energy transitions could give rise to **intra-generational, intergenerational, and spatial equity concerns**.
- Transitions affect near-term **fossil-dependent jobs**, disrupt forms of future energy access, shrink state's capacity to spend on welfare programmes, and thus exacerbate existing economic inequities between coal and other regions.
- Existing **JET-P** deals pay limited attention to intra-generational inequity, such as job losses resulting from a coal phase-down.
- However, among the **three JET-P deals** signed so far, only South Africa's deal mentions a 'just' component — funding reskilling and alternative employment opportunities in the coal mining regions to be financed as part of the initial \$8.5 billion mobilisation.

- The other **two JET-Ps (Indonesia and Vietnam)** are focused on mitigation finance for sector-specific transitions.

India and energy transition:

- India's transition requires significant simultaneous growth in energy demand.
- The Central Electricity Authority projects a near doubling of electricity demand by 2030.

- A country that is likely to multiply its energy demand requires adequate supply from a diverse mix of sources. India cannot afford to put its development on hold while decarbonising.

India's commitments:

- India has signalled a commitment to clean energy with ambitious targets like 500GW of non-fossil, including 450 GW renewable energy (RE) capacity addition and 43% RE purchase obligation by 2030.
- These targets are supported through complementary policy and legislative mandates (**Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act**), **missions (National Green Hydrogen Mission)**, **fiscal incentives (production-linked incentives)** and **market mechanisms**

(**upcoming national carbon market**).

- These interventions show India's serious efforts at energy transition, but additional supplementary measures are needed for a coherent JET strategy.

NEW TAX REGIME

CONTEXT:

Recently, during the Union Budget 2023-24 speech, Union Finance Minister announced a change in income tax slabs and rebate limits under the new income tax regime.

BENEFITS UNDER THE NEW TAX REGIME

FY'23	Tax rate	FY'24	Tax rate	Cumulative benefit
Rs 2.5 lakh	Nil	Up to 3 lakh	Nil	■ ₹ 2,500
Rs 2.5-5 lakh	5%	₹ 3-6 lakh	5%	■ ₹ 7,500
Rs 5-7.5 lakh	10%	₹ 6-9 lakh	10%	■ ₹ 15,000
Rs 7.5 to 10 lakh	15%	₹ 9-12 lakh	15%	■ ₹ 25,000
Rs 10-12.5 lakh	20%	₹ 12-15 lakh	20%	■ ₹ 37,500
Rs 12.5-15 lakh	25%	NA	NA	N.A
Above Rs 15 lakh	30%	Above ₹ 15 lakh	30%	■ ₹ 37,500

Standard deduction benefit has also been extended to new tax regime

- According to the proposed 2023 Finance Bill, **Startups that offer their shares to foreign investors may be subject to paying the "angel tax"** which was previously only applicable to investments raised by Indian residents.

What are the Proposed Changes?

○ Tax Rebate Limit Raised:

- ▶ The enhancement of this limit to **₹7 lakhs from ₹ 5 lakhs** indicates that the **person whose income is less than ₹7 lakhs need not invest anything to claim exemptions** and the entire income would be tax-free irrespective of the quantum of investment made by such an individual.
- ▶ This **will result in giving more consumption power to the middle-class income group** as they could spend the entire amount of income without

bothering too much about investment schemes to take the benefit of exemptions.

Changes in Income Tax slabs:

- It was proposed to change the tax structure in the new regime **by reducing the number of slabs to five from six income categories and increasing the tax exemption limit to ₹3 lakh.**
- Tax assessors will still be **able to choose from the prior regime.**
 - ▶ **Salaried and Pensioners:** The new system's standard deduction for taxable income exceeding Rs15.5 lakhs is ₹52,500.
- **For Pensioners:**
 - ▶ The Finance Minister **announced extending the benefit of the standard deduction to the new tax regime.**

- ▶ Each salaried person with an income of **₹15.5 lakh** or more will benefit by ₹52,500.
- **Maximum Tax Along with Surcharge:**
 - ▶ It was **proposed to reduce the highest surcharge rate** from 37% to 25% in the new tax regime. This **would result in the reduction of the maximum tax rate to 39%**.
 - ▶ The highest tax rate in India is 42.74%. **This is among the highest in the world.**
 - ▶ Tax rates have been reduced under the new tax regime and the **maximum marginal rate drops from 42.74% to 39%**.
- **Finance Bill, 2023:**
 - ▶ The Finance Bill, 2023 was also unveiled which has **proposed to amend Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act.**
 - ▶ The provision states that when an unlisted company, such as **start-ups** receive equity investment for the issue of shares exceeding their face value, it will be **considered income for the start-up and be subject to income tax under the heading "Income from other Sources"**.
 - ▶ **Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act**, colloquially known as the 'angel tax' was **first introduced in 2012** to deter the generation and use of unaccounted money through the subscription of shares of a closely held company at a value that is higher than the fair market value of the firm's shares.
 - ▶ It was also proposed to **include foreign investors also**, meaning that when a start-up raises funding from a foreign investor, that too will now be **counted as income and be taxable.**

THE STATUS AND PROCEEDS OF DISINVESTMENT

CONTEXT:

The Centre has not met the disinvestment target for 2022-23 so far, having realised ₹31,106 crore to date, of which, ₹20,516 crore or close to a third of the budgeted estimate came from the IPO of 3.5% of its shares in the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC).

Why does the government undertake disinvestment?

- Divestment is when the government sells its assets or a subsidiary, such as a Central or State public sector enterprise.
- Three main approaches to disinvestment are:

- ▶ **Minority disinvestment:** The government retains a majority in the company, typically greater than 51%, thus ensuring management control.
- ▶ **Majority disinvestment:** The government hands over control to the acquiring entity but retains some stake whereas in complete privatisation.
- ▶ **Complete privatisation:** 100% control of the company is passed on to the buyer.

There is a separate department for undertaking disinvestment-related procedures called the **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)**.

Reason for disinvestment:

- The government may disinvest in order to **reduce the fiscal burden** or **bridge the revenue shortfall** for that year.
- It also uses **disinvestment proceeds** to finance the **fiscal deficit**, to invest in the economy and development or social sector programmes, and to **retire government debt**.
- Disinvestment also encourages **private ownership of assets** and trading **in the open market**.

Disinvestment vs. Strategic Disinvestment

- If the government is selling minority shares in a PSE (less than 50%), it will continue to be the owner of the PSE. This is normal disinvestment procedure.
- But if the government is selling majority shares (50% or more) of PSE to some other entity (mostly to a private sector entity), then this method is called strategic disinvestment or strategic sale). Unlike the simple disinvestment, strategic sale implies some sort of privatization, along with transfer of management control.
- PSEs for strategic disinvestment are selected based on certain criteria.
 - ▶ They may be incurring losses
 - ▶ Or it may be operationally difficult for the government to continue with the PSE.

What are CPSEs likely to be divested in 2023-24?

- The government decided to include IDBI Bank, the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), the Container Corporation of India Ltd (Concor), NMDC Steel Ltd, BEML, HLL Lifecare, and so on in its disinvestment list.
- Incidentally, the disinvestments of **Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, SCI, and ConCor** had been approved by the government in 2019 but have not gone through yet.

- The divestments of both **SCI and ConCor** were stuck as some of the physical assets of these companies were properties of the States they are located in and had to be demerged.
- The divestment of major holdings of the IDBI bank is also in the pipeline and is likely to be concluded by mid-FY24.

Benefits of disinvestment:

The importance of disinvestment by the government lies in utilisation of funds for:

- To improve public finances and fund increasing fiscal deficit.
- Financing large-scale infrastructure development.
- For investing in the economy to encourage spending and fund growth.
- For retiring Government debt- since a big part of Centre’s revenue receipts go towards repaying public debt/interest.
- For expenditure on social programs like health and education.
 - ▶ To encourage wider share of ownership in an enterprise, and reduce monopoly like enterprises.
 - ▶ To introduce, competition, market discipline and efficiency.
 - ▶ To depoliticize non-essential services and move out of non-core businesses, especially ones where private sector has now entered in a significant way.
 - ▶ It also sends a positive signal to the market and can boost economic activity.

