

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 3

APRIL
2023

MAINS

- GS-I**
 - AMBEDKAR'S DEMAND FOR SEPARATE ELECTORATE AND RESERVATION IN PRESENT TIMES
 - INDIA TO HAVE MORE PEOPLE THAN CHINA BY MID-2023: UN

- GS-II**
 - INDIA-ARMENIA PARTNERSHIP
 - 'NOTION OF MAN, WOMAN NOT BASED ON GENITALS': SC ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGES
 - ED INITIATES PROBE IN BBC INDIA'S ALLEGED FOREIGN EXCHANGE VIOLATIONS
 - GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF CHILD SUSPECTS IN 'HEINOUS' OFFENCES
 - MERCY PLEA DECISIONS AND DELAYS

- GS-III**
 - US EMERGES AS INDIA'S BIGGEST TRADING PARTNER
 - INDIA AMONG TOP 10 COUNTRIES FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS: EIU
 - INDIA HAS ALMOST WIPED OUT EXTREME POVERTY: IMF
 - G7 VOWS TO ZERO CARBON
 - INDIA LAUNCHES NATIONAL QUANTUM MISSION

PRELIMS

ART & CULTURE

- India to host two-day international Buddhist conference

GEOGRAPHY

- NISAR satellite to map Himalayas' seismic zones
- El Niño is coming

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

- Fill vacancy in NCSC expeditiously: SC

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- SpaceX postpones maiden test flight of the world's biggest rocket Starship
- ISRO to launch Singapore's TeLEOS-2 satellite

ENVIRONMENT

- Pittas find new haven in Odisha districts
- IMD issues heat wave alerts for five states

NEWS IN SHORT

- MP's Gond Painting gets GI Tag
- Bohag Bihu
- Uttaramerur inscription
- World Heritage Day 2023
- Exercise Orion
- India hosts first joint working group meeting on Chabahar port
- Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel
- Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution
- Dabba trading
- Utsa Patnaik wins Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023
- World Chagas Disease Day
- Pralay ballistic missiles
- Scientists identifies Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) waves
- SIDBI Launches 'Mission 50K-EV4ECO'
- Cumbum grapes gets GI Tag
- 'India's largest' aquarium, aviary to come up at Telangana's Eco-Park

SPECIAL

- Extra Judicial Killings

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— **Disclaimer** —

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

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

CONTENTS

WEEK - 3 (APRIL, 2023)

Section - A: MAINS CURRENT AFFAIRS			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS I	HISTORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambedkar's demand for Separate electorate and Reservation in present times 	02
	SOCIETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India to have more people than China by mid-2023: UN 	03
GS II	INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India-Armenia partnership 	04
	POLITY & GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Notion of man, woman not based on genitals': SC on same-sex marriages 	05
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ED initiates probe in BBC India's alleged foreign exchange violations 	06
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines for assessment of child suspects in 'heinous' offences 	07
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercy plea decisions and Delays 	08
GS III	ECONOMY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US emerges as India's biggest trading partner 	09
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India among Top 10 Countries for Ease of Doing Business: EIU 	10
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India has almost wiped out extreme poverty: IMF 	11
	ENVIRONMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> G7 vows to zero carbon 	12
	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India launches National Quantum Mission 	13
Section - B: SPECIAL			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS II	POLITY & GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extra Judicial Killings 	17
Section - C: PRELIMS CURRENT AFFAIRS			
Area of GS		Topics in News	Page No.
GS I	ART & CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> India to host two-day international Buddhist conference 	21

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GS II	GEOGRAPHY	• NISAR satellite to map Himalayas' seismic zones	22
		• El Niño is coming	23
	POLITY & GOVERNANCE	• Fill vacancy in NCSC expeditiously: SC	25
GS III	SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	• SpaceX postpones maiden test flight of the world's biggest rocket Starship	25
		• ISRO to launch Singapore's TeLEOS-2 satellite	26
	ENVIRONMENT	• Pittas find new haven in Odisha districts	27
		• IMD issues heat wave alerts for five states	27

Section - D: SHORT NEWS

Area of GS	Topics in News	Page No.
ART & CULTURE	• MP's Gond Painting gets GI Tag	31
	• Bohag Bihu	31
	• Uttaramerur inscription	32
	• World Heritage Day 2023	32
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	• Exercise Orion	33
	• India hosts first joint working group meeting on Chabahar port	33
POLITY AND GOVERNANCE	• Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel	34
	• Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution	34
ECONOMY	• Dabba trading	35
	• Utsa Patnaik wins Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023	35
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY	• World Chagas Disease Day	36
	• Pralay ballistic missiles	36
	• Scientists identifies Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) waves	36
ENVIRONMENT	• SIDBI Launches 'Mission 50K-EV4ECO'	37
	• Cumbum grapes gets GI Tag	37
	• 'India's largest' aquarium, aviary to come up at Telangana's Eco-Park	38

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SECTION: 'A'
(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

AMBEDKAR'S DEMAND FOR SEPARATE ELECTORATE AND RESERVATION IN PRESENT TIMES

CONTEXT:

On the occasion on Ambedkar Jayanti 2023, the issue of caste and the ideas of political representation for untouchables becomes the key focus.

Ambedkar Jayanti 2023:

- Ambedkar Jayanti is celebrated in India to commemorate the **birth anniversary of Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar**, also known as **Babasaheb Ambedkar**, who was an Indian jurist, economist, social reformer and politician and is best known as the **chief architect of the Indian Constitution**.
- Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a towering figure in India's struggle for social justice and equality.

Historical Background:

- Against the rigid caste structure and raising voice for their rights and representation, B R Ambedkar has made many efforts and he was amongst few people with **Gandhi** to represent oppressed class issues in political way.



- The fundamental differences between **Ambedkar and Gandhi** were highlighted the most during the issue of '**separate electorates**'.
- In the early 1930s, the issue of **separate electorates for lower castes** became a source of major debate.
- So, let us look at the issue of separate electorates which was asked by Dr. Ambedkar and the opposition to it from Gandhi, and how it was eventually '**rejected in favour of reservations**'.

What does separate electorate means?

- Separate Electorates are that **type of elections** in which minorities select their own representatives separately, as opposed to **Joint Electorates** where people are selected collectively.

Ambedkar's views on caste:

- Unlike Gandhi, who advocated for reforming the **caste system by abolishing untouchability**, Dr Ambedkar held a more radical view which rejected the institution of caste itself.
- He saw the reformism advocated by contemporary upper caste Hindus as inadequate to undo millennia of discrimination.
- According to him, any revolt against the caste system would only be possible after the oppressed themselves rejected their condition and oppression as being divinely ordained.
- Thus, Ambedkar's political programme emphasised on lower castes obtaining political power.
- He suggested separate electorates as the **form of affirmative action** to empower lower castes.

Ambedkar's arguments for separate electorates:

- He argued during **the First round table conference**, the depressed classes **form a group by themselves** which is distinct and separate and, although they are included among the Hindus, they in no sense form an integral part of that community.
- He also highlighted that the Depressed Classes feel that they will get no shred of political power unless the political machinery for the new constitution is of a special make.

How separate electorate can help depressed classes?

- According to Ambedkar's demands, separate electorates with **double vote** – one for SCs to vote for an SC candidate and the other for **SCs to vote for in the general electorate**.
- While he had previously rejected communal electorates (i.e. separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims), his position changed over time, as he realised that while joint electorates might better help integrate lower castes into the Hindu fold, they would do little to challenge their subservient position.

Gandhi's opposition:

- Gandhi's opposition to separate electorates was ostensibly based on his view that they "**do too little**" for lower castes.

- Gandhi argued that rather than being restricted to just this measly share of seats, lower castes should aspire to rule “**the kingdom of the whole world**”.
- However, the reality of lower castes’ material and social condition was not likely to put them in a position to rule the world.

Gandhi’s Argument:

- British had exploited internal divisions in Indian society for their own purposes.
- Separate electorates, according to him, would only help the British ‘**divide and rule**’.
- Second, this was also a time when antagonism between **Hindus and Muslims** was rising.

Evolution of Reservation:

- The reservation system that exists today, in its true sense, was introduced in 1933 when British Prime-Minister Ramsay Macdonald presented the ‘**Communal Award**’.
- The award made provision for **separate electorates** for Muslims, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, Europeans and the Dalits.
- After long negotiations, Gandhi and Ambedkar signed the ‘**Poona Pact**’, where it was decided that there would be a single Hindu electorate with certain reservations in it.

THE POONA PACT

- Poona Pact was signed by Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi on September 24, 1932, in the **Yerwada Central Jail** in Pune.
- The pact is a result of the fusion of two diametrically opposed ideas (Gandhi’s Social Approach and Ambedkar’s Political Approach), with the aim of attaining a shared objective for the upliftment of one of India’s most vulnerable groups of society.
- **Key agreements:**
 - As part of a deal he reached with Mahatma Gandhi, Bhimrao Ambedkar agreed to have candidates from the underprivileged class chosen by a joint electorate.
 - In addition, **147 legislative seats**—nearly twice as many as the community award—were reserved for the oppressed classes.
 - The Poona Pact also guaranteed **that underprivileged groups received fair representation in public services** while providing a portion of subsidies for their education to continue their advancement. Higher-class Hindus publicly acknowledged with the Poona Pact that the underprivileged class was the most unfairly treated group in India.
 - Additionally, it was decided that quick, severe action was required to help politically the underprivileged segment of society.
 - The treaty made the entire country ethically answerable for the moral uplift of the lower classes.

INDIA TO HAVE MORE PEOPLE THAN CHINA BY MID-2023: UN

CONTEXT

India is probably the world’s most populous country already. The latest demographic data from the United Nations Population Fund’s (UNFPA) say India’s population is expected to surpass that of mainland China by around 3 million people by the end of June 2023.

Key-highlights of the UN Report

- The UN report estimates India’s population will hit **1428.6 million** by mid-2023, while China’s (excluding Hong Kong and Macao, Special Administrative Regions of China, and Taiwan Province of China) is estimated to reach 1425.7 million.

Grouping the population

- **25 percent** of India’s population is estimated at below 14 years old
 - **18 percent** is estimated in the 10-19 year age group
 - **26 percent** in the 10-24 year bracket
 - **68 percent** in the 15-64 year age group
 - **7 percent** is estimated to be over 65 years old
 - In contrast, 17% of China’s population is estimated to be below 14 years of age, and 14 percent is estimated to be above 65 years old.
- Asia’s third-largest economy will soon house almost a fifth of humanity, more than the populations of Europe, Africa, or the Americas.
 - **Distant third:** The **United States** is estimated to be a distant number three in the rankings, with nearly 340 million people.
 - **The report says eight countries will account for half the projected growth in global population by 2050:** the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Tanzania.

What does the Indian government's data show?

Data from the Indian government, meanwhile, says India's annual population growth has averaged 1.2 percent since 2011, compared with 1.7 percent in the 10 years previously.

Cause of Overpopulation

- Poor livelihood has encouraged the country's poor and illiterate population reproducing at a higher rate than their middle- and high-income counterparts.
- Lack of family planning/unawareness
- Poor contraceptives use
- Decline in death rate, better medical capabilities

What are the issues/challenges?

