

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 5
MARCH
2023

MAINS

PRELIMS

GS- I

- WHY NORTHWEST INDIA IS SEEING EXCESS RAINFALL IN MARCH?
- WORLD GOVERNING BODY BANS TRANSGENDER WOMEN ATHLETES

GS- II

- SECTION 144 OF CRPC
- OFFENCE UNDER UAPA 1967
- PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT

GS- III

- RENEWABLES ENERGY POTENTIAL OF MYANMAR
- SEBI GETTING SET TO REGULATE INDEX PROVIDERS
- MUTUAL FUNDS RE-OPEN OVERSEAS INVESTMENT FUNDS
- APEX BODY FOR GLACIER MANAGEMENT
- SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC WASTE MANAGEMENT
- BIOTRANSFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
- INDIA TO ESTIMATE TB BURDEN USING OWN SYSTEM

ART & CULTURE

- Saurashtra-Tamil Sangam

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- Parole days cannot be counted as part of sentence period: SC
- Rural Development Ministry inks deal with 19 employers
- SMART PDS Scheme

ECONOMY

- Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP)
- Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal

- Product-wise insurance commission cap removed by IRDAI

ENVIRONMENT

- Light pollution and Issues
- Penalty on Kerala for failure to protect Ramsar Sites
- Firewood as a renewable energy source
- Gandhamardan hills become 3rd biodiversity heritage site in Odisha

NEWS IN SHORTS

- Hybrid gamosa
- NASA monitors South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA)
- Western Disturbances
- Saving Day time
- Riyadh joins Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- Panchamasali reservation
- 'Call Before u Dig' App
- Revised NCERT books under NEP 2020
- 'Bharat Nepal Ashtha Yatra'
- Plastic-rock hybrid discovered in Andaman's Aves island
- Konkan 2023
- World Tuberculosis Day 2023
- Army to get satellite for critical data
- Ubuntu

SPECIAL

- Weaponising the Defamation Law

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

www.iasscore.in

— **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.

CONTENTS

WEEK - 5 (MARCH, 2023)

Section - A: MAINS CURRENT AFFAIRS			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS I	GEOGRAPHY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why Northwest India is seeing excess rainfall in March? 	02
	SOCIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World governing body bans transgender women athletes 	03
GS II	POLITY AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 144 of CrPC 	04
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offence under UAPA 1967 	05
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 	06
GS III	ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewables Energy potential of Myanmar 	07
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEBI getting set to regulate index providers 	08
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual Funds re-open overseas investment funds 	09
	ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apex body for Glacier Management 	10
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar Photovoltaic Waste Management 	11
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biotransformation Technology 	12
	SCIENCE & TECH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India to estimate TB burden using own system 	13
Section - B: PRELIMS CURRENT AFFAIRS			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS II	POLITY AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weaponising the Defamation Law 	17
Section - B: PRELIMS CURRENT AFFAIRS			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS I	ART AND CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saurashtra-Tamil Sangam 	21



For Information, Contact: **8448496262** | Website: <https://iasscore.in/>

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!



R. P. SINGH



RAJEEV CHAUDHARY



RASHID YASIN



MANOJ K. JHA



GAURAV BANSAL



SIDDHARTH MITTAL



RAJNISH JINDAL



SHIVLAL GUPTA



RAJWARDHAN



SOURABH MISHRA



SMRITI RAO



ABHISHIEKH SAXENA



VIRAJ C. RANE

THE MOST EXPERIENCED & SEASONED SUBJECT EXPERT

GS II	POLITY & GOVERNANCE	• Parole days cannot be counted as part of sentence period: SC	22
		• Rural Development Ministry inks deal with 19 employers	22
		• SMART PDS Scheme	23
GS III	ECONOMY	• Green Tug Transition Programme (GTTP)	24
		• Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal	24
		• Product-wise insurance commission cap removed by IRDAI	25
	ENVIRONMENT	• Light pollution and Issues	26
		• Penalty on Kerala for failure to protect Ramsar Sites	27
		• Firewood as a renewable energy source	28
		• Gandhamardan hills become 3rd biodiversity heritage site in Odisha	29

Section - D: SHORT NEWS

Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
ART & CULTURE	• Hybrid gamosa	31
GEOGRAPHY	• NASA monitors South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA)	31
	• Western Disturbances	31
	• Saving Day time	32
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	• Riyadh joins Shanghai Cooperation Organization	32
POLITY & GOVERNANCE	• Panchamasali reservation	33
	• 'Call Before u Dig' App	33
	• Revised NCERT books under NEP 2020	34
	• 'Bharat Nepal Ashtha Yatra'	34
ENVIRONMENT	• Plastic-rock hybrid discovered in Andaman's Aves island	35
SCIENCE & TECH	• Konkan 2023	35
	• World Tuberculosis Day 2023	36
	• Army to get satellite for critical data	36
ENVIRONMENT	• Ubuntu	37

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

IAS
2024

IAS 2024-25 GS FOUNDATION Mains *cum* Prelims

1 YEAR & 2 YEAR
PROGRAMME



Only Outcome Matters!

GS MAINS CLASSES (BASIC TO ADVANCE)

IAS
2024



The Ultimate Mains Programme

- ✓ Everything for GS MAINS in 7 Months
- ✓ Complete Coverage of GS PAPER 1,2,3,4 & Essay
- ✓ Answer Writing + Test Series with Personalized Mentoring



1B, Second Floor, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh,
New Delhi - 110005 (Beside Karol Bagh
Metro Station Gate No. 8)



8448496262



iasscore.in

SECTION: A
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WHY NORTHWEST INDIA IS SEEING EXCESS RAINFALL IN MARCH?

CONTEXT:

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a forecast for a fresh spell of rainfall along with thunderstorms and hailstorms over northwest, east and northeast India from March 30 to April 1, 2023.

Background:

- IMD categorises Northwest India having **10 States and Union Territories**.
- Out of the **ten states six** have recorded a large excess in rainfall so far this month, **including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Chandigarh**.
- The rain spells over northwest India began nearly two weeks ago and are continuing.

India Meteorological Department (IMD):

- It is an agency established in 1875 under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- It is the principal institution responsible for **meteorological observations, weather forecasting and seismology**.

The changing scenario:

- Rainfall this month has also brought with it a drop in temperatures.

- In Delhi, for instance, the maximum temperature dropped to a low of **25.3 degrees Celsius** on March 19.
- Last year, when Delhi recorded no rainfall at all in March, the national capital saw higher maximum temperatures of **38 and 39 degrees Celsius after March 20**.

Factors responsible for such high rainfall:

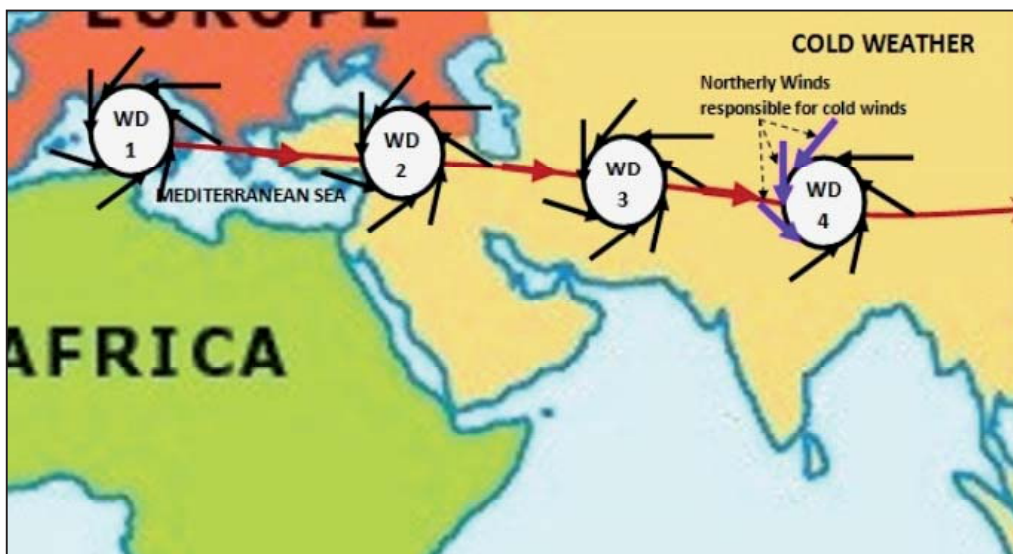
• Western disturbances:

- ▶ Multiple western disturbances have been affecting Northwest India this month in contrast to February when **no western disturbances** affected the plains of the region.
- ▶ The current spell of rainfall has also been brought by a **western disturbance** that lies as a cyclonic circulation over **Afghanistan and the neighbourhood**.
- ▶ According to IMD scientists, four western disturbances have affected the plains of northwest India so far this month.

Western disturbances are storms from the **Mediterranean region** that bring **rainfall to northwest India**.

Phenomenon behind Western Disturbance (WD):

- Western disturbances are storms that originate in the **Caspian or Mediterranean Sea**, and bring non-monsoonal rainfall to northwest India.
- They are labelled as an **extra-tropical storm** originating in the Mediterranean, is an area of low pressure that brings sudden showers, snow and fog in northwest India.



- The disturbance travels from the **“western” to the eastern direction**.
- These travel eastwards on high-altitude westerly jet streams - massive ribbons of fast winds traversing the earth from west to east.
- Disturbance means an area of **“disturbed” or reduced air pressure**.
- Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a region tries to normalise its pressure.
- A WD is associated with **rainfall, snowfall and fog in northern India**. It arrives with rain and snow in Pakistan and northern India.
- The moisture which WDs carry with them comes from the Mediterranean Sea and/or from the Atlantic Ocean.
- WD brings winter and pre-monsoon rain and is important for the development of the Rabi crop in the Northern subcontinent.
- The WDs are not always the harbingers of good weather.
- Sometimes WDs can cause extreme weather events like **floods, flash floods, landslides, dust storms, hail storms and cold waves killing people, destroying infrastructure and impacting livelihoods**.

WORLD GOVERNING BODY BANS TRANSGENDER WOMEN ATHLETES

CONTEXT:

Transgender women have been barred from competing in the female category by **World Athletics (WA)**.

Background (previous rules):

- Under previous rules, World Athletes required transgender women to reduce their amount of blood testosterone to a maximum of **5nmol/L**, and stay under this threshold continuously for a period of 12 months before competing in the **female category**.

Testosterone is a **male sex hormone** (androgen) that helps male features develop. It is made in the testes in males, the ovaries in females, and in the **adrenal glands**.

What does the ban mean?

- Transgender women who have **experienced male puberty** will not be able to compete in the female competition after March 31 this year.
- The decision to exclude transgender women who had gone through male puberty was based “on the

overarching need to protect the female category”.

Who is a transgender person?

- As per international standards, ‘transgender’ is an umbrella term that includes persons whose sense of gender does not match with the gender assigned to them at birth.
- In addition to this **sense of mismatch**, the definition provided under the new rules also lists further criteria to be defined as a transgender person.
- **These additional criteria include being:**
 - i. ‘neither wholly male nor female’, or
 - ii. ‘a combination of male or female’, or
 - iii. ‘neither male nor female’

Issues faced by Transgender:

- Discrimination
- Unemployment
- Lack of educational facilities
- Homelessness
- Lack of medical facilities like HIV care and hygiene
- Depression
- Hormone pill abuse
- Tobacco and alcohol abuse
- Penectomy
- Problems related to marriage and adoption

Constitutional rights related to Transgender (in India):

- Preamble to the Constitution mandates Justice - social, economic, and political equality of status.
- **Article 14** provides ‘right to equality’
- **Article 15** speaks about the prohibition of discrimination on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Article 21** ensures right to privacy and personal dignity to all the citizens.
- **Article 23** prohibits trafficking in human beings as beggars and other similar forms of forced labor and any contravention of these provisions shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.
- The **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act (TPPRA), 2019** prohibits discrimination against transgender people when it comes to things like education and employment.