What have been the challenges to disinvestment?

- It is argued that government is selling profit-making enterprises and is weakening the public sector
- It is diverting attention from the economic slowdown
- It is skipping the normal channel of parliamentary procedures

AMAZON DEFORESTATION HEATING TIBET

CONTEXT:

According to a new report, Deforestation in the Amazon rainforest can directly influence temperatures in Tibet, which is more than 15,000 kilometres away from the tropical biome.

About the report:

- The report has highlighted that **Climate tipping elements** are remotely correlated and there are no borders in the fight against climate change.
- Countries must cooperate and take objective actions in cooperation toward the international goal.

Tipping points are thresholds that, if crossed, cause significant changes in a specific region of the Earth system that may be irreversible.



- The Amazon rainforest is one such tipping point. Even modest, incremental changes in this biome might eventually result in **massive, abrupt and permanent** changes to the planet.
- Contemporary global discussions suggest that the climate tipping point attainment could occur **with a 1-2°C temperature rise**.
- Consequently, the **Paris Agreement** calls for limiting warming to below 2°C and below 1.5°C as a long-term goal.
- This climate network approach was used to analyse the global impacts of a prominent tipping element and concluded that the **harsh and warmer temperatures in the Amazon** correlated with rising temperatures in Tibet and the West Antarctic ice sheet.
- The researchers succeeded in detecting a pronounced propagation pathway over more than 20,000 kilometres.
- It has been observed that the general trajectory could be plotted from **southern Africa** through the **Arabian Peninsula**, then across to Tibet.

Tibet and its geographic significance:

- Tibetan Plateau is an important physical feature, whose influence is felt not only in the Indian Subcontinent but also on the entire Asian continent.
- It is an interment plateau surrounded by the **Great Himalayas to the south, Kunlun ranges to the North-West, Altyn Tagh to the north and Nan Shan to the northeast**.
- Tibetan Plateau is called the **"Third Pole of the World"** because it has the largest reserves of fresh water in frozen ice form, outside the two poles.
- It is also being heated at twice the rate due to global warming, just like the two poles of the world.
- It is the **highest plateau** in the world and its height is still growing at a slow, but perceptible rate.
- This is because the Indian plate is continuously moving towards the Eurasian plate (at a rate of about 4-5 cm/year) and this is resulting in the Indian plate being pushed under the Eurasian plate.
- This is the reason why the continental crust in the Tibetan Plateau is the thickest and hence it is called the **"Roof of the World"**.
- The plateau is home to several **glaciers and lakes** – brackish water lakes in the north and freshwater lakes in the south.
- Tibetan Plateau is thus the **lifeline of Asia** because it is the source of several rivers like the Indus and Satluj of the Indus river water system, Arun, Ghaghra and Gandak of the Ganges river water system, Manas and Brahmaputra of the Brahmaputra river water system, Yellow River, Yangtze, Mekong and Salween Rivers.

- It also plays a crucial role in the **Indian Monsoons**, which are the lifeline of several rivers in Peninsular India.

E20 FUEL AND FUTURE OF GREEN ENERGY

CONTEXT:

The Prime Minister is going to launch 20% ethanol gasoline named 'E20', unveiling a solar and conventional energy-powered cooking system to celebrate the India Energy Week in Bengaluru.

India energy week:

- **E20 or flex-fuel vehicles** are an excellent way to reduce pollution without breaking the bank.
- Furthermore, the Prime Minister will launch the **Green Mobility Rally** to raise public awareness of green fuels and showcase vehicles powered by green energy.

About E20 fuel:

- The number "20" in "E20" refers to the **percentage of ethanol** in the gasoline blend.
- Simply put, the higher the number, the higher the percentage of Ethanol in the gasoline.
- India's current **ethanol-to-petroleum mix is 10%**, the highest it has ever been.
- Because it is made from biomass, ethanol does not require crude oil.
- Ethanol is primarily produced from crops such as **corn and sugarcane**.
- India already produces significant quantities of grain and sugarcane. It may allow automobiles to use a higher proportion of Ethanol.

What is ethanol blending?

- **Naturally Produced**- Ethanol is a biofuel, naturally produced by the fermentation of sugars by yeasts or by petrochemical processes like ethylene hydration.
- **Derived from agricultural products**- In ethanol blending, a blended motor fuel containing ethyl alcohol derived from agricultural products is blended with petrol specifically.
- **High in oxygen content**- Ethanol is high in oxygen content, allowing an engine to more thoroughly combust fuel.

Advantages of E20 fuel:

- Biofuel is gaining popularity because it has the potential to significantly reduce pollution if used on a large enough scale.
- Imports meet approximately 85% of India's fuel needs. In India, using petrol with a 20% ethanol blend would result in significant cost savings for the country.
- New jobs will be created in the original equipment manufacturing (OEM), component supplier, and aftermarket service provider sectors.
- The Indian government believes achieving its 20% ethanol in gasoline target will benefit the country's agricultural industry. The government claims that these measures will increase farmer income.

Present utilisation of E20 Fuels in India:

- India's **Creta, Venue, and Alcazar SUVs** from Hyundai Motor are said to be capable of running on E20 gasoline as of the **2023 MY model year**.
- Tata Motors debuted two new **turbocharged petrol engines** at the Auto Expo 2023. (1.2-litre and 1.5-litre).
- Tata has stated that its vehicles longer than 4 metres will soon be equipped with E20 fuel-compatible engines.

- By April 2023, similar developments are planned for vehicles manufactured by **Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, Kia, and others**.

Ethanol Blended with Petrol (EBP) programme:

- EBP programme was launched by the government in 2003 to promote the use of alternative and environmental friendly fuels.
- This intervention also aimed to reduce import dependency for energy requirements, and give boost to the agriculture sector (supply of straw, additional income to farmers).
- **Oil marketing companies (OMCs)** were mandated to sell ethanol blended petrol with percentage of ethanol up to 10 per cent. The government allowed procurement of ethanol produced from non-food feed stocks, like cellulosic and ligno-cellulosic materials, including petrochemical route.
- **Ligno-cellulosic materials:** It describes the main constituents in most plants, namely cellulose, hemicelluloses, and lignin. Lignocellulose is a complex matrix, comprising many different polysaccharides, phenolic polymers and proteins. Cellulose, the major component of cell walls of land plants, is a glucan polysaccharide containing large reservoirs of energy that provide real potential for conversion into biofuels. It is the non-starch based fibrous part of plant material.

Section: B
(SPECIALS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

CHINA'S BALLOON & BOUNDARIES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

CONTEXT

The United States (US) shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon that has been spotted over US airspace for a couple of days.

China's Balloon Incident:

- From January 28 to February 4, 2023, a large, white high-altitude balloon operated by China crossed **North American airspace**, passing over Alaska, western Canada, and the contiguous United States.
- Then, a U.S. jet shot it down over the Atlantic and U.S. ships raced to gather the debris.

What is a Surveillance Balloon?

About:

- These **cheap, quiet and hard-to-reach balloons have been used for reconnaissance purposes**, including in conflicts like the American Civil War.

The **practice became widespread during World War I** and was used extensively during the **Cold War** when the US launched hundreds of balloons to gather intelligence on the Soviet Union and China.

- While their use has **declined with the rise of unmanned drones and satellites**, many countries still employ spy balloons.
- The Purpose of Sending the Balloon:**
 - China has for decades complained about US surveillance by ships and spy planes near its own territory, leading to occasional confrontations over the years. **According to China, the balloon was for research but got off track.**

Uses:

- Close-range Monitoring:** In the age of satellites, surveillance balloons which are typically advanced balloons equipped with high-tech, downward-pointing imaging gear offer close-range monitoring.