- **Burden on resources:** With a large population, prevalent job crisis and climate change directly affects its limited resources. India home to 18% of the global population has only 4 percent of its water resources.
- **Environmental degradation:** This rapid growth is putting immense pressure on India's resources, and is contributing to environmental degradation, poverty, and social unrest.
- **Burden on land:** With an increase in population, the land holdings will become smaller, also because land is likely to be diverted for non-farming purposes.

Looking at the positive side

- India could use this **potential demographic advantage** (half its population is under the age of 30) to become the **world's fastest-growing major economy**.
- The population needs to be seen as a source of innovation, new thinking and lasting solutions.

Where India needs to work now?

India needs to advance on the given broad fronts to fully cash in on its demographic dividend and reshape the global economy in the process-

- Urbanization
- Infrastructure
- up-skilling and broadening its labor force
- boosting manufacturing
- Social security and universal health
- Demographic liability
- Resource allocation and Achieving SDGs
- Poverty and quality of life

**INDIA-ARMENIA
PARTNERSHIP****CONTEXT:**

As informed by the Armenian envoy in India, amid expanding defence cooperation, Armenia to soon have a Defence Attache at its embassy also in the country.

India-Armenia Relations:

- **Background:**
 - ▶ After the breakup of the USSR, India recognized Armenia on December 26, 1991.
 - ▶ The Protocol on establishment of Diplomatic relations between India and Armenia was signed on 31 August 1992.
 - ▶ India opened its Embassy in 2 Yerevan on 01 March 1999.
- **Historical ties:**
 - ▶ Indian settlements in Armenia existed as early as 149 BC. Thomas Cana is said to be the first Armenian to have landed on the Malabar coast in 780 AD.
 - ▶ Long before the **Dutch and the English** appeared in India, a few Armenian traders had come to Agra during the Mughal Empire.
 - ▶ Emperor Akbar, highly appreciative of the commercial talents and integrity of the Armenians, granted them numerous privileges and considerable religious freedom as also an opportunity to serve in his empire in various capacities.
 - ▶ The Armenian colony in India increased in size, wealth and importance throughout the 17th century.
 - ▶ During British government, they also entered Indian trade in varying relationships to the East India Company.
 - ▶ The Armenians made some contributions in the areas of artisanship including **gun-making and printing**.
- **Cultural ties:**
 - ▶ Indian classical singer Gohar Jaan, the first to be recorded on gramophone in 1902 was of Armenian origin.
- **People-to-people ties:**
 - ▶ The Armenian language journal "Azdarar" published in Madras (Chennai) in 1794 was the first ever Armenian journal published anywhere in the world.

- ▶ After India's independence, many Armenians migrated to Australia, USA and other places. The vestigial Armenian community in India is now mainly settled in Calcutta with sprinkling in Mumbai, Delhi, Agra and Chennai.
- **Defence ties:**
 - ▶ Armenia recently signed a major defence deal with India for procurement of **Pinaka multi-rocket launch systems and their ammunition**, among others, in a deal worth around ₹2,500 crore.
 - ▶ At present neither country has a dedicated DA in the other country.
- **Developmental cooperation:**
 - ▶ Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme.

ITEC programme is an on-going programme under which every year on average 35 slots are earmarked for Armenia for short and medium term courses which are extremely popular amongst Government and Public Sector officials.

- **Bilateral agreements:**
 - ▶ India and Armenia signed a Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation on 14 December 1995 in New Delhi.
 - ▶ In addition, there are over 30 Agreements/MoUs covering diverse areas of possible cooperation such as trade & commerce, culture, tourism, education, defense, science & technology, information technology, double tax avoidance, academic cooperation between institutes and Think Tanks.

'NOTION OF MAN, WOMAN NOT BASED ON GENITALS': SC ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGES

CONTEXT

The Supreme Court bench hearing petitions seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages made it clear that it will not go into personal laws governing marriages and said the very notion of a man and a woman, as referred to in the Special Marriage Act, is not 'an absolute based on genitals'.

Key-highlights

- **Bench's points:** Terming the issue involved in the pleas as 'complex', the bench asked the lawyers appearing in the matter to advance arguments on the Special Marriage Act, a religion neutral statute.
 - ▶ The bench said it is not the question of 'genitals' and the very notion of the special law having 'man and woman' is not restricted to the genitals.
- **Centre's Objection:** Centre raised preliminary objections to the Supreme Court hearing, says parliament is the only constitutionally permissible forum to decide on creation of a new social relationship.

What is the Special Marriage Act?

- The Special Marriage Act (SMA), 1954 is an Indian law that provides a legal framework for the marriage of people belonging to different religions or castes.
 - ▶ It governs a civil marriage where the state sanctions the marriage rather than the religion.
 - ▶ The Indian system, where both civil and religious marriages are recognised, is similar to the laws in the UK's Marriage Act of 1949.
- **Applicability:**
 - ▶ The applicability of the Act extends to the people of all faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists, across India.
- **Recognition of Marriage:**
 - ▶ The Act provides for the registration of marriages, which gives legal recognition to the marriage and provides a number of legal benefits and protections to the couple, such as inheritance rights, succession rights, and social security benefits.
 - ▶ It forbids polygamy and declares a marriage null and void if either party had a spouse living at the time of the marriage or if either of them is incapable of giving valid consent to the marriage due to unsoundness of mind.
- **Written Notice:**
 - ▶ **Section 5 of the Act** specifies that the parties must give written notice to the Marriage Officer of the District and that at least one of the parties must have lived in the district for at least 30 days immediately before the date of such notification.
 - ▶ **Section 7 of the Act** allows any person to object to the marriage before the expiration of 30 days from the date of the notice's publication.
- **Age Limit:**
 - ▶ The minimum age to get married under the SMA is 21 years for males and 18 years for females.

ED INITIATES PROBE IN BBC INDIA'S ALLEGED FOREIGN EXCHANGE VIOLATIONS

CONTEXT:

The Enforcement Directorate has initiated an inquiry into the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) India under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) for suspected violations.

Background

- February 2023: The move came about two months after the **Income-Tax Department** had surveyed the Delhi and Mumbai office of the BBC, which allegedly revealed multiple irregularities, including non-payment of tax on certain remittances that were not disclosed to the authorities as income in India.
 - The **Income-Tax Department** had then said that the income/profits shown by various group entities were not commensurate with the scale of operations in India.
- January 2023: The tax surveys came after the BBC had released a controversial documentary on the 2002 Gujarat riots titled *India: The Modi Question*.

Where has BBC India faltered?

- Violation of FDI rules:** In September 2019, the Indian government capped **FDI** in digital media at **26 percent** and issued a clarification the next October, which specified which entities were required to comply.
 - The **Information and Broadcasting Ministry** reinforced this in November 2020 asking "entities involved in uploading/streaming of news and current affairs through digital media" to comply with the decision.
 - This means that a **foreign investor cannot have more than a 26 per cent stake** in a digital media entity.

Primary legislation governing the foreign exchange regime in India

- Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (as amended from time to time) (FEMA)
- Foreign Exchange Management (Non-Debt Instruments) Rules, 2019 (NDI Rules)
- Foreign Exchange Management (Mode of Payment and Reporting of Non-Debt Instruments) Regulations, 2019
- Consolidated Foreign Direct Investment Policy, 2020

Reason behind the move

- So that, foreign companies do not "control" news organisations in the country.

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC):

- The BBC World Service India Private Limited is the subsidiary of the British broadcaster in the country. The parent company is called BBC World Service.
- British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the **publicly financed broadcasting system** in Great Britain, operates under **royal charter**.
- The Indian subsidiary is reportedly 100 per cent owned by the parent firm with no other investor.

The **British monarch** appoints the members of the BBC Trust, an **independent 12-member panel**, governed by a chairman that oversees day-to-day operations.

Role of Enforcement Directorate (ED):

- The Enforcement Directorate (ED) is the agency responsible for probing money laundering and violations of foreign exchange rules in India.
- Functions:-**
 - To collect, develop and disseminate intelligence relating to violations of FEMA, 1999, the intelligence inputs are received from various sources such as **Central and State Intelligence agencies**, complaints etc.
 - To investigate suspected violations of the provisions of the **FEMA, 1999** relating to activities such as "**hawala**" **foreign exchange** racketeering, non-realization of export proceeds, non-repatriation of foreign exchange and other forms of violations under FEMA, 1999.
 - To adjudicate cases of violations of the erstwhile **FERA, 1973 and FEMA, 1999**.
 - To realize penalties imposed on conclusion of adjudication proceedings.
 - To handle adjudication, appeals and prosecution cases under the erstwhile FERA, 1973
 - To process and recommend cases for preventive detention under the **Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA)**
 - To undertake survey, search, seizure, arrest, prosecution action etc. against offender of PMLA offence.
 - To provide and seek mutual legal assistance to/ from contracting states in respect of attachment/ confiscation of proceeds of crime as well as in respect of transfer of accused persons under PMLA.

Legal Backing:

- As per the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act**, the ED got its power to investigate under **Sections 48** (authorities under act) and **Section 49** (appointment and powers of authorities and other officers).
- If money has been laundered abroad, the PMLA court (constituted as per the Act) has the right to send a letter of rogatory under **Section 105 (reciprocal arrangements regarding processes) of the Code of Criminal Procedure**.

About the move:

- Criminal Cases by children come under the **“heinous” offences category of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.

The JJ Act, 2015 was amended to include **“serious” offences as a separate category apart from the existing categories of “heinous” offences and “petty” offences**.

- The main aim of the guidelines is to determine whether the accused should be treated as a **minor or not during the trial**.

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF CHILD SUSPECTS IN ‘HEINOUS’ OFFENCES

CONTEXT:

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has issued guidelines for the first time for conducting **“preliminary assessment”** to determine whether a child should be treated as a **minor or not in criminal cases**.

Need of assessment:

- The sole aim of **preliminary assessment** is to determine whether the child in the age of 16-18 years should be tried as an adult in case of heinous offence.
- There are **two essential conditions** that call for preliminary assessment.
 - First, the offence is in the category of **“heinous” as defined in the Act**.
 - Second, the child who has allegedly committed the crime is in **the age group of 16-18 years**.

What makes difference amongst type of Crime?

Heinous offences	Petty offences	Serious offences
includes crimes for which the minimum punishment is imprisonment for seven years or more	includes crimes for which the maximum punishment is imprisonment up to three years	includes crimes for which the punishment is a minimum imprisonment for a term more than three years and not exceeding seven years

Provision of Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act 2015:

- **Definition of ‘a child’:**
 - The child is defined in the **JJ Act, 2015** as a person who has not completed **18 years of age**, there is a specific provision under which initiation of an inquiry into a heinous crime has been differentiated based on **age of the child**.
- According to **Section 15(1) of the Act**, in case of a **heinous offence** alleged to have been committed by a child who has completed or is above the **age of 16**, the **Juvenile Justice Board (JJ)** shall conduct a preliminary assessment with regard to his **mental and physical capacity** to commit such offence, ability

to understand the consequences of the offence and the circumstances in which he allegedly committed the offence.

- The Board may then **pass an order** that there is a need for trial of the **child as an adult**.