A **National Portal For Transgender Persons (NPTP)** was introduced so that people could apply online for a ‘transgender ID’.

Position of other sports on transgender athletes:

- **World Rugby** has banned transgender players from competing at the elite level of the women's game, citing safety concerns.
- **Rugby league** has banned transgender players from women's international competition, while the **International Cycling Union (UCI)** has tightened its eligibility rules.
- A number of sports announced reviews of their transgender inclusion policies following **World Aquatics'** decision to restrict the participation of transgender athletes.

SECTION 144 OF CRPC

CONTEXT:

Former Chief Justice of India U.U. Lalit stated that conferring drastic powers upon the executive or the police through Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) is not acceptable in a nation governed by the rule of law.

The CJI made the comment while speaking at the launch event of a report titled 'The Use and Misuse of Section 144 CrPC'.

Key-highlights of the Report:

- The report states that **prohibitory orders** were issued over 6,100 times in the national capital in 2021.
- In some cases, Section 144 was used to regulate the sale of balms or cough syrups, which are often used as drugs
- The report categorises the prohibitory orders into four broad themes, including establishing CCTV surveillance and regulating businesses.
- Section 144 is an emergency provision to prevent rioting, and maintain tranquillity and peace. But as per this report, the State uses it to snoop on regular life.

About Section 144 of CrPC:

- **Section 144** of CrPC is meant for **emergency situations**.
- It empowers a district magistrate, a sub-divisional magistrate, or any other executive magistrate empowered by the state government, to issue orders to prevent and address urgent cases of apprehended danger or nuisance.
- The written order by the officer may be directed **against an individual or individuals residing in a particular area, or to the public at large**.

- In urgent cases, the magistrate can pass the order without giving prior notice to the individual targeted in the order.

Powers under the Provision:

- The provision allows the magistrate to direct any person to **abstain from a certain act**, or to pass an order with respect to a certain property in the possession or under the management of that person.
- This usually means **restrictions on movement, carrying arms, and unlawful assembly**. It is generally understood that an **assembly of three or more people is prohibited** under Section 144.
- When aimed at restricting a single individual, the order is passed if the magistrate believes it is likely **to prevent obstruction, annoyance or injury to any lawfully employed person**, or a danger to human life, health or safety, or a disturbance of the public tranquility, or a riot, etc.
- **Time limit:** Orders passed under Section 144 remain in force for **two months**, unless the state government considers it necessary to extend it. But in any case, the total period for which the order is in force cannot be more than **six months**.

Issues with section 144 of Crpc:

- The criticism is that it is **too broad and the words of the section are wide enough** to give **absolute power to a magistrate** that may be exercised unjustifiably.
- The **immediate remedy** against such an order is a **revision application to the magistrate himself**.
- An aggrieved individual **can approach the High Court** by filing a **writ petition** if his fundamental rights are at stake. However, fears exist that before the High Court intervenes, the **rights could already have been infringed**.

Court's Ruling on Section 144:

- **Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya case 1967**, the Supreme Court held that "no democracy can exist if 'public order' is freely allowed to be disturbed by a section of the citizens".
- **'Madhu Limaye vs Sub-Divisional Magistrate': SC** said the power of a magistrate under Section 144 "is not an ordinary power flowing from administration but a power used in a judicial manner and which can stand further judicial scrutiny".
- The Supreme Court in another recent judgement said that the section cannot be used to impose restrictions on citizens' fundamental right to assemble peacefully, cannot be invoked as a 'tool' to 'prevent the legitimate expression of opinion or grievance or exercise of any democratic rights'.

- In 2012, the Supreme Court criticised the government for using **Section 144** against a sleeping crowd in **Ramlila Maidan**. Such a provision can be used only in grave circumstances for maintenance of public peace. The efficacy of the provision is to prevent some harmful occurrence immediately.

OFFENCE UNDER UAPA 1967

CONTEXT:

Recently, the Supreme Court ruled that even a mere **membership of a banned association is sufficient to constitute an offence under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967.**

The ruling lowers the bar for who can be charged under the stringent anti-terror law.

About the Judgement:

- A three-judge bench of SC has overruled **three key precedents** on aspect of banned organisation, which had distinguished between **active and passive membership** of an unlawful association and the crucial difference between '**advocacy and incitement to violence**'.

Advocacy and incitement are two categories of speech, where advocacy is a **more specific type** than incitement, which directed to producing **imminent lawless action** and which is likely to **incite or produce such action**.

- The bench has upheld the **constitutional validity of Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA**.
 - ▶ **Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA** says that, "Penalty for being member of an unlawful association, etc.—Where an association is **declared unlawful by a notification issued** under section 3 which has become effective under sub-section (3) of that section,—
 - ▶ A person, who is and **continues to be a member** of such association,
- The rest of **Section 10(a)** includes a person who takes part in meetings of such association; or contributes to, or receives or solicits any contribution for the purpose of, such association; or in any way assists the operations of such association.

Other judgments:

- In 2011, in '**Arup Bhuyan vs State of Assam**', the Supreme Court bench has said that a "person's

association with an unlawful organisation must be an **active 'membership'** which required actual **incitement to violence** or the **act of committing violence**."

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1967:

- The Act provides special procedures to **deal with terrorist activities**, among other things.
- Unlawful activity means any conduct which constitutes a crime or which contravenes any law whether such conduct occurred before or after the commencement of this Act and whether such conduct occurred in the Republic or elsewhere.
- **Section 15** of the UAPA defines "**terrorist act**" and is punishable with imprisonment for a term of at least five years to life. In case the terrorist act results in death, the punishment is death or imprisonment for life.

Criteria for Organisations:

Under the Act, the central government may **designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation** if it:

- commits or participates in acts of terrorism,
- prepares for terrorism,
- promotes terrorism, or
- Is otherwise involved in terrorism

- The Act assigns absolute power to the **central government**, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.
- **The provisions of this Act apply also to—**
 - ▶ Citizens of India outside India;
 - ▶ Persons in the service of the Government, wherever they may be; and
 - ▶ Persons on ships and aircrafts, registered in India, wherever they may be.

Impacts:

• On Society:

- ▶ The UAPA was introduced with an aim to recognise and control the unlawful activists and arrest terrorists without providing them adequate escape measures.
- ▶ However, mere part of an organisation becoming a Crime makes vulnerable group like children and women involved more into this, due to less stringent protocols for them.
- ▶ It can also increase the instances of more innocent people being scrutinised and affect their life.

- **On People:**
 - ▶ They will become less sensitive towards law
 - ▶ Legal proceedings may target a particular group/ religion for the cause
- **Others:**
 - ▶ Delay in judicial proceedings
 - ▶ Overburdening of Judiciary
 - ▶ Unlawful tactics
 - ▶ Increase in corruption

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT

CONTEXT:

Sixty-three years after the implementation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in 1960, the central government made reforms under the legislation.

Highlights of the development:

- The Government has laid down the procedures for **dehorning cattle and castration, branding or nose-roping of any animal.**

- The **castration method** involves crushing the blood vessels, nerves and vas deferens to cause the testicles to become defunct.
- **Dehorning of horned cattle** is the process of removal of their horns or the process of preventing their growth.

- The new law defined how painful procedures such as castration of bulls, horses and other animals are to be carried out.
- All procedures are to be carried out with the involvement of a **registered veterinary practitioner**, along with the mandatory use of **general and local anaesthetics.**
- The rules prescribe a **methodology for euthanasia** for ill animals to avoid a painful death, adding the rules also require using pain-reducing methods for dehorning and nose roping.
- The rules also demand the breeding of **naturally hornless cattle** over dehorning and using face halters and other humane procedures for nose roping and preventing cold and hot branding on live tissues.

Need for reforms:

- These procedures were earlier 'undefined' under **Sections 11 and subsection 3 of the Act**, which made it difficult to prevent cruelty against animals.

- **Section 11** defined the acts that amount to treating animals with cruelty.
- But **subsection 3 allowed exceptions for animal husbandry procedures**, which involve dehorning cattle and castration, branding and nose roping of animals in a prescribed manner.

Existing methods

- The existing methods involve pushing a bull to the ground to use a castrator sans painkillers.
- Dehorning is done by **disbudding by chemical** or **hot-iron destroys the horn-producing cells** of the horn bud.

Animal rights and safety:

- None of the guarantees contained in **Part III of the Constitution**, which deals with fundamental rights, are explicitly conferred on animals.
- Therefore, when efforts to legislate on animal welfare were first made, it came from a more **elementary ethical precept** that it was morally wrong to inflict unnecessary pain and suffering on animals.
- It was with this vision in mind that Parliament enacted the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA Act), in 1960.**

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act in 1960:

- The legislative intent of the Act is to "**prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals**".
- The **Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI)** was established in 1962 under Section 4 of the Act.
- This Act provides for punishment for causing unnecessary cruelty and suffering to animals. The Act defines animals and different forms of animals.
- Discusses different forms of cruelty, exceptions, and killing of a suffering animal in case any cruelty has been committed against it, so as to relieve it from further suffering.
- Provides the guidelines relating to experimentation on animals for scientific purposes.
- The Act enshrines the provisions relating to the exhibition of the performing animals, and offences committed against the performing animals.
- This Act provides for the **limitation period of 3 months** beyond which no prosecution shall lie for any offences under this Act.

Concerns:

- While it criminalizes several types of actions that cause cruelty to animals, it exempts, for example, from its coverage the use of animals for experiments with a view to securing medical advancement.

Other Government Interventions:

- **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM):** To undertake breed improvement programme for indigenous breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock.
- **E-Pashu Haat Portal:** This portal is for connecting breeders and farmers regarding availability of quality bovine germplasm.
- **National Animal Disease Control Programme:** It has been launched for **Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)** and Brucellosis with a total outlay of Rs.13, 343 crore to ensure 100% vaccination of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat and pig population.
- **National Livestock Mission:** IT is for intensive development of livestock, especially small livestock along with adequate availability of quality feed and fodder.
- **Livestock Health & Disease Control Scheme:** Assistance is provided for prevention and control of animal diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) etc.
- **Disease Protection of Livestock:** For livestock protection, the diagnostic kits against Japanese Encephalitis (JE) and Bluetongue (BT) diseases and Subviral Particle based Infectious Bursal Disease Vaccine were developed.

RENEWABLES ENERGY POTENTIAL OF MYANMAR

CONTEXT:

The latest Miller Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (MCSE) report highlighted that Myanmar is one of the least developed countries with the lowest electrification rate in Asia.

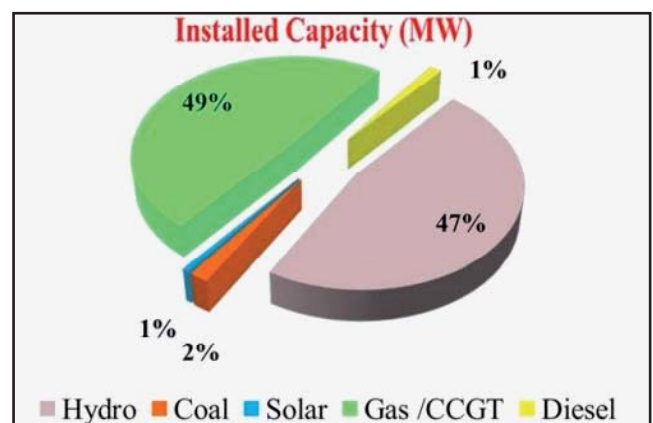
Energy needs of Myanmar:

- In 2022, "80 per cent of the rural people had no access to grid electricity".
 - ▶ Around **26 per cent of the population** in the country lives in poverty.
 - ▶ Most people living in rural areas use **candles, kerosene, batteries, and generators due to the inaccessibility of grid electricity**. The poverty rate in rural areas is twice that of urban areas.
- Power generation in Myanmar is dominated by **gas (57 per cent)** and **hydroelectric power (39 per cent)**.
 - ▶ The economic growth in such areas has been dampened due to the twin challenges of affordable and reliable electricity.