Regulations in the US:

- The US also has its own "air defence identification zone", a legacy of the Cold War.
- It requires all aircraft entering US airspace to identify themselves. Canada has its own complementary zone.
- Image Quality:** The lower-flying balloons, which hover at about the same height as commercial airlines fly, can typically take clearer images than the lowest orbiting satellites.
 - Satellites that rotate in sync with Earth capture continuous but hazier images due to farther orbit.
- Intercepting Communication:** Surveillance balloons

can also be capable of "gathering electronic signals" and intercepting communications.

Who has sovereignty over the air?

- International law is clear with respect to the use of these balloons over other countries' airspace.
- Every country has complete **sovereignty and control over its waters** extending **12 nautical miles (about 22 kilometres) from its land territory**.
- Every country likewise has "complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory" under international conventions.
 - This means each country controls all access to its **airspace, which includes both commercial and government aircraft**.
- But the **upper limit of sovereign airspace is unsettled in international law**. In practice, it generally extends to the maximum height at which commercial and military aircraft operations, which is around 45,000 feet (about 13.7km).
- The supersonic Concorde jet, however, operated at 60,000 feet (over 18km).
 - The Chinese balloon was also reported to be operating at a distance of 60,000 feet.
- International law **does not extend to the distance at which satellites operate**, which is traditionally seen as falling within the realm of space law.
- There are **international legal frameworks** in place that allow for permission to be sought to enter a country's airspace, such as the **1944 Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation**.
- The International Civil Aviation Organization has set an additional layer of rules on airspace access, including for **hot air balloons**, but it does not regulate military activities.

Prohibited Air Space:

- It refers to an area of air space within which flight of aircraft is not allowed, usually due to security concerns. It is one of many types of special use airspace designations and is depicted on aeronautical charts with the letter "P" followed by a serial number.

Restricted Air Space:

- Different from prohibited air space, in this space, entry is **typically forbidden for all aircraft and is not subjected to clearance from ATC (Air Traffic Control)** or the air space's controlling body.

Section: C

(PRELIMS)

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LEPAKSHI MURALS IN VEERABHADRASWAMY TEMPLE

CONTEXT:

A team of G-20 delegates visited the Lepakshi Sri Veerabhadraswamy temple.

About Lepakshi Temple:

- Lepakshi temple is located in Andhra Pradesh, built during the era of the **Vijayanagara Empire**.
- The temple is famous for its three shrines, which are dedicated to-
 - ▶ Lord Vishnu
 - ▶ Lord Shiva
 - ▶ Lord Veerabhadra

Mural Painting:

- Lepakshi Veerabhadra Temple complex has **India's highest sculptural wealth and mural paintings**.
- **Asia's biggest mural painting**-Veerabhadra Swamy (measuring 24x18 feet), a hanging pillar in the dancing hall and the biggest monolithic bull in the country.



- The Veerabhadra Temple was constructed by two brothers, **Viranna and Virupanna**.
- **Architectural style:** The temple is built in the **Vijayanagar architectural style** and has beautiful sculptures adorning the walls.
- It is one of the finest & oldest temples in India.
- It is situated atop the **Kurmasailam (tortoise-shaped) hill**.
- There is a huge **Nandi bull** made from a single granite stone.

- Lepakshi has many **murals from the Vijayanagara Era** and the famous sculpture of the **snake on the Nagalinga**.

The original structure is said to have been built by **Sage Agastya** and finds mention in the **Skanda Purana** as one of the **108 Saivaite pilgrimage** centres of ancient India.

- The entire temple complex was believed to be rebuilt by **Virupanna, and his brother Veeranna** under the rule of **Vijayanagara king Achyuta Devaraya**.



- The main shrine, the 70-pillared **nrutya mantapa**, the detailed and beautiful carvings on them depicts gods and artists playing musical instruments and dancers in various poses and mudras.
- The high ceiling is filled with long panels of fresco paintings.

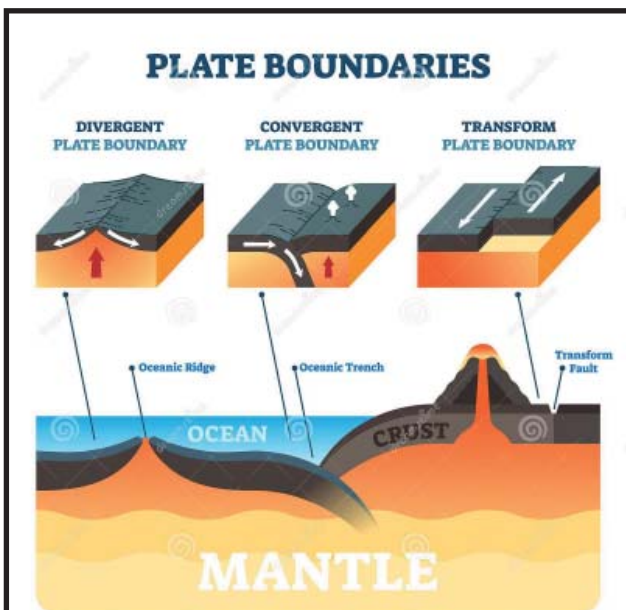
About the Archaeological Survey of India:

- The ASI is the **premier organization for the archaeological research** and protection of the cultural heritage of the country.
- The prime objection of ASI is to maintain the archaeological sites, ancient monuments and remains of national importance.
- Its Headquarters is in New Delhi.
- It was established in 1861 by **Alexander Cunningham**.
- It regulates all archaeological activities as per the provisions of the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, of 1958**.
- It functions under the aegis of the **Union Ministry of Culture**.
- It also regulates the **Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, of 1972**.

TURKEY & ITS RELATION TO EARTHQUAKES

CONTEXT:

Recently, Turkey witnessed a 7.8 magnitude earthquake which is one of the most powerful earthquakes in the past two decades with more than 1,300 people killed and thousands still believed to be trapped under rubble.



What makes Turkey a hotbed of seismic activity?

- Turkey is frequently shaken by earthquakes.
- Turkey's proneness to earthquakes comes from its **tectonic location**.
- Turkey, a hotbed of seismic activity, sits on the **Anatolian Plate**, which borders two major faults as it grinds northeast against Eurasia.

Tectonic plates:

- The Earth's outermost layer comprises some 15 major slabs, called **tectonic plates**.
- The boundaries between these plates are a system of **faults – fractures** between two blocks of rocks. Any sudden movement along these faults can cause earthquakes.
- The **North Anatolian fault** traverses the country from **west to east**, and the East Anatolian fault, rests in the country's south-eastern region.

- ▶ The **North Anatolian fault (NAF) line**, the meeting point of the Eurasian and Anatolian tectonic plates — is known to be "**particularly devastating**".
- The NAF, one of the best-understood fault systems in the world, stretches from the south of Istanbul to north-eastern Turkey and has caused catastrophic earthquakes in the past.

About Earthquake:

- An earthquake is the shaking of the surface of the Earth, resulting from the sudden release of energy in the Earth's lithosphere that creates seismic waves.
- Earthquake is the form of energy of wave motion transmitted through the surface layer of the earth.
- It may be due to **faulting, folding, plate movement, volcanic eruptions and anthropogenic factors** like dams and reservoirs.



The location:

- Turkey is a country that occupies a unique geographic position, lying partly in **Asia and partly in Europe**.
- Throughout its history it has acted as both a **barrier and a bridge** between the two continents.
- Turkey is situated at the crossroads of the **Balkans, Caucasus, Middle East, and eastern Mediterranean**.
- It is among the larger countries of the region in terms of territory and population, and its land area is greater than that of any European state.
- The country has a north-south extent that ranges from about **300 to 400 miles** (480 to 640 km), and it stretches about 1,000 miles from west to east.
- The capital is Ankara, and its **largest city and seaport** is Istanbul.

