

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 4
SEPTEMBER
2023

MAINS

GS- I

- ▣ 'STATUE OF ONENESS'
- ▣ CANCER'S GENDER PROBLEM
- ▣ LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP ARE NOT CRIMINALIZED: DELHI HC
- ▣ SEPTEMBER RAIN

GS- II

- ▣ INDIA, U.S. FRAMEWORK FOR INITIATIVE ON CRITICAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY (ICET)
- ▣ CHINESE RESEARCH SHIP TO VISIT SRI LANKA
- ▣ 78TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGC)
- ▣ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMART CITIES
- ▣ INDIA'S AADHAAR PROGRAMME AND DECENTRALISATION
- ▣ MEDIATION ACT, 2023
- ▣ NATIONAL BROADCASTING POLICY
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- ▣ FINDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENT PANEL ON EDUCATION
- ▣ COUNTING DEATHS IN INDIA'S PRISONS
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- ▣ LINK BETWEEN GDP GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

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- ▣ Global India Maritime Summit (GMIS 2023)
- ▣ First maritime exercise held between India, Australia and Indonesia

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- ▣ Indian medical graduates can practice abroad
- ▣ MHA extends 'Disturbed area' status in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland

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- ▣ Hybrid seeds in India

- ▣ Centre seeks to relax angel tax

ENVIRONMENT

- ▣ U.N.'s Climate Ambition Summit (CAS)
- ▣ Centre identifies 62 new elephant corridors; total now 150
- ▣ India-Bangladesh consensus to save Sundarbans
- ▣ Giant sea lizards (Mosasaur species)
- ▣ 'Pink Blooms' in Kole wetlands of Kerala

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- ▣ Unparliamentary Language
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- ▣ Kaimur Wildlife sanctuary
- ▣ World Environment Health Day
- ▣ Capacity-building initiative for industry
- ▣ General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES)
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- ▣ CE20 E13 Engine
- ▣ Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968)
- ▣ Pterygotrigla intermedica
- ▣ Vibrio vulnificus
- ▣ Rhinos
- ▣ South China Sea
- ▣ Scarborough Shoal

SPECIALS

- ▣ India-Canada Diplomatic Row

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

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

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Section A [MAINS]

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- ☞ Cancer's gender problem
- ☞ Live-in relationship are not Criminalized: Delhi HC
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- ☞ India, U.S. Framework for initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET)
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'STATUE OF ONENESS'

Context: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan unveiled a 108-foot-tall statue of the 8th-century spiritual leader Adi Shankaracharya (788 AD-820 AD) naming it as 'Statue of Oneness' in Omkareshwar.

About the Statue:

- ◆ The 'Statue of Oneness', depicts Shankaracharya as a **12-year-old child** when he is said to have visited Omkareshwar, which is one among the **twelve Jyotirlinga shrines**.
- ◆ The metal casting was done in **China's Nanchang city** and shipped to Mumbai in several batches.
- ◆ The idol, weighing 100 tonnes, installed on a **75-foot platform**, is made up of bronze that contains **88% copper, 4% zinc and 8% tin**.
- ◆ Its internal structure is made-up of **high-quality steel**.
- ◆ The design for the statue was conceptualised founding inspiration in **Raja Ravi Verma's** depiction of Shankaracharya.

Who was Adi Shankaracharya?

- ◆ Adi Shankaracharya is generally considered an **eighth-century** religious teacher.
- ◆ According to a commonly held view, Adi Shankaracharya was born in **788 AD**.
- ◆ Adi Shankara, as he is popularly known among his followers, was born in Kalady village - now a small town in the **Ernakulam district** - situated on the bank of a river of the same name in Kerala.
- ◆ He was an exceptional child as Adi Shankara had become fluent in Sanskrit by the age of two. By four, he was comfortably reciting scriptures including Vedas.
- ◆ The burning quest for attaining superior knowledge from an early age pushed Adi Shankara to leave his home and set on the search for a guru.
- ◆ His quest ended with **Govind Bhagvatpad at Omkareshwar** (Madhya Pradesh) on the bank of the **Narmada River**.
- ◆ Adi Shankara excelled under the tutelage of Govind Bhagvatpad, who instructed him to write commentaries on scriptures on completion of his learning. **Adi Shankara was just 12** at the time.



Jyotirlinga	Location	State
Somnath	Veraval, Saurashtra	Gujarat
Mallikarjuna	Srisailam	Madhya Pradesh
Mahakaleshwar	Ujjain	Madhya Pradesh
Omkareshwara	Khandwa	Madhya Pradesh
Kedarnath	Kedarnath	Uttarakhand
Bhimashankar	Khed Taluka, Pune	Maharashtra
Vishweshwara	Varanasi	Uttar Pradesh
Trayambakeshwar	Trimbak	Maharashtra
Nageshwara	Jamnagar	Gujarat
Baidyanath	Deoghar	Jharkhand
Rameshwaram	Rameshwaram	Tamil Nadu
Grishneshwar	Ellora	Maharashtra

- ◆ Following his guru's command, Adi Shankara wrote commentaries explaining the subtle meanings hidden in scriptures.
- ◆ To his ardent followers, Adi Shankaracharya was an **incarnation of Lord Shiva**, who came to the earth for 32 years.

Religion and Philosophy:

- ◆ Adi Shankaracharya championed the **Advait branch of philosophy** that declared that god and humans were not two. He then set out to spread the message of his guru.
- ◆ From the **age of 16 to 32**, Adi Shankaracharya traveled across the **length and breadth of India** with the message of Vedas.
- ◆ He pronounced that 'Brahman or pure consciousness is the absolute reality that is attainable by human beings and that the **material world is an illusion**.
- ◆ He established his supremacy in religion and philosophy in debating duels with experts and chief of ashram after ashram from **north to south and east to west**.
- ◆ The defeat would end up hitherto expert philosophers accepting young Adi Shankara as their guru and accepting his interpretation of the scriptures.

Important Literary work

- ◆ Adi Shankaracharya wrote **18 commentaries** on the scriptures including the **Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and 12 major Upanishads**.
- ◆ He wrote about two dozen books elucidating the fundamentals of the **Advaita Vedanta philosophy**.
 - ▶ Some of these books are **Viveka Chudamani, Atma Bodha, Vaakya Vritti, and Upadesa Sahasri**.

- ◆ Adi Shankaracharya is credited to have composed 72 devotional and meditative hymns such as **Soundarya Lahari, Sivananda Lahari, Nirvana Shalkam, Maneesha Panchakam.**

Important Ashram founded by Adi Shankaracharya

- ◆ Having established his superiority among all exponents of religion and philosophy of the time, Adi Shankaracharya founded **four ashrams** in the **four corners of the country**–
 - ▶ Badrinath for Atharva Veda
 - ▶ Puri for Rig Veda
 - ▶ Dwaraka for Sama Veda
 - ▶ Sringeri for Yajur Veda
- ◆ These were the centres to elucidate the essence of **Advaita philosophy.**

What is the Kedarnath Connection?

- It is believed Adi Shankaracharya took **samadhi at Kedarnath.**
- It is said he was seen last by his disciples walking into the Himalayan woods at Kedarnath. He was not seen thereafter.

CANCER'S GENDER PROBLEM

Context: Recently, the *Lancet* report highlights that **lack of awareness, financial and decision-making powers hurts women's chances of timely diagnosis and treatment of cancer.**

Highlights of the Report:

- ◆ **Title:** 'Women, Power and Cancer'
- ◆ The Lancet report reveals that **63% of Indian women's cancer deaths** could be prevented through risk reduction and screening, and **37% via timely treatment.**
- ◆ The report mentioned that around 6.9 million cancer deaths among women in India were preventable and 4.03 million were treatable.
- ◆ It also mentions that even though men are at a higher risk of cancers that affect both the genders, cancer incidence and mortality in women remains high.
- ◆ Globally, women account for **48% of the new cancer cases and 44% of cancer deaths.**
- ◆ This happens even though some of the cancers in women, such as breast and cervical cancers are highly preventable and treatable.

Reason behind Women cancer patients' rise:

- ▶ **Lack of timely treatment:** Women face challenges in accessing timely and appropriate care in the absence of knowledge, decision-making and financial powers and availability of services at the primary level closer to home.
- ▶ **Less authority to take self-decisions:** Irrespective of which part of the world they live in and which strata of the society they belong to, women are more likely than men to lack the **knowledge and power** to make informed decisions.
- ▶ Women are also much more likely to experience financial catastrophe due to cancer.
- ▶ **Discrimination and Inequality:** When it comes to providing cancer care, women are under-represented as leaders, are likely to face gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, and also constitute the largest unpaid workforce.
- ▶ **Lack of funds:** The report estimated that the value of **unpaid cancer care-giving** by women is about 3.66% of India's national health expenditure.

Suggestions:

- ▶ There is a need to regularly collect data on gender and social demographics for cancer health statistics.
- ▶ It called for **developing, strengthening, and enforcing laws** and policies that reduce exposures to known cancer risks.
- ▶ The report called for **equitable access to cancer research resources**, leadership, and funding opportunities for women.

What is Cancer?

- ◆ Cancer is a generic term for a large group of diseases that can affect any part of the body.
- ◆ Other terms used are malignant **tumors and neoplasms.**
- ◆ One defining feature of the disease is the rapid creation of abnormal cells that grow beyond their usual boundaries, and which can then invade adjoining parts of the body and spread to other organs; the latter process is referred to as metastasis. Widespread metastases are the primary cause of death from cancer.
- ◆ Cancer begins when genetic changes interfere with this orderly process causing cells to start to grow uncontrollably.
- ◆ These cells may form a mass **called a tumor.** A tumor can be **cancerous or benign.**
 - ▶ A cancerous tumor is malignant, meaning it can grow and spread to other parts of the body.

- ▶ A benign tumor means the tumor can grow but will not spread.
- ◆ Some types of cancer do not form a tumor. These include **leukemias, most types of lymphoma, and myeloma.**

Stages of Cancer detection:

- ◆ **Self-Examination:** Individuals are encouraged to perform self-examinations for certain types of cancer, such as breast and testicular cancer.
- ◆ **Screening Tests:** Screening tests are often recommended for individuals with specific risk factors or within certain age groups.
- ◆ **Clinical Examination:** Healthcare professionals conduct physical exams to look for signs and symptoms of cancer. This may involve palpating the body for lumps or abnormalities, checking skin changes, and assessing other physical indicators.

Women and Cancer:

- ◆ The two most common cancers in women– **breast and cervical.**
- ◆ They are **highly preventable and treatable.**
- ◆ **Breast Cancer:** The American Cancer Society recommends the following for women at average risk for breast cancer:
 - ▶ **Women ages 40 to 44** should have the choice to start yearly breast cancer screening with a mammogram (x-ray of the breast) if they wish to do so.
 - ▶ **Women age 45 to 54** should get a mammogram every year.
 - ▶ **Women 55 and older** can switch to a mammogram **every 2 years**, or can continue yearly screening.
- ◆ Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to **live at least 10 more years.**
- ◆ **Cervical Cancer:** Chronic infection by certain types of the human papillomavirus (HPV) is the most important risk factor for cervical cancer.

Challenges for Women in Indian society:

- ◆ **Lack of Awareness:** Many women, especially in rural areas, lack awareness about the importance of cancer screening, leading to low participation rates.
- ◆ **Societal Stigma:** Societal norms and taboos often discourage women from discussing their health concerns openly, hindering their access to screening services.

- ◆ **Financial Barriers:** High costs associated with cancer screening and treatment may deter women from seeking early diagnosis and care.
- ◆ **Gender Roles:** Traditional gender roles may prioritize women's caregiving responsibilities over their own health, delaying or neglecting screenings.
- ◆ **Limited Access to Healthcare:** Rural and marginalized communities often have limited access to healthcare facilities, including cancer screening centers.
- ◆ **Cultural Norms:** Cultural beliefs and practices may discourage women from pursuing cancer screening or treatment, further exacerbating gender disparities.

Way Forward:

- ◆ Governments should run public awareness campaigns aimed at educating women about the importance of cancer prevention, early detection, and healthy lifestyles. These campaigns often emphasize the significance of regular screenings.
- ◆ **Governments fund cancer research** to develop new treatments, therapies, and early detection methods, benefiting women and the entire population.
- ◆ Laws and policies must be enacted to protect women from discrimination and ensure their rights regarding cancer care. These laws may include measures to guarantee insurance coverage and job protection during treatment.

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP ARE NOT CRIMINALIZED: DELHI HC

Context: In a significant move, the Delhi High Court has noted that although live-in relationships are not legally recognized, they are not considered criminal, and therefore, courts cannot impose their moral judgments on consenting adults in such relationships.

Key-points from the Court's observation:

- ◆ Live-in relationship between **two consenting married adults**, who are married to different partners, has not been made criminal or legislated against.

Live-in relationships are not recognized as a legal union under any law in India

- ◆ The parties herein have the right to determine their **own choices, life, and actions**, but at the same time, should remain **conscious of the repercussion**

it invites from their partners and its effect on their marriage.

- ◆ Any court of law cannot impose their own perception of morality on individuals who are adults and make free adult choices if such choices are not illegal or an offence under the present framework of law.



Supreme Court's view:

- ◆ **Live-in Relationship as a Fundamental Right:** The Supreme Court has ruled that any couple living together for a long time will be presumed as legally married unless proved otherwise.
 - ▶ So it is gradually being accepted especially amongst the young generation. As per the law, 'living together is not a crime, but it is part of the right to life'.

Why there is a need for regulations?

- ◆ The Court made its observation in a recent case where a woman made allegations pertaining to rape and sexual harassment against her live-in partner with whom she has been cohabiting for last five years.

Stakeholders involved:

- Male live-in-partner
- Female live-in-partner
- Police officials
- State Women Commission
- Society at large

- ▶ The case *prima facie* looks to be of a relationship gone sour.

- ◆ However, it also shows the vulnerable position of both the partners in case any of them demands justice where both the law and society are not very receptive of the live-in relationships.

Societal Dilemmas:

- ◆ Generally, live-in relationships are not favored in the Indian society.

- ◆ It is yet not being fully accepted in our culture and this leads to social rejection of the people involved, if the live-in relation does not work, it gets all the more difficult to re-enter into established institution of marriage, especially in the case of women because of the rejection and stigma associated with it.

Instances for safeguarding women:

- ◆ For the first time, the question of whether **live-in relationship** is a legal relationship came to the Supreme Court in the case of **Badri Prasad v. Dy. Director of Consolidation**.
- ◆ In the present case the parties were living in a live in relationship for almost 50 years and the question before the court was whether their relationship be granted the same status which is granted to a married couple and the apex court's decision was in favour of the couple and the apex court granted legal status to their 50 year relationship.
- ◆ In the case of **Indra Sarma v. VKV Sarma** the Supreme Court held that if at any point any male who is not married lives with a women who is also not married and they also shared the same house then that will come under **section 2(f) of Domestic Violence Act** and if at any point of time domestic violence occurs then the aggrieved person can seek relief under the **chapter IV of the Domestic Violence Act**.