Role of JJ Board:

- The **Juvenile Justice Board (JJB)** is solely responsible for conducting preliminary assessment, which it must complete within three months from the date of first production of the child before it.
- In case the Board determines that there is a need for a trial of the child as an adult, it will then transfer the case to the Children’s Court.

How the exact age is determined by the board?

- To determine the offender's age, the JJ Board would either obtain the **date of birth certificate** from the school, or the **matriculation or equivalent certificate** from the concerned examination Board in the absence of the birth certificate given by a civic body.
- Only in cases age shall be determined by an **ossification test** or any other latest **medical age determination test** conducted on the orders of the JJ Board.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):

- NCPCR is a statutory body under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005**. It comes under the administrative control of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
- The Child is defined as a person in the **0 to 18 years age group**.
- The commission's mandate is to ensure that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Commission visualizes a rights-based perspective flowing into National Policies and Programmes, along with nuanced responses at the State, District and Block levels, taking care of specificity and strengths of each region.
- Composition:**
 - This commission has a chairperson and six members of which at least two should be women.
 - All of them are appointed by the Central Government for three years.
 - The maximum age to serve in commission is 65 years for Chairman and 60 years for members.

MERCY PLEA DECISIONS AND DELAYS**CONTEXT:**

The Supreme Court directed all State Governments to ensure that mercy petitions in death penalty cases are decided and disposed of at the earliest.

What is the case?

- The order came on the Maharashtra Government's petition challenging a Bombay High Court order commuting the death sentence awarded to a woman and her sister in a murder case on the ground that there was **"unexplained inordinate delay"** of seven years and 10 months in deciding their mercy pleas by the Governor.
- The trial court had awarded them death sentence in 2001 for kidnapping 13 children and killing nine in Kolhapur.
- The death penalty was confirmed by the High Court and the Supreme Court in 2004 and 2006 respectively.
- Their mercy petitions were rejected by the Governor in 2013 and by the President in 2014.
- While refusing to interfere with the High Court's order commuting the death sentence to life imprisonment, the top court modified it and directed the accused to undergo life imprisonment for natural life and without any remission.

Points made by the Supreme Court

- Issue:** The apex court has highlighted that **death row convicts** were taking advantage of an inordinate delay in deciding mercy petitions.
 - Inordinate delay in not deciding on mercy pleas will **"frustrate the object and purpose of the death sentence."**
- Required measure:** The efforts shall be made by the state government and/or the concerned authorities to see that the mercy petitions are decided and disposed of at the earliest, so that even the accused can also know his fate and even justice is also done to the victim.
 - The court while directing the states also relied on the SC ruling on **Jagdish vs. State of Madhya Pradesh** wherein the court commuted the death sentence to life imprisonment after taking into consideration the delay in disposal of the **mercy petition of above five years**.

What is a Mercy petition?

- The mercy petition talks about the **power to pardon the convict** under a few sections of the **criminal code of procedure**.
- Mercy Petition lies in saving **an innocent person** from being punished due to **miscarriage of justice** or in **cases of doubtful conviction**.

Procedure to apply for mercy petition:

- A convict under the sentence of death is allowed to file a mercy petition within a **period of seven days** after the date on which the **Superintendent of Jail**

informs him about the dismissal of the appeal or special leave to appeal by the Supreme Court.

- The petitions are to be presented to the President of India. The President office seeks the **cabinet advice**.
- The appeal is examined by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** and the Ministry before giving recommendations to the President, takes the view of **State concerned**.
- There is **no written procedure** to deal with mercy petition.

Constitutional backing:

- **Under Article 72 of the Constitution**, the **President** has the **power to grant pardons** and decide on mercy petitions.
- **Under Article 161** of the Indian Constitution, the **Governor of State** also possess the **power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites and remission or suspend, remit or commute the sentence of a convict against state law**.

Difference between the pardoning power of President and Governor:

- **Death sentence:** President can pardon the death sentence but the Governor has no power to pardon the death sentence.
- **Court-martial:** The President can pardon in case of Court-martial. But the Governor cannot pardon in the court-martial.
- **Jurisdiction:** President exercises his judicial powers for the punishment which is given under the law made by the Union. Whereas the Governor exercises his judicial powers for the punishment which is given under the law made by the State.

Judicial review:

- ▶ President's **pardon/rejection/delay is also subjected to judicial review**.
- ▶ However, if a court finds that the process of the decision taken by the President under Article 72 was **not arbitrary or unreasonable**; the decision then cannot be interfered with.

A **curative petition** is the last judicial corrective measure which can be pleaded in any judgment or decision passed by the Supreme Court which is normally decided by Judges in-chamber.

Who else can give pardon?

- In **Dhananjoy Chatterjee alias Dhana v State of West Bengal**, 1994 case the Supreme Court has said that "The power under **Articles 72 and 161 of the**

Constitution can be exercised by the Central and State Governments, not by the President or Governor on their own".

- The advice of the appropriate Government binds the Head of the state.

US EMERGES AS INDIA'S BIGGEST TRADING PARTNER

CONTEXT

The United States (US) has emerged as India's biggest trading partner in 2022-23 on account of increasing economic ties between the two countries.

Key-highlights of the data

- According to the provisional data of the commerce ministry, the bilateral trade between India and the US has increased by 7.65 per cent to USD 128.55 in 2022-23 as against USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22. It was USD 80.51 billion in 2020-21.
 - ▶ Trade between the two countries has skyrocketed since 2020, when the Covid pandemic led to major global economic disruptions. In 2020-21, India-US trade stood at \$80.51 billion, which rose by over 37 percent to \$128.55 billion in 2022-23.
 - ▶ India's exports grew by 2.81 percent to reach \$78.31 billion in 2022-23, while imports soared by nearly 16 percent to \$50.24 billion in the same period. The **trade surplus** came to over \$28 billion in the last fiscal.
- Netherlands emerged as the **third largest goods buyer**, displacing China to the fourth position in 2022-23.
- **Bangladesh and Hong Kong** remained in India's **top 10 export markets**.
- **Trade deficit widens with China:** While China has been one of the top trading partners, India's deficit has widened over the years. Exports to China dipped by about 28 percent to \$15.32 billion in 2022-23, while imports rose by 4.16 percent to \$98.51 billion in the last fiscal.

Previous trend

China was India's top trading partner since 2013-14 till 2017-18 and also in 2020-21. Before China, the UAE was the country's largest trading partner.

Why is it a good news for India?

- United States is one of the few countries with which India enjoys a trade surplus. This means India exports more than it imports from the United States.
- So, trading with the United States helps India improve its foreign exchange reserves.

What led to this development?

- The increasing exports of goods such as pharmaceutical, gems and jewellery were helping India to push its shipments to America.
- Furthermore, India is emerging as a **trusted trading partner** and global firms are reducing their dependence on China for their supplies and are diversifying business into other countries like India.
- India has joined a **US-led initiative** to set up an **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)** and this move would help boost economic ties further.
- The US has consistently been India's largest market for services exports, but the recent overseas sales of merchandise goods to that country overtook China, making it the largest bilateral trading nation of India.

Government interventions:

The Government has taken the following measures to boost **exports and reduce trade deficit**:

- Foreign Trade Policy (2015-20)** extended up to 31-03-2023.
- Interest Equalization Scheme** on pre and post shipment rupee export credit has also been extended up to 31-03-2024.
- Assistance provided through several schemes to promote exports, namely, **Trade Infrastructure for Export Scheme (TIES) and Market Access Initiatives (MAI) Scheme**.
- Rebate of **State and Central Levies and Taxes (RoSCTL) Scheme** to promote labour oriented textile export has been implemented since 07.03.2019.
- Remission of **Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP)** scheme has been implemented since 01.01.2021.
- Common Digital Platform for Certificate of Origin** has been launched to facilitate trade and increase Free Trade Agreement (FTA) utilization by exporters.
- Districts as Export Hubs** has been launched by identifying products with export potential in each district, addressing bottlenecks for exporting these products and supporting local exporters/manufacturers to generate employment in the district.

Trade basics

- Trade surplus:** A trade surplus is an economic measure of a positive balance of trade, where a country's exports exceed its imports.
- Trade deficit:** A trade deficit is said to happen when a country's imports are higher than its exports. Trade deficit puts a strain on a country's foreign exchange and contributes to the balance of payments problem.

INDIA AMONG TOP 10 COUNTRIES FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS: EIU

CONTEXT

In a report published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), India seems to have inched ahead in terms of ease of doing business.

Key-highlights of the Report

- Singapore has retained its number one rank among all. Canada and Denmark were ranked joint second with the US and Switzerland occupying fourth and fifth place respectively.
- India has moved up six spots** since the last report. From the 14th rank for the period between 2018-22, India now stands at 10th rank in terms of business environment for the period 2023-27.
- India, Vietnam, Thailand, Belgium, Sweden, and Costa Rica** made the biggest improvements over the past year in their business environments, whereas **China, Bahrain, Chile and Slovakia** deteriorated the most.

The **EIU's Business Environment Ranking (BER)** measures the attractiveness of the business environment in 82 countries on a quarterly basis, using a standard analytical framework with 91 indicators.

What led to the improvement?

- Foreign trade:** The improvement is mostly attributable to gains in its scores for foreign trade and exchange controls, infrastructure, and technological readiness
- Profitable market:** India's highest-scoring category is market opportunities, helped by the large and growing domestic market that the country offers.

- **Beneficial geopolitical trends:** India has also benefited from global geopolitical trends, in particular the tension between the US and China.
- **Stability and labour supply:** In India, a strong, stable economy and access to a large labour supply form the basis of its appeal to investors.
- **Easier policy reforms:** In addition, policy reforms are making it easier to do business in India, and the researchers at the EIU are expecting major improvements in areas such as infrastructure, taxation and trade regulation which will boost investment.
- **Demography:** Another factor playing to India's advantage is its generally youthful demographic which promises good availability of labour.

India's Demography

EIU forecasts India's working-age population to expand by almost 100 million in the period to 2030, pushing it comfortably past 1 billion, while that of China will fall by 40 million to under 950 million. India's median age of 28.4 years compares favourably with that of 38.4 years in China. The rise in population creates an additional incentive for the government to develop the manufacturing sector to absorb additional workers.

Challenges

- **Low labour participation rate:** The low labour participation rate remains a weakness in India's labour market environment.
 - ▶ The overall labour participation rate in India consistently falls short of 50 per cent, below peer economies, mainly because female participation in the labour force remains extremely low.
 - ▶ As a result, India's labour force is smaller than that of China, even though it has a larger working-age population.
- **Low levels of literacy and technical skills** are a further constraint.

Why is China losing?

- China has been losing favour with international investors who are shying away from the middle kingdom due to regulatory changes stemming from the statist direction of economic policy as well as rising local costs weigh.
- This has resulted in China being labelled as the "biggest loser" in the EIU survey, falling 11 spots in the global rankings compared to a year ago.

INDIA HAS ALMOST WIPED OUT EXTREME POVERTY: IMF

CONTEXT

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) working paper by Bhalla, Bhasin and Virmani (henceforth called **BBV**) has come out with a series of poverty projections based on different assumptions, the most optimistic of which shows extreme poverty virtually disappearing at just 0.86% of the population (12 million people).