The country's **per capita annual power consumption** was **389 kilowatts per hour (kWh)** in 2019-20.

Renewables in Myanmar:

- Myanmar has enormous **solar energy potential**, specifically in its **dry zones**.
- The estimated potential for wind energy is 33.83 GW; for solar energy, it is 26.96 GW. Effective tapping of these resources can reduce the **carbon footprint** of the country, as well as lower its dependency on fossil fuels.
- Myanmar has more than **100 GW of hydropower** installed capacity potential, according to estimates.
- Around 92 large hydropower potential projects have been identified with a combined installed capacity of 46 GW.
- The **four main large rivers** flowing across the country, namely, **Ayeyarwady, Thanlwin, Chindwin, and Sittaung**, house around **200 large dams** built for hydroelectricity.



How can India help Myanmar?

- Strengthening the **India-Myanmar electricity grid connection** and **accessing the large Indian power market** can provide Myanmar access to a reliable supply of electricity.
- This will allow the country to employ resources and kick-start the process of **larger South Asia-ASEAN power Grid integration**.
- About 3-5 MW of power is currently being supplied to **Tamu (Myanmar) from Moreh (Manipur, India)** through an **11 kV line** between the two countries.

India-Myanmar relations:

- **India's gateway to South-East Asia:** India and Myanmar share a long 1,643 km geographical land border and maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar shares borders with 4 Indian states –

Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India.

- **Infrastructural Projects:** India is building the **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport**, a road-river-port cargo transport project, to link Kolkata to Sittwe in Myanmar and then from Myanmar's Kaladan river to India's north-east.
 - ▶ India, Myanmar, and Thailand are building the Asian Trilateral Highway, which will connect India to ASEAN.
- **Defence: India-Myanmar Bilateral Army Exercise (IMBAX)** is aimed at building and promoting closer relations with armies. Myanmar is a key partner in the fight to end insurgency in India's northeast.

Challenges:

- Internal Security: Indo-Myanmar border is porous and lightly policed which is exploited by terrorist outfits and insurgent groups from North Eastern part of India.
- Bilateral trade between India and Myanmar still falls short of expectations.
- China has asserted itself through its soft power as well as through its trade and economic relations with Myanmar by taking up large infrastructure projects.
 - ▶ India has found it difficult to counter **Chinese influence in Myanmar**.
- **Lack of basic infrastructure and low trading volume** at the Indian border.
- The India Intelligence Agency stated that the smuggling of light arms, drugs and counterfeit currencies have been spotted along the border.

SEBI GETTING SET TO REGULATE INDEX PROVIDERS

CONTEXT:

The government is going to regulate the practices of market index providers on the Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI), amid concerns about the safety of passive investors' savings parked in funds linked to indices that have added or retained several Adani group stocks.

Who are market index providers?

- **Index providers** are companies that design and calculate indexes.
- They have the responsibility to set the rules that decide what securities to include in each index, how

the index will be managed and how securities will be added or removed from that index over time.

The most prominent indices in India are the **Nifty50 by NSE Indices**, and Sensex provided by a venture of S&P Dow Jones Indices and BSE Ltd.

How they help investors?

- The process of listing usually determine how stocks can be classified, e.g. are a particular stock a Healthcare or an Oil & Gas stock, or are it a **Developed or Emerging market stock**.
- An index allows **investors and other stakeholders** to get a snapshot/idea of the market.

What are index funds?

- An index fund is a portfolio of **stocks or bonds designed** to mimic the composition and performance of a **financial market index**.
- Index funds have **lower expenses and fees** than actively managed funds.
- Index funds **follow a passive investment strategy**.
- Index funds seek to **match the risk and return of the market based** on the theory that in the long term, the market will outperform any single investment.

Need for regulation:

- SEBI had stressed the need for greater oversight on currently unregulated index providers like **NSE Indices (a National Stock Exchange subsidiary)** and **Asia Index Pvt. Ltd.** citing their growing dominance due to the "**proliferation**" of index funds.
- The firms associated with investors could "**exercise discretion through changes in methodology resulting in exclusion or inclusion of a stock in the index or change in the weights of the constituent stocks**" and their decisions can impact the volumes, liquidity and price of such stocks, as well as investors' returns from index funds.

As of **January 2023**, almost **16% of the mutual fund industry's ₹41 lakh crore assets** under management were in **index and exchange traded funds (ETFs)**, including from large investors like the **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** which oversees formal sector workers' retirement savings.

About the development:

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has proposed a regulatory framework for index providers.

- The proposed framework would mandate index providers to adhere to **International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) principles**.
- The proposed regulations would prescribe provisions to ensure eligibility criterion, compliance, disclosures, periodic audits, and penal action in case of non-compliance and incorrect disclosures.

Significance:

- **Portfolios of index funds** only change substantially when their **benchmark indexes change**.
- Thus, regulating the market index providers could directly impact the index funds.

Weighting is a method that balances out the influence of any single holding in an index or a portfolio.

Role of Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI):

- It is the regulator for the securities market in India. It was established in 1988 and given statutory powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.
- **It has empowered to exercise on following areas;**
 - ▶ To approve by-laws of Securities exchanges.
 - ▶ To require the Securities exchange to amend their by-laws.
 - ▶ Inspect the books of accounts and call for periodical returns from recognized Securities exchanges.
 - ▶ Inspect the books of accounts of financial intermediaries.
 - ▶ Compel certain companies to list their shares in one or more Securities exchanges.
 - ▶ Registration of Brokers and sub-brokers.

MUTUAL FUNDS RE-OPEN OVERSEAS INVESTMENT FUNDS

CONTEXT:

Mutual fund houses are re-opening their international funds for investment due to the potential loss of long-term capital gains tax benefits if invested after the end of March 2023.

Background:

- In January 2022, market regulator SEBI had banned **mutual funds' investments** in overseas stocks as

it was inching closer to the **\$7 billion limit** and a separate cap of **\$1 billion** for overseas ETFs.

- Following a representation from the industry and meltdown in global markets, SEBI re-opened overseas investments last June but within the individual mutual fund cap as of last February.
- With the steady fall in the international markets and **change in taxation rules from April 1**, mutual funds left with some headroom want investors to take advantage of overseas investment.

International Mutual Funds:

- International mutual funds are **equity funds** that primarily invest in stocks of companies listed outside India.
- These funds help to diversify the investment portfolio of the mutual fund and help the funds to obtain better returns by taking a higher risk associated with investing in international markets.

What are overseas investment funds?

- Foreign investment refers to the investment in **domestic companies and assets** of another country by a foreign investor.
- **Large multinational corporations** will seek new opportunities for economic growth by opening branches and expanding their investments in other countries.
- A **foreign fund** is a type of fund that invests in companies that are based internationally, or outside the investor's country of residence.

Foreign funds are also known as international funds. Foreign funds can be **mutual funds, closed-end funds, or exchange-traded funds**.

Rules governing international investments:

- The Overseas Investment Rules and Regulations, notified under the Foreign Exchange Management Act, will be administered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- A **No-Objection Certificate (NOC)** will be mandatory for any person who has a bank account classified as a Non-performing asset, or is labelled a wilful defaulter by any bank, or is under investigation by a financial service regulator, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or the Central Board of Investigation (CBI).
- Further, **no Indian resident** will be permitted to make investments in foreign entities that are engaged in **real estate business, gambling in any form and dealing with financial products linked to the Indian rupee without the central bank's specific approval**.

APEX BODY FOR GLACIER MANAGEMENT

CONTEXT:

The Parliamentary Standing Committee has recommended setting up an overarching apex body for glacier management in the country.

Glacier Management in India:

- There are different **ministries/departments/institutions** with different mandates for dealing with hydro-meteorological and hydro-geological hazards of **Himalayan glaciers**.
- While the glaciers are **surveyed and their detailed inventory** is maintained by the Geological Survey of India, Ministry of Mines; the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change looks into all matters related to climate change.
- The **Department of Science & Technology** is involved in conducting research on glaciers and the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research has done some studies on the Himalayan Cryosphere.

Recommendations of the Committee:

- New strategies:**
 - Given the strategic role and importance of glaciers as a vital national resource, there is a critical and imperative need as never before, to formulate new strategies for combating the challenges posed by the climate change and global warming in the glacier management.
- Single nodal agency:**
 - Committee recommended setting up a single nodal agency for bringing out synergies among various government departments/ministries involved in glaciological research and monitoring.
 - Such an agency should be entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating the activities of all the departments/agencies involved in Himalayan glaciers' monitoring and research work.
- Role of concerned agencies:**
 - Committee urge upon the Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation to play a lead role in this regard so as to take the matter to its logical conclusion.

About Glaciers:

- Glaciers are **large, thick masses of ice that form on land when fallen snow gets compressed into ice over many centuries**.

- Presently, **10 percent of land area on Earth is covered with glacial ice**, including glaciers, ice caps, and the ice sheets of **Greenland** and **Antarctica**.
- In India, mostly glaciers are confined to the Himalayan region, specifically in **Greater Himalayan ranges**.
- Glacierized areas cover over 15 million square kilometres (5.8 million square miles).
- Glaciers store about **69 percent of the world's fresh water**.

Glacier mapping in India:

- There are **about 15,000 glaciers** in the Himalayas.
- Total area of Himalayas is about **five lakh square kilometres** (Area of India is nearly 32 lakh sq km). About 33,000 sq.km area is covered by snow.
- The snow line (the lowest level of perpetual snow) varies in different parts of the Himalayas depending upon latitude, amount of precipitation and local topography.

List of Important Glaciers in India:

S. No.	Glacier Name	Length	Location
1	Siachen Glacier	76 km	Ladakh
2	Gangotri Glacier	30 km	Uttarakhand
3	Bara Shigri Glacier	27.7 km	Himachal Pradesh
4	Zemu Glacier	26 km	Sikkim
5	Drang-Drung Glacier	23 km	Ladakh
6	Milam Glacier	16 km	Uttarakhand
7	Shafat Glacier/ Parkachik Glacier	14 km	Ladakh
8	Pindari Glacier	9 km	Uttarakhand
9	Chhota Shigri Glacier	9 km	Himachal Pradesh
10	Machoi Glacier	9 km	Ladakh

Significance of Glaciers:

- Glaciers as Reservoirs:** About three-quarters of Earth's freshwater is stored in glaciers. Therefore, glacier ice is the second-largest reservoir of water on Earth and the largest reservoir of freshwater on Earth.
 - The cold runoff from glaciers also affects downstream water temperatures.
- Glacier-feeding Rivers:** The Gangotri Glacier, one of the largest glaciers in the Himalayan Mountains, is the source of the Ganga River.
 - The Ganges is the most important source of fresh water and electricity in India and Bangladesh.
- Glaciers for Aquatic Life:** Many aquatic species

in mountainous environments require cold water temperatures to survive which is provided by Glaciers.

- ▶ Some aquatic insects are especially sensitive to stream temperature and cannot survive without the cooling effects of glacial melt water.
- ▶ Such changes in stream habitat may also adversely impact native trout and other keystone salmon species.
- **Glaciers for People:** Glaciers provide people with many useful resources. Glacial till provides fertile soil for growing crops.
 - ▶ Deposits of **sand and gravel** are used to make concrete and asphalt.

SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC WASTE MANAGEMENT

CONTEXT:

Since India have ambitious solar power installation targets, it lacks in holding a solar waste management policy.

So, Let us analyse the cause.

What is solar waste?

- It is the **electronic waste (e-waste)** generated by discarded **solar panels and Photo-voltaic (PV) devices**.

Photovoltaic (PV) devices contain semiconducting materials that convert sunlight into electrical energy.