Related Laws:

- ◆ India's legal framework primarily recognizes traditional marriages governed by **personal laws and the Special Marriage Act, 1954**, for interfaith or inter-caste marriages.
- ◆ However, there are some legal provisions and court judgments that indirectly impact live-in relationships.
- ◆ **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:** This law can be used by women in live-in relationships to seek protection from physical, emotional, or economic abuse. It allows for the filing of complaints and obtaining restraining orders against the abuser.
- ◆ **Indian Penal Code (IPC):** Section 497 of the IPC (Adultery) was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2018, which indirectly recognized the autonomy of married individuals in matters of relationships. It is essential to note that the IPC is a criminal law and not a law that explicitly recognizes or regulates live-in relationships.
- ◆ **Maintenance and Alimony:** Courts in India have occasionally ruled in favor of providing maintenance or alimony to partners in long-term live-in relationships, considering the principles of equity and justice.

- ◆ **Protection of Children's Rights:** In cases involving live-in couples with children, courts have ruled in favor of securing the rights and welfare of the child, including custody and financial support.



SEPTEMBER RAIN

Context: Due to intensified El Nino this year, the monsoonal rains has seen a shift in its regular trend, causing the majority of Indian farmers to depend on tubewell or canal water irrigation for their crops in Kharif season.

- ◆ So, let us take a look at weather factors responsible for crop losses and deficit rains with shift in rains to September.

About the September Rain:

- ◆ The Month of September has seen around **18.7% surplus** rainfall so far.
- ◆ The September showers have been most beneficial for **oilseeds, especially soyabean and groundnut**.
- ◆ Inflationary pressures have also eased in **vegetables**, whose consumer price index had jumped 37.4% year-on-year in July and 26.1% in August.

Reasons for Irregular Rains:

- ◆ **Due to El Nino:** The **US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration** has predicted a 73% chance of average sea surface temperatures in the east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean ruling more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above normal during October-December and 78% probability of exceeding 1 degree in January-March 2024.
- ◆ **Due to Positive Indian Ocean Dipole:** Positive IOD tends to lead to decreased rainfall in parts of South Asia, including India.
 - ▶ This can result in drier conditions, impacting agriculture and water resources in affected regions.
 - ▶ Farmers may face challenges related to water scarcity and drought conditions.
 - ▶ Positive IOD can influence **sea surface temperatures in the Indian Ocean**, which, in turn, can affect weather patterns and temperature fluctuations in the region.
- ◆ **Due to upcoming Retreating Monsoon season:**
 - ▶ The retreating monsoon, also known as the **post-monsoon season**, marks the withdrawal of the southwest monsoon winds from the Indian subcontinent.

- ▶ It begins in September and continues into October.
- ▶ During this period, there is a reversal of wind direction. Instead of moist winds from the southwest, dry winds start blowing from the northeast.
- ▶ This transition phase is known as the northeast monsoon or the retreating monsoon.
- ▶ However, while northern India experiences **cooler and drier conditions**, the southern and southeastern regions receive precipitation.

Significance of September Rains:

- ◆ The September rains are essential for the cultivation of crops like rice, pulses, and oilseeds in southern India.
- ◆ They help recharge groundwater levels and ensure a steady water supply for irrigation.

Concerns:

- ◆ A third of India's paddy area remained **un-irrigated** and rainfall has been deficient in the whole of **eastern UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal**.
- ◆ The crop in large areas of **Punjab and Haryana** suffered inundation due to excess rain and water released from dams.
- ◆ Farmers there had to then **re-transplant short-duration paddy varieties**, including of basmati, yielding less than those planted earlier in June.



INDIA, U.S. FRAMEWORK FOR INITIATIVE ON CRITICAL AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGY (ICET)

Context: India and the United States are working together on advanced technology collaboration, aiming to address regulatory barriers and align export controls for mutual benefits.

Background:

- ◆ India and United States (US) first announced the framework on the sidelines of the Quad meeting in **Tokyo in May 2022**.
- ◆ It was launched to strengthen their strategic partnership and **drive technology and defense cooperation**.

What is iCET?

- ◆ The **Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies** is a framework agreed upon by India and the U.S. for cooperation on **critical and emerging technologies** in areas including **Artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors and wireless telecommunication**.
- ◆ The United States and India affirm that the ways in which technology is designed, developed, governed, and used should be shaped by our shared democratic values and respect for **universal human rights**.
- ◆ Both the countries are committed to fostering an **open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem**, based on mutual trust and confidence that will reinforce our democratic values and democratic institutions.

Key Points of the framework:

- ◆ The iCET seeks to build **supply chains and support** the co-production and co-development of items.
- ◆ Both countries agreed to include setting up a **research agency partnership** to drive collaboration in areas like AI.
- ◆ They will also aim to develop a **new defence industrial cooperation roadmap** to accelerate technological cooperation for joint development and production;
- ◆ **Other takeaways are:**
 - ▶ Developing common standards in AI;
 - ▶ developing a roadmap to accelerate defence technological cooperation and 'innovation bridge' to connect defence startups;
 - ▶ Supporting the development of a semiconductor ecosystem; strengthening cooperation on human spaceflight;
 - ▶ Advancing cooperation on development in 5G and 6G; and
 - ▶ Adopting OpenRAN network technology in India.

Progress done so far on lines of the framework

- ◆ **The Semiconductor policy:** India and the U.S. signed a MoU on establishing a **semiconductor supply chain** that paved the way for creating a semiconductor sub-committee to review recommendations from an industry-led task force launched in connection with the iCET.
- ◆ **Quantum Coordination Mechanism:** Both the countries has already launched a **public-private dialogue (PDD) on telecommunication** to drive collaboration in **OpenRAN, 5G and 6G**, and held important exchanges on AI and space.

- ◆ On the defence front, the two countries are close to concluding a mega jet engine deal.
- ◆ **India-U.S. Defence Acceleration Ecosystem (INDUS-X):**
 - ▶ India and the U.S. have concluded a roadmap for '**Defence Industrial Cooperation**' to guide the policy direction for the next few years.
 - ▶ The two countries have also established a **Strategic Trade Dialogue** to remove regulatory "barriers" and review existing export control norms to take forward strategic technology and trade collaborations envisaged under iCET.

India's Efforts:

Initiatives by MeitY in Emerging Technologies;

- ◆ Artificial Intelligence Committees Reports
- ◆ Centres of Excellence for Internet of Things (Gandhinagar, Bengaluru, Gurugram & Vizag)
- ◆ Centre of Excellence on Virtual & Augmented Reality (VARCoE) at IIT Bhubaneswar
- ◆ Centre of Excellence on Gaming, VFX, Computer Vision & AI at Hyderabad
- ◆ Centre of Excellence on Blockchain Technology at Gurugram
- ◆ Design, Development, and Deployment of National AI Portal (INDIAai)
- ◆ POC for AI Research Analytics and Knowledge Dissemination Platform (AIRAWAT)
- ◆ Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence



CHINESE RESEARCH SHIP TO VISIT SRI LANKA

Context: A Chinese research ship is going to dock on Sri Lanka's Colombo port in October this year, which is seen as a concern by US and India for security of Indo-pacific region.

Background:

- ◆ Last year, India had objected to a Chinese ship docking in the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota.
- ◆ India raised objections to a **Chinese ballistic missile and satellite tracking ship** staying at Hambantota port on Sri Lanka's southern coast.
- ◆ While Sri Lanka had earlier asked China to postpone the arrival of the **hi-tech vessel** following Indian concerns, it later overturns its stand.



The US too had earlier this year shot down what it called a **Chinese spy balloon** floating over its territory, while Beijing said it was a weather balloon.

Why the Chinese ship coming to Sri Lanka?

- ◆ A vessel named 'Shi Yan 6', a scientific research vessel, with a **60-member crew**, is going to land on Sri Lankan port.
- ◆ The research ship aims to carry out **oceanography, marine geology and marine ecology tests**.
- ◆ The Chinese research vessel is expected in the island country in October to carry out research along with Sri Lanka's **National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA)**

Why does India object to Chinese vessels docking in Sri Lanka?

- ◆ **Security threats:** India considers Chinese ships docked so close to its mainland a security threat, and suspects they could be used for snooping, even when their stated aim is scientific research.

Why is Chinese Presence in Sri Lanka a Concern for India?

- ◆ **China's Debt strategy:** Recently, China's presence in Sri Lanka has increased on a large scale.
 - ▶ China is the largest **bilateral creditor to Sri Lanka**.
 - ▶ Its loans to the Sri Lankan public sector amount to **15% of the central government's external debt**.
 - ▶ Sri Lanka heavily relies on Chinese credit to address its **foreign debt burden**.
- ◆ **Investment on Infrastructure:** China extended about **USD 2.8 billion to Sri Lanka** soon after the pandemic hit but has not stepped in much in 2022, even as the island's economy collapsed rapidly.
 - ▶ China has invested about USD 12 billion in Sri Lanka's infrastructure projects between 2006-19.

- ◆ **Relations with Island countries:** China enjoys friendlier waters in South Asia and the Indian Ocean than it does in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.
 - ▶ China faces opposition from Taiwan, territorial disputes in the **South China Sea and East Asia**, and myriad frictions with the **US and Australia**.

Geo-strategic consequences:

- ◆ **Threat for Multilateral approach in Indo-Pacific region:** Leasing of **Hambantota and the Colombo Port City** project make it almost certain for the Chinese navy to have a permanent presence in the Indian Ocean which will be worrisome for India's national security.
 - ▶ This Chinese strategy to encircle India is referred to as the **Strings of Pearls Strategy**.
- ◆ **China's focus on developing countries:** Other South Asian nations like **Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives** have also been turning to China to finance large-scale infrastructure projects.

78TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA)

Context: Recently, the External Affairs Minister of India has joined a meeting held with counterparts from Brazil, Bahrain and South Africa on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

About:

- ◆ **Theme:** "Rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity: Accelerating action on the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals towards peace, prosperity, progress and the sustainability for all."
- ◆ **Location:** New York City, United States (US)
- ◆ The events were started on **5th September till 23rd September 2023**.
- ◆ The first day of the **high-level General Debate** took place on **19th September 2023**.

UNGA

- The **General Assembly**, also known as **UNGA**, is the main forum for all 193 Members of the UN to discuss international issues in line with the UN Charter.
- The Assembly meets in regular sessions from September to December each year.

Highlights of the event:

- ◆ **High Impact Initiative: Nature Driving Economic Transformation:** This was one of **twelve high impact initiatives**, led by UN-system entities that showcased select programmatic offerings and initiatives to support Member States' efforts towards just development **transitions and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) achievement**.
 - ▶ This event was part of the **SDG Action Weekend** of the SDG Summit.
- ◆ **High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development:** This Dialogue is a critical moment to follow up on the implementation of the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda**, which was adopted in 2015 to provide a new global framework for funding sustainable development by aligning all financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities.
- ◆ **Climate Ambition Summit:** The Summit aims to accelerate action by governments, business, finance, local authorities and civil society, and hear from "first movers and doers".
 - ▶ The Summit represents a critical political milestone for demonstrating that there is collective global will to accelerate the pace and scale of a just transition to a more equitable renewable-energy based, climate-resilient global economy.
- ◆ **High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage:** This Meeting presents an opportunity for countries and stakeholders to renew efforts and accelerate progress toward achieving health for all.
 - ▶ This will serve as the foundation for executing policies and ensuring responsibility for strengthening health systems for the future, building on the **2019 Political Declaration**.
- ◆ **High-level Meeting on Tuberculosis:** This Meeting is aimed to undertake a comprehensive review on the achievement of agreed **tuberculosis targets 2018 Political Declaration** of the first General Assembly high level meeting on TB, and to identify gaps and solutions to accelerate progress towards ending the tuberculosis epidemic by 2030.



Context: According to the report released by President at the Annual Smart Cities Conclave in Indore, over 70% of projects under the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) are in alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on cities, clean water and sanitation, clean energy and economic growth.

The SDGs are a set of 17 targets part of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which was adopted by all UN member states, including India, in 2015.

About the event:

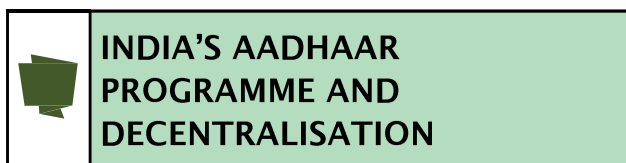
- ◆ During the event, the President handed out the **Smart Cities awards for 2022**.
- ◆ Indore being named the **overall best Smart City** and Madhya Pradesh the best state.

Highlights of the Report:

- ◆ **Theme: "Smart Cities Mission, India: Localising Sustainable Development Goals"**.
- ◆ **Prepared by:** The Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry and UN-Habitat.
- ◆ **Objective:** The report demonstrates tangible and measurable impact towards the achievement of SDGs, relying not solely on data but also **human stories and perspectives**.
- ◆ **Sustainable Goals achieved:**
 - ▶ According to the report, while the SCM projects have largely contributed, in one way or the other, to **15 of the 17 SDGs**.
 - ▶ Nearly 44% were in line with the aim of SDG 11 — to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
 - ▶ Around 13.3% of the SCM projects contributed to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation);
 - ▶ 8.6% to SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy) and
 - ▶ 6.4% to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth).
- ◆ The report mentioned that the SCM, with a total of **7,846 projects** across 100 cities showcases successful implementation of a national-scale urban mission that aligns comprehensively with global agendas and empowers cities to drive sustainable development.
- ◆ **Key Projects highlighted:**
 - ▶ The report cited as an example a **project in Ahmedabad**, where **sensor-based monitoring of the water network** resulted in an additional supply of 50 million litres a day (MLD) by detecting leakages.
 - ▶ The **Mudasarlova Reservoir Floating Solar Plant** in Visakhapatnam, which led to an annual electricity generation of 3,613 MWh and saved \$0.28 million, the report said. The project prevented emission of over **3,000 tonnes of CO₂**.
 - ▶ The project in Indore, which used a **gravity-based network** to prevent **205 MLD** of untreated sewage from entering the Kahn River, the Saraswati River and the **network of 25 drains**.

About Smart Cities Mission:

- ◆ The Smart Cities Mission, launched in 2015.
- ◆ It is an initiative of the **Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry**.
- ◆ **Aim:** Cities across the country were asked to submit proposals for projects to improve municipal services and to make their jurisdictions more liveable.
 - ▶ The projects were supposed to be completed within five years of the selection of the city, but in 2021 the Ministry changed the deadline for all cities to June 2023.
- ◆ But the Ministry extended its **deadline to June 2024**.
- ◆ **Funding:**
 - ▶ The Mission is operated as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.
 - ▶ Central Government will give financial support to the extent of Rs. 48,000 crores over 5 years i.e., on an average Rs.100 crore per city per year.
 - ▶ An equal amount on a matching basis is to be provided by **the State/ULB**.
 - ▶ Additional resources are to be raised through convergence, from ULBs' own funds, grants under Finance Commission, innovative finance mechanisms such as **Municipal Bonds**, other government programs and borrowings.



Context: After global rating major Moody's Investors Service pointed out concerns about security and privacy vulnerabilities in India's Aadhaar programme, the government has termed the financial agency's opinion baseless.

What has Moody's said?

- ◆ In a report on "**Decentralized Finance and Digital Assets**" issued, Moody's acknowledged Aadhaar is the **world's largest digital ID program** that assigns unique numbers to over 1.2 billion Indian residents using biometric and demographic data.
- ◆ The Aadhaar system enables access to **public and private services**, with verification via **fingerprint or iris scans** and alternatives like **One-Time Passcodes (OTPs)**.
- ◆ However, it faces hurdles, including the
 - ▶ Burden of establishing authorization

- ▶ Concerns about biometric reliability
- ▶ Security and privacy vulnerabilities
- ▶ Concentration of sensitive information with specific entities
- ▶ Increases the risks of data breaches
- ◆ India's unique ID system, Aadhaar, "often results in service denials, and the reliability of biometric technologies, especially for manual labourers in hot, humid climates, is questionable."