Turkey is bounded on the north by the **Black Sea**, on the northeast by **Georgia and Armenia**, on the east by **Azerbaijan and Iran**, on the southeast by **Iraq and Syria**, on the southwest and west by the **Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea**, and on the northwest by **Greece and Bulgaria**.

TRILATERAL COOPERATIVE INITIATIVE

CONTEXT:

India, France and the United Arab Emirates declared their common intent to formalise a “Trilateral Cooperative initiative” to collaborate on nuclear energy and explore opportunities in the Indian Ocean region.

About the initiative:

- **Background:** The trilateral was first discussed when the three foreign Ministers had met on the sidelines of the **UN General Assembly in New York** in September 2022.
- All the three countries agreed to work together in the field of **solar and nuclear energy, climate change and biodiversity**.
- **Objective:** It will serve as a forum to promote the **design and execution of cooperation projects** in the fields of energy, with a focus on solar and nuclear energy, as well as in the fight against climate change and the protection of biodiversity, particularly in the Indian Ocean region.
- The countries have also agreed to cooperate in defence preparation and in countering infectious diseases.
- Following the alliance, multilateral organizations such as **World Health Organization (WHO), Gavi-the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund, and Unitaid** will be encouraged.
- The three countries will also attempt to identify tangible cooperation on implementing the “**One Health**” approach, and support the development of local capacities in biomedical innovation and production within developing countries.

A range of trilateral events will be held in the backdrop of the Indian Presidency of the G20 here and COP28 to be held in UAE in November-December 2023.

India-UAE relations:

- India and UAE have entered into a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** by signing the CEPA in February, 2022.

- This agreement will boost bilateral trade between the two countries and benefit both the economies.

India's Extended Neighbourhood:

- In 2004 the Indian government affirmed that “the concept” of an “extended neighbourhood for India” included the region from the Suez Canal to the South China Sea and includes within it **West Asia, the Gulf, Central Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region**.
- **Look West Policy:** In the year 2005, the government of India launched its Look West Policy which focused on India improving its relations with West Asian countries.
- The three main axes of India's Look West Policy are- The Arab Gulf countries, Israel and Iran.

India-France relations:

- India and France share a **dynamic and multifaceted** relationship.
- Both countries signed a strategic partnership agreement in 1998.
- Frequent interactions at the highest political levels, comprehensive defence cooperation and dynamic cultural linkages have further contributed to maturing the partnership.
- Convergence of their views on multi-polar world order and their belief in multilateralism for addressing international challenges help them in developing greater political synergy at the global level.
- India and France have been expanding their relationship amid changing regional and global dynamics.
- France has been termed by India as its “**Gateway to Europe**”.

TOURISM WORKING GROUP IN RANN OF KUTCH

CONTEXT:

As part of India's G20 presidency, Gujarat will host the first **Tourism Working Group (TWG) meeting** in the state's Rann of Kutch from 7 to 9 February 2023.

Rural and Archaeological tourism will be the focus area of Tourism. Also, **Dholavira, which is a UNESCO World heritage site**, will be the second spot for foreign delegates.

How is the G20 Emphasizing Interventions in the Tourism Sector?

- In the **G20 Presidency of India**, there are **5 interrelated priority areas for tourism**. Accordingly, thrust will be on these five priority areas:
 - **Greening of the Tourism sector**
 - Harnessing the power of **dignisation**
 - Empowering youth with skills
 - **Nurturing tourism MSMEs/ Startups**
 - Rethinking the strategic management of destinations.
- Also, one of the priorities through the **G20 platform** is to reach a consensus on how the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) will be achieved by 2030**.
 - As a part of this, there will be **emphasis on sustainable tourism which is important not only for the environment but also to create opportunities for local enterprise**.
- The **different places chosen for the G20 events** will encompass different flavours like **rural tourism (Ladpura Khas village, MP), archaeological tourism (Dholavira), and ecotourism (Khonoma Village, Nagaland) etc.**
 - **Along with this, 3 mega tourism** related events are being organized to take advantage of the G20 Presidency. These include **Global Investors' Summit in April 2023, MICE Convention and Meeting of World Tourism CEOs Forum**.

What is the Status of the Tourism Sector in India?

- India is known for its **diverse cultural heritage, rich history, and natural beauty**, which **attract millions of domestic and international tourists each year**.
- India offers a wide range of tourism options, including eco-tourism, cruise trips, business travel, sports tourism, educational tourism, **rural tourism, archaeology tourism** and medical tourism.
- **Contribution to Economy:**
 - In 2021, India was ranked **6th by the World Travel and Tourism Council** in terms of the **total contribution of Travel & Tourism to the country's GDP**.
 - The sector contributed **5.8% to India's GDP in 2021 and created 32.1 million jobs**, which is equivalent to 6.9% of total employment in the country.

Challenges Related to the Tourism Sector:

Government Initiatives Related to Tourism Development:

- Swadesh Darshan Scheme
- Draft National Tourism Policy 2022
- Dekho Apna Desh Initiative
- National Green Tourism Mission

- **Infrastructural Constraints:** India faces a shortage of **quality tourist infrastructure**, including accommodations, transportation, and recreational facilities, which limits its potential to attract more tourists.
- **Safety and Security:** India has been faced with **concerns regarding the safety and security of tourists**, especially for **women**. This can deter potential tourists from visiting the country.
- **Lack of Standardization:** India faces a **lack of standardization across the tourism industry**, including accommodations, tour operators, and transport providers, which can negatively impact the overall tourist experience.

SC REMOVES FROM VERDICT REFERENCE TO SIKKIMESE-NEPALESE AS PERSONS OF 'FOREIGN ORIGIN'

CONTEXT:

The Supreme Court ordered removal of certain remarks from a recent judgement wherein it had referred to Sikkimese-Nepalis as people of foreign origin, leading to protests in Sikkim.

What was the issue in front of the Court?

- The SC was hearing a petition filed by the **Association of Old Settlers of Sikkim**.
- **It decided on a rather pesky issue:**
 - Whether those Indians who had settled in Sikkim prior to the kingdom joining the Indian Union in 1975 should be exempted from paying income tax, like the rest of the population in the Himalayan state is?
 - Whether Sikkimese women who have married non-Sikkimese persons after 2008 onwards should also be exempted from paying income tax?

Tax Exemption in Sikkim

- Sikkim is a State whose **original inhabitants** are exempted from payment of **Income tax**.
- The business community or the left outs of Sikkim, too, were accorded the luxury of exemption owing to a **Supreme Court judgement dated 13 Jan 2023**.

Three types of residents in Sikkim

There are **three types of residents in Sikkim** namely;

- The original habitats like the **Bhutia-Lepchas**
- The **migrants from Nepal** and other countries
- The **old settlers of Indian Origin**

How SC added to the boil?

- In its judgment, the apex court said that under the **Sikkim Income Tax Manual, 1948**, "all persons engaged in business were subjected to tax irrespective of their origin.
- Therefore, there was no difference made out between the original inhabitants of Sikkim, namely, the **Bhutia-Lepchas**, and the persons of foreign origin settled in Sikkim like the Nepalis or persons of Indian origin who had settled down in Sikkim generations back."
- The judgment also recorded the **petitioner's contention** that migrants from other countries or erstwhile kingdoms like "Nepalese migrants", who "migrated to and settled in Sikkim at the same time or even after migrants/settlers of Indian origin", were benefiting from **Section 10(26AAA) of the IT Act, 1961**, "while arbitrarily excluding settlers of Indian origin such as the petitioners herein".

What does the Section 10 (26AAA) say?