- A single PV device is known **as a cell**, and these cells are connected together in chains to form larger units known as modules or panels.

As a Hazard for Environment:

Although up to **90% of the components are recyclable**, many PV modules contain heavy metals such as **cadmium, copper, lead, antimony or selenium**, and when they are taken out of service or broken, they may be classified as **hazardous waste**.

Solar waste generation in India:

- Globally, **India stands fourth in solar photovoltaic deployment**. India's solar power installed capacity had reached nearly 62 GW by November 2022.

- However, it also augurs a **colossal amount of solar photovoltaic waste** in future.
 - ▶ According to the **International Renewable Energy Agency report 2016**, India could generate 50,000-3,25,000 tonnes of cumulative photovoltaic waste by 2030 and more than 4 million tonnes by 2050.

India is expected to become one of the **top five leading photovoltaic waste producers** globally by **2045-2050**.

- India's solar photovoltaic installations are dominated by **crystalline silicon (c-Si) technology**. A typical photovoltaic panel is made up of 93% of c-Si modules and 7% of cadmium telluride (CdTe) thin film modules.
- The metals used to manufacture c-Si modules are silver, tin, and lead. The CdTe thin film module is made of glass, encapsulant, and compound semiconductor.

Challenges/Issues:

- **According to e-waste guidelines:** As these photovoltaic panels reach their end of lives, some portions of the frame are extracted and sold as scrap; junctions and cables are recycled.
 - ▶ According to a 2021 report, approximately **50% of total materials** can be recovered through such waste management and recycling processes.
- India's challenge is the growing **informal handling of photovoltaic waste**.
 - ▶ Only about 20% of the waste is recovered in general; the rest is treated informally.
- The waste often accumulates at **landfills**. Landfill disposal in turn causes acidification, leaching of toxic metals (such as lead and cadmium) into the soil, and contaminates the local water.
- Gradual incineration of the panel encapsulant also releases **sulphur dioxide, hydrogen fluoride, and hydrogen cyanide into the atmosphere**.

Global action against solar waste:

- Many **Western and Asian economies** have well-established **regulatory guidelines** for photovoltaic waste management and are actively investing in building awareness on effective waste management practices.
- For example, the **European Union's 'Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive'** makes producers responsible for safely and responsibly disposing of end-of-life photovoltaic panels.
- In the **U.S.**, states have the freedom to establish their own solar photovoltaic regulatory standards. Its National Renewable Energy Laboratory is also exploring ways to boost the circular economy in the solar photovoltaic sector.

- China has introduced an implementation plan for life-cycle management and to improve the resource efficiency of solar photovoltaic panels.

Way forward:

- Specific provisions:** India should formulate and implement provisions specific to photovoltaic waste treatment within the ambit of the e-waste guidelines. The government should also build a legislative framework to enforce the Extended Producer Responsibility Rules.
- Regulatory body:** Central insurance or a regulatory body should be set up to protect against financial losses incurred in waste collection and treatment.
- Awareness: pan-India sensitization drives** and awareness programmes on photovoltaic waste management will be beneficial. Clear recycling targets and recycling rates in the photovoltaic waste management policy directive will be good as well.
- R&D:** considering India's local solar photovoltaic-panel manufacturing is limited, we need to pay more attention to domestic R&D efforts.

BIOTRANSFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

CONTEXT:

A UK-based start-up claims to have developed Biotransformation technology that can alter the state of plastics and make them biodegradable without leaving behind any microplastics.

Biotransformation:

Biotransformation is the process by which substances that enter the body are changed from hydrophobic to hydrophilic molecules to facilitate elimination from the body. This process usually generates products with few or no toxicological effects.

What is biotransformation technology?

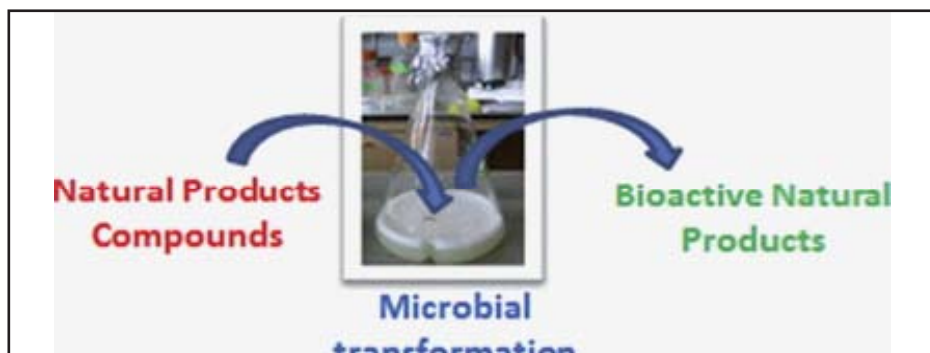
- Biotransformation technology is a novel approach to ensure plastics that escape refuse streams are processed efficiently and broken down.
- The tech was co-developed by the Imperial College in London, UK, and a Britain-based startup, Polymateria.
- Plastics made using this technology are given a pre-programmed time during which the manufactured material looks and feels like conventional plastics without compromising on quality.
- Once the product expires and is exposed to the external environment, it self-destructs and biotransforms into bioavailable wax.
- This wax is then consumed by microorganisms, converting waste into water, CO₂, and biomass.
- This biotransformation technology is the world's first that ensures polyolefins fully biodegrade in an open environment causing no microplastics.

Why do we need it?

- Huge plastic waste:** the country is generating 3.5 billion kgs of plastic waste annually and that the per capita plastic waste generation has also doubled in the past five years. Of this, a third comes from packaging waste.
 - According to Statista, in 2019, plastic packaging waste from e-commerce firms was estimated at over a billion kilograms worldwide.
- Freshwater and marine ecosystems as pollution:** Amazon generated nearly 210 million kgs of plastic from packaging waste in 2019. They also estimated that up to 10 million kgs of Amazon's plastic packaging ended up in the world's **freshwater and marine ecosystems as pollution** in the same year.

Applications:

- Food packaging and health care industries are the two prime sectors that could use this technology to reduce waste.
- "The increase in cost is relatively small compared to conventional plastic that does not contain" this technology.



Alternatives to reducing plastic waste:

- A switch to **jute or paper-based packaging** could potentially cut down plastic waste. This could also build sustainability within the paper industry, and save on the import bill on ethylene solutions.
- The **wooden packaging** is yet another alternative, but that will make the packaging bulkier and increase cost.
- Some other alternatives can be like coir, bagasse, rice and wheat bran, plant and agricultural residue, banana and areca leaves, jute and cloth.

INDIA TO ESTIMATE TB BURDEN USING OWN SYSTEM

CONTEXT:

India has become the first country in the world to estimate the Tuberculosis (TB) burden in-country and launch its own mathematical system to estimate the disease burden.

About the Model:

- This model was constructed based on;
 - ▶ The **natural history of diseases**,
 - ▶ individual status of infection, disease,
 - ▶ health care seeking, missed or correct diagnosis,
 - ▶ Treatment coverage and outcomes including cure and death.
- The TB model was drawn up by **using data** from several sources, including the **Nikshay portal** of private sector drug sales, the sub-national certification system where the TB-free status of various States is **estimated and ranked**.

Status of TB in India:

- India's TB incidence rate stands at **196 per 1,00,000 population**, instead of the 210 estimated by the WHO, and the estimated deaths from the communicable disease stand at 3.20 lakh, instead of the 4.94 lakh that was projected in 2021.
- The Health Ministry noted that as per this data, the global TB reduction numbers stand at 11% while the reduction in TB cases in India is 18%.

National TB prevalence survey 2019-21:

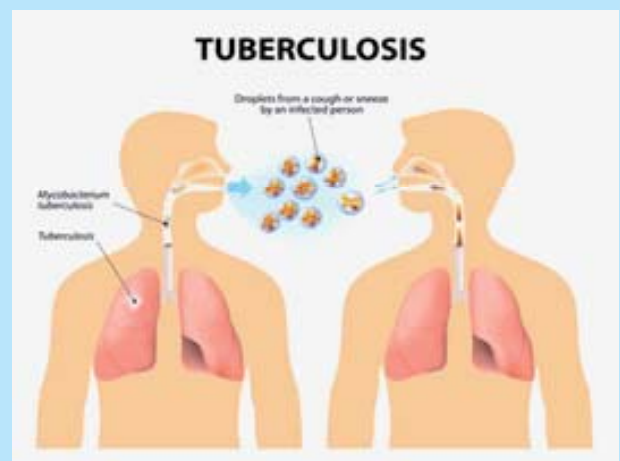
- The National TB Prevalence survey in India was conducted from 2019 to 2021 to know the actual disease burden of TB at a national level.
- The survey estimated the point prevalence of microbiologically confirmed pulmonary TB (PTB)

among **person's ≥15 years in age** in India at the national level and for 20 individual states / state groups.

- The survey also explored the **health seeking behaviour** and **estimated the prevalence of TB infection**.
- **Key Findings:**
 - ▶ Delhi has the **highest burden** of all forms of TB and pulmonary TB — at 747 per 100,000 and 534 per 100,000 respectively.
 - ▶ Gujarat has the **lowest burden** of all forms of TB at 137 per 100,000 while Kerala is the lowest in pulmonary TB at 151 per 100,000.

About TB:

- TB is caused by a bacterium called **Mycobacterium tuberculosis**, belonging to the Mycobacteriaceae family consisting of about 200 members.
- In humans, TB most commonly affects the **lungs (pulmonary TB)**, but it can also affect other organs (**extra-pulmonary TB**).
- TB is a very ancient disease and has been documented to have existed in Egypt as early as 3000 BC.
- TB is a **treatable and curable disease**.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from **person to person through** the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.



Treatments available for TB:

Drugs:

- **For previously treated cases of TB**, the intensive phase is of **12 weeks**, where injection of streptomycin is given for eight weeks along with four drugs FDCs (INH, Rifampicin, Pyrazinamide, and Ethambutol).
- **Second-line drugs** are the TB drugs that are used for the treatment of drug-resistant TB. The second line drugs include **levofloxacin, moxifloxacin, bedaquiline, delamanid and linezolid**.

- **Vaccines:** Currently, the following **two vaccines** have been developed and identified for TB, and are **under Phase-3 clinical trial:**
 - VPM (Vaccine Projekt Management) 1002
 - MIP (**Mycobacterium Indicus Pranii**)

National and international initiatives:

- National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)
- National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis Elimination (2017-2025)
- The Nikshay Ecosystem (National TB information system)
- Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY- financial support)
- TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign
- TB Free India Campaign
- Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP)
- International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

GS SCORE
An Institute for Civil Services

Aadhaar

NCERT FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

150⁺ Hrs.
Course to Cover & Map
the Concepts of **Old &
New NCERT Books** in
Sync with
UPSC Syllabus

- Developing Answer Writing skills
- 97 NCERT-based Prelims Tests (Topic-wise)
- Crisp & Concise notes for Quick Revision
- Mentorship for personalized guidance



📞 **8448496262** 🌐 **iasscore.in**

Section: B
(SPECIAL)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

INTEGRATED TEST SERIES



Single Source of Integrated Preparation
for PRELIMS & MAINS

- 👉 Total **96 Tests**, (45 Prelims & 51 Mains Tests)
- 👉 One on one doubt clearing sessions
- 👉 Approach Classes & Test discussion classes

More than just the Test Series

2 YEARS

INTEGRATED TEST SERIES



Single Source of Integrated Preparation
for PRELIMS & MAINS



CONCEPT
CLASSES



TEST SERIES
(PRELIMS & MAINS)



PERSONAL
MENTORING



STUDY
MATERIAL



1B, Second Floor, Pusa Road, Karol Bagh,
New Delhi - 110005 (Beside Karol Bagh
Metro Station Gate No. 8)



8448496262



iascore.in

WEAPONISING THE DEFAMATION LAW

CONTEXT:

Recently, the Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** was held guilty and sentenced to two years in jail by a Surat Court in a 2019 defamation case.