In August, the government extended its deadline for switching to **Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS)** for MGNREGA beneficiaries for the fifth time, pushing it to December 31, 2023.

What had Moody's suggested as an alternative?

- ◆ Moody's has pitched for decentralised ID systems in place of India's Aadhaar.
- ◆ Countries with successful programs, including **Catalonia, Azerbaijan and Estonia**, have used blockchain-based systems to issue digital identities.
- ◆ While in a centralized system, a single entity such as a bank, social media platform or government electoral roll controls a user's information, in the case of a decentralised ID (DID) system such as digital wallets, personal data is saved in a user's digital wallet and identity verification takes place on a decentralised digital ledger such as a blockchain.
- ◆ This will enhance privacy and reduce the amount of personal information held by intermediaries.

Aadhar ID system in India:

- ◆ The UIDAI is a **statutory authority** established on 12th July 2016 by the Government of India under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the **Aadhaar Act 2016**.
- ◆ The UIDAI is mandated to assign a **12-digit unique identification (UID)** number (Aadhaar) to all the residents of India.
- ◆ The Aadhaar card includes demographic information like the **citizen's name, father's or mother's name, date of birth, sex, and address, as well as biometric information** like a **photograph, fingerprints, and information about the iris (eye)**.
- ◆ The **central government of India** controls and manages **Aadhar cards**.

The Supreme Court determined that the **Aadhaar Act** is a reasonable exception to the **right to privacy** because it serves a legitimate state goal and is proportionate.

Concerns:

- ◆ A single entry controlling users' ID credentials can dispose of user data for internal or third-party profiling purposes.
- ◆ Aadhar faces hurdles, including burden of establishing authorization.
- ◆ The system often results in **service denials**, and the **reliability of biometric technologies**, especially for manual laborers in hot, humid climates, is questionable.

Related Judgments:

- ◆ The case of Justice *Puttaswamy and Others v. Union of India* and Others was brought in 2018 by the Supreme Court's constitutional bench, which rendered a **4:1 majority decision** rejecting this claim challenging the validity of the Aadhar card.
 - ▶ The Bench invalidated **Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act**, which mandates the use of an Aadhaar for verification by **private businesses and permitted businesses and people to demand an Aadhaar** in payment for goods and services, which was also repealed.

**MEDIATION ACT, 2023**

Context: In the recent monsoon session of Parliament, both Houses passed The Mediation Bill, 2023, and upon receiving the assent of the President of India, is referred to as the Mediation Act, 2023 ("the Act").

Salient Features of the Act:

- ◆ **Objective:** The Mediation Act, 2023 aims to foster a link between the **mediation and the arbitration** of commercial disputes, thus reducing the burden on Indian courts.



- ▶ **Mandatory Pre-Litigation Mediation:** Parties involved in civil or commercial disputes must engage in at least two mediation sessions. Only after these sessions can a party opt to withdraw from the process. This approach aims to alleviate the burden on the Indian judicial system and promote faster dispute resolution.
- ◆ **Timely Resolution:** The Act sets a timeline for the mediation process. It must be completed within 180 days. However, this period can be extended by an additional 180 days if all parties involved agree to the extension.
- ◆ **Mediation Council of India:** The **Mediation Council** is to be established to regulate the profession of mediators, may not have representation of practising mediators with adequate experience.
- ◆ **Applicability:** The Bill will apply to mediations conducted in India:
 - ▶ Involving only domestic parties,
 - ▶ Involving at least one foreign party and relating to a commercial dispute (i.e., international mediation), and
 - ▶ If the mediation agreement states that mediation will be as per this Bill.
 - ▶ If the central or state government is a party, the Bill will apply to: (a) commercial disputes, and (b) other disputes as notified.
 - The Act applies to international mediations only if they are conducted in India.
- ◆ **Exemptions:** Not all disputes are eligible for mediation under this act. Cases involving criminal prosecution or those significantly impacting the rights of third parties are deemed inappropriate for mediation.

What is "Mediation"?

- ◆ Under the Act, Mediation is defined expansively to include any process where parties request a third person (mediator) to assist them in reaching an amicable settlement and includes (a) pre-litigation mediation; (b) online mediation; (c) community mediation; (d) conciliation; or any other expression having a similar meaning.
- ◆ Currently, mediation in India can be court-referred, private (based on contractual agreements), or provided under specific statutes like the **Commercial Courts Act, 2015, the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, or the Companies Act, 2013.**

Advantage	Criticism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could lead to more out of court settlements and reduce the pendency in courts. • Confidentiality, self-determination and voluntariness, are adequately safeguarded. • Affords protection against admissibility and privilege against disclosure. All mediation communication is confidential. • Ensures that non-settlement reports by the mediator do not disclose the cause of non-settlement. • Any party can, at any point in the mediation, voluntarily opt out of the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shift from the voluntary nature of mediation to mandatory participation, which has been a cornerstone of traditional mediation. Critics argue that this may deter parties from engaging in the process willingly. • Unlike other professional regulators like the Bar Council of India (BCI), the Mediation Council lacks adequate representation of experienced practitioners, leading to questions about its effectiveness in regulating the mediation profession. • The requirement for the Council to obtain prior approval from the Central government for its regulations has raised concerns about potential government involvement as a party to mediations, potentially compromising neutrality.

What are the other ways of mediation?

- ◆ **Panchayat:** Mediation has a long history in India, particularly through the use of Panchayats for resolving community conflicts.
- ◆ **Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR):** ADR refers to a bouquet of mechanisms that enables disputing parties to resolve their differences amicably, without the intervention of courts. In India, modes of ADR include **arbitration, negotiation, mediation, and Lok Adalats.**

What about the Singapore Convention on Mediation?

- ◆ In 2019, India was amongst the first to sign the **United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements** resulting from Mediation, also called the **Singapore Convention on Mediation.**
- ◆ However, in 2023, when India promulgated its first standalone legislation on mediation, it chose not to incorporate the **Singapore Convention.**

Various countries including **Australia, Singapore, and Italy** have standalone laws on mediation.

NATIONAL BROADCASTING POLICY

Context: Recently, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has issued a pre-consultation paper on the framework and issues to be considered for forming the National Broadcasting Policy.

Key Points of the paper:

- ◆ The Policy may provide a common approach for **licenses, oversight, and compliances.**

- ◆ The “**broad contours**” of the proposed policy include;
 - ▶ Promoting content production in India that promotes Indian culture,
 - ▶ Expanding institutional capacity, promoting research, and
 - ▶ Adopting a “coherent and modernized approach” to legacy mediums like **print, radio and television**, as well as for **digital media, such as streaming services.**
- ◆ The draft refers to **restructuring of legal, licensing and regulatory frameworks** for reaping the benefits of convergence, indicating a more uniform approach to traditional and digital mediums.
- ◆ The broadcast policy is going to provide a common approach for **licences, oversight, and compliances.**
 - ▶ Currently, the sector is governed by **service specific Act, rules and guidelines for various licence/ registration/ permission** issued from time to time.
- ◆ The National Broadcasting Policy is also expected to frame guidelines for having a credible Audience Measurement System, besides focusing on the **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) segment.**

Need of such a Policy:

- ◆ According to TRAI, a policy is needed as the broadcasting sector is also undergoing unprecedented changes due to evolving technologies similar to **the telecom sector.**
- ◆ Moreover, there are **social or behavioral changes** in viewing patterns and viewer’s way of consuming entertainment.
- ◆ It pressed for the need of establishing a **unified policy framework** and spectrum management regime for broadcast and broadband technologies.

Significance:**Major Broadcasting agencies in India:**

- **Doordarshan (DD):** Doordarshan is India's public service broadcaster and one of the oldest television networks in the country. It operates several channels, including **DD National, DD News, and DD Sports**.
- **Star India:** A subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, Star India is **one of the largest** and most prominent broadcasting networks in India.
 - ▶ It operates channels like **Star Plus, Star Sports, Star Movies, and more**.
- **Sony Pictures Networks India (SPN):** SPN is a major player in the Indian broadcasting industry. It owns channels such as **Sony Entertainment Television, Sony Ten, and Sony PIX**.

- ◆ A policy can provide a **channelised approach** for the sector and provide appropriate impetus for development.

Present Broadcasting Rules in India:

- ◆ **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995:** This act provides for the regulation of cable television networks in India.
 - ▶ It includes provisions related to the registration of cable operators, the content code to be followed by cable operators, and the establishment of the **Cable Television Network Regulation Authority (TRAI)**.
- ◆ **Digital Addressable System (DAS):**
 - ▶ DAS was introduced to ensure transparency in the cable TV sector.
 - ▶ It mandates the use of **set-top boxes (STBs)** for cable TV services to provide consumers with the choice of channels and to curb unauthorized distribution.

Governing agencies:

- ◆ **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB):** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is the primary government agency responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies and programs related to broadcasting, including **television and radio**.
 - ▶ It oversees the licensing of broadcasting services and content regulations.
- ◆ **Prasar Bharati:** Prasar Bharati is an autonomous body established under **the Prasar Bharati Act**. It operates Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR), which are the public service broadcasters in India.
 - ▶ Prasar Bharati's role includes ensuring the

impartiality and objectivity of news and programming on DD and AIR.

- ◆ **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):** TRAI is the regulatory authority for telecommunications and broadcasting services in India.
 - ▶ It plays a crucial role in regulating issues related to **tariffs, quality of service, interconnection, and competition in the broadcasting sector**.
- ◆ **Broadcasting Content Complaints Council (BCCC):** BCCC is a **self-regulatory body** established by the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF).
 - ▶ It addresses complaints related to content broadcasted by **television channels** that are members of IBF.



IMMUNITY OF LEGISLATORS FROM BRIBERY CHARGES

Context: The Supreme Court (SC) is going to observe the need to examine the validity of its 1998 constitution bench ruling in **PV Narasimha Rao vs. State**, referring it to a larger bench for fresh consideration to decide on if **lawmakers can be prosecuted for taking bribes despite legal protection mentioned in the Constitution**.

About the Case:

- ◆ The Supreme Court is examining whether lawmakers can be **prosecuted for taking bribes**, despite certain legal protections mentioned in the Constitution.
- ◆ The issue has been under consideration **since 2014** when it was recognized as important and referred to larger benches for discussion.
- ◆ The **current 5-judge bench** believes that the matter needs reconsideration by a **larger 7-judge bench** due to its significance and impact on the **functioning of legislators**.

Provisions for legislator's immunity from prosecution:

- ◆ **Article 105 of the Constitution** deals with the **powers, privileges, etc.** of the Houses of Parliament and of the members and committees thereof.
- ◆ **Article 105(2) states**, "No member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings **in any court** in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof, and no person shall be so liable in respect of the publication by or under the authority of either House of Parliament of any report, paper, votes or proceedings."

This immunity extends to certain non-members, like the **Attorney General of India** or a **Minister** who may not be a member but speaks in the House.

- ◆ In cases where a **member oversteps or exceeds the contours of admissible free speech**, the **Speaker of the House** will deal with it.
- ◆ **Article 194(2)** extends this immunity to **MLAs and states** to protect its members of assembly from prosecution.

Related Judgements:

- ◆ **PV Narasimha Rao case** refers to the 1993 **JMM bribery case**, under which SC has mentioned that protection under **Article 105(2) or 194(2)** and the immunity granted could **not extend to cases concerning bribery** for making a **speech or vote** in a particular manner in the House.
- ◆ Later on, the top **court in 1998** quashed the case against the JMM MPs, citing immunity under Article 105(2).

FINDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENT PANEL ON EDUCATION

Context: The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has presented a report in Lok Sabha during the Special Session of Parliament.

Key Observations of the Report:

- ◆ **Report title:** 'Implementation of the National Education Policy, 2020 in Higher Education'

Not a viral MEME

The National Education Policy, 2020 promises multiple entry and multiple exit (MEME) for students, offering 'greater attention to life aspirations and greater flexibility' for students

- NEP says it removes 'rigid boundaries' and creates new possibilities for 'life-long learning'

- Students can opt for it at graduate, Master's and doctoral levels

- A certificate will be provided after completing one year of study, a diploma after two years, and a degree after a three-year programme



- An academic bank of credit will digitally store the academic credits earned by a student

- Kerala government had decided not to implement MEME in the State

- State will allow multiple entry, but exit will be allowed either after three years with a degree or after four years with an Honour's degree

- ◆ **Challenges/hurdles in implementation:** The **multiple entry and exit system** (flexible system) is being operated by **western educational institutions** quite effectively but Indian institutions are likely to face several issues in its implementation.

- ▶ **High population:** Indian institutions are likely to face several issues in implementing this system. Due to high population, the estimated intake of students in higher education every year is quite high.
- ▶ **Uneven geographical distribution** of higher education institutions would create hurdles in managing MEME in several areas, mostly countryside.
- ▶ Since institutions would not know the in-and-out-traffic, it will certainly disturb the **pupil-teacher ratio**.

MEME System:

The National Education Policy (NEP) suggests implementing a **multiple entry and multiple exit (MEME) system** in higher education.

- This system in education is a flexible approach that allows students to **enter and exit academic programs at various points, rather than following a linear and fixed path**.

- ◆ The report noted that of the **1,043 universities** functioning in the country, 70% are under the State Act and that 94% of students are in State or private institutions with just 6% of students in Central higher educational institutions, stressing the importance of States in providing higher education.
- ◆ The panel highlighted that by 2030, every district in the country should have at least **one multidisciplinary HEI** and that the **Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education**, including vocational education, should be increased from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035.

Key-Issues in the Education system

- ◆ Rigid separation of disciplines
- ◆ limited access to higher education in socio-economically disadvantaged areas
- ◆ lack of higher education institutes (HEIs) that teach in local languages
- ◆ the limited number of faculty
- ◆ lack of institutional autonomy
- ◆ lesser emphasis on research
- ◆ ineffective regulatory system
- ◆ Low standards of undergraduate education

Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility: With flexibility, students can enter and exit programs at different points, allowing for a more personalized learning journey. • Increased Access: It can make education more inclusive for working professionals, part-time students, or those with family responsibilities. • Skill Development: Students can gain valuable skills and qualifications incrementally. • Reduced Financial Burden: Students can manage their finances more effectively by paying for the education in smaller, manageable increments. • Higher Completion Rates: Some students who may have dropped out in a traditional system due to personal or academic challenges might stay engaged and eventually complete their education through MEME pathways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Concerns: Fragmented education pathways can raise concerns about the overall quality of education. • Credential Devaluation: There is a risk of devaluing degrees and qualifications, as students may exit with partial credentials that are not widely recognized or respected by employers. • Administrative Challenges: Managing a MEME system can be administratively complex. • Inequality: MEME systems may exacerbate educational inequalities if not designed and implemented with equity in mind. • Employer Perceptions: Employers may not fully understand or trust the qualifications from a MEME system, which could affect graduates' job prospects.