Key-highlights

Purchasing power parity (PPP) is a metric that equalises the buying power of different currencies to make comparisons easy.

- The IMF working paper said that the **proportion of people living in extreme poverty, at less than 1%**, remained steady even during the pandemic on the back of "in-kind" subsidies, especially food rations.

The **Gini coefficient** ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 representing perfect equality and 1 representing perfect inequality.

- In India, the number of people living in extreme poverty -- defined by the World Bank as living on US\$1.9 or less in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms -- was 0.8% of the population in the pre-pandemic year 2019.
- **Real (inflation-adjusted) inequality**, as measured by the **Gini coefficient**, which stands at 0.294, is now very close to its lowest level 0.284 observed in 1993-94, the paper stated.

What is Extreme Poverty?

- Extreme poverty is defined by the UN as living on less than \$1.90 a day.

India's poverty line

- In India, the official consumption-based poverty line is still the **Tendulkar Line**, which is close to the World Bank \$1.9 a day line.
- The Tendulkar Expert Group chaired by economist Suresh Tendulkar in 2009 was formed to review the methodology for poverty estimation.
- The committee finalised per person per day consumption figure of Rs 32 a day for urban areas and Rs 26 a day for rural areas.

- The **national poverty line** for 2011-'12 was estimated at Rs 816 per capita per month for rural areas and Rs 1,000 per capita per month for urban areas.

Rangarajan Committee

- In 2012, due to the widespread criticism of the Tendulkar Committee's approach, the **Rangarajan Committee** was formed. This panel's report, submitted in 2014, raised the daily per capita expenditure to Rs 47 per day for urban areas and Rs 32 for rural areas.
- They recommended a monthly per capita consumption expenditure of Rs 972 in rural areas and Rs 1,407 in urban areas as the all-India poverty line.
- However, the government did not adopt this report and has continued using the Tendulkar Line.

NSO's poverty figure

- India will finally have its official poverty figure in the second half of this year.
- The **National Statistical Office (NSO)** is currently rolling out the consumption expenditure sample survey, which is used to measure poverty level.
- The survey will continue through July 2023 and preliminary results are expected by the end of the year.

Poverty Alleviation Scheme

- **Schemes to increase monthly income:** The four schemes, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM Kisan), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) and saving from PMGKAY, together increased a person's monthly income by Rs. 2,111.
- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PMGKAY):** It is a programme to distribute a fixed quantity of free foodgrain (5kg per head) to the poor beyond their usual entitlement of 25kg a month of subsidised grains.
- **Public Distribution System (PDS)** aims to manage food scarcity and distributing essential food commodities at affordable prices.
- **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)** was launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development and aided by the World Bank.
- **Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G):** Due to the gaps in the earlier scheme for rural housing, titled Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) — it was restructured in 2016 to PMAY-G. Through this scheme, the government commits to realizing housing for all.

G7 VOWS TO ZERO CARBON

CONTEXT

Energy and environment ministers of the Group of Seven wealthy nations vowed to work to hasten the shift toward cleaner, renewable energy, but set no timetable for phasing out coal-fired power plants.

Key excerpts

- The **Group of Seven** industrialised nations, which also includes **Germany, Italy, Canada and the EU**, all target net-zero emissions by 2050 or sooner after signing the Paris Agreement to cap warming at well under 2 degrees Celsius, and ideally 1.5C.
- **Reducing carbon emission:** The leaders reiterated the need to urgently reduce carbon emissions and achieve a "predominantly decarbonized power sector" by 2035.
- **Phasing out fossil fuel:** The group is committed to accelerate the phase-out of unabated fossil fuels so as to achieve net zero in energy systems by 2050 at the latest.
 - ▶ But they offered no new deadlines beyond last year's G7 pledge.
- **Hydrogen and Ammonia:** The group recognised low-carbon and renewable hydrogen and its derivatives such as ammonia should be developed and used where they are impactful as effective emission reduction tools to advance decarbonisation.
- **Critical mineral:** The group is committed to maintain products containing critical minerals and raw materials in the economy as long as possible
- **Plastic pollution:** The group is committed to end plastic pollution, with the ambition to reduce additional plastic pollution to zero by 2040.

What Does Carbon Free Mean?

- In contrast to carbon-neutral, becoming carbon-free means directly reducing emissions to zero.
- **For Critical mineral:** example, if a country or company is carbon-free, all the energy and electricity comes from renewable sources, like wind or solar.

What is this move significant?

- The G-7 nations account for 40% of the world's economic activity and a quarter of global carbon emissions.
- Their actions are critical.

About G7

- The Group of Seven (G7) is an inter-governmental political grouping consisting of **Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US.**
- **Russia** joined in 1998, creating the G8, but was excluded in 2014 for its takeover of Crimea.
- The EU is not a member of the G7 but attends the annual summit.



G7 in numbers

- 7** member countries
 - 1975** first meeting of the group of six
 - 40%** of global GDP
 - 1/10** of world's population
 - 2014** Russia suspended over annexation of Crimea
- Source: BBC research

INDIA LAUNCHES NATIONAL QUANTUM MISSION

CONTEXT

The Union Cabinet cleared Rs 6,003 crore National Quantum Mission seeking to realise a host of frontier technologies related to quantum computing, quantum communication and quantum sensing that only a handful of countries possess.

Background

- The new mission comes four years after the central government in December 2018 announced Rs 3,660 crore **National Mission on Cyber-Physical Systems**, which is being executed through 25 hubs.

What is the National Quantum Mission?

- **Duration:** Eight years
- **Verticals:** The mission involving research institutions and industry will have four verticals
 - ▶ three on quantum computing, communication and sensing
 - ▶ a fourth one on developing novel materials and devices that would aid in the three core programmes
- **Aim:** To accelerate quantum technology-led economic growth and nurture the ecosystem in the country.
- The new mission targets developing intermediate scale quantum computers with 50-1000 physical qubits in eight years in various platforms like superconducting and photonic technology
- **Global race:** India will be the seventh country to have a dedicated quantum mission after the US, Austria, Finland, France, Canada and China.
 - ▶ All these countries are also at the R&D stage.

What is Quantum technology?

- Quantum technology is a class of technology that works by using the principles of quantum mechanics

(the physics of sub-atomic particles), including quantum entanglement and quantum superposition.

- **Example-** Smartphone is a type of quantum technology – its semiconductors use quantum physics to work.

What is Qubit?

- A qubit (or quantum bit) is the quantum mechanical analogue of a classical bit.
- In classical computing the information is encoded in bits, where each bit can have the value zero or one.
- In quantum computing the information is encoded in qubits.

How Quantum technology can be a good 'solution'?

- **Effective functioning:** In modern day computing, information is relayed and stored in binary digits or bits, that is, 0 or 1. In quantum computing, information sharing, and storage is done in qubits, which exist as 0 or 1 or a combination of both.
 - ▶ This allows for a quantum computer to perform a multitude of applications at the same time, at a much faster rate, surpassing the processing ability of a conventional computing system.
- **Increased processing capabilities:** Quantum computers will exponentially increase the processing capabilities of a modern-day computer and address impediments linked to combinatorics.
- **Wide range of application:** It has immense potential in a wide range of applications from ultra secure military communication to extra-precise MRI machines.
- **Multiple benefits:** Near-term and long-term quantum applications will:
 - ▶ augment AI solutions
 - ▶ improve financial forecasting
 - ▶ drastically reduce failures in the manufacturing sector
 - ▶ accentuate drug development
 - ▶ push for better cybersecurity paradigms

How this mission will give India a quantum leap?

- **Valuable deliverables:** Satellite-based secure quantum communications between ground stations over a range of 2000 km within India, long distance secure quantum communications with other countries, inter-city quantum key distribution over 2000 km as well as multi-node quantum network with quantum memories are also some of the deliverables of the mission.
- **Development of atomic systems:** The mission will help develop magnetometers with high sensitivity in atomic systems and atomic clocks for precision timing, communications and navigation.
- **Development of quantum materials:** It will also support design and synthesis of quantum materials such as superconductors, novel semiconductor structures and topological materials for fabrication of quantum devices.
- **Beneficial for different sectors:** The mission would greatly benefit communication, health, financial and energy sectors as well as drug design, and space applications.
- **Boost to national priorities:** It will provide a huge boost to National priorities like **Digital India, Make in India, Skill India and Stand-up India, Start-up India, Self-reliant India and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).**

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EXTRA JUDICIAL KILLINGS

CONTEXT:

- The murder of gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed and his brother by assailants while in police custody, and the 'encounter' deaths of Atiq's son Asad and an accomplice have generated a lot of heat and debate in India on custodial deaths and extra-judicial killings.

What are extra-judicial killings?

- Extra-judicial killings are those when the accused person is killed or executed illegally by the police officials in charge of the accused person before the judgment of the trial arrives.
- No law in India exclusively defines encounter killings but it is still classified under "**Cases Registered against State Police Personnel for Human Right Violation**" in the **National Crime Records Bureau**.

The increasing numbers

While India has seen a 15% decline in encounter killing cases registered in the six years between 2016-'17 and 2021-'22 – till March 10, 2022 – the cases shot up by 69.5% in the last two years.

Why is it a threat?

- **Shaking the values of constitution:** Extra-judicial killings are a gross violation of not just human rights, but also the very rule of law that forms the bedrock of our Constitution. It shakes the values the Constituent Assembly attempted to imbibe within the country's grundnorm to the very core.
- **Questioning the separation of power:** Extrajudicial violence does away with **separation of powers** in a democracy.
- **Threat to law:** It is a threat to the rule of law.
- The **principles of natural justice** had been held to be an inherent part of Article 21 by the Supreme Court in its judgment in **Kartar Singh vs. State of Punjab (1961)**. Extra-judicial killings, by executing punishment on the spot, deny the accused their right to be given a notice of charge and an opportunity to be heard, defying the principle of *audi alteram partem* and therefore, **Article 21**.
- Furthermore, they allow the police to revel in lawlessness, avoid the scrutiny of courts and violate the **principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'**.
- **Violates human rights:** It straight away violates the human rights of individuals, denying them any opportunity of contacting their legal representatives or legal advisors.
- **Violates fundamental rights:** Encounter or extrajudicial killings violate the fundamental rights

of offenders given in the Constitution of India, which mandates that every person has a **right to life and liberty and equality before law**. The fundamental rights which are violated because of these unlawful killings under the Constitution of India are:

- ▶ **Article 14-** the right to equality
- ▶ **Article 21-** the right to life and personal liberty except according to procedure established by law
- ▶ **Article 22-** the right to be protected against arrest and detention

What does the latest case show?

- Systemic incompetence
- Perverse machismo
- Weak institutional structures

Why people do not oppose?

- **Decreasing faith in democracy:** In reality, extra-judicial killings are vigilantism under the garb of '**instant justice**'. People, rather than opposing this blatant disregard of due process, end up adulating it due to the increasing downfall of the faith the public reposed in the judiciary.
 - ▶ Instances of pendency of cases, matters getting caught up and convictions getting reversed due to administrative technicalities force the people to seek speedy justice desperately and think of encounters as a way to obtain it.
- Apart from praise from the public, police personnel are often also rewarded with promotions for 'wiping out' hardened criminals, which becomes an added incentive to engage in extra-judicial killings.