- The objective behind **Section 10 (26AAA)** is to reduce the taxpayer's burden by providing exemptions.
- This section describes the income that **does not form a part of the total income** while calculating the tax for an individual, also known as "exempted income".
- The petitioners challenged the proviso (applicable to **married Sikkimese women**) and Explanation to Section 10 (26AAA), which elaborated on **the type of income falling** under the category, along with a **definition of 'Sikkimese'**.
- Under the Explanation to **Section 10 (26AAA)**, the definition of 'Sikkimese' is confined to:
 - ▶ Individuals **whose name is recorded** in the register maintained under the Sikkim Subjects Regulation, 1961 read with the Sikkim Subject Rules, 1961, immediately before the **26th day of April 1975**;

- ▶ The **73,000-odd individuals** whose names were included in the **Register of Sikkim Subjects** by virtue of Government of India Orders of August 1990 and April 1991; and
- ▶ Any individual whose name does not appear in the Register of Sikkim Subjects, but it is established beyond doubt that the name of such individual's **father or husband or paternal grandfather or brother** from the same father has been recorded in that register.

Section 10 (26AAA) was inserted into the **IT Act, 1961** by the **Finance Act, 2008** with retrospective effect from April 1, 1990, the date on which the IT Act was made applicable in Sikkim.

Sikkim and inclusion in India:

- The present erstwhile monarchy in Sikkim started in the year 1642 with the coronation of Phuntsog Namgyal as the Chogyal or king. The king was also a consecrated Buddhist priest.
- The country was frequently attacked by the **Gorkha army of Nepal**. Initially, the British establishment in India had good relations with Sikkim.
- Relations with the British deteriorated and finally in 1861, the British acquired the **regions of Darjeeling and the Terai**.
- The **Treaty of Tumlong** in 1861 made Sikkim a protectorate of the British.
- After India's independence in 1947, the guarantees of independence that Sikkim had acquired from the British were transferred to the new Indian government.
- Sikkim was finally **admitted to the Union of India on 16th May 1975 as the country's 22nd State**.

**'GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION'
DOCTRINE****CONTEXT:**

The Supreme Court has decided to reconsider for its 2011 judgments that ruled that mere membership of a banned organisation cannot be a crime, observing that there was no challenge to the law when the doctrine of "guilt by association" was rejected nor was the Union government heard before the verdict.

What is Guilty by Association mean?

- Guilt by association, also known as the **association fallacy**, is officially defined as "guilt ascribed to

someone not because of any evidence, but because of their association with an offender.”

- In this particular context, an individual can face criticism or backlash as a result of their likeness to an existing group or entity.
- Conversely, honour by association describes a situation where someone is lauded as a result of their affiliation with groups that are perceived in a positive light.

About the Case:

- The provision of **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA)** (now repealed) mentions that mere membership of a banned organisation cannot **incriminate a person** unless he or she resorted to or **incited violence**.
- These decisions had come while hearing two separate cases of bail and conviction under TADA.

Government’s plea against the judgement:

- The solicitor general of India, representing the Union government, argued that the **2011 judgments** failed to consider a raft of **significant considerations**, including the legislative intent and the fact that Parliament, in its wisdom, has engrafted certain provisions to keep the security of the nation intact.
- The **right to form an association** cannot be an unbridled right, and when it affects **sovereignty and integrity** of the country, restrictions will be reasonable. The law is preventive in nature and not just punitive.

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act:

- It is an Indian law aimed at prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
- Its main objective was to make powers available for dealing with activities directed against the integrity and sovereignty of India.
- The most recent amendment of the law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019 (UAPA2019) has made it possible for the Union Government to designate individuals as terrorists without following any formal judicial process.
- UAPA is also known as the Anti-terror law.

PUISNE JUDGE AND ROLE

CONTEXT:

While recommending names for appointment as judges of the Supreme Court, the Collegium headed by the Chief Justice of India mentioned that it had taken into consideration the seniority of Chief Justices and senior Puisne Judges.

What does ‘Puisne’ used for judges mean?

- The term originates from France, which means ‘**later born**’ or ‘**younger**’.
- The English word that means ‘**small**’ or ‘**undersized**’.
- Puisne is almost always used in the context of judges, and essentially denotes seniority of rank.
- The term Puisne judge is used in ‘**common law countries**’ to refer to judges **who are ranked lower in seniority, i.e.,** any judge other than the Chief Justice of that court.

Which are common law countries?

- Common law is the body of law **created by judges** through their written opinions, rather than through **statutes or constitutions** (statutory law).
- Common law, which is used interchangeably with ‘case law’, is based **on judicial precedent**.
- The United Kingdom (UK) and the Commonwealth countries, including India, are common law countries.

Is a “Puisne judge” in India the same as in the UK?

- In the UK, Puisne judges are judges other than those holding distinct titles.

For the United Kingdom, the Supreme Court of Judicature Act, of 1877 defined a “Puisne judge” as any judge of the High Court besides the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of England, and the Master of the Rolls.

- In India, all judges have the same judicial powers. As the Seniormost judge of a court, the Chief Justice has an **additional administrative role**.
- In India, there is a reference to a Puisne judge only while considering the **order of seniority** for appointments, elevations to High Courts, etc. Still, it does not have a bearing on the exercise of a judge’s judicial power.

Collegium’s stand on Puisne judges:

- While giving reasons for its recommendation for appointing judges in Supreme Court, the decision was made taking “into consideration the **seniority of Chief Justices** and **senior Puisne Judges** in their respective **parent High Courts** as well as the **overall seniority of the High Court Judges**”.
- This was done because seniority is one of the several criteria that are considered while making appointments to the higher judiciary.

Procedure for appointment and promotion in Judiciary:

- In the **Third Judges Case ruling in 1998**, the Supreme Court clarified that 'The Chief Justice of India must make a recommendation to appoint a Judge of the Supreme Court and to transfer a Chief Justice or Puisne Judge of a High Court in consultation with the four Senior-most Puisne Judges of the Supreme Court.'

DISPUTE SETTLEMENT SCHEME

CONTEXT:

The Government has proposed quick settlement of contractual disputes to promote ease of doing business as announced in Union Budget 2023-24.

Background:

- The Government has appreciated that special efforts are required to clear the backlog of old disputes and litigation.
- Such cases are not only holding back fresh investment but are also reducing the **ease of doing business** with the Government.
- Therefore, after due study of the past cases, the government intends to bring one time settlement scheme called "**Vivad se Vishwas II (Contractual Disputes)**" to effectively settle pending disputes.

About the scheme:

- **Aim:** The scheme is aimed at **bringing quick finality** to certain contractual disputes in which Government of India or its agencies is a litigant.
- **The salient features of the proposed scheme are as under:**
- The scheme will apply to disputes where one of the parties is either the Government of India or its following bodies:
 - ▶ All Autonomous Bodies of the Government of India;
 - ▶ Public sector banks and public sector financial institutions;
 - ▶ All Central Public Sector Enterprises;
 - ▶ Union Territories, National Capital Territory of Delhi and all agencies/ undertakings thereof; and
 - ▶ All organisations, where Central Government like Metro Corporations, where Government of India has shareholding of 50%; however, these bodies

can opt out of the scheme at their discretion, with approval of the Board of Directors.

- Only disputes involving above entities where the claims for proceedings (either to Court or for Arbitration or Conciliation) were submitted by the contractor.
- Disputes, where claims are **raised against procuring entities** as above along with some other party (State Government or private party), shall not be eligible under the scheme.
- Disputes having only financial claims against the procuring entities will be settled through this scheme.
- The Scheme will be applicable to all **contractors/suppliers** who wish to participate.
- In case **Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) etc.** are the contractors/ suppliers in a particular contract, they are also eligible to submit their claims under the scheme.
- The Scheme proposes a **graded settlement** terms depending on pendency level of the dispute.
- It is proposed to cover only for cases involving **domestic arbitration** and cases under international arbitration are not eligible to be settled under this scheme.
- The scheme will be implemented through Government **e-Marketplace (GeM)**, which shall provide an online functionality for the same.
- The draft scheme document also provides a broad functionality that the **GeM portal** shall provide to implement the scheme.
- The draft scheme also contains a **draft settlement agreement** between the litigating parties to bring finality to the contractual dispute settlement.