Recommendations of the Report:

- ◆ **Comprehensive framework for MEME:** The panel, though noted that **MEME will offer students greater flexibility** and choice in their educational pathways, asked the Centre to develop comprehensive guidelines and a well-defined framework for MEME options, including specific eligibility criteria, credit transfer mechanisms providing clear road map for students pursuing different exit points.
- ◆ **Work for marginalized communities:** The Parliamentary panel has called for “**comprehensive awareness campaigns and infrastructural development**” in the country’s remote areas and urban slums to improve access to education in marginalised communities in line with the **National Education Policy (NEP)**.
- ◆ **It has recommended for;**
 - ▶ Assessment of the technological infrastructure in higher education institutions,
 - ▶ Proper involvement of the student community.
- ◆ **For Stakeholder’s benefits:**
 - ▶ Training of teachers who work in communities;
 - ▶ Scholarship and financial support;
 - ▶ Community engagement, besides collaboration and partnership with **NGOs and civil society organisations**.
- ◆ **Monitoring Group:** The committee recommended for setting up of a “**monitoring group**” to assess the readiness of the higher education sphere.
- ◆ **Technological Intervention:** It further recommended “**adoption of modern cloud-based technologies**” to create a more “efficient, transparent, and student-centric ecosystem” in higher education institutions.

- ◆ **Funding to be provided:** It also mentioned, **Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)** to diversify its sources of funding, and consider;
 - ▶ Reducing the rates of interest
 - ▶ Expediting the process of engagement of “**Professor of Practice**” as envisaged in the NEP; and
 - ▶ Budgetary and infrastructure support to **set up R&D cells** in different higher educational institutions.



COUNTING DEATHS IN INDIA'S PRISONS

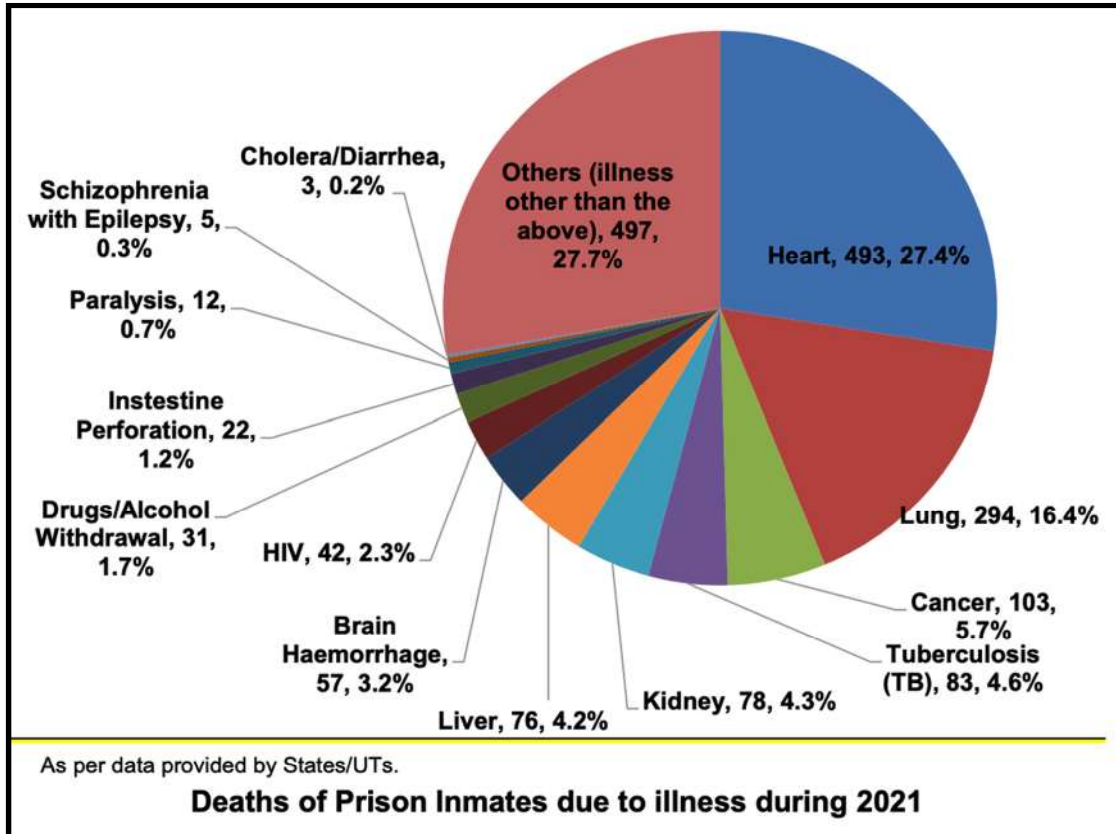
Context: Recently, the Supreme Court Committee on Prison Reforms found **suicide to be the leading cause of ‘unnatural’ deaths — deaths other than ageing or illnesses — among Indian prisoners.**

Highlights of the report:

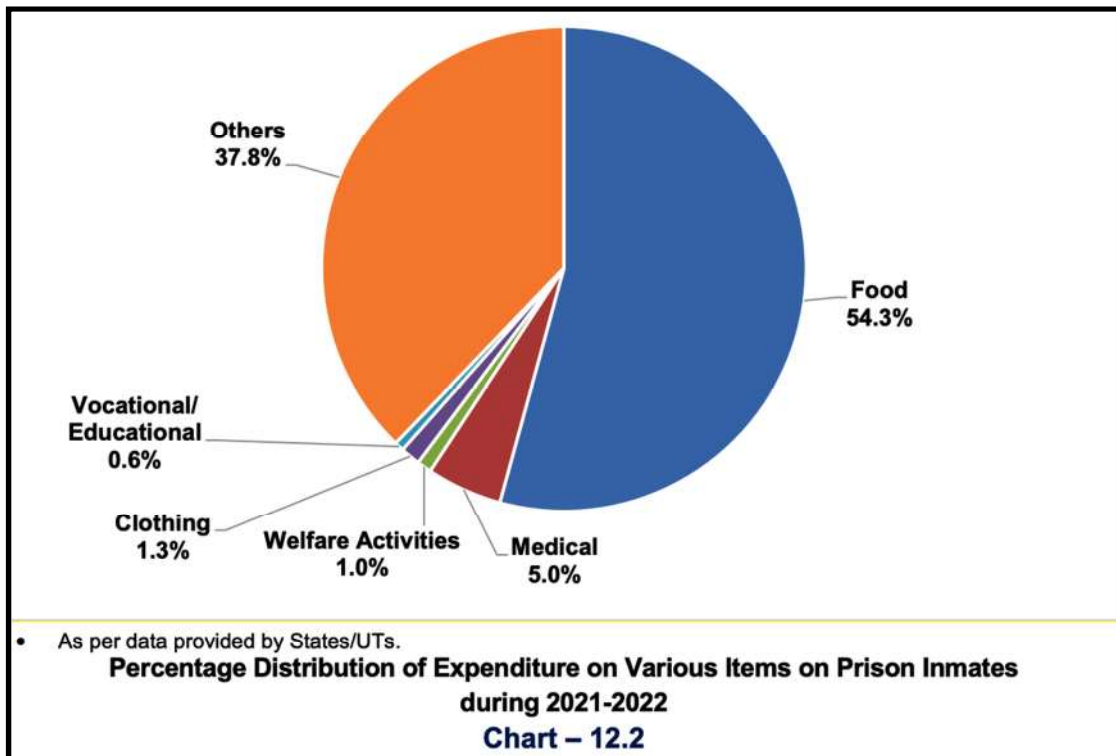
- ◆ Uttar Pradesh recording the **highest number of suicides** between 2017 and 2021.
- ◆ The number of custodial deaths has seen a steady rise since 2019, and 2021 has recorded the highest number of deaths so far.

How are prison deaths classified?

- ◆ Prison deaths are labelled as ‘**natural**’ or ‘**unnatural**’ by the Prison Statistics India report published by the National Crime Records Bureau every year.



◆ In 2021, a total of 2,116 prisoners died in judicial custody, with almost 90% of cases recorded as natural deaths.



◆ Natural' deaths account for ageing and illness. Illness has been further sub-categorized into diseases such as heart conditions, HIV, tuberculosis, and cancer, among others. As the prison population swells, recorded natural deaths have increased from 1,424 in 2016 to 1,879 in 2021.

- ◆ 'Unnatural' deaths are more diverse in classification, profiled as:
 - ▶ Suicide (due to hanging, poisoning, self-inflicted injury, drug overdose, electrocution, etc.)
 - ▶ Death due to inmates
 - ▶ Death due to assault by outside elements
 - ▶ Death due to firing
 - ▶ Death due to negligence or excesses
 - ▶ Accidental deaths (natural calamities like earthquakes, snakebites, drowning, accidental fall, burn injury, drug/alcohol consumption, etc.)

Factors responsible for deaths:

- ◆ The infrastructural deficiencies are both a cause and effect of callousness and neglect of the health of individuals in jail custody.
- ◆ The neglect could be medical, psychological or a continued denial of access to **healthcare, food or safety**.

Almost 1.5% of the prison population suffers from **mental illnesses**, per the CHRI report.

What are the Provisions Available Regarding Custody?

- ◆ **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - ▶ **Article 21:** Article 21 states that "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law". Protection from torture is a fundamental right enshrined under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian constitution.
 - ▶ **Article 22:** Article 22 provides "Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases". The right to counsel is also a fundamental right under Article 22(1) of the India constitution.
- ◆ **Role of State Government:**
 - ▶ Police and public order are State subjects as per the **Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution of India.
 - ▶ It is primarily the responsibility of the state government concerned to ensure the protection of human rights.
- ◆ **Role of Central Government:**
 - ▶ The Central Government issues advisories from time to time and also has enacted the **Protection of Human Rights Act (PHR), 1993**.
 - ▶ It stipulates establishment of the **NHRC and State Human Rights Commissions** to look into alleged human rights violations by public servants.

How are deaths investigated?

- ◆ **For custodial Deaths:** The NCRB is required to

intimate a custodial death within 24 hours, followed by post-mortem reports, magisterial inquest reports or videography reports of the post-mortem.

- ▶ If an enquiry by the Commission into custodial death discloses negligence **by a public servant**, the Commission recommends to authorities of **Central/State Governments** for paying compensation to the **Next of Kin (NoK)** and also for initiation of disciplinary proceedings/prosecution against the erring public servant.
- ◆ **In case of Custodial rape and death:** The Code of Criminal Procedure also requires **compulsory judicial magisterial** inquiry in place of an executive magistrate inquiry.
 - ▶ The National Human Rights Commission in 2010, however, weakened the legal requirement to say inquiry by a **judicial magistrate is "not mandatory"** when "there is no suspicion or foul play or where there is no evidence or allegation of an offence."

Supreme Court's Judgments:

- ◆ The Supreme Court in a 1996 judgment mentioned that, prisoners' incarceration places limitations to access; no physician of choice, no second opinions, and few if any specialists.
- ◆ Secondly, because of the conditions of their incarceration, inmates are exposed to more health hazards than free citizens."

Provisions for protection of prisoners:

- ◆ The **Model Prison Manual of 2016** and the **Mental Healthcare Act of 2017**, outline inmates' right to healthcare, which includes adequate investment in healthcare facilities, setting up mental health units, training officers to provide **basic and emergency care**, and formulating suicide prevention programmes to thwart such instances.

Suggestive measures:

- ◆ To prevent suicides specifically, guidelines recommend a strict **check on tools** such as ropes, glasses, wooden ladders, pipes.
- ◆ Initial mental health screening at the time of entry into jail is required and installing CCTV cameras to **monitor high-risk inmates**.
- ◆ Human rights activists have cautioned against the latter measure, as heightened surveillance would violate the rights of prisoners.
- ◆ It flagged a dearth of correctional staff including psychologists, "limited access to mental healthcare resources", inadequate identification of mental illnesses in inmates along with heightened vulnerability and stigma.

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) AMENDMENT RULES, 2023

Context: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a gazetted notification, amending the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) rules after mandating NGOs with FCRA licence to submit details of movable and immovable assets created out of foreign contributions.

Background:

- ◆ FCRA was enacted during the **Emergency in 1976** amid apprehensions that **foreign powers** were interfering in India's affairs by pumping money into the country through independent organisations.
- ◆ In 2022, the MHA amended **foreign funding rules** giving certain relaxations such as;
 - ▶ Allowing relatives to send more money under the FCRA and
 - ▶ Giving more time to the organisations to inform government about opening of bank accounts for utilisation of funds received under '**registration**' or '**prior permission**' category.

About the Amendment:

- ◆ Under the new rules, **political parties, legislature members, election candidates, judges, government servants, journalists and media houses** among others – all barred from receiving foreign contribution – will **no longer be prosecuted** if they receive foreign contribution from relatives abroad and fail to intimate the government within **90 days**.

What is NGO?

- A **Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)** is a non-profitable charitable organisation.
- In India, NGOs established under **Section 8 of the Companies Act** are governed by the provisions of the Companies Act, 2013, while the NGOs established as a trust or society are governed by the state governments.

How foreign funding is being regulated in India?

- ◆ The **FCRA registration** is a mandatory requirement for **receiving foreign funds**.

- ◆ The License is granted by the Union home ministry grants FCRA licenses for a five-year period.
- ◆ FCRA registration is valid for 5 years, and NGOs are expected to apply for renewal within six months of the date of expiry of registration.
- ◆ The government can also cancel the FCRA registration of any NGO if it finds that the NGO is in violation of the Act, if it has not been engaged in any reasonable activity in its chosen field for the benefit of society for **two consecutive years**, or if it has become defunct.
- ◆ Once the registration of an NGO is cancelled, it is not eligible for re-registration for three years.

Criteria to seek FCRA registration:

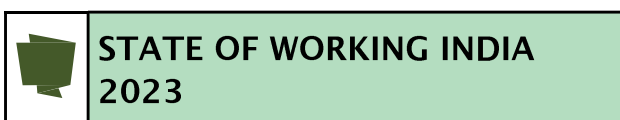
- ◆ The FCRA requires every person or NGO seeking to receive foreign donations to be:
 - ▶ registered under the Act
 - ▶ to open a bank account for the receipt of the foreign funds in State Bank of India, Delhi
 - ▶ to utilize those funds only for the purpose for which they have been received and as stipulated in the Act
- ◆ FCRA registrations are granted to individuals or associations that have definite cultural, economic, educational, religious, and social programmes.
- ◆ **Exceptions:**
 - ▶ Under the FCRA, the applicant should not be fictitious and should not have been prosecuted or convicted for indulging in activities aimed at conversion through inducement or force, either directly or indirectly, from one religious faith to another.
 - ▶ The applicant should also not have been prosecuted for or convicted of creating communal tension or disharmony.
 - ▶ Also, should not be engaged or likely to be engaged in the propagation of sedition.
 - ▶ The Act prohibits the receipt of foreign funds by candidates for elections, journalists or newspaper and media broadcast companies, judges and government servants, members of legislature and political parties or their office-bearers, and organisations of a political nature.

Why Foreign Contributions are regulated?

- ◆ **National Security:** Foreign funding can be misused to support activities that may undermine the security and stability of a country.
 - ▶ Governments want to prevent foreign entities from influencing domestic affairs in ways that could be detrimental to their interests.