What was the case?

- The Rahul Gandhi commented that “Why do all thieves, be it Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi or Narendra Modi, have Modi in their names”. These remarks were made during a rally in Kolar, Karnataka, in the run-up to the **2019 Lok Sabha elections**.
- However, none of the three named Modis filed a criminal complaint or a civil suit for defamation on being called thieves. A former Gujarat Minister and current MLA, Purnendu Modi, filed a criminal complaint in a Surat court saying that all Modis had been defamed.
- His complaint was based on the second explanation to Section 499 of the IPC, which reads: “It may amount to defamation to make an imputation concerning a company or an association or collection of persons as such.”
 - ▶ **Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)** prescribes for defamation a simple imprisonment for a “term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.”

Ground of Disqualification:

Disqualification of a lawmaker is prescribed in **three situations**.

- One of the prescriptions is under The Representation of **The People Act (RPA), 1951**.
 - ▶ There are several provisions that deal with disqualification under the RPA.
- **Section 8 of the RPA** deals with disqualification for conviction of offences.
 - ▶ The provision is aimed at “preventing criminalisation of politics” and keeping ‘tainted’ lawmakers from contesting elections.
- **Section 8(3) of RPA** states: “A person convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less **than two years shall be disqualified** from the date of such conviction and shall continue to be disqualified for a further **period of six years** since his release.”

Law of criminal defamation

- The law of criminal defamation was not intended to have political consequences. It has been in **the Indian Penal Code (IPC)** since its inception in the times of **Macaulay**.

- The basic logic of making defamation a criminal offence was to prevent people from fighting in the streets to protect their honour or that of their loved ones.
- **When the Constitution of India came into being, the right to freedom of speech and expression** was made subject to the laws of defamation and contempt of court, along with a few exceptions.
- Free India ought to have done away with criminal defamation and continued with defamation as a civil law that envisages compensation in terms of damages.

What about ‘free speech’?

- Under the Constitution of India, all Indian citizens enjoy **free speech** subject to **reasonable restrictions** under **Article 19**, but the speech of MPs and Members of Legislative Assemblies in Parliament and other legislative bodies is particularly protected under **Articles 105 and 194** as a parliamentary privilege, subject only to **provisions of the Constitution** and standing orders of such a legislative body.
- MPs cannot be punished “in connection with” any vote or speech made in Parliament.
- Courts are also specifically barred from making inquiries into proceedings in Parliament.
- These additional greater protections for legislators are neither accidental nor a carve-out for special interests, but a recognition of how important free speech of legislators has been, historically, and continues to be in our parliamentary democracy.

Important SC’s Judgments:

Lilly Thomas Case:

- Under the **RPA, Section 8(4)** stated that the disqualification takes effect only “after three months have elapsed” from the date of conviction. Within that period, lawmakers could file an appeal against the sentence before the High Court.
- However, in the landmark 2013 ruling in ‘**Lily Thomas v Union of India**’, the Supreme Court struck down **Section 8(4)** of the RPA as unconstitutional.

The Subramanian Swamy case

- The constitutionality of criminal defamation was challenged in the Supreme Court, but in 2015, in the Subramanian Swamy case, the court upheld Sections 499 and 500 of the IPC, with the argument that the provision had existed in the statute books for a long time.
- It was also argued that even the makers of the Constitution had made an exception in the freedom of speech provisions in favour of defamation laws.

GS SCORE

An Institute for Civil Services

IAS-2023**OFFLINE & ONLINE****PRELIMS SAMPORNA****Yearly CURRENT AFFAIRS
REVISION CLASSES**SCAN FOR DETAILS &
DOWNLOAD BROCHURE**60⁺ Hrs CLASSROOM & ONLINE PROGRAMME**
for Complete Revision of Prelims 2023 Current Affairs**8448496262****www.iasscore.in**

Section: C

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

To Attempt

Weekly Current Affairs Test, Visit

www.iasscore.in

ALL INDIA PT MOCK

in UPSC SIMULATION ENVIRONMENT

for Civil Services Prelims Examination at the

TEST CENTERS in SCHOOLS

Across 20+ Cities

OMR
Based

- ✓ Mock Tests on UPSC Pattern
- ✓ All India Ranking
- ✓ Live Discussion/Doubt Clearing
- ✓ Detailed Analysis

◉ AHMEDABAD

◉ BENGALURU

◉ BHOPAL

◉ BHUBANESWAR

◉ CHANDIGARH

◉ CHENNAI

◉ DELHI

◉ DELHI

(MUKHARJEE
NAGAR)

◉ DELHI (SOUTH
CAMPUS)

◉ GUWAHATI

◉ HYDERABAD

◉ INDORE

◉ JAIPUR

◉ JAMMU

◉ KOLKATA

◉ LUCKNOW

◉ MUMBAI

◉ PATNA

◉ PRAYAGRAJ

◉ PUNE

◉ RAIPUR

◉ RANCHI

◉ THIRUVANANTH
A-PURAM

◉ VARANASI

◉ VIJAYAWADA

ENGLISH & हिंदी माध्यम

MOCK TEST 01

09 APRIL

MOCK TEST 02

30 APRIL

MOCK TEST 03

10 MAY

₹ 500/-

PER
MOCK TEST

₹ 1000/-

FOR ALL 3
MOCK TESTS



8448496262



iasscore.in

SAURASHTRA-TAMIL SANGAM

CONTEXT: Overwhelmed by the 'success' of the **Kashi-Tamil Sangamam**, the Union government is set to hold the **Saurashtra-Tamil Sangam** in Gujarat which will be followed by the **Kedarnath-Tamil Sangamam**.

About Saurashtra-Tamil Sangam (STS):

- The Saurashtra Tamil Sangam aims to rediscover, reaffirm and celebrate the over 1,000-year-old emigration and contribution of **Saurashtrian Tamils**.
- It is a program that highlights the oneness of India's culture by narrating untold histories of how a community emigrated to Tamil Nadu and their contributions to the country.
- The Saurashtra Tamil Sangam is going to held at Somnath, Dwarka and other places in Gujarat to connect Tamil Nadu and Saurashtra.
- It will celebrate the civilisational links between people from the southern part of the country and the People from the Saurashtra and Kedarnath in the north.
- It is a unique attempt where States shared their culture, civilisation and heritage with each other, and the country united in soft power.
- The STS is the second such programme under the 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' initiative.

The first one was the '**Kashi Tamil Sangamam**', a month-long event held last year to "rediscover" links between Varanasi and Tamil Nadu.



Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat

- The initiative '**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**' was announced in 2015.
- The program aims to actively enhance interaction between people of diverse cultures living in different States and UTs in India, with the objective of promoting greater mutual understanding among them.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education

Background

- Originally from the Gujarat region, the **Saurashtrian community** now mostly resides in the southern states of **Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka**.
- Their migration to the southern parts of the country is believed to be primarily a result of the desecration of the **Somnath Temple**, their religious centre, by **Mahmud Ghazni** in 1024.
- Many **Saurashtrians** also came to Tamil Nadu in the 17th century as royal silk weavers to the **Nayak kings**.

According to reports, there are about 25 lakh people of Gujarati origin living in Tamil Nadu and over 12 lakh Saurashtrians in the state with a majority of them settled in Madurai, Thanjavur, and Salem.

Kedarnath-Tamil Sangamam

- Kedarnath is one of the four sacred shrines of Shiva among the Char Dham (four shrines).
 - ▶ The Char Dham also comprises **Badrinath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri temples**.
- It is situated on the banks of Mandakini, 3,583 metres above sea level.
- It is the eleventh out of 12 *jyotirlingas* (shrines dedicated to Shiva) of India.
- Tamilians were ardent Shiva worshippers, and every year thousands of people from TN and other southern States, including Karnataka and Kerala visited Kedarnath during the yatra.
- People from the south also visited the Badrinath shrine in large numbers, to perform Pind Daan and Tarpan (part of the last rites in Hinduism), at the Brahm Kapal temple situated in Badrinath.

PAROLE DAYS CANNOT BE COUNTED AS PART OF SENTENCE PERIOD: SC

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court recently held that period of parole granted to prisoners during the COVID-19 pandemic period to prevent the overcrowding of prisoners.

Key-highlights of the Judgment

- The SC Bench dismissed a writ petition filed by a prisoner who sought for a declaration that the period of parole granted allowed by the High Powered Committee during the pandemic based on the orders passed by the Supreme Court in the *suo motu* case In Re Contagion of COVID 19 virus in Prisons be counted towards the period of actual sentence.
- The bench relied on the recent judgment in Rohan Dhungat vs. State of Goa which held that parole period cannot be counted towards the period of actual sentence.

About Parole:

- A parole can be defined as **conditional release of prisoners** i.e. an early release of a prisoner, conditional on good behaviour and regular reporting to the authorities for a set period of time.
- It can also be defined as a form of conditional pardon by which the convict is released before the expiration of his term.
- Thus, the parole is granted for good behaviour on the condition that parolee regularly reports to a supervising officer for a specified period.
- Such a release of the prisoner on parole can also be temporarily on some basic grounds. In that eventuality, it is to be treated as mere suspension of the sentence for time being, keeping the quantum of sentence intact.
- Release on parole is designed to afford some relief to the prisoners in certain specified exigencies. Parole is granted by Divisional Commissioner Parole can be granted number of times.

Furlough:

- **Furlough** is a brief release from the prison.
- It is conditional and is given in case of long-term imprisonment.
- The period of sentence spent on furlough by the prisoners need not be undergone by him as is done in the case of parole.

- Furlough is granted as a good conduct remission. The grant of furlough is to break the monotony of imprisonment and to enable the convict to maintain continuity with family life and integration with society.
- Although furlough can be claimed without a reason, the prisoner does not have an absolute legal right to claim furlough.
- The grant of furlough must be balanced against the public interest and can be refused to certain categories of prisoners.
- Furlough is granted by the Deputy Inspector General of Prisons. There is limitation in the case of furlough.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY INKS DEAL WITH 19 EMPLOYERS

CONTEXT: The Ministry of Rural Development has signed MoUs with **19 'Captive Employers'** for training and placement of 31,000 rural youths under **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**.

'Captive Employers' refer to companies or industries that select rural youths, skill them, and deploy them in one of their own establishments, sister-concerns or subsidiaries.

About the development:

- The ministry aims to provide these employers the target to train and provide gainful employment to rural youth, with a minimum salary of **Rs.10, 000 per month**.
- The time-period of employment is **minimum of six months**.
- **Objective:** To ensure that the candidates are trained in line with the industry requirement and employed.
- **Significance:** The **Captive Employment model** allows the employer to select the rural youths, skill and deploy them in one of its own establishment/ sister-concern/subsidiaries.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana:

- **Enable Poor and Marginalized to Access Benefits:** scheme emphasizes demand led skill training at no cost to the rural poor.
- **Inclusive Program Design:** Scheme includes Mandatory coverage of **socially disadvantaged groups (SC/ST 50%; Minority 15%; Women 33%)**
- **Shifting Emphasis from Training to Career Progression:** Scheme pioneers in providing incentives for job retention, career progression and foreign placements.
- **Greater Support for Placed Candidates:** Scheme provides Post-placement support, migration support and alumni network.
- **Proactive Approach to Build Placement Partnerships:** Scheme provides guaranteed Placement for at least 75% trained candidates.
- **Enhancing the Capacity of Implementation Partners:** scheme includes nurturing new training service providers and developing their skills.
- **Regional Focus:**
 - ▶ Greater emphasis on projects for poor rural youth in Jammu and Kashmir (HIMAYAT),
 - ▶ The North-East region and 27 Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) districts (ROSHINI)
- **Standards-led Delivery:** All program activities are subject to Standard Operating Procedures that are not open to interpretation by local inspectors. All inspections are supported by geo-tagged, time stamped videos/photographs.
- **Beneficiary Eligibility:**
 - ▶ **Rural Youth:** 15-35 Yrs.
 - ▶ **SC/ST/Women/PVTG/PWD:** up to 45 Yrs.
- **Funding support:** DDU-GKY provides funding support for placement linked skilling projects that address the market demand with funding support ranging from Rs. 25,696 to over Rs. 1 lakh per person, depending on the duration of the project and whether the project is residential or non-residential.