GUARANTEED PENSION SCHEME (GPS) OF ANDHRA PRADESH

CONTEXT:

Amid the rejection of four states on new pension system, there are discussions about a new model, which has been proposed by the Andhra Pradesh's government named as Guaranteed Pension scheme (GPS).

About Guaranteed Pension scheme:

- Under GPS, employees can get a guaranteed pension of **33% of their last drawn salary** if they

contribute **10% of their basic salary** every month which is matched by a **10% contribution by the state government**.

- And if, they can get a **guaranteed pension of 40 per cent** of their last drawn salary, if they are willing to contribute a **higher 14 per cent** of their salary every month, which will be matched by **14 per cent government contribution**.
- It combines the elements of both the **Old Pension System (defined benefit)** and the **New Pension Scheme (defined contribution)**. In doing so, it seeks 'defined contribution' from employees every month and offers two options of 'defined benefit'.

How does the Pension system work in India?

- All pension plans in India provide guaranteed **maturity benefits**. This is the reason why pension plans in India are also known as **guaranteed pension plans**.
- The maturity benefits are generally the fund value or **101% of the Premium paid**, whichever is higher.

What are the issues associated with New Pension System (NPS)?

- The NPS is a **corpus** from which you can draw a pension **after retirement**. Its value is determined by the **market prices** in which the corpus is invested.
- One of the issues with the NPS is the **amount of monthly pension** you would draw (for the same contribution during service) with three hypothetical market rates of return is significantly lower for NPS.
- Secondly, it is **dependent on the vagaries of the market prices** of equity/bonds in which the corpus is invested.
- To be sure, the markets do not crash often and in the long run, they go up rather than down. If there is a crash, the downside has to be absorbed by the retirees.

According to a 2008 **OECD study**, the global financial crisis had wiped a total of \$5 trillion off the value of **private pension funds** in rich countries compared to the start of the year 2022.

Description	Old Pension System	NPS (Tier-I)
Contribution of employee	Nil	10% of (Basic pay plus DA)
Pension gurantee by Government	yes	No
Amount of Pension	50% of last pay drawn	No link with las tpay
Dearness Relief provided by Government for mitigating impact of inflation	Yes	No
Amount of communication allowed	Upto 40%	No option
GPF eligibility	Yes	No
GPF/NPS withdrawl	Temporary: within 15 years Final: after 15 years	Tier-I: Not allowed till May 2015

ANGEL TAX AND INDIA'S START-UPS

CONTEXT:

The Finance Bill, 2023 has proposed to amend Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act.

Section 56(2) VII B of the **Income Tax Act**, also known as the '**angel tax**' was first introduced in 2012 to deter the generation and use of **unaccounted money** through the subscription of shares of a closely held company at a value that is higher than the fair market value of the firm's shares.

What is Angel Tax?

- It is a 30% tax that is levied on the **funding received by Startups** from an external investor.
- However, this **30% tax** is levied when Startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'.
- It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- Angel tax was introduced in 2012, with the purpose of **keeping money laundering** in check.

About the proposal:

- As per the proposal under the finance bill 2023, the start-ups, that offer their shares to **foreign investors**, may have to pay '**angel tax**', which was earlier only supposed to be paid for investments raised by **resident Indian investors**.

- The move could adversely impact financing available to the start-ups, which have already been reeling under a funding winter since 2022.
- The provision states that when **an unlisted company**, such as a start-up, receives equity investment from a resident for the issue of shares that exceeds the face value of such shares, it will be counted as income for the start-up and be subject to income tax under the head '**Income from other Sources**' for the relevant financial year.
- However, with the latest amendment, the government has proposed to also **include foreign investors** in the ambit, meaning that when a start-up rises **funding from a foreign investor**, that too will now be counted as **income and be taxable**.

Why are start-ups concerned?

- The change comes as the funding for India's start-ups dropped by 33 per cent to \$24 billion in 2022 as compared to the previous year.
- Foreign investors are **a key source** of funding for start-ups and have played a big role in increasing the valuation.
- **Startups and reverse flipping:**
 - ▶ Several challenges start-ups faces, such as funding hurdles, revenue generation struggles, lack of easy access to supportive infrastructure, and a complex regulatory tax environment.
 - ▶ As many start-ups have been headquartered overseas, especially in destinations with favourable legal environments and taxation policies, technically known as '**flipping**'.

BUDGET BOOST FOR TRIBES

CONTEXT:

The Union Budget 2023-24 has issued funds for welfare of Tribals which is in line with the Odisha's scheme.

About:

- The Central government's **PM-PVTG (Pradhan Mantri Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups)** programme is in line with the Odisha government's own **PVTG Empowerment and Livelihood Improvement Programme (OPELIP)**, launched in 2015 for the upliftment of tribals, giving the Odisha government hope that it will have more funds for its special programme for Adivasi communities.
- **Funds allocated:** A budget of Rs.15, 000 crore is earmarked for the purpose.

Objective of the scheme:

- The PM-PVTG scheme aims to improve the socio-economic conditions of the tribes listed as beneficiaries, by extending basic facilities such as housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, improved access to education, health, nutrition, roads, telecom connectivity and sustained livelihood opportunities, to them.

PVTGs in India:

- There are **75 PVTGs** identified in India.
- Odisha has 13, namely **Birhor, Bondo, Chuktia Bhunjia, Didayi, Juang, Kharia, Dongria Kondh, Lanjia Saora, Lodha, Mankidia, Paudi Bhuyan and Saora**.
- The PVTGs are spread over 32,000 households in 542 villages under **84 gram panchayats of 12 districts**.
- Their population at present stands at **2.5 lakh in the state** alone.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

CONTEXT:

World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on 2 February to raise awareness about wetlands.

- This day also marks the anniversary of the **Convention on Wetlands**, which was adopted as an international treaty in 1971.

About:

- On 30 August 2021 the **UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 75/317** that established 2 February as '**World Wetlands Day**'.
- **Need of the initiative:**
 - ▶ Nearly **90% of the world's wetlands** have been degraded since the 1700s, and we are losing wetlands three times faster than forests.
 - ▶ Wetlands are critically important ecosystems that contribute to **biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, freshwater availability, and world economies**.
 - ▶ It is urgent that we raise **national and global awareness** about wetlands in order to reverse their rapid loss and encourage actions to conserve and restore them.

World Wetlands Day is the ideal time to **increase people's understanding** of these critically important ecosystems.

- **Theme:** Wetland Restoration the theme for 2023 highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland restoration.
- **Organised by:** The World Wetlands Day awareness campaign is organized by the **Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands.**

What are Wetlands?

- According to the Convention, wetlands include almost any habitat where water is key to the environment and its wildlife.
- Wetlands include swamps, marshes, billabongs, lakes, salt marshes, mudflats, mangroves, coral reefs, fens, peat bogs, or bodies of water - whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary.
- Water within these areas can be static or flowing; fresh, brackish or saline; and can include inland rivers and coastal or marine water to a depth of six metres at low tide. There are even underground wetlands.
- Anywhere from estuaries, lakes and rivers to underground aquifers, mangroves, coral reefs and rice paddies count.

The Ramsar Convention:

- The Ramsar Convention is an **international treaty** for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- It is named after the **Iranian city of Ramsar**, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on **2 February 1971.**
- Known officially as '**the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat**' (or, more recently, just 'the Convention on Wetlands'), it came into force in 1975.

What is Montreux Record?

- Montreux Record is a **register of wetland sites on the Ramsar list**, which are facing immediate challenges.
- The listed sites are threatened by changes that affect their ecosystem components, processes, benefits and services which characterise the said wetland at a given point in time.
- India's two wetlands find a place in the Montreux Record. They are:
 - ▶ **Keoladeo National Park**, in Rajasthan, was designated a **Ramsar site in 1981** and listed in the **Montreux Record in 1990.**
 - ▶ **Loktak Lake** in Manipur was declared a Ramsar site in 1990 and indexed in the Montreux Record in 1993.