- ◆ **Sovereignty and Independence:** Excessive foreign influence can compromise a country's ability to make decisions that are in its best interest.
 - ▶ Governments aim to maintain control over their own policies and actions without undue external pressure.
 - ◆ **Transparency and Accountability:** By monitoring and overseeing foreign contributions, governments can track how the money is used and ensure that it is not misappropriated or channeled into illegal or illicit activities.
 - ◆ **Preventing Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing:** Regulations help in detecting and preventing these illegal activities by imposing strict reporting requirements and due diligence measures on organizations receiving foreign funds.
 - ◆ **Protection of Domestic Interests:** Regulations are often put in place to protect domestic organizations and industries from unfair competition or manipulation by foreign entities.
 - ◆ **Political Independence:** Rules are designed to ensure that domestic political activities are free from undue foreign influence, thereby preserving the integrity of democratic processes.
 - ◆ **Preventing Subversion of Values:** Foreign contributions may come with strings attached, where the donor seeks to promote specific ideologies or values.
 - ◆ **Compliance with International Obligations:** Some countries have international obligations to regulate foreign contributions as part of their commitments to global anti-money laundering, anti-corruption, and counter-terrorism financing efforts.
- ▶ **Changing composition of employment type, based on caste:** Between 2004 and 2018, more **sons of fathers** who did casual wage work are now getting better jobs, except for **Scheduled Caste workers**, where progress is slower.
 - Between 1983 and 2021, more **Scheduled Caste (SC) workers** have regular wage jobs, but the proportion is lower than for general caste workers. SC workers also have higher self-employment rates.
 - ▶ **Intergenerational mobility matrices over time disaggregated by caste, for SC/ST groups:**
 - Between 2004 and 2018, more sons of fathers who did casual wage work are now getting better jobs, except for Scheduled Caste workers, where progress is slower.
 - Between 1983 and 2021, more Scheduled Caste (SC) workers have regular wage jobs, but the proportion is lower than for general caste workers.
- ◆ SC workers also have **higher self-employment rates**.
 - ▶ Industries showing an overrepresentation of Women, SCs:
 - In 2018, there was more economic mobility for sons of general caste casual wage workers **compared to SC/STs**.
 - Sons of casual wage workers shifted towards informal, semi-formal, and regular wage work.
 - Casual wage work had the highest intergenerational persistence, while regular wage work showed less persistence.

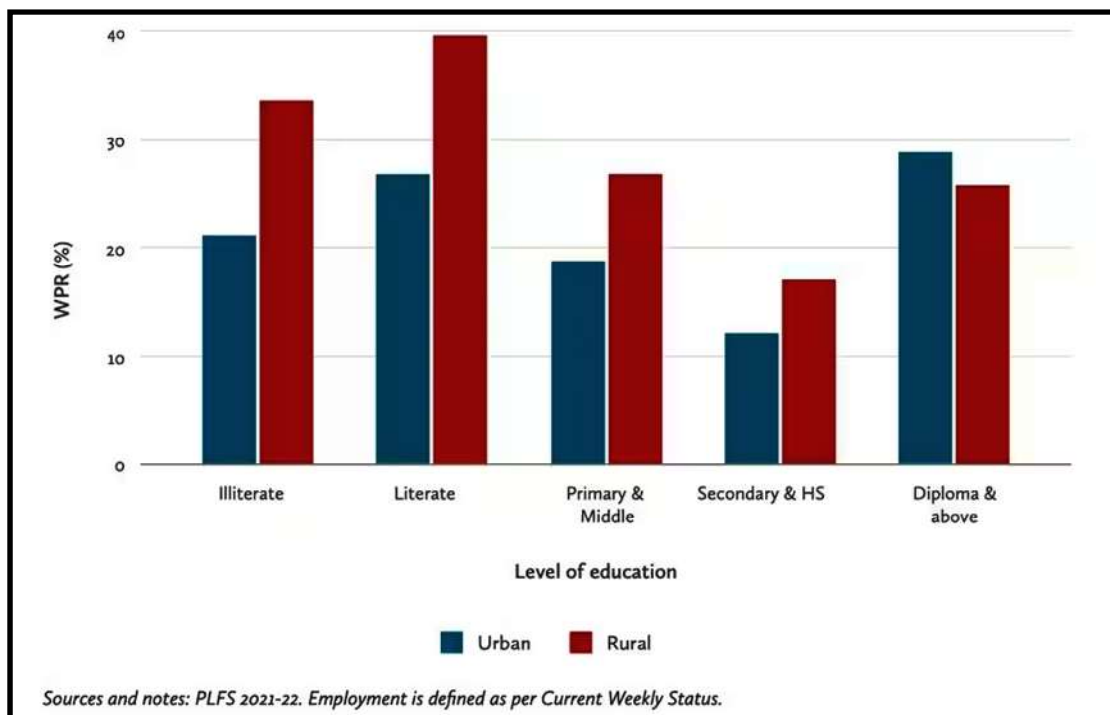
- ◆ Relationship between husband's earnings and probability of women's employment:
 - ▶ In rural areas, as the husband's income increases, the decline in the wife's employment probability slows down.
 - ▶ In urban areas, there's a **U-shaped pattern**: the wife's employment probability falls until the husband's income reaches Rs. 40,000, then rises because higher-income husbands often have well-educated wives with access to good jobs.
- ◆ Female workforce participation rates by education for 2021-22:
 - ▶ The presence of an employed mother-in-law significantly increases the likelihood of married women being employed, whereas an unemployed mother-in-law decreases this likelihood.
- ◆ On the rising share of workers in the non-agricultural sector, compared to organised/regular wage employment sectors:



Context: Recently, the 'State of Working India 2023' report was released by Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment.

Highlights of the Report:

- ◆ **About:** It uses data sources like the **National Statistical Office**, including **Employment-Unemployment Surveys** and the Periodic Labour Force Surveys, and has revealed major trends in **India's labour market**.
- ◆ **Findings:** The analysis was drawn from seven charts from the report on **intergenerational mobility and women's workforce participation rates**:



- ▶ The share of non-agricultural sector workers increased from the 1980s, reaching 19.8% in 2021 (20.3% in the late 2010s). However, many shifted to casual wage labor or informal work instead of organized or salaried employment.
- ▶ Unemployment in India is concentrated among its educated youth:
 - Unemployment rates are highest among graduates **under 25**, decreasing with lower education levels. As people age, **employment probability rises**.

JP MORGAN'S GLOBAL BOND INDEX

Context: Under a significant move, the JP Morgan (US Investment Bank) is going to add Indian government bonds (IGBs) to emerging markets index in June 2024, a move that could trigger an inflow of billions of dollars into the nation's debt market.

About the update:

- ◆ India, which will be included in the **GBI-EM Global index suite** starting June 28, 2024, is expected to reach the maximum weight of **10 per cent** in the **GBI-EM Global Diversified Index (GBI-EM GD)**.
- ◆ Currently, **23 Indian government bonds** with a combined notional value of \$330 billion are index eligible.

- ◆ Inclusion of the bonds will be staggered over 10 months through March 31, 2025 (i.e., inclusion of 1 per cent weight per month).

What is GBI-EM Global index?

- ◆ The GBI-EM (Government Bond Index-Emerging Markets) is a global bond index maintained by JP Morgan.
- ◆ It is designed to track the performance of government bonds issued by emerging market countries.
- ◆ The GBI-EM consists of **regularly traded, fixed-rate, domestic currency government bonds** which international investors can readily access.
- ◆ These bonds are denominated in **various currencies**, including the US dollar and local currencies of the respective countries.
- ◆ **Criteria for inclusion:** Bonds included in the index must meet certain criteria set by JP Morgan, including minimum outstanding **issue size, liquidity, and credit quality standards**.
- ◆ These criteria ensure that the index represents relatively liquid and investable bonds.
- ◆ It serves as a **reference point** for measuring returns and risk in this asset class.
- ◆ This index is closely followed by global funds, with approximately \$236 billion in assets benchmarked against it.

What are Indian Government Bonds (IGBs)?

- ◆ Indian government bonds, also known as **G-Secs** or

Government Securities, are debt instruments issued by the Government of India to raise funds for various public expenditure and developmental projects.

- ◆ The issuer of Indian government bonds is the Government of India through the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) acting as its agent.
- ◆ These bonds are primarily issued to finance fiscal deficits, infrastructure development, and various government programs. They are a crucial source of capital for the government.
- ◆ **Types:**
 - ▶ Indian government bonds come in various tenures, ranging from short-term (Treasury Bills) to long-term (Government Dated Securities or G-Secs).
 - ▶ The most common G-Secs have maturities of **5 years, 10 years, and 30 years.**
- ◆ These bonds pay periodic interest to bondholders, typically semi-annually. The interest rates are determined through auctions and can be **fixed or floating.**

- ◆ Indian government bonds are actively traded in the bond market.
- ◆ They are listed on **stock exchanges, and investors** can buy and sell them in both the **primary and secondary markets.**

What led to the inclusion?

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has been engaging with other index providers, including FTSE Russel and Bloomberg-Barclays, for the inclusion of IGBs in **global bond indices.**

- ◆ **Fully Accessible Route:** The Reserve Bank of India removed foreign investment restrictions on some government securities in 2020 as part of an effort to enter global bond indexes with several bonds now part of the **"Fully Accessible Route"** without any foreign investment restrictions.
- ◆ **Reforms for FPI:** India also brought substantive market reforms for aiding foreign portfolio investment.

Impacts on Indian Economy	Concerns:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency for the currency to appreciate. • Increase in capital inflows into India. • Demand for investors to buy Indian government bonds denominated in Rupee will increase. • Increase in foreign portfolio investments (FPI). • Can lower inflation compared to other economies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currency appreciation and the demand from investors for Indian government securities can imbalance Rupee competitiveness. • Rise in sensitivity of domestic policy to external spillovers. • Destabilize Rupee



LINK BETWEEN GDP GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN INDIA

Context: A recent report says the relationship between India's GDP growth and the generation of employment for its people has become weaker over time.

What is GDP growth?

- ◆ The **annual average rate of change** of the **gross domestic product (GDP)** at market prices based on constant **local currency**, for a given national economy, during a specified period of time.
- ◆ **Measurement:** GDP average annual growth rates are those estimated by the **World Bank** from the corresponding data in the **United Nations' Systems of National Accounts** expressed in **1995 US dollars** constant prices, using the least-squares method.
 - ▶ The least-squares growth rate is estimated by fitting a **linear regression trend line** to the

logarithmic annual values of the variable in the relevant period.

- ▶ The calculated growth rate is an average rate that is representative of the available observations over the entire period.
- ▶ It does not necessarily match the **actual growth rate** between any two periods.

How employment is related to Growth?

- ◆ Generally, there is an inverse relationship between GDP growth and unemployment. When the economy is growing at a healthy rate, businesses expand, invest, and hire more workers, leading to a decrease in unemployment. Conversely, during economic downturns or recessions, GDP contracts, businesses cut back, and **unemployment tends to rise.**
- ◆ **Lag Effect:** The impact of GDP growth on unemployment may not be immediate. It often takes time for businesses to adjust their hiring decisions in response to changes in economic growth. Therefore, changes in GDP growth may precede changes in the unemployment rate.

Factors affecting employment and growth:

- ◆ The type of economic growth (extensive or intensive), is an important factor that determines the rate of job creation in relation to economic growth.
- ◆ Thus, the **economic growth (GDP growth -aggregate production)** as reaction to the aggregate demand growth, can be achieved in different ways:
 - ▶ Either the quantity of inputs (labour force, capital, etc.) increases and then the extensive growth, or,
 - ▶ The productivity of production factors increases (intensive growth), or a combination of the two possibilities.
- ◆ The existence of a **positive or negative**, higher or lower employment elasticity of economic growth can be explained by the **type of economic growth** (extensive or intensive).

- ◆ As a result of the influence of some factors such as the institutions specific to the labour market, **relative cost of labour**, the **micro and macroeconomic context**, technological progress, working time including part-time work, the sectorial composition of employment, etc. are important to be considered.

Conclusion

GDP growth and unemployment are closely related in the sense that a growing economy typically leads to lower unemployment rates, and a shrinking economy often results in higher unemployment. However, the relationship is not always straightforward, and various factors, including government policies and global influences, can modify this link. Understanding this relationship is essential for policymakers, businesses, and individuals seeking to make informed economic decisions.



***Section B* [SPECIALS]**

Topic

☞ India-Canada Diplomatic Row

INDIA-CANADA DIPLOMATIC ROW

Context: The bilateral ties between India and Canada have deteriorated after Canada alleged “potential” Indian links to the killing of Khalistani separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar (wanted under India’s Terrorist Act) and expelled an Indian diplomat over the issue..

Who was Hardeep Singh Nijjar?

- ◆ In June this year Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot dead outside a Sikh temple in Surrey, British Columbia.
- ◆ Nijjar had campaigned for an independent Sikh nation – known as Khalistan – to be carved out of India’s Punjab state.
- ◆ He was wanted by Indian authorities and had been designated as a “terrorist” in July 2020.

What is Khalistani movement?

- ◆ Supported by a minority of Indian Sikhs, the Khalistan movement is a separatist and identity movement that advocates, among other things, for carving out an **independent Sikh homeland** from the Indian state of Punjab.
- ◆ **The word Khalistan means “Land of the Khalsa” or “Pure.”**
- ◆ **Origin:** India’s Punjab state – which is about 58% Sikh and 39% Hindu – was rocked by a violent Khalistan separatist movement (led by preacher **Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale**) in the 1980s and early 1990s, in which thousands of people died.
- ◆ **Proposed boundaries:** Some claim the **entire Indian state of Punjab**, while others claim **Pakistani Punjab** and other parts of North India such as **Chandigarh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh**.
- ◆ **Operation Blue Star:** In 1984, Bhindranwale and his followers holed up in the Golden Temple—Sikhism’s holiest site—in Amritsar, Punjab, and fortified it. They were killed by the government in a mission called **Operation Bluestar**.
- ◆ **Assassination:** In retaliation, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who authorized the mission, was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards.
- ◆ Today, that movement’s most vocal advocates are primarily among the Punjabi overseas diaspora.
- ◆ Farmer protests in New Delhi in 2020–21, led predominantly by Sikhs from Punjab, brought the issue of Khalistan back into the public eye.
- ◆ The movement has been outlawed in India, where the government considers it a **national security threat**.

The **Sikh Empire** (faith that arose during the **15th century**) was a kingdom in the Punjab region led by **Maharaja Ranjit Singh**, with the province of Lahore serving as the Sikh capital.