The Exception

- However, as per **Right to Private Defence** under **Sections 96-106 in the Indian Penal Code, 1860**, there are certain circumstances when a death in an encounter shall not be counted as an offence in India.
 - ▶ This law applies to every citizen of the country and not just police officials
- **Self-defence:** Under this law, death in an encounter will not amount to a criminal offence when it is caused by an action taken to defend yourself.

- ▶ This means police officials may injure the criminal in order to defend themselves or for maintaining peace and order, but their motive must be scrutinised.
- If the death cannot be justified under the law then the police must be tried under **culpable homicide**.

Required measures

- **Putting limit on powers:** By way of training programs and by also limiting powers of law enforcement, a legitimate attempt can be made at preventing such killings.

- **Treating problems:** Resolving systemic problems such as underfunding and understaffing and creating a better, more well-equipped police force may also assist in reducing such killings substantially.
- **Overhaul of the system:** An overhaul of the criminal justice system and better policy making is the need of the hour, to ensure that procedural and systemic anomalies, coupled with callousness and impunity, do not result in the loss of precious life.



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INDIA TO HOST TWO-DAY INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONFERENCE

CONTEXT

The first Global Buddhist summit is going to be held in Delhi. Buddhist monks and others from 30 countries are expected to attend the event.

Key-highlights of the Summit

- The summit is being organized in conjunction with the International Buddhist Conference, a non-governmental organization.
- The **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC)**, an umbrella group that serves as a platform for Buddhists worldwide, is organising the event.
- **Theme:** 'Responses to contemporary challenges, philosophy to practice'.

Recently, India, which is the chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) grouping, organised a meet on **Buddhist heritage** involving all the countries.

About Buddhism

- Buddhism is a **non-theistic religion** (no belief in a creator god), also considered a philosophy and a moral discipline, originating in India in the **6th and 5th centuries BCE**.
- It was founded by the sage **Siddhartha Gautama** (the Buddha 563 - 483 BCE) who had been a Hindu prince.
 - ▶ It remained a relatively minor school until the reign of **Ashoka the Great (268-232 BCE) of the Mauryan Empire (322-185 BCE)** who embraced and spread the belief, not only throughout India, but through Central and Southeast Asia.
- Buddhism offers four primary sites of pilgrimage:
 - ▶ **Lumbini** (birthplace of the Buddha),
 - ▶ **Bodh Gaya** (the site where the Buddha attained enlightenment)
 - ▶ **Sarnath** (the location of the Buddha's first sermon)
 - ▶ **Kushinagar** (the location where the Buddha attained parinirvana)

Main Branches of Buddhism

- **Theravada School of Buddhism:** It was popularized in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, China and other Asian countries.

- ▶ According to the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism, an individual needs to abide by the basic principles of Buddhism strictly.

Four Noble Truths

Buddha presented the **Four Noble Truths** as guiding principles: there is suffering in life; the cause of suffering is desire; ending desire means ending suffering; and following a controlled and moderate lifestyle will end desire, and therefore end suffering.

Noble Eightfold Path

In order to achieve the above goals (happiness), the Buddha presented the **Noble Eightfold Path**:

- right belief
- right resolve
- right speech
- right conduct
- right occupation
- right effort
- right mindfulness
- right samadhi—or meditation

According to Buddhist practice, following the Noble Eightfold Path will ultimately result in being liberated from **samsara**, the cycle of rebirth and suffering.

- **Mahayana School of Buddhism:** The main idea behind Mahayana Buddhism is that anyone can reach the stature of the Buddha by following Buddha Marga. Mahasanghika sect is believed to be the source of the Mahayana Buddhism.
 - ▶ This school of Buddhism had a huge impact **on China, Korea and Japan.**
- **Vajrayana School of Buddhism:** This is the tantric school of Buddhism. It is believed that by practicing Vajrayana, a Buddhist follower can achieve enlightenment easily.
 - ▶ It is more popularly used in Tibetan Buddhism. When considered on a larger aspect, it is a part of the Mahayana school of Buddhism.
 - ▶ It is also commonly referred to as '**Lamaism**' because at the center of the school lies the **Lama.**

Incline and Decline of Buddhism in India

- In the 3rd century B.C., Ashoka the Great, the Mauryan Indian emperor, made Buddhism the state religion of India. Buddhist monasteries were built, and missionary work was encouraged.
 - ▶ Over the next few centuries, Buddhism began to spread beyond India.

- With the collapse of the **Pala dynasty** in the 12th century, Indian Buddhism suffered yet another setback, from which it did not recover.
- By the 13th and 14th centuries, the great Buddhist centres and universities of India were destroyed by foreign invaders, both in the eastern plains and in Kashmir.
- The roots that fed the Buddhist culture and art of the Himalayas and beyond were cut, and eventually Tibet and Nepal were left to preserve this rich heritage on their own.

Buddhism's influence in the present times

- Buddhism's influence remains present in Indian art, culture, and architecture.
- The three lions of the **Ashoka pillar**, which independent India adopted as its national emblem, are a symbol of the impact of Buddhist thought on the country and its people.
- As of 2011, there are over 8 million practicing Buddhists in India.

NISAR SATELLITE TO MAP HIMALAYAS' SEISMIC ZONES

CONTEXT:

NISAR satellite is going to map the most earthquake-prone regions in the Himalayas with unprecedented regularity and aims to build an advance warning system of land subsidence and earthquakes.

About NISAR:

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

Emergence of Himalayas:

- About 225 million years ago, India was a large island still situated off the **Australian coast**, and a vast ocean (called **Tethys Sea**) separated India from the Asian continent.

- NISAR satellite was jointly developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the U.S.**
- NISAR is expected to be launched in **January 2024** from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre** into a near-polar orbit.

About the map:

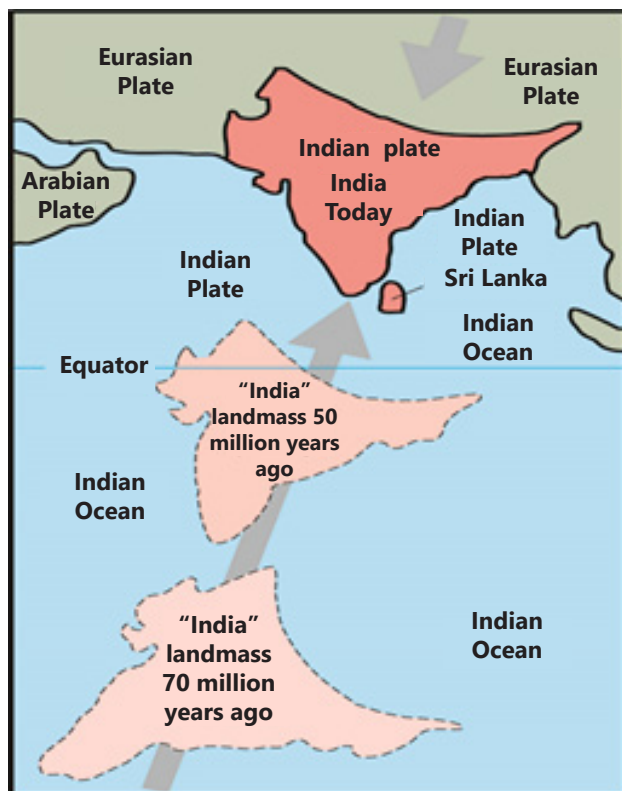
- **Need of the initiative:** A large section of the Himalayan region falls in **Zone V**, implying the highest risk of strong earthquakes.

Strain

Strain refers to the deformation that occurs in rocks when it is under pressure from other rocks, usually due to movements of continental plates that are sliding, colliding, or subducting against each other. The Indian Plate, for instance, collided into the Eurasian plate forming the Himalayas and continues to incrementally push it upwards.

- The NISAR satellite will use **two frequency bands**: the **L-band and S-band** to image the Himalayan region.
- The geoscience community can use this to determine how **strain** is building up in various parts of the Himalayas.
- These two frequency bands will together provide **high-resolution, all-weather data** from the satellite that is expected to follow a **sun-synchronous orbit** and will be launched in January 2024.

- When **Pangaea** broke apart about 200 million years ago, India began to forge northward.
- By studying the history -- and ultimately the closing-- of the Tethys, scientists have reconstructed India's northward journey.



- About 80 million years ago, India was located roughly 6,400 km south of the Asian continent, moving northward at a rate of about 9 m a century.
- When India rammed into Asia about 40 to 50 million years ago, its northward advance slowed by about half.
- The collision and associated decrease in the rate of plate movement are interpreted to mark the beginning of the rapid uplift of the Himalayas.

Himalayas and vulnerability:

- The Himalaya is a **fragile mountain range** that is still rising as the Indian plate continues to push into the Asian plate.
- The mountains are mainly the **shale upwelling of the sea**, which makes them quite unstable.
- In fact, they are largely held together by the forests that they support.

Concerns:

- **Extreme weather events** - With the consequent loss of forest cover and extreme weather events (the 2013 Kedarnath flood), catastrophes have occurred at a steady beat in all of Uttarakhand.
- **Soil and water degradation** - The local soil and water have been degraded.
- **Decline in natural springs** - The number of natural mineral water springs is declining.
- **Increasing landslides** - The number of landslides is also shooting up.

EL NIÑO IS COMING

CONTEXT

As per the prediction of most forecast models, the climate system's biggest player – El Niño – will return for the first time in nearly four years.

How El Niño affects the planet?

- **Wet and dry areas:** The warm water affects air currents that leave areas wetter or drier than usual.
- **Storms:** It can ramp up storms in some areas, like the southern U.S., while tending to tamp down Atlantic hurricane activity.
- **Impact on marine life:** El Niño can also wreak havoc on the many marine ecosystems that support the world's fishing industries, including coral reefs and seagrass meadows.
- **Extreme ocean warming:** Specifically, **El Niño** tends to trigger intense and widespread periods of extreme ocean warming known as marine heat waves.
- Global ocean temperatures are already at record highs, so **El Niño-induced marine heat waves** could push many **sensitive fisheries to a breaking point**.

In the **Bay of Bengal east of India**, interactions between El Niño and a tropical air flow pattern known as the **Walker Circulation** elevate the risk for marine heat waves.

How would it impact India?

- **Affected monsoon:** India's agricultural production depends on the southwest monsoon, which accounts for 75% to 90% of the total annual rainfall from June to September. El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) significantly affects the southwest monsoon.
- **Drought:** The monsoon-disrupting weather pattern causes climate chaos across the globe and, often, drought in India.