- **Objective:** The aim of the Ramsar list is to develop and maintain an international network of wetlands which

are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits.

- The convention entered into force in India on 1 February 1982.

Wetlands in India:

- India currently has **54 sites** designated as Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).
- **The spread of Wetlands in India:**
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) carried out a **National Wetland Inventory and Assessment** using Indian remote sensing satellites during 2006-2011 and subsequently brought out **national- and state-level wetland inventory atlases.**
- The total wetland area estimated is **26 million hectares**, which is around **4.63%** of the geographical area of the country.

The largest wetland in India is the **Sunderbans**. Sunderban Wetland is also a part of the **largest mangrove forest in the world.**

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

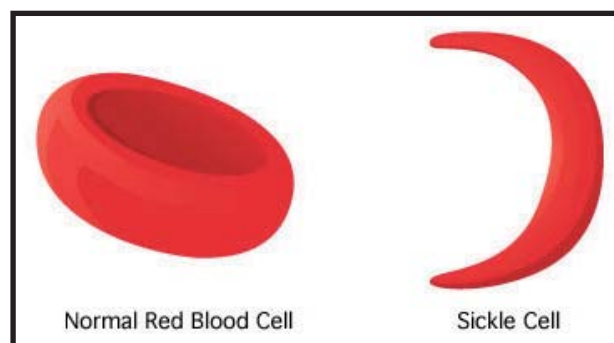
CONTEXT:

The Government of India, through the National Health Mission, is supporting the states in their efforts to prevent and manage sickle cell disease.

In **Union Budget 2023-24**, the government has announced a mission to eliminate **Sickle cell Anaemia by 2047.**

What is Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)?

SCD is a **chronic single gene disorder** causing a debilitating systemic syndrome characterized by **chronic anaemia, acute painful episodes, organ infarction and chronic organ damage** and by a significant reduction in life expectancy.



- **Symptoms:**
 - ▶ Symptoms of sickle cell disease can vary, but some common symptoms include:
 - ▶ **Chronic Anaemia:** leading to fatigue, weakness, and paleness.
 - ▶ **Painful episodes** (also known as sickle cell crisis): these can cause sudden and intense pain in the bones, chest, back, arms, and legs.

Delayed growth and puberty

- **Treatment:**
 - ▶ **Blood Transfusions:** These can help relieve anaemia and reduce the risk of pain crises.
 - ▶ **Hydroxyurea:** This is a medication that can help reduce the frequency of painful episodes and prevent some of the long-term complications of the disease.
 - ▶ It can also be treated by **bone marrow or stem cell transplantation**
- **Government Initiatives to Tackle SCD:**
 - ▶ Government has released **technical operational guidelines for prevention and control of hemoglobinopathies in 2016** including sickle cell anaemia.
 - ▶ Integrated centers have also been established in **22 tribal districts for treatment and diagnosis.**
 - ▶ The **State Haemoglobinopathy Mission** has been established in **Madhya Pradesh** to address the challenges in screening and management of the disease.

IAF TO PROCURE INDIGENOUS TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT

CONTEXT:

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has initiated the process of acquiring a Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA), which is to be manufactured in the country under the 'Make in India' initiative.

Background:

- In September last year, the Defence Ministry signed a 21,935 Crore contract with **Airbus and Space S.A., Spain** for procurement of **56 C-295MW transport aircraft** to replace the **Avro aircraft** in service with the IAF which it is executing in partnership with **Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL).**

- An **Airbus-TASL joint venture** will assemble the **C-295s** at a manufacturing facility being set up in Vadodara, Gujarat.

About the initiative:

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has initiated the process to find a replacement for the **AN-32 transport aircraft** in service.
- It has issued a **Request for Information (RFI)** for the procurement of a **Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA)** with a carrying capacity of **18 to 30 tonnes.**

Request for Information (RFI):

An RFI (request for information) is a **formal process for gathering information from potential suppliers of a good or service.** RFIs are intended to be written by customers and sent to potential suppliers.



- Several projects for the **domestic manufacturing** of various defence platforms such as **missiles, field guns, tanks, aircraft carriers, drones, fighter planes, tanks, and helicopters** are currently underway to meet the defence modernisation needs of the Indian armed forces.
- The IAF operates around **100 AN-32s** which are the workhorse of the force and they have all been upgraded recently under a **\$400-million deal signed** with Ukraine in 2009.
- Some of them were upgraded in Ukraine a decade ago to improve **avionics and increase engine lifespan**, while several others are being upgraded at an **IAF repair facility in Kanpur.**

Significance under Make in India:

- The RFI has asked aircraft manufacturers to indicate the scope of work related to MTA, which would be undertaken under Make in India under the appropriate category with an estimate of indigenous content mandatorily.

- The joint venture will enhance, methods to enhance indigenisation and to set up a dedicated manufacturing line, including design, integration and manufacturing processes in India.

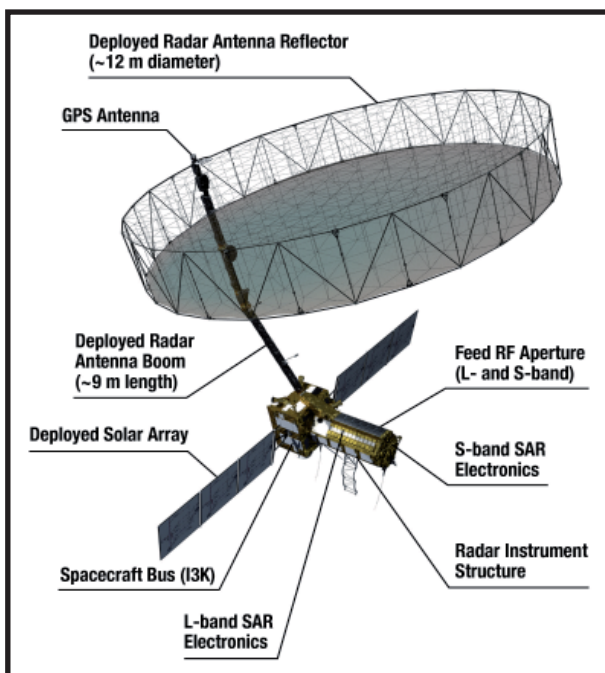
NASA-ISRO PARTNERSHIP SATELLITE 'NISAR'

CONTEXT:

Recently, the Joint project of National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), called NISAR, got a send-off ceremony at the American space agency's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California.

Background:

- NISAR has been built by space agencies of the US and India under a **partnership agreement** signed in 2014.
- NISAR is expected to be launched in January 2024 from Satish Dhawan Space Centre into a near-polar orbit.
- The satellite will operate for a minimum of three years.



About NISAR:

- NISAR stands for **NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar**.
- It is an **Earth observation satellite**.
- The **2,800 kilograms** satellite consists of **both L-band and S-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) instruments**, which makes it a dual-frequency imaging radar satellite.
- NASA has provided the **L-band radar, GPS, a high-capacity solid-state recorder** to store data, and a payload data subsystem.
- And the ISRO has provided the **S-band radar, the GSLV launch system** and spacecraft.
- Another important component of the satellite is its **large 39-foot stationary antenna reflector**
- It is made of a **gold-plated wire mesh**, the reflector will be used to focus the radar signals emitted and received by the upward-facing feed on the instrument structure.

Additional features:

- By using **synthetic aperture radar (SAR)**, NISAR will produce high-resolution images.
- SAR is capable of **penetrating clouds** and can collect data day and night regardless of the weather conditions.

According to NASA, "**the instrument's imaging swath** — the width of the strip of data collected along the length of the orbit track — is greater than **150 miles (240 kilometres)**, which allows it to image the entire Earth **in 12 days**."

What is the mission?