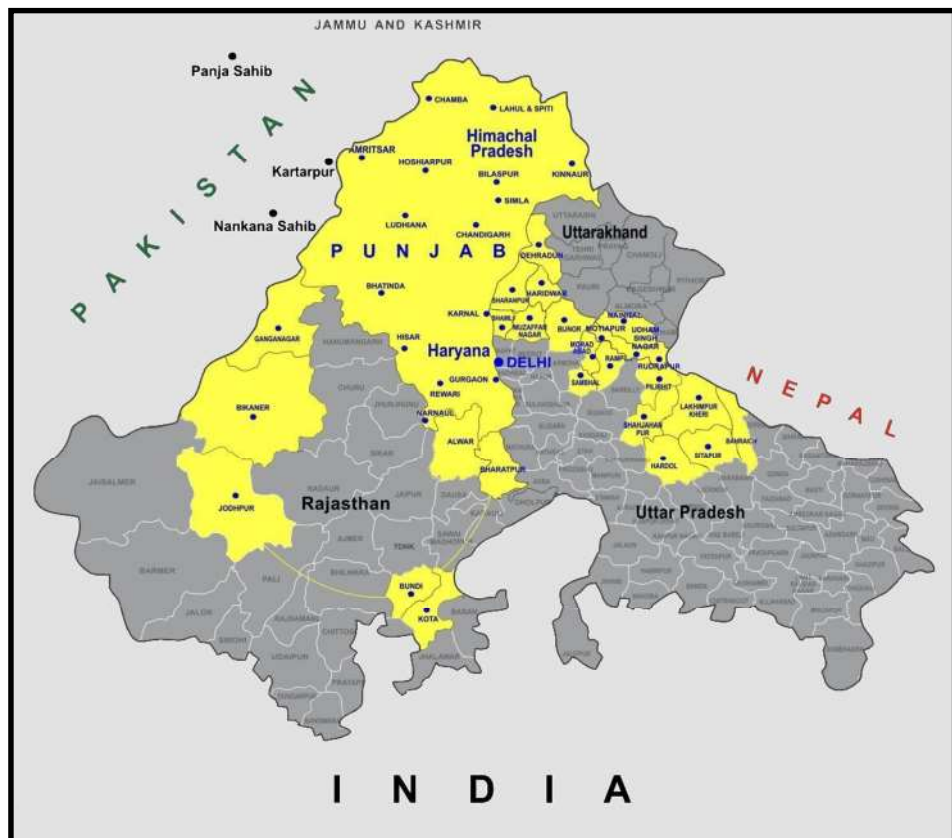


Fig: Proposed Khalistan

Other Separatist Movements

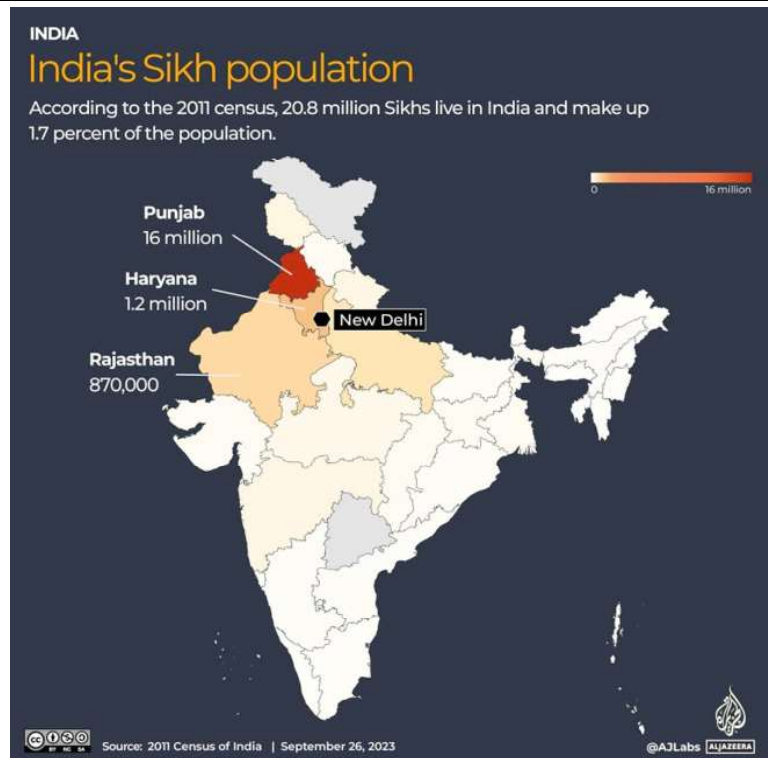
- **Gorkhaland Movement:** As mentioned earlier, the Gorkhaland movement in West Bengal advocates for a separate state for the Gorkha community in the Darjeeling Hills.
- **Bodoland Movement:** The Bodoland movement in Assam seeks the creation of a separate state for the Bodo ethnic group.
- **Vidarbha Movement:** Some groups in Maharashtra have called for a separate state of Vidarbha, citing regional disparities and cultural differences.

How the movement received support in Canada?

- ◆ The Khalistan movement found supporters among the large and scattered Sikh diaspora, predominantly in Canada, the UK and Australia.
- ◆ Canada is home to the largest Sikh population outside Punjab, comprising more than 2% of the country's population. It also has significant political representation.

What created resentment among Sikhs?

- ◆ **Partition:** The partition of Punjab between Pakistan and India in 1947 created fear and disaffection in the Sikh community.
 - ▶ They suddenly found themselves divided between a Muslim-majority Pakistan and a predominantly Hindu India.
- ◆ **Haryana division:** In 1966, Punjab was divided again, this time on linguistic lines, as a new Hindi-speaking state of Haryana was carved out of the region.
- ◆ **Anti-Sikh Violence:** The Indian army's operation in **Amritsar (Operation Blue Star)** and the **anti-Sikh violence** in 1984 created an enduring memory for many Sikhs that has transcended India's borders.
- ◆ **Inequitable distribution:** Punjab's Sikh community was also impacted by **India's Green Revolution**, an initiative in the late 1960s to improve agricultural production. While this benefited Punjab economically, it created resentment among Sikhs due to the inequitable distribution of wealth, the lack of non-agricultural development and the central government's monopoly over agricultural policy.
- ◆ **Water distribution:** Another issue contributing to the Sikhs' sense of injustice was the diversion of water from the Sutlej River that flowed through Punjab to the neighbouring states of Haryana and Rajasthan.



1985 Bombing (The Violent Peak):

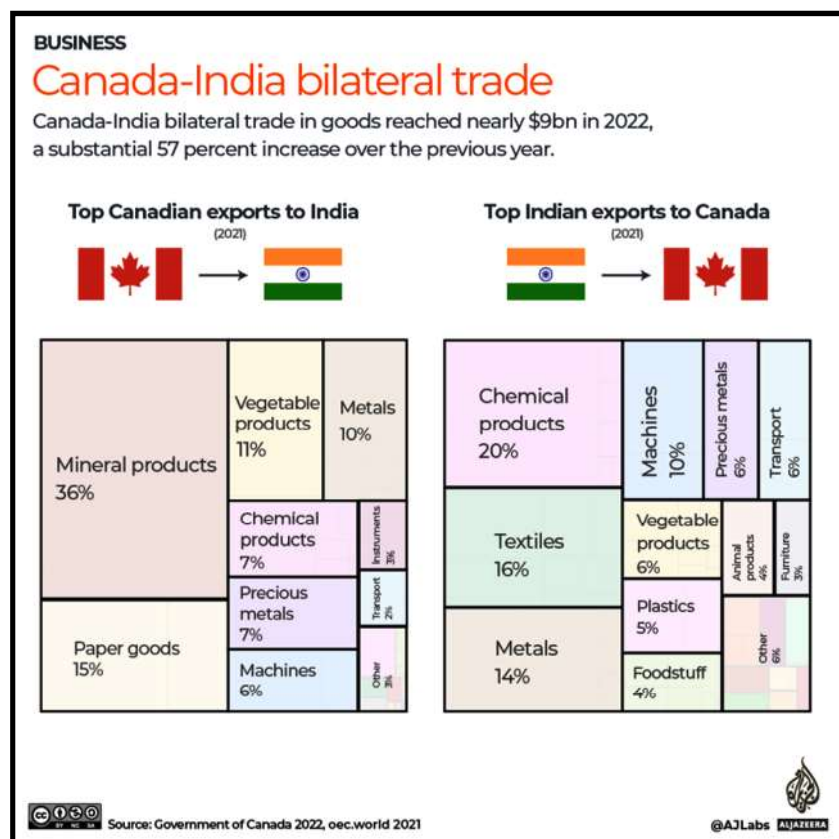
- In 1985, an Air India flight travelling from Canada to India via London, exploded off the Irish coast, killing all 329 people on board. The bombings were planned by Sikh separatists who wanted to take revenge for the Indian army's deadly 1984 storming of the Golden Temple in Punjab state.

How have other countries such as the US and EU reacted to the row?

- The West has been rather restrained in their reaction to the ongoing row as they see India as a counterweight to China.
- ◆ The **Five Eyes** — an intelligence-sharing alliance of the US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand — have not extended whole-hearted support to Canada.
- ◆ The US is positioning itself as a possible mediator between Ottawa and Delhi.
- ◆ Canada's interests currently pale in comparison to India's massive strategic importance. It's unlikely Canada's allies, including the US, the UK and France, "will cut ties with India due to Trudeau's allegations".

What does this mean for Canada-India relations?

- ◆ In 2022, India was Canada's **10th largest trading partner**.
 - ▶ **Goods exports** to India amounted to \$5.4 billion and services exports, \$6.2 billion
 - ▶ **Imports** from India were \$6.4 billion (Goods) and \$2.9 billion (Services).
- ◆ More than 600 Canadian companies and organisations have a presence in India.
- ◆ **Bilateral commercial relations** between the two countries are worth \$100 billion, which includes \$70 billion of Canadian portfolio investment in India.
- ◆ **Students:** India has been the largest source country for international students in Canada. In 2022, their number rose 47 per cent to nearly 320,000, accounting for about 40 per cent of total overseas students.



However, if the crisis escalates, trade and investments could take a hit. If Canada imposes restrictions on student visas or the Indian government creates hurdles, it will reduce student inflow. This will hurt Canada as well, as CBIE data show Indian students contributed \$4.9 billion to the Canadian economy in 2021.



Section C [PRELIMS]

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- ☞ Global India Maritime Summit (GMIS 2023)
- ☞ First maritime exercise held between India, Australia and Indonesia
- ☞ Indian medical graduates can practice abroad
- ☞ MHA extends 'Disturbed area' status in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland
- ☞ Hybrid seeds in India
- ☞ Centre seeks to relax angel tax
- ☞ U.N.'s Climate Ambition Summit (CAS)
- ☞ Centre identifies 62 new elephant corridors; total now 150
- ☞ India-Bangladesh consensus to save Sundarbans
- ☞ Giant sea lizards (Mosasaur species)
- ☞ 'Pink Blooms' in Kole wetlands of Kerala
- ☞ NASA's OSIRIS-REx
- ☞ 'Swavlamban 2.0'

GLOBAL INDIA MARITIME SUMMIT (GMIS 2023)

Context: The Global India Maritime Summit (GMIS 2023) is going to held in India from 17th to 19th October 2023, at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi.

About the Summit:

- ◆ **Objective:** GMIS 2023 is a premier maritime sector focused event to bring together pivotal figures from the industry to explore opportunities, understand challenges, and stimulate investment within India's maritime sector.



- ◆ Building upon the legacy of its preceding editions, this **third installment** aims to unveil broader prospects for domestic and international maritime stakeholders and investors.
- ◆ Ready to make its presence felt on the global stage and spotlight India's maritime industry, the Maritime India Summit has now evolved to the 'Global' Maritime India Summit this year.
- ◆ FICCI will be the **exclusive industry partner**.

Need to boost India's maritime industry:

- ◆ Before 2014, India's ports faced challenges related to cargo handling capacity, competitiveness, and efficiency.
- ◆ The sector lacked modernization, mechanization, and digitization.
- ◆ The **World Bank's Logistic Performance Index** reports indicate substantial improvements in various

parameters, reflecting the success of these initiatives taken in India.

India's Upcoming Projects:

- ◆ **Eastern Maritime corridor (EMC) — Vladivostok to Chennai:** Coking coal, crude oil, LNG, and fertilisers could be the potential cargo that can be transported to India from Russia.

FIRST MARITIME EXERCISE HELD BETWEEN INDIA, AUSTRALIA AND INDONESIA

Context: Indian Navy's indigenously built warship INS Sahyadri has participated in the maiden trilateral Maritime Partnership Exercise with the ships and aircraft from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Indonesian Navy.

About the Exercise:

- ◆ The trilateral exercise aimed to bolster the partnership between **India, Australia, and Indonesia**, fostering a collective effort to enhance stability, peace, and security in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ◆ It also offered an invaluable opportunity for the participating navies to share their knowledge and expertise.

What is INS Sahyadri?

- ◆ INS Sahyadri is the third ship of the indigenously designed and built Project-17 class multi-role stealth frigates.
- ◆ It was built at **Mazagon Dock Ltd, Mumbai**.

What are the other exercises between India and Indonesia?

- ◆ **Exercise Samudra Shakti:** It is a bilateral maritime exercise between India and Indonesia. It aims to strengthen the bilateral relationship, enhance mutual understanding and interoperability in maritime operations between the two navies.
- ◆ **Exercise Garuda Shakti:** It is an annual military exercise between the Indian and Indonesian Army. It is conducted on a reciprocal basis and its first edition was conducted in the year 2012 in India.
- ◆ **IND-INDO CORPAT:** It is a bi-annual coordinated naval patrol exercise conducted along the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)** by the Indian and Indonesian Navy.

What are the other exercises between India and Australia?

- ◆ **Exercise AUSTRALIA HIND:** It is a bilateral training exercise between the Indian Army and the Australian Army.
- ◆ **Exercise Pitch Black:** It is a biennial multilateral air combat exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) since 1981. The **Indian Air Force** had taken part in the exercise for the first time in 2018.
- ◆ **AUSINDEX:** It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The first edition of the exercise took place in 2015.



INDIAN MEDICAL GRADUATES CAN PRACTICE ABROAD

Context: Recently, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has been awarded the coveted World Federation for Medical Education's (WFME) recognition status.

About the update:

- ◆ Indian medical graduates will now be able to **practise or pursue post-graduation** in countries like the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.
- ◆ All **706 existing medical colleges** regulated by the NMC will now be **WFME accredited**.
- ◆ While the new colleges that will be set up in the **next 10 years** will automatically become WFME accredited.
- ◆ **Significance:**
 - ▶ The WFME accreditation will enhance the quality and standards of medical education in India by aligning them with the **global best practices and benchmarks**.
 - ▶ It will also promote continuous improvement and innovation in medical education and foster a **culture of quality assurance** among medical educators and institutions.

World Federation for Medical Education's (WFME):

- The WFME is a global organisation dedicated to **enhancing the quality of medical education** worldwide.
- **Objective:** WFME's accreditation program plays a pivotal role in ensuring that medical institutes meet and uphold the **highest international standards of education and training**.

About National Medical Commission (NMC):

- ◆ The **National Medical Commission (NMC)** is India's premier regulatory body overseeing **medical education and practice**.
- ◆ Committed to upholding the highest standards in healthcare education, NMC ensures the **delivery of quality medical education and training across the nation**.

Medical Education in India:

- ◆ Medical schools in India produce the largest number of doctors than anywhere else in the world (30,408 from 271 medical schools), corresponding to the rapid proliferation of medical colleges in the last two decades, especially within the private sector.
- ◆ The **Medical Council of India (MCI)**, the regulatory body, is required to approve any significant reforms in medical curricula.
- ◆ The **accreditation process for medical schools** focuses largely on the **infrastructure and human resources** required and little on the **process and quality of education or outcomes**.
- ◆ The implementation of the recommendations of MCI regarding **recognition or de-recognition** of a medical college is governed by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, whilst individual universities also have variable sets of regulations for their affiliated medical schools.
- ◆ As a result, there is **no uniformity in the standard of medical education** across the country.

Do you Know?

- The **12th Five Year Plan** has ambitious objectives for the health sector. In the near future, spending on health would increase from 1.2% at the current level to **2.5% of GDP** over the five year period.
- The **12th Plan** will prioritise convergence among all existing National Health Programs.
- It is within the ambit of the 12th national plan that the **Universal Health Care (UHC)** has been proposed.