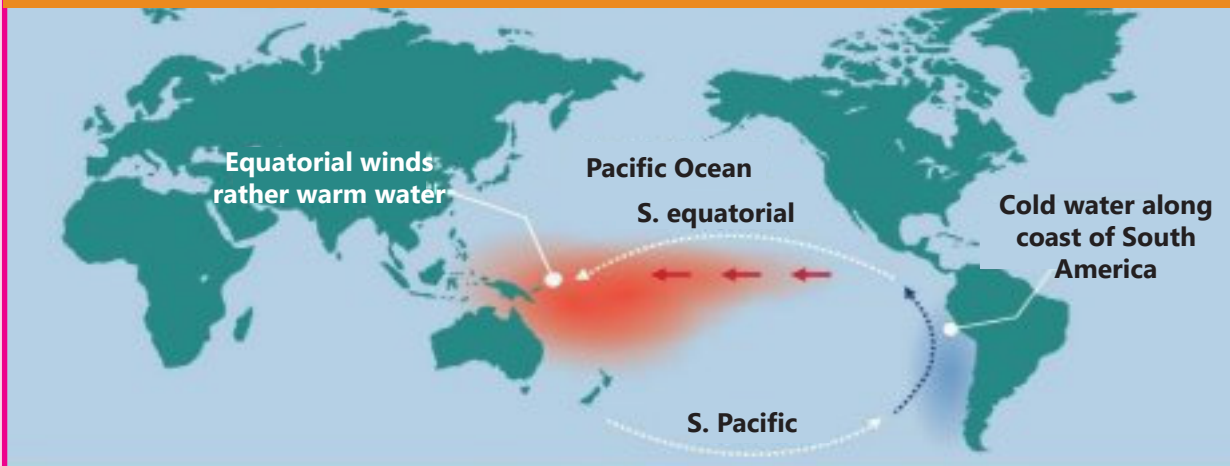
Between 2001 and 2020, India saw seven **El Niño** years. Of these, four resulted in droughts (2003, 2005, 2009-10, 2015-16). These years also saw **kharif** or summer-sown farm output decline by 16%, 8%, 10% and 3%, stoking inflation. **Kharif harvests** account for nearly half of the country's annual food supply.

Back to Basics

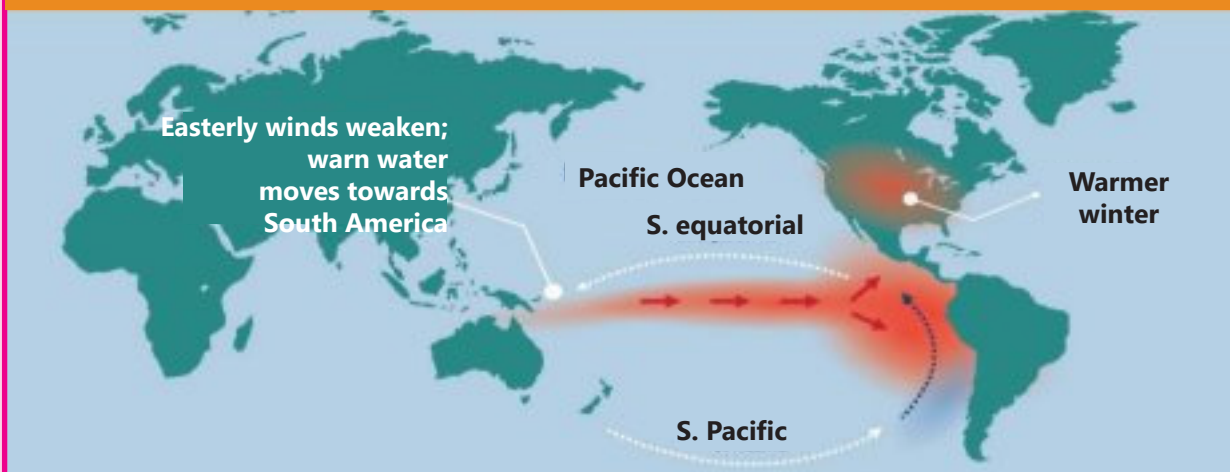
El Nino:

- El Niño is one side of the climatic coin called the **El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**. It's the heads to La Niña's tails.
- It is classified as a periodic fluctuation in sea surface temperature (SST) across the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean.
- It is triggered by a warming of the eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- El Niño occurs **every 2-7 years** and can last anywhere between **nine months and two years**.
- El Niño is the warm phase of the **El Niño Southern Oscillation (commonly called ENSO)** and is associated with a band of warm ocean water that develops in the central and east-central equatorial Pacific (**between approximately the International Date Line and 120°W**), including off the Pacific coast of South America.

NORMAL YEAR



EL NINO YEAR



La Nina is the opposite of El Nino and is characterised by cooler currents in the equatorial eastern Pacific.

El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO):

- The combined phases of **La Nina and El Nino** are termed **El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)**.
- The phenomenon affects **rainfall patterns, global atmospheric circulation, and atmospheric pressure across the planet**.
- In the neutral state, (neither El Niño nor La Niña) trade winds blow east to west across the surface of the tropical Pacific Ocean, bringing warm moist air and warmer surface waters towards the western Pacific and keeping the central Pacific Ocean relatively cool.

FILL VACANCY IN NCSC EXPEDITIOUSLY: SC

CONTEXT

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to ensure that vacancy in the National Commission for Scheduled Castes is filled on an expeditious basis.

About

- The National Commission for Scheduled Castes is an **Indian constitutional body**.
- Articles 338 of the Constitution of India lays down the provision for the establishment of the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes.
- **Objective:** It is established to provide safeguards against the exploitation of Scheduled Castes and Anglo Indian communities to promote and protect their social, educational, economic and cultural interests.
- **Appointment:** The President by warrant under his hand and seal appoints, and determines the tenure, service conditions of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairman, and the members of the Commission.
- **Composition:** NCSC consists of a chairperson, a vice chairperson and three other members. Its headquarter is situated in New Delhi and has 12 state branches.

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST)

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003.

Who are Scheduled Castes?

The 2011 Census places the number of scheduled castes in India at 16.6 percent of the total population, or approximately 166,635,700 people.

- Scheduled castes are **sub-communities** within the framework of the **Hindu caste system** who have historically faced deprivation, oppression, and extreme social isolation in India on account of their perceived 'low status'.
- Only marginalised Hindu communities can be deemed Scheduled Castes in India, according to **The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950**.

What are the important laws for SCs?

- **Article 15** of the Constitution says the State shall not discriminate on the basis of caste, religion, race, or place of birth.
- **Article 16** assures equal opportunity to all citizens for employment in any office under the State, including in promotions, without any discrimination based on caste.
- **Article 46** states that the State shall promote the educational and economic interests of weaker sections, namely "Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes."
- **Article 243D** provides for reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Panchayats
- **Article 243T** promises the same proportionate reservation of seats in Municipalities.
- **Article 330** promises reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha.
- **Article 338** establishes the National Commission for the Scheduled Castes.
- **Article 340** gives the President the power to appoint a commission to investigate the conditions of backward classes, the difficulties they face, and make recommendations on steps to be taken to improve their condition. This was the article under which the Mandal Commission was formed.

SPACEX POSTPONES MAIDEN TEST FLIGHT OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST ROCKET STARSHIP

CONTEXT

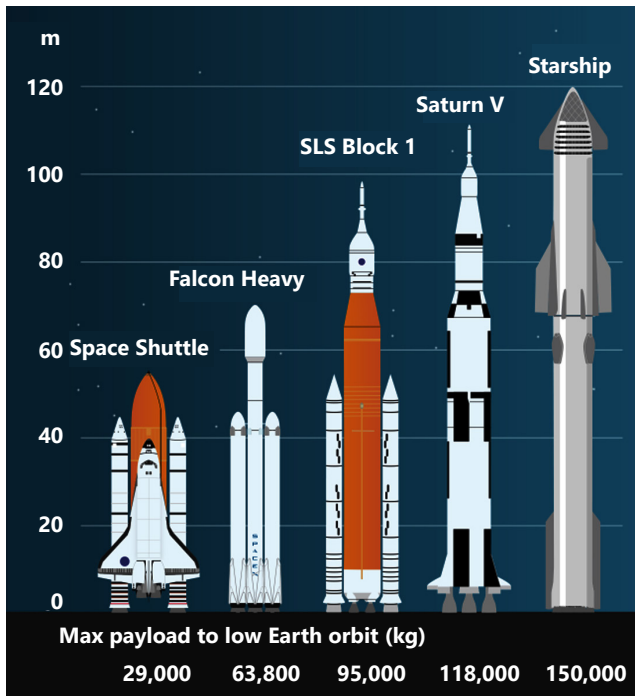
SpaceX postponed the first test flight of Starship, the most powerful rocket ever built, designed to send astronauts to the Moon and Mars and beyond.

- **Issue:** pressurization issue in the booster stage

About Starship

- Together, the **Starship spacecraft** and the **Super Heavy rocket** are collectively referred to as Starship.
- Starship is a **super-heavy-lift rocket and spacecraft** that could ferry more than 100 people a time to the Red Planet.
- Starship, a rocket and spacecraft combination, consists of a 50-metre tall spacecraft designed to carry crew and cargo that sits atop a 70-metre first-stage Super Heavy booster rocket.

- **Reusable transport system:** The system is designed to be fully and rapidly reusable.



- ▶ **Being fully reusable** means the **principal hardware elements** are not discarded in the sea or allowed to burn up, as happens with some other launch systems, but return to the ground so they can be flown again.
- ▶ **Rapid reusability** means that after coming back from space, Starship can be re-filled with propellant and be ready to launch again in a short period of time - like an aircraft. This reduces the cost of the whole enterprise.
- Collectively referred to as Starship, the spacecraft and the Super Heavy rocket have never flown in combination together, although there have been several sub-orbital test flights of the spacecraft alone.

'Spacefaring civilisation'

- The founding ethos of SpaceX was to make life multi-planetary.
- Settling humans on other worlds, such as Mars, could preserve civilisation if Earth were to experience a cataclysm, such as a large asteroid impact.

Important features

- Super Heavy booster is the first stage of Starship and the Starship spacecraft is the **second stage** of the Starship system. It is capable of **point-to-point transport on Earth**.
- **Material:** The rocket is made of stainless steel.

- **Measurement:** The Starship spacecraft will be about 50 metres tall and 9 metres wide.
- **Payload capacity:** It will have a payload capacity of between 100 tonnes and 150 tonnes.
- **Powered by:** It will be powered by **three normal Raptor engines** and **three Raptor engines** specially modified for use in the vacuum of space. Together, this will give it a thrust capacity of 1,500 tonnes of force.
- **Fuel:** It is fueled with 10 million pounds of **liquid methane and oxygen**. The new fuel can be stored at more **manageable temperatures** than liquid hydrogen, meaning it doesn't need as much insulation and is less prone to leaks.

ISRO TO LAUNCH SINGAPORE'S TELEOS-2 SATELLITE

CONTEXT

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is gearing up for its next big mission to launch a customer satellite in an orbit around the planet. The TELEOS-2 mission will launch on-board ISRO's workhorse Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) on its 55th mission to date.

What is TELEOS-2 satellite?

- The Singaporean probe is an **Earth Observation Satellite**, which has been designed to capture round-the-clock, all-weather satellite imagery.
- The 750-kilogram satellite, developed by ST Engineering, will provide imagery that could be used for hotspot monitoring and haze management, air crash search and rescue operations, and much more.
- The XL variant of PSLV, which will be used during the C-55 mission, has 6 solid rocket strap-on motors to augment the thrust.
- The rocket is capable of launching 1,750 kg of payload to **Sun-Synchronous Polar Orbits** at 600 km altitude and 1,425 kg into **Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits**.