SMART PDS SCHEME

CONTEXT: The **Department of Food and Public Distribution (DFPD)** is envisaging a new and unified scheme to strengthen the **PDS technology components** by standardization of its operation and implementing data-driven decision-making through data analytics.

About the scheme:

- **Full-Form:** Scheme for Modernization and Reforms through Technology in Public Distribution System.
- **Aim:** to transform the entire PDS IT ecosystem by leveraging the usage of Cloud and new-age technology. Also, to prevent leakage of food grains, and increase efficiency of the distribution.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- **Components of SMART-PDS:**
 - ▶ **Smart Ration Card:** SMART-PDS is a system where smart ration cards are issued to beneficiaries of the public distribution system, and ration is given through fair price shops on the production of the smart ration card by any member of the beneficiary family.
 - ▶ **Fingerprint Template:** The fingerprint template of the beneficiary is recorded in these smart ration cards, which record all transactions.
- **Fund allocation:** Funds should also be allocated by the **state governments**, as according to the National Food Security Act, ration cards are issued by the state government.
- **Estimation:** The expected procurement of **coarse grains/millet (Shri Anna)** is 7.50 LMT during the KMS 2022-23(Kharif & Rabi) as against actual procurement of 6.30 LMT during KMS 2021-22.

Need of the initiative:

- With technological advancements, it is essential that the ration shops become digitalised for easy and quick transactions.
- It will also keep the entire **process transparent and reduce corruption.**

Working of the Smart PDS system:

- **To issue smart cards:** The smart PDS is a joint operation of the **central and state government.** However, it is the responsibility of the state governments to issue smart cards.
 - ▶ The operational responsibility of the ration cards also lies with the state government.
- **Allocation of ration:** The Centre will only **allocate rice, wheat, kerosene, and sugar** to the state government and Union Territories under this scheme.
- **Distribution:** It is the duty of the **state governments to** distribute the allocated food grains among the citizens.

GREEN TUG TRANSITION PROGRAMME (GTTP)

CONTEXT: With an aim to make India a global hub for building green ships, the **Ministry of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW)** launched '**Green Tug Transition Programme**' (GTTP).

Tugs are **special boats** that assist other vessels into and out of port. The primary purpose of these boats is to help move larger ships by **towing, pushing, and guiding**.

About the Development

- The plan is to expand the exercise of conversion of tugboats into green tugs into full-fledged manufacturing of these all important boats in the country that are essential elements of any port, helping in the mooring or berthing operation of a ship by either towing or pushing a vessel towards the port.
- Union minister of ports, shipping and waterways said that plan is afoot to make India as the '**Global hub for building Green Ships**' by 2030.

About 'Green Tug Transition Programme' (GTTP):

- The goal is to turn every tugboat in use in the nation into a "**Green Hybrid Tug**," one that runs on non-fossil fuels like **hydrogen, ammonia, and methanol**.
- The initial Green Tugs are expected to begin operating in all Major Ports by **2025**, according to a target set by **the Ministry of Ports**.
- The programme will start with '**Green Hybrid Tugs**', which will be powered by **Green Hybrid Propulsion systems** and **subsequently, adopt non-fossil fuel solutions** (like **Methanol, Ammonia, and Hydrogen**).
- At least 50% of all the Tugs are likely to be converted into **Green Tugs by 2030**, which will considerably reduce emissions as the country moves towards achieving sustainable development.

The minister also inaugurated India's first **National Centre of Excellence in Green Port & Shipping (NCoEGPS)** in Gurugram, Haryana.

National Centre of Excellence in Green Port & Shipping (NCoEGPS):

- **Located at:** Gurugram, Haryana

- **Setup by:** NCoEGPS is the result of collaboration between the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, the Government of India and **the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)**.
- **Purpose:** The centre will engage in developing the regulatory framework and alternative technology adoption roadmap for green shipping in India.
 - ▶ It will act as a technological arm of MoPSW for providing the needed support on Policy, Research and **Cooperation in Green Shipping areas**.
- **Significance:** The Centre is aimed at playing a crucial role towards the achievement of the UN's **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 14)** to sustainably manage and protect marine & coastal ecosystems from pollution, conservation & sustainable use of ocean-based resources.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX APPELLATE TRIBUNAL

CONTEXT: Amendments to the GST laws, to enable the **Appellate tribunal's constitution** are expected to be introduced in the Lok Sabha under which the Tribunal is likely to be headed by a **former Supreme Court judge or a former Chief Justice of a High Court**.

About Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal:

- GSTAT would serve as the forum of second appeals to do with the applicability of GST, and will also be the first common forum of dispute resolution between the Centre and the States.
- It will be situated in New Delhi and several other State benches.

Composition:

- The tribunal has been established under **Chapter XVIII** of the **CGST Act** which provides for the Appeal and Review Mechanism for dispute resolution under the GST Regime.
- **Section 109 under CGST Act** empowers the **Central Government** to constitute, on the recommendation of Council, an Appellate Tribunal known as the Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by the Appellate Authority or the Provisional Authority.
- It will be presided over by its **president**. It will consist of a technical member from the Centre and a representative of the States.

The framework of the Tribunal may permit the resolution of disputes involving **dues or fines** of less than Rs. 50 lakh by a single-member bench.

Aim and Functions:

Twin functions of second appellate and first common forum between centre and states

- The appeals against the orders in first appeals issued by the Appellate Authorities under the Central and State GST Acts lie before the GST Appellate Tribunal, which is common under the Central as well as State GST Acts.
- The disputes that state tribunals would be looking at would be appeals under GST law wherein the taxpayer is contesting the tax demand put by the tax department.
 - ▶ The appeal based on the assessment would be made to the Commissioner (Appeals) if not satisfied at the state level and from there it would go to the Appellate Tribunal.
- Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST, and therefore, in implementation of GST across the country.

Significance:

- The national bench of the GST Appellate Tribunal will expedite resolution of disputes under GST laws. Being a common forum, GST Appellate Tribunal (national bench) will ensure that there is uniformity in redressal of disputes arising under GST.
- The appellate authority is being seen crucial as a forum for higher appeal for disputes under the indirect tax regime and will also help in resolving the confusion created by contradictory rulings given by **Appellate Authority for Advance Rulings (AAAR)** on the same or similar issues in different states.

What is GST?

- GST is an **Indirect Tax** which has replaced many Indirect Taxes in India.
- The Act came into effect on 1st July 2017; Goods & Services Tax Law in India is a comprehensive, multi-stage, destination-based tax that is levied on every value addition.

Goods & Services Tax Council is a constitutional body for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Service Tax.

PRODUCT-WISE INSURANCE COMMISSION CAP REMOVED BY IRDAI

CONTEXT:

Insurance regulator IRDAI has removed the **product-wise cap** on commission payable by Life, General and standalone health insurers to intermediaries and instead notified that such payments will come under the **expense of management (EOM)** limits.

About the decision:

- The commission payable by insurers to insurance agents or insurance intermediaries should not exceed the EOM limits specified.
- Health insurance policies offered by **Life and General insurance companies** will also come under the ambit of the new regulations

Objective:

- **Flexibility:** Objective of the new regulation on commissions is to provide insurers flexibility to manage expenses based on their growth aspirations and ever-changing insurance needs in the backdrop of improving insurance penetration.
- **Enhance the responsiveness:** It also intended to enhance the responsiveness of the regulation to market innovation, and facilitate the insurers in development of new business models, products, strategies, internal processes and enable easy compliance.

Significance:

- The shift from **product-level commissions** to a company-wide limit of expenses, as proposed, will ensure parity across varying business models while rendering greater flexibility in managing expenses for insurers.

ABOUT IRDAI:

- The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)**, is a statutory body formed under Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999 (IRDAI Act 1999)
- **Aim:** overall **supervision and development of the Insurance sector in India.**
- The key objectives of the IRDAI include the **promotion of competition** so as to enhance customer satisfaction through increased **consumer choice and fair premiums** while ensuring the financial security of the Insurance market.

Entities regulated by IRDAI:

- **Life Insurance Companies** - Both public and private sector Companies.
- **General Insurance Companies** - Both public and private sector Companies. Among them, there are some standalone Health Insurance Companies that offer health Insurance policies.
- **Re-Insurance Companies**
- **Agency Channel**
- **Intermediaries** include the following:
 - ▶ Corporate Agents
 - ▶ Brokers
 - ▶ Third Party Administrators
 - ▶ Surveyors and Loss Assessors.

About Light Pollution:

- Light pollution would be familiar to most people as that light dome that appears over populated areas that become visible, especially when you go **outside of that populated area** and look back towards it.
- That dome that you see is an **amalgamation of all the light sources** that have been exposed to the exterior environment.
- **Causes:**

India's first site for dark reserve:

- A part of **Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary at Hanle** in Ladakh is all set to become **India's first Dark Sky Reserve**.
- The site will also promote astronomy tourism, giving a boost to **local tourism** through science.

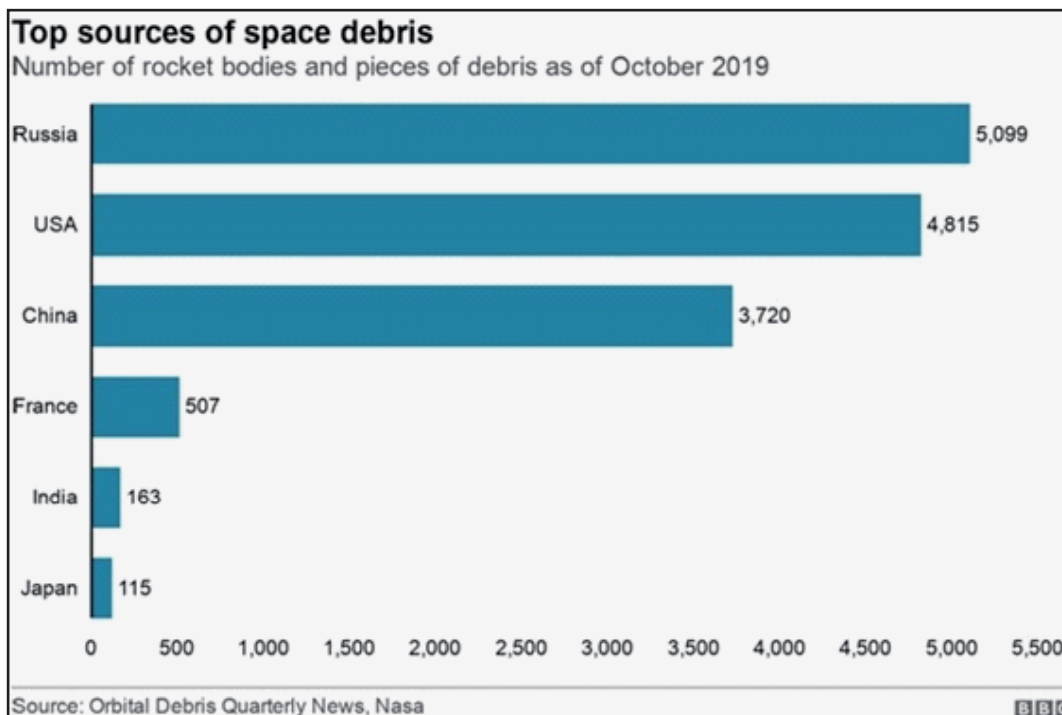
LIGHT POLLUTION & ISSUES

- CONTEXT:**
- Scientists have warned that artificial light and satellite constellations are an unprecedented global threat to nature and cultural heritage.
 - The satellites also pose a challenge to space debris as more and more junk piles up after a satellite's end of its mission.