- NISAR will observe subtle changes in **Earth's surfaces**, helping researchers better understand the causes and consequences of such phenomena.
- It will **spot warning signs of natural disasters**, such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and landslides.
- The satellite will also;
 - ▶ **Measure groundwater levels,**
 - ▶ **Track flow rates of glaciers and ice sheets,** and
 - ▶ **Monitor the planet's forest and agricultural regions,** which can improve our understanding of carbon exchange.
- ISRO will use NISAR for a variety of purposes including **agricultural mapping, and monitoring of glaciers in the Himalayas, landslide-prone areas and changes in the coastline.**

Section: D
(SHORT NEWS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Dar es Salaam Declaration



The inaugural countries leading the **Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children** gathered in **Dar es Salaam**, Tanzania and discussed progress and the plans to end AIDS in Children by 2030.

About:

Objective: To achieve the goal of ending AIDS in children.

- The declaration calls to intentionally strengthen, coordinate and resource robust national programs by:
- Providing access to universal testing and treatment for all children and adolescents living with HIV and supporting them to remain virally suppressed.
- Ensuring access to treatment and care for all pregnant and breastfeeding women and supporting them to stay in care.
- Harnessing digital technologies to reach adolescents and young people;
- Implementing comprehensive, integrated HIV services.
- Working with and for men, women and adolescent girls to ensure that mothers are protected from acquiring HIV during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Ending the stigma, discrimination, and gender inequities experienced by **women, children, and adolescents affected by HIV.**

Paris Club



The Paris Club, an **informal group of creditor nations**, will provide **financial assurances** to the International Monetary Fund on Sri Lanka's debt.

About:

- The Paris Club is a group of **mostly western creditor countries** that grew from a 1956 meeting in which Argentina agreed to meet its public creditors in Paris.
- **Objective:** To find sustainable **debt-relief solutions** for countries those are unable to repay their bilateral loans.
- It describes itself as a forum where official creditors meet to solve payment difficulties faced by debtor countries.
- **The members are:** Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- All 22 are members of the group called **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).**



Follow on Public Offer (FPO)



Ladakh's first biodiversity heritage site (BHS)



Recently, India and EU has announced to form **Trade and Technology council**.

About:

- **India and the European Union (EU)** announced the formation of three working groups under the '**Trade and Technology Council**' that was set up to deepen strategic ties with the trade bloc.
- India and EU had in April last year agreed to establish a 'Trade and Technology Council', to tackle the challenges at the nexus of trade, trusted technology and security.
- Such a council is the first for India with any of its partners and second for the EU, following the first one it has set up with the United States (US).

Under FPO, a company that is already listed on a stock exchange, issues new shares to existing investors or shareholders.

About:

- Follow on Public Offer is a process whereby a company that is already listed on a stock exchange, issues new shares to existing investors or shareholders.
- It is also known as a secondary offering. In other words, FPO allows a company to raise additional funds through the issuance of new shares.
- **FPO is different from Initial Public Offer (IPO).**
 - ▶ IPO is the first sale of shares to the public while FPO is Follow on Public Offer. FPO typically occurs after the company has completed an IPO.
 - ▶ FPO also allows investors to increase their stake in a company.
 - ▶ It also provides an opportunity to new investors to buy stakes in a company.

Two new feathery visitors, **Baikal Teal and Orange-Bellied leafbird**, have been sighted at Renuka Ji wildlife sanctuary during this **winter migratory bird season**.

About:

- This is the **first such sighting** of two rare birds in Himachal Pradesh.
- The two species includes;
 - ▶ **Orange-bellied leafbird** is the other species sighted for the first time in the state.
 - ▶ Its characteristic habitat is in the **North-East India**. As the bird feeds on nectar, it was spotted on the bottlebrush plant.
 - ▶ Baikal Teal breeds in the far-east on the edges of Tundra and has made its way through the Asian flyway to reach Renuka Ji wetland.

Global Climate Resilience Fund



Hillary Clinton (Former US secretary of state) announced a **Global Climate Resilience Fund of 50 million dollars** for **women to fight climate change** in association with the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) founded by late activist Ela Bhatt.

About

- The fund will empower women and communities to fight climate change and help provide new livelihood resources and education
- Climate change-related heat poses an additional challenge to women workers in informal sectors and the Global Climate Resilience Fund will assist in addressing this challenge.

Hillary Clinton visited salt pan workers in the **Little Rann of Kutch near Kuda village** in Gujarat's Surendranagar district and learnt from them the process of salt production and hardships faced by them.

Naval LCA lands on INS Vikrant



A prototype of the naval variant of the indigenously developed Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) undertook its maiden landing on board aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, in a feat described by the Indian Navy as 'historical milestone' for India's self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

Landing and take-off of the LCA

- The landing and take-off of the LCA prototype and MiG-29K aircraft came as part of flight trials on board the aircraft carrier.
- The Indian Navy currently operates over **40 MiG-29K jets**.
- The air wing of INS Vikrant will be able to carry 30 MiG-29K fighter jets, according to officials.

About INS Vikrant:

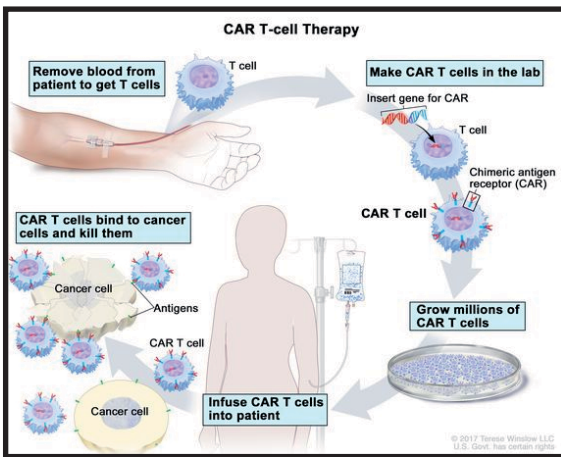
- INS Vikrant is the country's **first indigenous aircraft carrier**.
- The carrier has a top speed of around **28 knots** and a cruising **speed of 18 knots** with an endurance of about 7,500 nautical miles.
- It is 262 metres long, 62 metres wide and has a height of 59 metres. Its construction began in 2009.

Chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy

According to a study, long-term response to autologous **anti-CD19 chimeric antigen receptor T-cells** in relapsed or refractory '**B cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia**'.

About:

- A type of treatment in which a patient's T cells (a type of immune system cell) is changed in the laboratory so they will attack **cancer cells**.
- T cells are taken from a patient's blood. Then the gene for a special receptor that binds to a certain protein on the **patient's cancer cells** is added to the T cells in the laboratory.



- The special receptor is called a **chimeric antigen receptor (CAR)**.
- Large numbers of the CAR T cells are grown in the laboratory and given to the patient by infusion.
- Chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy is used to treat **certain blood cancers, and it is being studied in the treatment of other types of cancer.**
- Also called **CAR T-cell therapy.**

Gaganyaan Mission



The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)**, along with the Indian Navy, has conducted an important trial for the Gaganyaan, human space flight mission.

About the trials:

- They carried out initial recovery trials of the Crew Module in the **Navy's Water Survival Test Facility (WSTF)** in Kochi.
- The trials were part of the preparation for crew module recovery operations for the Gaganyaan mission that will be carried out in Indian waters with the participation of Indian Government agencies, the overall recovery operations being led by the Indian Navy.
- A **Crew Module Recovery Model (CMRM)**, that simulates the mass, centre of gravity, outer dimensions, and externals of the actual Crew Module at touchdown, was used for the trials.
- The sequence of operations required for the recovery of the Crew Module was carried out as part of the trials.
- WSTF, Kochi, is a **state-of-the-art facility** of the Indian Navy that provides realistic training of aircrew for escape from a ditched aircraft under varied simulated conditions and crash scenarios.
- WSTF simulates different sea state conditions, environmental conditions, and day/night conditions.

The Gaganyaan project:

The **Gaganyaan project** envisages demonstration of human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of **three members** to an orbit of 400 km for a **three day mission** and bringing them back safely to earth, by landing in Indian sea waters.



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