Previous Launches

- The Indian space agency launched three Singaporean satellites with the **PSLVC-53** mission in June 2022.
- The spacecraft carried the **DS-EO satellite, NeuSAR**, a 155 kg satellite, and **Scoob-1 of Nanyang Technological University (NTU)**, Singapore.

WHAT IS PSLV?

- The PSLV is a **third-generation launch vehicle** developed solely in India and was the first launched from India to be equipped with liquid stages.
- The rocket is capable of placing multiple payloads into orbit and has been used to launch various satellites into **Geosynchronous and Geostationary orbits**.
- During its last mission, PSLV deployed an **Earth Observation Satellite (EOS-06)** and eight nano-satellites with a lift-off mass of 321 tonnes into orbit.
- The Primary satellite (EOS-06) was separated in Orbit-1.
- Subsequently, orbit change was conducted using two **Orbit Change Thrusters (OCTs)** introduced in the Propulsion Bay Ring of the PSLV-C54 Vehicle.

PITTAS FIND NEW HAVEN IN ODISHA DISTRICTS

CONTEXT

In a first-ever census of mangrove pitta birds carried out in two coastal districts of Odisha, 179 such birds were sighted.

About

- **Scientific name:** *Pitta megharencha*



- It is a species of **passerine bird** in the family **Pittidae**.
- **Super-species:** It is part of a superspecies where it is placed with the **Indian pitta, the fairy pitta and the blue-winged pitta** but has no recognized subspecies.
- **Distribution:** It is native to the eastern Indian Subcontinent and western Southeast Asia.

- ▶ Its range extends from India to Malaysia and Indonesia.
- ▶ It can be found in few pockets of **eastern India**, including **Odisha's Bhitarkanika** and **West Bengal's Sundarbans**.
- **IUCN Status:** These pitta species have fragmented distribution and considered 'Near Threatened' by IUCN.
- **Features:** A colourful bird, it has a black head with brown crown, white throat, greenish upper parts, buff underparts and reddish vent area.
- **Findings of first census:** The mangrove pitta is found in coastal mangrove forests of India, foraging on the ground and resting on the trees.
 - ▶ A total of 179 individual mangrove pitta birds were counted.
 - ▶ The highest concentration of the birds has been found in the mangroves near the **Mahipura river** mouth inside the **Bhitarkanika National Park**.

IMD ISSUES HEAT WAVE ALERTS FOR FIVE STATES

CONTEXT

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday issued a heat wave warning for West Bengal, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh over the next four to five days.

What is Heat wave?

- Heat Wave is simply, a continuous spell of abnormally hot weather.
- Heat wave need not be considered till maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40° C for Plains and at least 30° C for Hilly regions.

India and Heatwave:

- **Criteria for declaring Heat Wave:** Heat wave is considered if the maximum temperature of a station reaches **at least 40 degree Celsius** or more for Plains and **at least 30 degree Celsius** or more for Hilly regions.
- **Period of Heat Wave in India:** Heat waves generally occur over plains of northwest India, Central, East & north Peninsular India during March to June.
- **Heat wave prone states:** It covers Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal,

Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, parts of Maharashtra & Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Sometimes it occurs over Tamil Nadu & Kerala also.

◦ **Favourable conditions for Heat wave:**

- ▶ Transportation / Prevalence of hot dry air over a region
- ▶ Absence of moisture in the upper atmosphere
- ▶ The sky should be practically cloudless
- ▶ Large amplitude anticyclonic flow over the area.

Different standards on heatwaves

Several countries have adopted their own standards on heatwaves:

- **United States:** The US National Weather Service defines a heatwave as a spell of "abnormally and uncomfortably hot and unusually humid weather" over two days or more.
- **Denmark:** A heatwave occurs when the mean of the highest recorded temperature measured over three consecutive days exceeds 28°C (82.4°F).
- **Australia:** In Adelaide, Australia, a heatwave is defined as five straight days with temperatures at or above 35°C (95°F), or three consecutive days at or over 40°C (104°F).

Impacts on India

- **Health effects:** Hyperthermia, also known as heat stroke, becomes common during periods of sustained high temperature and humidity.
- **Mortality:** Heatwaves have killed more than 17,000 people in 50 years in India, according to a research study by IMD scientists.
- **Crop losses:** heat waves and excessive heating impacts the standing crops of the regions, as they are not immune to more heat at that time of the year.
- **Psychological and sociological effects:** In addition to physical stress, excessive heat causes psychological stress, to a degree which affects performance, and is also associated with an increase in violent crime.
- **Increase in surface ozone: ozone pollution** in urban areas is especially concerning with increasing temperatures, raising heat-related mortality during heat waves. During heat waves in urban areas, ground level ozone pollution can be 20% higher than usual.
- **Lead to wild fires:** If a heat wave occurs during a drought, which dries out vegetation, it can contribute to bushfires and wildfires.
- **Power outages:** Heat waves often lead to electricity spikes due to increased air conditioning use, which can create power outages, exacerbating the problem.

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MP's Gond Painting gets GI Tag



Madhya Pradesh's Gond painting gets **GI tag**, protecting and recognizing tribal artists and requiring committee approval for non-tribal artists to use the art.

About

- Gond paintings are a form of painting from folk and tribal art that is practiced by one of the largest tribes in India with whom it shares its name.
- Gond comes from the **Dravidian expression**, 'Kond' which means 'the green mountain'.
- Gond painting is a traditional art of Madhya Pradesh and belongs to the Gond tribe.
- **Patangarh village** of Dindori district famous for gond paintings.
 - It is such a village where there is an artist in every house.
 - Their work is not only famous in the state but also abroad as these paintings have a unique style and unique art which certainly mesmerizes for its unique theme.
- Gond art has been ruling for centuries, traditionally adorning the walls of each artist's home in **Patangarh**.

Bohag Bihu



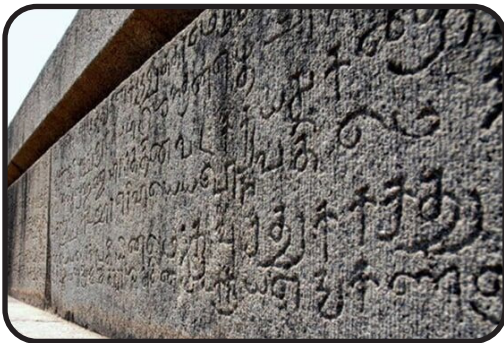
Bohag Bihu, a 7-day festival will be celebrated from **April 14, 2023 to April 20, 2023 in Assam**.

About the event:

- The seven days of **Bohag Bihu** are celebrated differently.
- The **first day or Garu Bihu** is dedicated to cattle and on this day people take their cattle to river, bathe them, adorn them with garlands, pain their horns and hoofs and pray for their well-being.
- The second day of the festival is called **Manuh Bihu**, wherein people wake up early in the morning, apply turmeric paste on their bodies and take bath.
- Delicious traditional dishes like **Til Laru, Pitha, Murir Laru, Ghila Pitha, Poka Mithoi** among others are made.
- People meet and greet each other and exchange gifts.
- The third day of the festival is called **Guxai Bihu, dedicated to worshipping household deities**.
- The fourth day is called **Taator Bihu** or Bihu for the handlooms.
- The fifth day is called **Nangolor Bihu**, dedicated to farm equipment, while the sixth day is called GharosiaJibar Bihu, which is celebrated for domestic animals.
- The final day of the festival is celebrated as **Chera Bihu** which is celebrated with much enthusiasm.

Bihu festival:

- It is one of the biggest festivals of Assam and marks the first day of **Hindu unipolar calendar**, and the beginning of **Assamese New Year**.
- Bihu is celebrated **thrice in a year**.
- Bohag Bihu marks the beginning of the **seeding period and falls in the second week of April every year**.
- The other two - **Kati Bihu and Magh Bihu** are celebrated in October and January respectively.
- Rong means joy in Assamese and **Rongali Bihu** is the time for joy and happiness for Assamese community as they celebrate each day of the festival with great fervour and enthusiasm.

Uttaramerur inscription

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently referred to the **Uttaramerur inscription** in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, while discussing India's democratic history.

About

- The famous inscription from **Parantaka I's reign** is found on the walls of the **Vaikunda Perumal Temple**.
- The inscription gives details of the functioning of the local **sabha**, i.e. the village assembly.
- A **sabha** was an assembly exclusively of **brahmins** and had specialised committees tasked with different things.
- The Uttaramerur inscription details how members were selected, the required qualifications, their roles and responsibilities, and even the circumstances in which they could be removed.

Uttaramerur lies in present-day Kanchipuram district, approximately 90 km southeast of Chennai. It is known for its historic temples built during **Pallava and Chola** rule.

World Heritage Day 2023

April 18th marks the observance of **World Heritage Day**, also referred to as **International Day for Monuments and Sites**.

About

- The day was established by the **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** and was approved by the UNESCO General Conference in 1983.
- The date, April 18th, was chosen to commemorate the day when the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by UNESCO in 1982.
- **Theme 2023:** "Heritage Changes"

- **Heritage sites** refer to locations or landmarks that possess significant cultural, historical, scientific, or artistic value to a particular community, society, or nation.
- As of today, there are 40 World Heritage Sites in India that have been declared by UNESCO.

Exercise Orion



The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has projected that India's economy will grow by 5.9% for the current fiscal year. Exercise Orion, a **bilateral military drill** between the **Indian Air Force and the French Air and Space Force (FASF)** started at the Mont-de-Marsan airbase in France.

About

- Orion is reportedly the largest ever multinational exercise being carried out by the French defence forces which have involved their **Army, Navy and Air Force** along with their allies the US and the UK.
- The IAF Contingent comprising four **Rafale, two C-17, two Il-78 aircraft, and 165 air warriors** participated in the exercise.
- This would be the first overseas exercise for the IAF's Rafale aircraft. April 2023 - March 2024.

About the forecast:

- The IMF estimated a **6.3% economic growth rate for India** for the next fiscal year, a downward revision of **0.5 percentage points** from the last forecast.

India hosts first joint working group meeting on Chabahar port



The **first joint working group** meeting on the Chabahar port is going to be hosted by India.

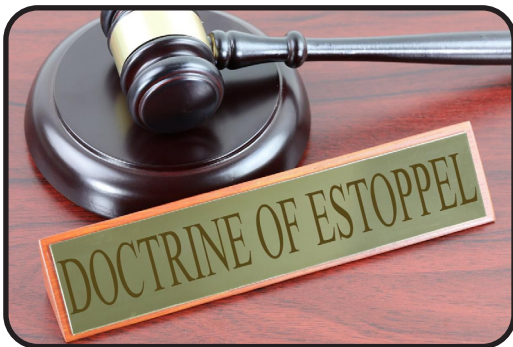
About the meet:

- India has been pushing for **the Chabahar port project** to boost regional trade, especially for its connectivity to Afghanistan.
- At the meeting, the country representative for the **UN World Food Programme (UNWFP)** made a presentation on the on-going cooperation between India and the UNWFP in Afghanistan for the delivery of wheat assistance.
- The consul general of Afghanistan emphasised the significance of the Chabahar port for the delivery of **humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people and providing economic opportunities for Afghan businessmen and traders.**

Significance:

- **India and the central Asian nations** reaffirmed that connectivity initiatives should comply with **global norms, transparency, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries.**

Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel



The **Supreme Court** has dismissed petitions challenging the Delhi High Court judgment which upheld the **Agnipath scheme** for recruitment to the armed forces.