- ▶ Skyglow, also known as **light pollution**, is the brightening of the night sky as the result of excessive and inappropriate artificial lighting.
- ▶ Light pollution is an increasing problem threatening astronomical facilities, ecologically sensitive **habitats, wildlife, and energy use**.

About Space Debris Problem:

- Space debris is the thousands of fragments from **old rocket parts or disintegrated satellites** that litter space - principally in Earth's orbit.
- There are more than **23,000 pieces of debris** larger than 10cm (4in) and the US Space Surveillance



Network tracks most of them, according to **NASA's Orbital Debris Programme Office (ODPO)**.

- Most of that debris is zipping around within **1,250 miles of the Earth's surface**, along with more than 2,000 artificial satellites, as well as the International Space Station.

How much is India responsible for?

- India still produces much less space junk than the top three polluters: **Russia, the US, and China**, according to ODPO data.
- Indian-made space debris, however, is on the rise - **from 117 pieces in 2018 to 163 in 2019**.

What is being done to tackle space debris?

- Project NETRA** is an early warning system in space to detect debris and other hazards to Indian satellites.
- In 2022, **ISRO set up the System for Safe and Sustainable Operations Management (IS 4 OM)** to continually monitor objects posing collision threats, predict the evolution of space debris, and mitigate the risk posed by space debris.
- The **Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC)**, an international governmental forum, was established in 1993 to coordinate efforts between spacefaring nations to address the issue of space debris.
- The United Nations has established the **Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)** to develop guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities, including the mitigation of space debris.
- And in 2025, the **European Space Agency** will launch the first space mission to remove debris from Earth's orbit.

PENALTY ON KERALA FOR FAILURE TO PROTECT RAMSAR SITES

CONTEXT: The Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed a penalty of ₹10 crore on the Kerala government for its failure to check the **indiscriminate pollution** of the listed Ramsar sites.

Key-highlights of the Order:

- The order by NGT was made in lines with a petition alleging failure of **statutory and administrative authorities** in taking remedial action for protection of the **Vembanad and Ashtamudi lakes** hit by illegal waste dumping.

Polluter pays principle:

The 'polluter pays' principle is the commonly accepted practice that those who produce pollution should bear the costs of managing it to prevent damage to human health or the environment.

- The penalty was imposed on the basis of the '**polluter pays principle**' which had to be deposited in a ring-fenced account to be operated under the authority of the Chief Secretary.
- The penalty of **₹10 crore** has been imposed which had to be made within a month.
- The penalty will be utilised for **conservation/restoration measures** by preparing an action plan to be preferably executed **within six months**.

National Green Tribunal (NGT):

- It is a special body established under the **National Green Tribunal Act (2010)**.
- Aim:** To effectively and expeditiously deal with cases related to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- NGT Act provides for special jurisdiction in court to deal with disputes arising under a set of seven rules (mentioned in **Schedule I** of the Act) -
 - Water Act
 - Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972
 - Forest (Conservation) Act 1980
 - Public Liability Insurance Act 1991
 - Biological Diversity Act 2002
 - National Green Tribunal Act 2010
- NGT has five residences- **New Delhi** (principal), **Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai**.

About Ramsar Sites:

- These are wetlands deemed to be of "**international importance**" under the Ramsar Convention.
- It is named after the city of **Ramsar in Iran**, where the convention was signed in **1971**.
- Ramsar sites are **trans-boundary** in which case more than one **Contracting Party** is responsible for their **conservation and management**.
- The inclusion in the list is for-**
 - the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands,
 - recognizing the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands and their
 - Economic value

- ▶ Cultural value
 - ▶ Scientific value
 - ▶ Recreational value
- It is also known as the **Convention on Wetlands**.

Vembanad Lake:

- This is the largest lake in Kerala and the longest Lake in India.
- The lake has its source in four rivers, **Meenachil, Achankovil, Pampa and Manimala**
- In 2002, it was included in the **list of wetlands of international importance**, as defined by the **Ramsar Convention**.
- It is the **second-largest Ramsar site in India** only after the Sundarbans in West Bengal.
- The **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary** is located on the east coast of the lake.
- In 2019, **Willingdon Island**, a seaport located in the city of Kochi, was carved out of **Vembanad Lake**.

Ashtamudi Lake:

- Ashtamudi Lake is a large freshwater lake located in the Kollam district of Kerala, India.
- It is known for its unique ecosystem and biodiversity, and is an important tourist destination in the region.
- Ashtamudi Lake is significant because it has been recognized as a **Ramsar site**, which is a wetland site, designated of international importance under the **Ramsar Convention**.
- The lake also plays an important role in supporting the livelihoods of local communities through fishing and tourism.



FIREWOOD AS A RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCE

CONTEXT: According to the **European Commission**, biomass, which includes **firewood, plants and other organic materials**, makes up **60% of the EU's renewable energy source**.

About:

- According to the EU law, as they tend to plant new trees after others have been chopped down, firewood gets the renewable seal of approval.
- That means member countries can **subsidize wood burning**, as long as certain sustainable sourcing rules are met.
- It means that "EU citizens are paying energy companies to **burn forests** in the midst of a climate and biodiversity crisis."

What does the renewable energy means?

- Renewable energy is energy derived from **natural sources** that are replenished at a higher rate than they are consumed.
- **Sunlight and wind**, for example, are such sources that are constantly being replenished.
- Renewable energy sources are **plentiful and all around us**.
- Fossil fuels - coal, oil and gas - on the other hand, are **non-renewable resources** that take hundreds of millions of years to form.
- Fossil fuels, when burned to produce energy, cause harmful greenhouse gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide.

Significance:

- Generating renewable energy creates far lower emissions than burning fossil fuels.
- Transitioning from fossil fuels, which currently account for the lion's share of emissions, to renewable energy is key to addressing the climate crisis.

Argument for using bioenergy:

- Bioenergy needs to comply with strict sustainability criteria that ensure sourcing and use of biomass for energy does not cause any **environmental harm or biodiversity loss**.

- The EU officially counts wood and other biomass **as carbon neutral**, based on the premise that CO₂ emitted through burning will be reabsorbed by more trees in the future.

Argument against Wood burning:

- But the **European Academies Science Advisory Council** says scientific study suggests the trend to replace coal with wood pellets as a means of generating electricity actually increases "atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide for substantial periods of time."
- A **2019 EASAC report** says the time it takes for carbon emissions associated with wood burning to be evened out can range from years to decades or even centuries, depending on conditions.

India's Renewable energy:

- Today, India is the **world's third largest producer of renewable energy**, with 40% of its installed electricity capacity coming from non-fossil fuel sources.
- India has always shown its willingness in leadership to fight climate change.
- The country's vision is to achieve **Net Zero Emissions by 2070**, in addition to attaining the short-term targets which include:
 - ▶ Increasing renewables capacity to 500 GW by 2030,
 - ▶ Meeting 50% of energy requirements from renewables,
 - ▶ Reducing cumulative emissions by one billion tonnes by 2030, and
 - ▶ Reducing emissions intensity of India's gross domestic product (GDP) by 45% by 2030.

GANDHAMARDAN HILLS BECOME 3RD BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE SITE IN ODISHA

CONTEXT: The Odisha government has declared the Gandhamardan hill as the third biodiversity heritage site of the state by giving it the status of a unique, ecologically fragile ecosystem having rich biodiversity.

About:

- The hill spans **18,963.898 hectare** over Bolangir and Bargarh districts.

- **Flora:** The floral diversity of Gandhamardan hills comprises of 1,055 plant species that include 849 angiosperms, 56 pteridophytes, 40 bryophytes, 45 lichens and 2 gymnosperms and 63 species of macrofungi.
- **Fauna:** The faunal diversity comprises 500 species of animals that include 43 species of mammals, 161 species of birds, **44 species of reptiles, 16 species** of amphibians, 118 species of butterflies, 27 species of dragonflies, 7 species of damselflies and 83 species of spiders.
 - ▶ **One angiosperm:** ficus concinna var. dasycarpa and one spider: peucetia harishankarensis are endemic to this hill.

Historical Significance:

- The hills have historical monuments such as the **Nrusinghanath temple** located on the northern slope and **Harishankar temple** on the southern side.
- These two shrines are big pilgrimage sites of Odisha.

- With this announcement, Gandhamardan has become **the 37th biodiversity heritage site of India**, along with the Majuli island of Assam, Nallur Tamarind grove of Bangalore, Khlaw Kur Syiem KmieIng sacred grove of Meghalaya and Naro Hills of Madhya Pradesh.
- The **Mandasaru gorge in Kandhamal district** was notified as the first such site in Odisha in 2019, followed by **Mahendragiri hills in 2022**.

What are Biodiversity Heritage Sites?

- **Biodiversity heritage sites are well-defined areas under the National Biodiversity Authority** that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems – **terrestrial, coastal and inland waters and, marine** – having a rich ecosystem comprising any one or more of the following components:
 - ▶ richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories
 - ▶ high endemism
 - ▶ presence of rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance, wild ancestors of domestic/cultivated species or their varieties
 - ▶ past pre-eminence of biological components represented by fossil beds
 - ▶ having significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values
 - ▶ important for the maintenance of cultural diversity, with or without a long history of human association with them.

Section: C
(SHORT NEWS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Hybrid Gamosa



Amid rising controversy over an Assamese-Bangla paired **gamosa**, the **Bangla Sahitya Sabha, Assam, (BSSA)** tendered an apology for hurting sentiments through its act of cutting Assamese and Bengali 'gamosas' and mixing its designs.

About:

- The traditional Assamese Gamosa/Gamusa or Gamucha is one of the most recognisable cultural symbols of Assam.
- It is a white rectangular piece of cloth with embroidered red borders.
- The red border is called the "anchu" and is believed to be the sign of Ahom strength.
 - ▶ "Anchu" was derived from a certain red flower which was also known as "anchu".

The controversy

- The Bangla Sahitya Sabha, Assam (BSSA) felicitated guests at a function with "hybrid gamosas".
- Hybrid gamosa was made using the designs of Assamese gamosa and Bengali gamchhas.
 - ▶ Half of the scarf was a red-and-white **phulam gamosa** — considered a symbol of Assamese identity
 - ▶ The other half was a red-and-white chequered pattern gamchha used by Bengalis

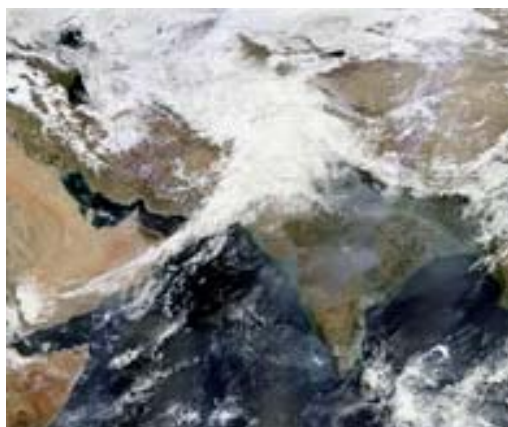
NASA monitors South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA)



Nasa is monitoring a region of magnetic intensity in Earth's field between South America and south-west Africa.

- The odd phenomenon, called the **South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA)**, is known as a "dent" in Earth's magnetic field.
- While it doesn't affect Earth, orbital spacecraft including the International Space Station can pass directly through the anomaly.

Western Disturbances



- The reason for the abnormal winter seasons since 2020-21 lies in the changing character of the **Western Disturbances**.
- A western disturbance (WD) is an extra-tropical storm which originates in the Mediterranean region.