National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers:

- ◆ NABH is a constituent of **Quality Council of India (QCI)**, set up to **establish and operate accreditation** programme for healthcare organisations.
- ◆ The board has functional autonomy while being supported by all stakeholders including **industry, consumers and government**.
- ◆ Accreditation to a healthcare organisation is a continuous process of improvement. NABH

accreditation reflects an organization's commitment to quality care.

- ◆ It **raises consumer and community confidence** in the services offered and also provides opportunity to healthcare unit to benchmark with the best.
- ◆ Accreditation provides access to **reliable and certified information** on facilities, infrastructure, and level of care.



MHA EXTENDS 'DISTURBED AREA' STATUS IN PARTS OF ARUNACHAL, NAGALAND

Context: The Union Home Ministry has extended the disturbed area status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for another six months.

Background:

- ◆ Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was enacted by the **Parliament in 1958**.
- ◆ In 1958, it was first made applicable to the Naga Hills, then part of Assam.
- ◆ Then later, it expanded to other parts of **Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh**.
- ◆ In 1983, the law was extended to **Punjab and Chandigarh**, but it was withdrawn in 1997.
- ◆ In 1990, it was applied to Jammu and Kashmir and has been in force since.

About the present situation:

- ◆ The Central government in exercise of the powers conferred by **Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958** had declared the **Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts** and other areas bordering the state of Assam in **Arunachal Pradesh** as 'disturbed area' on March 24, 2023.
- ◆ Now, as the situation is not under control yet, the Central government in exercise of the powers conferred by **the AFSPA, 1958** had declared **eight districts and 16 police stations** in five other districts of Nagaland as 'disturbed area' for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023.

What is 'Disturbed Area' status?

- ◆ A disturbed area is one that is declared by notification under **Section 3 of the AFSPA**.
- ◆ An area can be disturbed due to differences or

disputes between members of **different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities**.

- ◆ The Act **grants special powers** to the Indian Armed Forces to maintain public order in "disturbed areas".
- ◆ The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for **maintenance of public order**.
- ◆ AFSPA to be enacted **only when a state**, or part of it, is declared a '**disturbed area**'.
- ◆ According to the **Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976** once an area is declared as 'disturbed', it remains under the category for a **minimum of 6 months**.

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA):

- ◆ The **Armed Forces Special Powers Ordinance of 1942** was imposed by the British colonial government on 15 August 1942 to suppress the **Quit India Movement**.

Article 355 of the Constitution of India confers power to the Central Government to protect every state from internal disturbance.

- ◆ After Independence, the Ordinance was invoked by the Indian government to deal with the internal security situation which **emerged due to the Partition of India**.

What are Special Powers under AFSPA?

- ◆ Power to arrest anyone **without a warrant** and may use force **if needed for the arrest**.
- ◆ If a person acts against law or order in the disturbed area, then army personnel are allowed to fire after giving warning or use other kinds of force **even if it causes death**.
- ◆ **Enter and search any area or shelter** in order to make arrests, they also have the power to destroy that area or shelter.
- ◆ Power to stop and search **any vehicle or vessel**.
- ◆ Any person arrested and taken into custody under this act shall be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station with least possible delay.
- ◆ Army officers have **legal immunity** for their actions. There can be **no prosecution, suit or any other legal proceeding against anyone acting under that law**.
- ◆ The Government's Power to declare an area as '**disturbed area**' is not under judicial review.

Arguments in the support of AFSPA:

- Neither the soldiers nor their superiors have any training in **civilian law or policing procedures**. That is why a special law like AFSPA needed to legitimize the presence and acts of armed forces in extraordinary situations.
- Repealing the act will **encourage insurgency, militancy** and also threaten the peace and unity of the nation.
- The Army needs such powers because the army is only deployed when national security is at serious risk. **"Extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary measures"**.

Arguments against AFSPA:

- The act has been criticized for human rights violations in the regions of its enforcement.
- **This law started a Vicious cycle in the North East:** The use of the AFSPA pushes the demand for more autonomy, giving the people of the North East more reason to secede from a state which enacted such powers and these agitation justify the use of the AFSPA from the point of view of the Indian Government.

**HYBRID SEEDS IN INDIA**

Context: The increase in the share of private companies in India's seed market has promoted use of these seeds. Hybrid seeds could threaten the country's crop diversity and the hardy traditional varieties suited to grow in their native climate.

Background:

- ◆ The origin of hybrids can be traced to **India's Green Revolution** in the 1960s, when the government's effort was primarily to increase agricultural productivity.
- ◆ For this, the **National Seed Corporation** was set up to develop, store and distribute high yield variety seeds.
- ◆ Till the 1980s, the **public sector** had a firm control on the seed market and **supplied OPV seeds** to farmers.
- ◆ Towards the end of the decade, the government allowed development and distribution of hybrid varieties by private players.
- ◆ This trend has continued, but poses a threat to the country's crop diversity and the traditional varieties that are more suited to the local climates.

What are Hybrid seeds?

- ◆ A hybrid is created by crossing **two different varieties of the same plant**.

Open pollinated seeds result from a simple sharing of pollen between **two like parent plants**.

- ◆ Crossing involves taking the pollen from the **male flower of one plant** and transferring it **to the female flower parts** of a different plant.
- ◆ Once the **ovary of the female flower is pollinated**,

it will begin to swell and form a fruit. The seeds that develop inside that fruit are **hybrid seeds**.

- ◆ Hybrid seeds are **listed as F1 types**, as opposed to **open pollinated (OP) types**.

Benefits:

- ◆ Hybrid seeds have disease resistance and perform better in terms of more **fruits, flowers and vegetables** produced, more plants surviving disease and pests.

Issue with Hybrid seeds

- ◆ Use of hybrid seeds can also **damage diversity of crops** over the years.
- ◆ Production of new crop species through allopolyploidy following distant hybridization suffers from several problems, e.g., lower economic yields, poor agronomic characteristics, sterility etc.
- ◆ It requires more technical skills for hybrid production. More input requirements for hybrid cultivation to exploit their full potential.

Some of the Hybrid seed varieties:

- The five hybrid varieties of crop plants which have been developed in India are **Wheat - Sonalika** and **Kalyan Sona**, **Rice - Jaya** and **Ratna** and **Cowpea - Pusa Komal**.

**CENTRE SEEKS TO RELAX ANGEL TAX**

Context: Recently, **Rule 11UA** under the **Income Tax Act** has been amended bringing relief to prospective foreign investors in startups.

What is Angle tax?

- ◆ Angel tax is essentially the tax that **unlisted**

companies (startups) are liable to pay on the capital they raise through **issue of shares**.

About the update:

- ◆ In the **Budget 2023-24**, the government has eased some of the provisions of the **angel tax** introduced on investments **into startups** by non-resident investors.
- ◆ It has introduced **five different valuation methods** for shares and offered a **10% tolerance for deviations** from the accepted share valuations.
- ◆ The introduction of five alternative valuation methods for the **valuation of equity shares**, which so far could only be valued based on **NAV and Discounted Free Cash Flow methods**, is more flexibility to **merchant bankers** for the valuation of a company.

Taxation of Startups:

- ◆ In 2012, **Section 56 (2) of the Income Tax Act** was amended to curb money laundering practices.
- ◆ It updated that **any unlisted company (usually startup enterprises)** in receipt of investment which is above the **fair value** will have to treat the extraneous capital as '**income from other sources**' which would be identified and taxed.

Fair Value:

- Fair value is the **estimated price** at which an asset is **bought or sold** when both the **buyer and seller** freely agree on a price.
- To determine the fair value of a product or financial investment, an **individual or business** may look at actual market transactions for similar assets, estimate the expected earnings of the asset, and determine the cost to replace the asset.

- ◆ In an announcement by the **Finance Ministry in 2019**, startups registered under **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** are exempt from angel tax.
- ◆ All that a startup needs to do is apply for **eligibility to DPIIT** along with necessary documents and returns which will then be sent to **CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes)** for final approval.
- ◆ The CBDT reserves the **right to decline the exemption** status for a company.

Criteria for Exemption:

Now, according to **the revised rules**, the companies need to meet certain requirements to be eligible for the exemption-

- ◆ Paid-up capital, along with the premium on shares, cannot exceed **Rs.10 crore** post-issuance of shares.

- ◆ Earlier administration required a **merchant banker** must certify the startup's fair market value. But this rule has been made away with since 2019.
- ◆ The lower limit for **investor's net worth** has been fixed at **Rs. 2 crore** and **average income** cannot be less than Rs. 50 lakh in the last **three consecutive** financial years.

How Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) works in India?

- ◆ A Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is an investment made by a **firm or individual** in one country into business interests located in another country.
- ◆ FDI lets an **investor purchase** a direct business interest in a foreign country.
- ◆ **Significance:** Apart from being a critical driver of economic growth, FDI has been a **major non-debt financial resource** for the economic development of India.
- ◆ **Routes of FDI:**
 - ▶ **Government Route:**
 - ▶ In this, the **foreign entity** has to take the approval of the government.
 - ▶ The **Foreign Investment Facilitation Portal (FIFP)** facilitates the single window clearance of applications which are through approval route.
 - ▶ It is administered by the **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Foreign Investments and Impacts on Startups:

- ◆ **Economic Growth:** Foreign investment can fuel economic growth by providing capital, technology, and expertise. Startups often benefit from foreign direct investment (FDI) as it can fund research, development, and expansion.
- ◆ **Access to Global Markets:** Foreign investors can provide startups with access to international markets, helping them expand their customer base and reach global audiences.
- ◆ **Ecosystem Development:** Foreign investment can foster the development of a robust startup ecosystem by attracting talent, mentors, and resources, creating a favorable environment for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Challenges

- ◆ **Ownership and Control:** Startups must consider the trade-off between accessing foreign capital

and retaining control. Heavy reliance on foreign investment may lead to loss of ownership and decision-making power.

- ◆ **Regulatory Hurdles:** Different countries have varying regulations and restrictions on foreign investment. Startups need to navigate these legal complexities, which can be time-consuming and costly.
- ◆ **Cultural and Market Fit:** Startups entering foreign markets through investment must ensure their products or services align with local cultures and preferences to succeed.

U.N.'S CLIMATE AMBITION SUMMIT (CAS)

Context: The Climate Ambition Summit (CAS) has been conducted at the United Nations General Assembly which China, United States and India (who collectively account for about 42% of global greenhouse gas emissions and are the top three emitters) failed to participate.

About the Summit:

- ◆ **Participants:** Representatives from **34 states and 7 institutions** were participated on the summit.
 - ▶ Countries including **Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan** were among the listed speakers and emerging economies such as **South Africa and Brazil** were also on the list.
 - ▶ The European Union, Germany, France and Canada were also participated.
- ◆ **The criteria for countries** to be considered for a speaking slot at the summit were:
 - ▶ They would be expected to present updated pre-2030 Nationally Determined Contributions (as agreed in Glasgow)
 - ▶ Updated net-zero targets
 - ▶ Energy transition plans with commitments to no new coal, oil and gas
 - ▶ Fossil fuel phase-out plans
 - ▶ More ambitious renewable energy targets
 - ▶ Green Climate Fund pledges
 - ▶ economy-wide plans on adaptation and resilience
- ◆ All the "main emitters" and notably all **G-20 governments** would be asked to commit to presenting, by 2025, more ambitious economy-wide **Nationally Determined Contributions** featuring absolute emissions cuts and covering all gases.

India's commitments:

- ◆ India last updated its **climate pledges** in 2022 of reducing emissions intensity — or the volume of emissions per unit of gross domestic product (GDP) — by 45% from 2005 levels by 2030, a 10% increase from what it agreed to in 2015.
- ◆ The government committed to meet **50% of its electric power** needs from renewable, non-fossil fuel energy sources — up from 40% committed at the Paris agreement.
- ◆ It assured to create an additional carbon sink of **2.5 to 3bn tonnes of CO₂-equivalent [GtCO₂e]** through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

CENTRE IDENTIFIES 62 NEW ELEPHANT CORRIDORS; TOTAL NOW 150

Context: A new elephant corridor report has been released by the central government that showed a 40 per cent increase in elephant corridors across 15 elephant range states in India.

Elephant corridors can be defined as a **strip of land that enables elephant movement** between two or more friendly habitats. The corridors were reported by respective state governments and ground validation methods were used to verify them.

Highlights of the Report:

- ◆ The government has identified **62 new elephant corridors**, marking a significant milestone in the nation's commitment to wildlife conservation.
 - ▶ This brings the total number of such corridors to 150, a remarkable increase from the 88 registered in 2010.
- ◆ The elephant population in the country is estimated to be over 30,000.
- ◆ West Bengal has the **most elephant corridors** — 26 — amounting to 17 per cent of the total corridors.
- ◆ The increase in the elephant corridors reflected that elephants have expanded their ranges in **Vidarbha region of Maharashtra** neighbouring Chhattisgarh and **southern Maharashtra** bordering Karnataka.
- ◆ Elephants have also seen increased presence in Madhya Pradesh found in **Sanjay Tiger reserves and Bandhavgarh**.

◆ Region-wise Data:

- ▶ East central region contributed to **35 per cent**, which is **52 corridors**,
- ▶ The North East region was **second largest** with **32 per cent** number meaning **48 corridors in total**.
- ▶ Southern India registered 32, that is 21 per cent of the elephant corridors,
- ▶ Northern India was lowest with 18 corridors or 12 per cent.

◆ Status of Corridor Use:

- ▶ Elephant corridor report released by the central government showed a 40% increase in elephant corridors across 15 elephant range states in India.
- ▶ 19% of corridors (29) show a decrease in use, and 10 require restoration due to impairment.

- ◆ **Concerns highlighted:** The decrease in corridor use is attributed to the habitat fragmentation, shrinkage and destruction.

Elephants in India:

- ◆ Elephants are **keystone species** as well as the Natural Heritage Animal of India.
- ◆ India has the **largest number of wild Asian Elephants**. The elephant population in the country is estimated to be over 30,000.
- ◆ Karnataka has the **highest elephant population** in India.
- ◆ **Conservation Status:**
 - ▶ **Convention of the Migratory Species (CMS):** Appendix I
 - ▶ **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I
 - ▶ International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species:
 - **Asian Elephant:** Endangered
 - **African Forest Elephant:** Critically Endangered
 - **African Savanna Elephant:** Endangered

Government Efforts:

- ◆ **Gaj Yatra:** It is a nationwide campaign to protect elephants launched by Ministry of Environment and Forest.
 - ▶ The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states across the country.
 - ▶ It is a 15 months campaign led by the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI).

- ▶ The campaign aims create awareness about elephant corridors to encourage free movement in their habitat.

- ◆ **Project Elephant:** The Government of India introduced Project Elephant in 1992 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with the following goals:

- ▶ To safeguard elephants, their habitat, and migration routes
- ▶ To address problems of animal-human conflict
- ▶ Elephant welfare in captivity



INDIA-BANGLADESH CONSENSUS TO SAVE SUNDARBANS

Context: As per a recent update, officials and experts from Bangladesh and India agreed in Kolkata for a joint stakeholder initiative, to raise climate-linked loss and damage in the Sundarbans at global platforms.