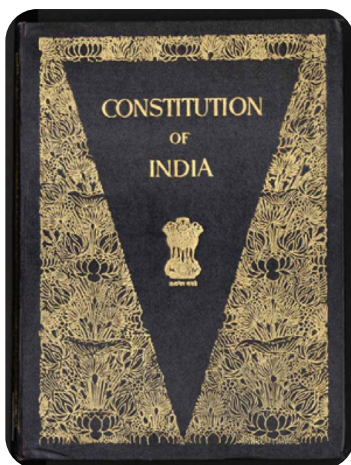
About the case:

- Some of the petitioners included candidates who were shortlisted in the earlier recruitment **process to Army and Air Force**.
- The advocate representing students argued that the government must be directed to complete the **old process citing the doctrine of promissory estoppel**.

What is Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel?

- **Within contract law**, promissory estoppel refers to “the doctrine that a party may recover on the basis of a promise made when the party’s reliance on that **promise was reasonable**, and the party attempting to recover detrimentally relied on the promise.”
- The **Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel works** on the principle of equity, fairness and moral conscience.
- The **doctrine of Promissory Estoppel** means when an individual with an intention of forming a relationship which is lawful makes a clear promise to another individual and the latter individual acts on it that promise becomes an obligation for the individual who made the promise.
- Hence, then going back from its **words is not permissible**.

Ninth Schedule of the Indian Constitution



Chhattisgarh chief minister has written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to include the state’s amended provisions to provide 76% reservation for SC, ST OBC and RWS in the ninth schedule of the Constitution for “based on the population” of the state.

About

- The Ninth Schedule includes a list of **Central and State laws** which **cannot be challenged in courts**.
 - ▶ While the Ninth Schedule provides the law with a “safe harbour” from judicial review, **the protection is not blanket**.
- The Schedule became a part of the **Constitution in 1951**, when the document was amended for the first time.
- It was created by the new **Article 31B**, which along with **31A** was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform and for abolishing the Zamindari system.
 - ▶ **A. 31A** extends protection to ‘classes’ of laws
 - ▶ **A. 31B** shields specific laws or enactments.

Dabba trading



The **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** issued a string of notices naming entities involved in '**dabba trading**'.

About:

- Dabba trading is an **illegal form of trading in shares that operates outside the purview of recognized stock exchanges**.
- It has been banned by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**.
- **It involves a parallel stock market where traders can speculate on** the direction of share prices and stock indices without a **trading account, demat account, or providing KYC details**.
- According to the **Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956 (SCRA)**, trading in shares of companies between persons other than members of a **recognized stock exchange is illegal**.
- SEBI has **prohibited activity** under regulations 3 and 4 of SEBI Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices. Dabba trading is also punishable under the **Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act of 2000**.
- Despite the risk involved, dabba trading can be profitable since it is not governed by any rules and regulations.
- Transactions are settled in cash and orders are taken personally by the operators of the dabba system.
- Since it is illegal, profits earned through **dabba trading are not subject to income tax**.

Utsa Patnaik wins Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023



Utsa Patnaik, a renowned economist of national and international repute, has been selected for the **Malcolm Adiseshiah Award 2023**.

About

- The award is given every year by the Malcolm & Elizabeth Adiseshiah Trust.
- The prestigious national award honours outstanding social scientists selected by a national-level jury specially constituted for this purpose, from the nominations received.

Utsa Patnaik

- Utsa Patnaik is an Indian Marxian economist.
- She taught at the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning in the School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, from 1973 until her retirement in 2010.

World Chagas Disease Day



Every year **on April 14th, World Chagas Disease Day** is observed to raise awareness about a life-threatening illness that can cause severe heart and digestive problems.

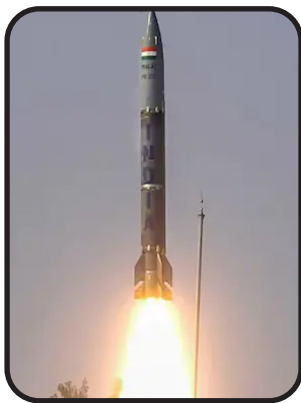
About the Disease:

- The disease, also known as **American trypanosomiasis**, silent disease, or silenced disease, is caused by the *Trypanosoma cruzi* parasite, which is **transmitted to humans by the triatomine bug, commonly known as the kissing bug.**
- The disease primarily affects individuals living in rural areas with poor hygiene conditions, particularly those who are impoverished. It is more common in regions like Central America, Mexico, and South America.

World Chagas Disease Day 2023: Theme

- The theme for 2023 is Time to integrate Chagas disease into primary health care, so that universal care and surveillance start at the most decentralized level of the health system.

Pralay ballistic missiles



India plans to acquire 250 more Pralay ballistic missiles to further bolster its own 'rocket force'.

About

- Pralay Ballistic Missile is an indigenous short-range ballistic surface-to-surface (SRBM) missile.
- This conventional weapon has a range of 150 to 500 kilometres.
- It is propelled by a solid-propellant rocket motor and other novel technologies.
- The Pralay missile project was sanctioned in 2015 and is a derivative of the Prahara missile programme, which was first tested in 2011.
- The missile guidance system has integrated avionics and cutting-edge navigation. The Indian Air Force would be the first to receive the missile, and then the Indian Army.

Scientists identifies Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) waves

Scientists have identified **Electromagnetic Ion Cyclotron (EMIC) waves**, a form of **plasma** waves in the Indian Antarctic station, Maitri, and studied its characteristics.

About

- The electromagnetic ion cyclotron (EMIC) waves are generally detected in the Earth's magnetosphere and have a small wave normal angle and left-hand polarization in the source region.



- **Formation:** The waves are formed when low-energy ions in the magnetosphere interact with electromagnetic fields, causing the ions to spiral along the magnetic field lines.
- EMIC waves accelerate electrons to very high energies and can cause the particles in the radiation belts to scatter, accelerate, and **precipitate** into the **Earth's atmosphere**, which can lead to changes in the distribution and intensity of the **radiation belts**.

More than 99% of the matter in the visible universe consists of plasma—the fourth state of matter.

SIDBI Launches 'Mission 50K-EV4ECO'



Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has announced the launch of a pilot scheme called 'Mission 50K-EV4ECO' aimed at strengthening the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem.

About

- 'Mission 50K-EV4ECO' aims to promote EV adoption and strengthen associated infrastructure in the country.
- The pilot scheme, which is a precursor to the EVOLVE scheme by SIDBI-World Bank.

Indian Policies on EVs

- In 2010, the **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)**, announced a financial incentive for manufacturers for EVs sold in India.
- In 2013, India unveiled the **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020**.
- In the Union Budget 2015-16, the **'Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of EVs' (FAME)** scheme was announced, with an initial outlay of Rs. 75 crore.
- In 2017, the **Transport Ministry** highlighted its intent to move to **100 percent electric cars by 2030**.
- In February 2019, the Union Cabinet cleared an **10,000-crore programme** under the **FAME-II** scheme.

Cumbum grapes gets GI Tag

Cumbum grapes from Tamil Nadu received the **Geographical Indication (GI)** label.

About

- Cumbum grapes is also known as the **Cumbum Panneer Thratchai**.
- The **Cumbum valley**, located in Tamil Nadu's Western Ghats, is regarded as the **"Grapes City of South India"** and grows the **Panneer Thratchai**.
- This variety, sometimes known as **Muscat Hamburg**, accounts for over 85% of the grape-growing areas in Tamil Nadu.



- Theni district is one of Panneer Thratchai's highest grape-producing locations.
- However, the 'Panneer' type is most closely linked with Cumbum Valley, where the agricultural area spans over 2,000 acres across ten villages.
- The **Cumbum region's agro-climate and soil conditions** are ideal for the cultivation of the Muscat varietal.
- This grape quality is suitable for making wine, spirits, jams, canned grape juice, and raisins.
- These grapes are high in vitamins, tartaric acid, and antioxidants, and they help to lower the risk of some chronic diseases. Apart from their purplish-brown color, they are also noted for their exceptional taste.

These grapes were introduced in **Tamil Nadu in 1832 by a French priest.**

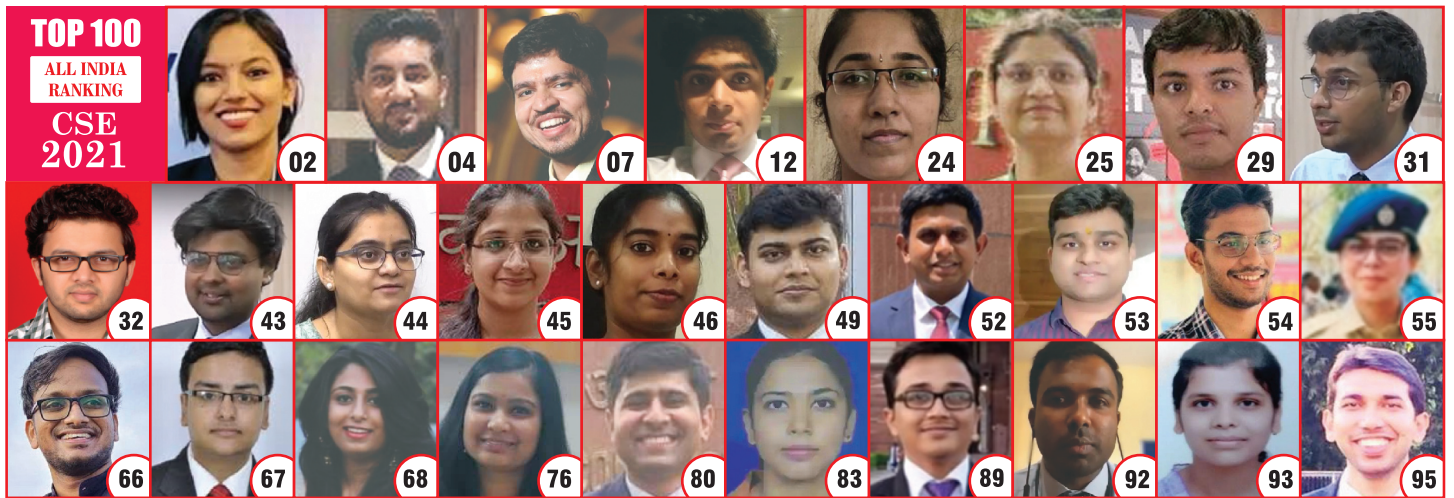
'India's largest' aquarium, aviary to come up at Telangana's Eco-Park



Hyderabad is all set to have the country's largest aquarium, which will be housed at Echo Hill Park in Kothwalguda.

About

- The Kothwalguda Eco-Park includes, in addition to gazebos and pergolas, a six-acre aviary, a 2.5-kilometre boardwalk, an aquarium, a butterfly garden, a sensory park, an open-air theatre, flora, and landscaping.



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