The disturbance travels from the "western" to the eastern direction.

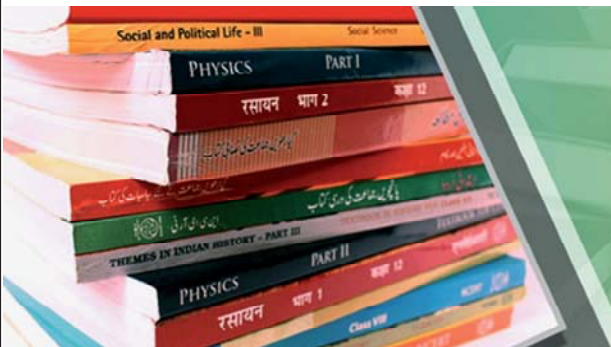
Disturbance means an area of "disturbed" or reduced air pressure. Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a region tries to normalise its pressure.

- In the term "extra-tropical storm", storm refers to low pressure. "Extra-tropical" means outside the tropics.
- As the WD originates outside the tropical region, the word "extra-tropical" has been associated with them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A WD is associated with rainfall, snowfall and fog in northern India. • Upon its arrival in Pakistan and northern India, clouds along with rain and snow also arrive. • The moisture which WDs carry with them comes from the Mediterranean Sea and/or from the Atlantic Ocean
<p>Saving Day time</p>	<p>Recently, Lebanon was thrown into mass confusion after its government at the last minute delayed the start of daylight saving time by a month.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenland has chosen to stay with daylight saving time forever. <p>What is daylight saving time?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to Norway-based Time and Date, daylight saving time (DST) is the practice of setting the clocks forward one hour from the standard time during the summer and back again in the autumn. • This is done to make better use of natural daylight. • India does not follow daylight saving time as countries near the Equator do not experience high variations in daytime hours between seasons. <p>What is phenomenon behind it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daylight saving is a result of the earth's tilted rotation around the sun. • The Earth's axis of rotation is tilted, which means that the sun rises and sets at different times throughout the year as the Earth moves around the Sun.
<p>Riyadh joins Shanghai Cooperation Organization</p>	<p>Saudi Arabia has approved a memorandum for granting the status of a 'dialogue partner' in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).</p>
	<p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia's cabinet approved, a decision to join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as to build a long-term partnership with China despite U.S. security concerns. • The decision followed an announcement by Saudi Aramco (2222.SE) which raised its multi-billion dollar investment in China, by finalizing a planned joint venture in northeast China and acquiring a stake in a privately controlled petrochemical group. • Dialogue partner status will be a first step within the organization before granting the kingdom full membership in the mid-term. <p>The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCO is a political and security union of countries spanning much of Eurasia, including China, India, and Russia. • It aimed to cooperate against non-traditional security challenges, in particular fighting the so-called "three evils" of terrorism, separatism, and extremism.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fact that the SCO also strives to strengthen mutual trust and good neighborly relations between its member states.
<p style="text-align: center;">Panchamasali Reservation</p> 	<p>The High Court of Karnataka has allowed the State government to take a decision on reservation for the Panchamasali (Lingayat sub-sect.)</p> <p>Who are Lingayats?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lingayats are followers of 12th-century social reformer Basavanna, who was inspired by the Bhakti Movement. Basavanna was a treasurer in the court of King Bijjala II; he rejected Brahmin rituals and temple worship and envisaged a society that was casteless, free of discrimination, and where men and women had equal opportunities. <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government gave an undertaking that the proposed decision would not disturb the constitutionally guaranteed quota in the existing Category 2A of the caste-based reservation list. There are now 99 sub-sects within the Lingayats, whose main goal was once the eradication of the caste system. Prominent sub-sects include the Panchamasalis, Ganiga, Jangama, Banajiga, Reddi Lingayat, Sadars, Nonaba and Goud-Lingayats.
<p style="text-align: center;">'Call Before u Dig' App</p> 	<p>Recently, the Prime Minister has launched an app called 'Call Before u Dig'.</p> <p>About:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objective: To help prevent uncoordinated digging that results in damage to underground utility assets like optical fibre cables, costing the government thousands of crores every year. The 'Call Before u Dig' (CBuD) app aims to facilitate coordination between excavation agencies and underground utility owners to prevent damage to utilities due to digging. With this, it would help to protect underground public infrastructure across the country. The mobile application has been developed by the department of telecommunications and the Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics functioning under the Gujarat government to protect underground public infrastructure across the country. The app will connect excavators and asset owners through SMS/Email notifications and click-to-call in bid to execute planned excavations.

Revised NCERT books under NEP 2020



After nearly two decades, **school students at all levels** will learn from updated textbooks to be introduced in the **2024-25** academic year.

About the development:

- The modification was done as per the **National Education Policy 2020** and **National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** released in August 2022.
- Currently the government has released NCF for pre-school to Class 2, for children aged between three and eight years.
- The framework for other classes is yet to be rolled out.
- Correspondingly, textbooks based on NCF for **Class 1 and 2** will be released by the end of this month.

Key features:

- The new **National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)** textbooks will be developed in **22 languages**, in consonance with the NEP 2020 perspective of **imparting multilingual education**.
- NCERT has developed material to feed into the play-way teaching method: the **Jaadui Pitaara (magic box)** would be made available to every school in the form of **open education resources**.

Significance:

- The **Ministry of Education** aims to help students develop their cognitive and critical thinking skills, which involve problem-solving in real-life situations.
- It also speaks about developing the **social and emotional capacities** of the child.
- There is an emphasis on **vocational education** so students can develop an entrepreneurial mindset or be gainfully employed in the future.

'Bharat Nepal Ashtha Yatra'



As per the information by IRCTC, more than **80 per cent of seats** for the **first-ever trip** of the 600-seater '**Bharat Nepal Ashtha Yatra**' special train have already been booked.

- The train is scheduled to start its journey from **Jalandhar in Punjab on March 31**.

About:

- The route will cover **Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Prayagraj in India and Pashupatinath (Kathmandu) in Nepal**.
- The train, operated by the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) Ltd, offers a **nine-day and 10-night package inclusive of boarding fees, transport costs, and meals**.
- More than **80 per cent of seats** out of 600 have been booked.
- The train will run till **Raxaul railway station in East Champaran** in Bihar and, thereafter, **tourists will be taken to Nepal in buses**.
- The boarding stations are **Jalandhar, Chandigarh, Ambala, Kurukshetra, and Panipat** in the **Ambala Railway division**.

Plastic-rock hybrid discovered in Andaman's Aves island



A team of **marine biologists** during routine monitoring of marine litter in some of the remote Andaman and Nicobar Islands, have stumbled upon a **piece of rock made from plastic**.

Background:

- Known as **Plastiglomerate**, the rock is composed of sand, rock fragments, shells and other materials held together by plastic, resulting in a plastic-rock hybrid.
- It is a new form **of plastic pollution** described by scientists in 2014.
- This is the **first find** from India of Plastiglomerate.
- Laboratory analysis showed that it has two very commonly used plastic polymers— **polyethene and polyvinyl chloride**— which was holding the smaller rock and sand particles to form a rock, approximately the size of ones **found along railway tracks**.
- The findings have been published in **Marine Plastic Pollution**.

Concerns:

- Plastic accumulating in oceans and on beaches has turned into a global crisis due to which thousands of seabirds and sea turtles, seals and other marine mammals are killed each year after ingesting plastic or getting entangled in it.

Konkan 2023



Recently the annual **bilateral maritime exercise** between the **Indian Navy and the Royal Navy** of the **United Kingdom (UK)** was held from **March 20 to 22** off the **Konkan coast** in the Arabian Sea.

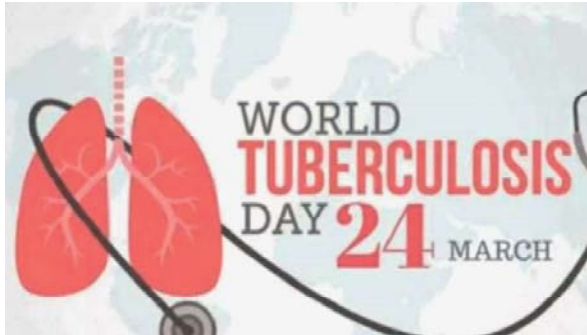
About the exercise:

- **INS Trishul**, a guided missile frigate of the Indian Navy, and **HMS Lancaster**, a Type 23 guided missile frigate of the Royal Navy, participated.
- This edition of the exercise undertook **multiple maritime drills** to enhance interoperability and imbibe best practices.
- The exercises covered all domains of maritime operations — **air, surface, and sub-surface**.
- It included **gunnery shoots on surface inflatable target 'Killer Tomato'**, helicopter operations, anti-air and anti-submarine warfare drills, **Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS)**, ship manoeuvres and exchange of personnel.

Visit Board search and seizure (VBSS):

- *Visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS)* is the term used by **United States military and law enforcement agencies** for maritime boarding actions and tactics.
- VBSS teams are designed to **capture enemy vessels, combat terrorism, piracy, and smuggling, and to conduct customs, safety and other inspections**.

World Tuberculosis Day 2023



World Tuberculosis Day is observed every year on **March 24**, to raise the awareness about Tuberculosis.

About:

- TB is caused by the **bacterium Mycobacterium tuberculosis** and primarily affects the lungs, although it can also affect other parts of the body.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has set a goal to eliminate the diseases of 2030.
- In 1982, the **International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD)** launched **World TB day** to coincide with the 100th Anniversary of **Koch's discovery**.

Significance:

- World TB Day is an opportunity to focus on the progress made in the **prevention and treatment of Tuberculosis**.

Army to get satellite for critical data



The **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** has signed **three contracts** worth ₹5,400 crore — two with **Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)** worth ₹2,400 crore and **Sarang Electronic Support Measure (ESM) systems**.

About the deal:

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) will procure an **Automated Air Defence Control and Reporting System 'Project Akashteer'** for the Army.
- Another ₹2,963 crore contract is with **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**, for an advanced communication satellite, GSAT 7B, for the Army has been signed.
- NSIL is a **Central Public Sector Enterprise** under the Department of Space.
- The geostationary satellite, being a **first-of-its-kind** in the five-tonne category, will be developed indigenously by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Sarang System:

- 'Sarang' is an **advanced ESM system** for helicopters of the Navy, designed and developed indigenously by the Defence Electronics Research Laboratory, Hyderabad under the programme, Samudrika.
- Sarang ESM systems along with **associated engineering support package** from BEL, Hyderabad will **generate an employment** of approximately two lakh man-days over a period of three years.

Significance of the move:

- The satellite will considerably **enhance the communication capability** of the Indian Army by providing mission critical beyond line of sight communication to troops and formations as well as weapon and airborne platforms.
- Akashteer will enable monitoring of low level airspace over the battle areas of Indian Army and effectively control the ground based air defence weapon systems.

Ubuntu



Context

Ubuntu, a philosophy taken from African customs can be helpful to tackle the macro-level repercussions of climate change.

About:

- Ubuntu can best be described as an **African philosophy** that places emphasis on 'being self through others'.
- It is a **form of humanism** which can be expressed in the phrases 'I am because of who we all are' and **ubuntu ngumuntu ngabantu in Zulu language**.
- The African word Ubuntu, which means '**humanity to others**', invokes a spirit of collective, global and regional inter-governmental action, as well as communal and individual efforts to resolve the complex climate crisis.

IAS-2024

GSSCORE
An Institute for Civil Services

ITS-2024

INTEGRATED TEST SERIES

Single Source of Integrated Preparation
for PRELIMS & MAINS

- ✓ Concept Building and Updation through **300+ Hrs. Classes**
- ✓ Assessment through **96 Tests** and Discussion for Prelims and Mains
- ✓ Value Addition **Study Material** and **Mentorship**





SUCCESS IS A PRACTICE WE DO!