- ◆ The global platforms would include the **28th Conference of Parties (COP28)** to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change which is going to held from **November 30-December 12** in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

About the collaboration:

- ◆ Both the countries has noted that the **transboundary Sundarbans** are one of the global hotspots of climate change with increasing high intensity cyclones, sea level rise more than double the global average, and a high degree of erosion leading to large- scale forced migration of people.



- According to West Bengal government data, just three cyclones — **Bulbul, Amphan and Yaas** — caused losses of about **Rs 1.5 lakh crore**.
- Also, out of the total population at risk, nearly **five million** are in India and the rest in Bangladesh.

The Sundarbans Mangrove Forest:

- ◆ The Sundarbans mangrove forest, one of the **largest such forests in the world**, lies across India and Bangladesh on the delta of the **Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers** on the Bay of Bengal.
- ◆ It is adjacent to the border of India's Sundarbans World Heritage site inscribed in 1987.
- ◆ The site is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests, and presents an excellent example of ongoing ecological processes.
- ◆ The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including **260 bird species**, the Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python.
- ◆ It is home to many rare and globally threatened wildlife species such as the estuarine crocodile, Royal Bengal Tiger, Water monitor lizard, Gangetic dolphin, and olive ridley turtles.

Threat:

- ◆ The Sundarbans — a UNESCO World Heritage Site split between **West Bengal in India (40 per cent) and Bangladesh (60 per cent)**.
- ◆ Climate change triggered problems in the Sundarbans.
- ◆ A sizeable population has already been affected multiple times, apart from on its unique ecosystem including Bengal tigers.

The project at Sundarbans is part of a global movement, **Project CAT (Conserving Acres for Tigers)**, aimed at building healthy habitats for **Tigers by conserving six million acres** of protected land across four countries.

GIANT SEA LIZARDS (MOSASAUR SPECIES)

Context: Recently, a team of palaeontologists studying marine reptiles from the latest Cretaceous of North Africa has found that mosasaur species (Marine reptiles), who were the top predators in the marine ecosystems, can tell us many about evolution of marine ecosystem.

About the findings:

- ◆ Recent discoveries unveiled **new mosasaur species** with unique adaptations, like ***Pluridens serpentis* and *Xenodens***, suggests about their specialized diets.
- ◆ The most recent discovery, ***Stelladens***, exhibited tooth structures never seen before in mosasaurs, leaving scientists puzzled about its dietary preferences.
- ◆ The diversity of large marine reptiles called mosasaurs, which were at the top of the prehistoric ocean food chain.

Outcomes drawn:

- ◆ During the late Cretaceous period, rising sea levels submerged parts of Africa, creating the **Tethys Sea and extending the Atlantic**.
- ◆ High sea levels and nutrient-rich upwelling along the **eastern Atlantic** supported a diverse marine ecosystem, including **mosasaurs**.
- ◆ Contrary to decline, mosasaurs thrived with various body sizes and tooth shapes, evolving to become formidable predators.
- ◆ It suggests that the marine ecosystem they were a part of was healthy and stable in the million years leading up to the end of **the Cretaceous period**.
- ◆ This supports the idea that the **mass extinction event** that ended the Cretaceous period, possibly caused by **an asteroid impact**, was a sudden and catastrophic event, rather than a gradual decline.



'PINK BLOOMS' IN KOLE WETLANDS OF KERALA

Context: Kole wetlands, an internationally important Ramsar site of high value biodiversity, have been facing the threat of alien invasive species called 'Pink Blooms'.



About Pink Bloom:

- ◆ **Cabomba furcuta**, popularly called as **Pink Bloom** due its massive flowering, is an invasive species in Kole wetland waters.
- ◆ Cabomba furcuta was brought to Kerala as an **aquarium plant** and has escaped to the wild.
- ◆ The species is native of **central and South America**.

Threats:

- ◆ Cabomba, which requires a **large quantity of oxygen** for its growth will choke water bodies and drainage canals.

Other invasive species emerging in the wetland are **water hyacinth and Salvinia molesta**.

- ◆ It could also spread out to the **paddy fields** as seeds quickly spread into them.
- ◆ According to a survey done as part of the **Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) 2023**, some migratory waterbird species, particularly **duck species** that visit Kerala's Alappuzha region, are experiencing declining populations due to increasing invasive species.

Kole Wetland

- ◆ Kole Wetland is located in Kerala.
- ◆ It is one of the **Ramsar Sites**.
- ◆ It is the **largest brackish**, humid tropical wetland ecosystem located in the **state of Kerala**.
- ◆ Extending from the **northern bank of Chalakudy River** in the south to the southern bank of **Bharathapuzha River** in the north.
- ◆ It is situated in the **Central Asian Flyway of migratory birds**.



NASA'S OSIRIS-REX

Context: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is preparing for the final phase of the OSIRIS-REX mission as the spacecraft is set to drop a capsule containing samples from the asteroid Benu on Earth.

What OSIRIS-Rex Mission?

- ◆ **Origins Spectral Interpretation Resource Identification Security - Regolith Explorer (OSIRIS-Rex)** is an ongoing mission. It returned samples of asteroid Benu to Earth in September 2023, and is now moving on to study asteroid Apophis in 2029.

Brief Timeline:

- ▶ **Launch:** This ambitious asteroid-sampling mission was launched by NASA in 2016 for the journey to **Benu** (near-Earth asteroid)
- ▶ It entered orbit around the near-Earth asteroid Benu in 2018 before a brief touchdown on Oct. 20, 2020, where it retrieved a sample from the surface of the asteroid.
- ▶ OSIRIS-REx then delivered the sample back to Earth on Sept. 24, 2023, before heading off on an extended mission to study **asteroid Apophis**.
- ◆ **Significance:** The mission aims to help scientists investigate how planets formed and how life began, as well as improve our understanding of asteroids that could impact Earth.

FACTS ABOUT ASTEROID

Asteroids are the bits and pieces left over from the formation of the planets, and as such, they serve as rudimentary blueprints of the early solar system.

Benu:

- Benu is one of several thousand near-Earth objects orbiting within 120 million miles (190 million km) of Earth.
- Among those, Benu was one of less than 200 objects whose orbit was well-known and sufficiently similar to Earth's orbit.
- This asteroid orbits the sun every 436 days and comes very close to Earth every six years.
- It was discovered by a team from the NASA-funded Lincoln Near-Earth Asteroid Research team in 1999.
- It is a **B-type asteroid**, implying that it contains significant amounts of carbon and various other minerals.

Apophis:

Apophis is another potentially hazardous asteroid that was recently removed from the Sentry Impact Risk Table which keeps track of asteroids where an Earth impact cannot be ruled out.



'SWAVLAMBAN 2.0'

Context: The Indian Navy is going to unveil 'Swavlamban 2.0', the 2nd Edition of the Naval Innovation and Indigenisation (NIIO) Seminar – 'Swavlamban 2023' which is scheduled to be conducted in October.

Background:

- ◆ The Prime Minister has launched '**SPRINT Challenges**' during Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation (NIIO) seminar 'Swavlamban' in July 2022.
- ◆ '**SPRINT (Supporting Pole-Vaulting in R&D through iDEX, NIIO and TDAC) Challenges**' is aimed at giving a boost to the usage of indigenous technology in Indian Navy.

- SPRINT is a **collaborative initiative** being undertaken in conjunction with the **Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO)** and stands for Supporting Pole-Vaulting in R&D through Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), NIIO and Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC).
- This initiative has received an overwhelming response with **1106 proposals**.

About 'Swavlamban 2.0':

- ◆ The Navy has surpassed its target set last year to develop **75 futuristic technologies** in partnership with domestic **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and startups** which are going to be launched as '**Swavlamban 2.0**'.
- ◆ **Technologies included:** Technologies are being progressed across the spectrum, including
 - ▶ Blue-green lasers for underwater applications;

- ▶ Autonomous weaponised swarms and underwater swarm drones;
- ▶ Multiple firefighting aids; introduction of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for various uses and the development of an ultra-endurance small drone for maritime missions.

Naval Innovation and Indigenisation Organisation:

- **Launch:** Launched in 2020 by the Ministry of Defence to fulfil its requirements relating to technology.
- **Objective:** To foster innovation and indigenisation for self-reliance in defence in keeping with the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.
 - ▶ It will put in place dedicated structures for the end-users to interact with academia and industry.
- **Structure:** The NIIO is a **three-tiered organization**:
 - ▶ Naval Technology Acceleration Council (N-TAC) will bring together the twin aspects of innovation and indigenisation and provide apex level directives.
 - ▶ Working group under the N-TAC will implement the projects.
 - ▶ **Technology Development Acceleration Cell (TDAC)** has been created for induction of emerging disruptive technology in an accelerated time frame.

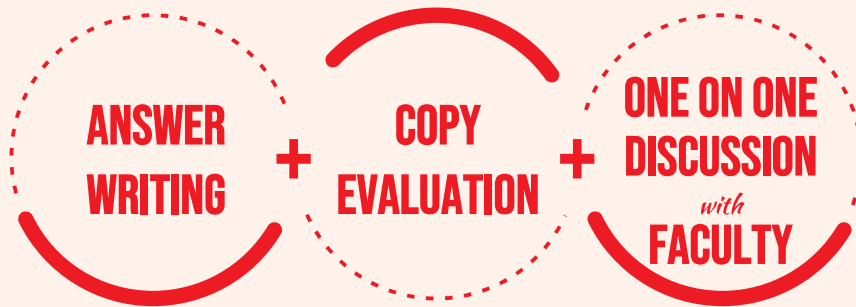


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Section D [QUIK BYTES]

- ☞ Galactic tides
- ☞ Vanadium
- ☞ L.69 group of nations
- ☞ Tripura introduced e-cabinet system
- ☞ Unparliamentary Language
- ☞ Promotion of Tribal Products for North East Region' (PTP-NER 2.0) scheme
- ☞ Agro Processing Clusters scheme
- ☞ Gujarat bans invasive tree species
- ☞ Kaimur Wildlife sanctuary
- ☞ World Environment Health Day
- ☞ Capacity-building initiative for industry
- ☞ General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES)
- ☞ Geospatial intelligence
- ☞ CE20 E13 Engine

[PERSONALITY IN NEWS]

- ☞ Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968)

[SPECIES IN NEWS]

- ☞ Pterygotrigla intermedica
- ☞ Vibrio vulnificus
- ☞ Rhinos

[LOCATION IN NEWS]

- ☞ South China Sea
- ☞ Scarborough Shoal

Galactic tides



Like the earth's oceans at their shores, the **universe's galaxies** also experience tides, but on a much larger scale called as **Galactic tides**.

About:

- Galactic tides refer to the gravitational forces exerted **by one galaxy on another**, leading to the deformation of the galaxies' shapes and affecting the distribution of stars within them.
- A galactic tide is the result of a tidal force imposed by a galaxy.
- If two galaxies pass sufficiently close (a galaxy collision or just a close encounter) their gravity can affect orbits of stars in the other (galaxy interaction).
- For example, disruptions such as a **tidal arm or tidal tail** can result, or a disk galaxy can lose its symmetry (an asymmetrical galaxy).
- An interacting galaxy is a galaxy displaying evidence of such interaction.
- A galaxy merger would be the most extreme interaction.

Vanadium



After the discovery of lithium in Kashmir, 'vanadium', a rare metal has been discovered in Gujarat (Gulf of Khambhat).

About:

- Vanadium is a **hard, silver-grey metallic element**.
- It is a **ductile transition metal** with a natural resistance to corrosion and stability against alkalis, acids and salt water.
- Vanadium is found in over 60 different minerals including **vanadinite, carnotite, roscoelite and patronite**.
- Presence in India:** Scarce
- Usage:**
 - It is used as an **alloying element in Iron & Steel Industry** and to some extent as a **stabiliser in titanium and aluminium alloys** (aerospace applications)
 - It imparts **toughness and strength to steel**, alloys and also acts **as scavenger for oxygen**.
- It offers **exceptional resistance** to corrosion and elevated temperatures.

L.69 group of nations

The Foreign Ministers of the **L.69 group of nations** held a meeting on the sidelines of **the 78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly** to exchange views on reform of the United Nations Security Council.



Who are L.69 group of countries?

- L.69 group is of **pro-reform member states**, including primarily developing countries from **Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific (Small Island Developing States)**.
- The group was initially created to promote economic cooperation and to collectively address development challenges.
- The **"L.69 group of countries"** refers to a coalition to advocate for their collective interests and concerns within international organizations and negotiations, particularly within the United Nations system.
- The group is formally known as the **"Group of 77 and China,"** often abbreviated as **G-77/China**.

Tripura introduced e-cabinet system

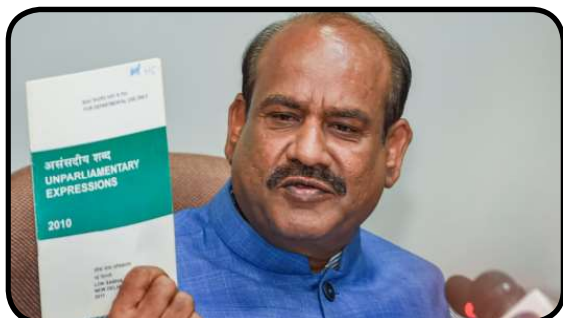


Tripura Chief Minister has launched an **e-cabinet system** at Agartala to promote **digital infrastructure development** and digitisation of government services and information.

About:

- Tripura has thus become **the fourth state**—and second in the Northeast—after **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh**, to have introduced an e-cabinet system.
- As per the plan, all future cabinet meetings in the state will be paperless, reducing the carbon footprint and environmental degradation in the process, with **ministers and bureaucrats using tablets**.
- All ministers attended the event at the new Secretariat complex, where the chief minister launched the app to be used for the e-cabinet.
- The government also rolled out **honorary commendations** to departments that have gone paperless as part of **100 per cent e-office adoption**.

Unparliamentary Language



Recently, a BJP MP has been condemned for the use of **"unparliamentary language"** to denote a community and remarks against another MP.

What are Unparliamentary words?

- Unparliamentary words are those which **do not fit with the dignity of the house** and are, therefore, expunged from the **record of speeches** by the chair.
- **Deciding Authority:** The **secretariats of parliament** release a list of such words that are considered 'unparliamentary'.
- Although the Constitution of India extends immunity from arrest to Members of Parliament, MPs inside the House are **not** allowed to say whatever they wish.
- **Example:** 'jumlajeevi', 'baal buddhi', 'Covid spreader', 'snoopgate', 'ashamed', 'abused', 'betrayed', 'corrupt', 'drama', 'hypocrisy' and 'incompetent'

Powers:

- **Rule 380 of Lok Sabha Rules:** The Speaker is empowered to expunge defamatory, indecent, unparliamentary or undignified words from the record of the debate.
- However, the Speaker cannot exercise this power in such a way as to erode the **freedom of speech** conferred upon members by **Article 105 of the constitution**.

Promotion of Tribal Products for North East Region' (PTP-NER 2.0) scheme

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) is set to launch the phase 2 of the '**Promotion of Tribal Products for North East Region' (PTP-NER 2.0) scheme**.

About:

- It is a **Central Sector scheme** launched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **Vision:** to expand the opportunity for indigenous craftsmen to support themselves through more effective logistics, sourcing, and marketing of their products in the North Eastern States.
- It will be implemented in the States of **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim**.
- **Implementing Partners:** North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation (NEHHDC), India Post under the Department of Posts, and other North Eastern State Government Departments/Agencies.

Progress of Phase I

- In the first phase of the scheme (PTP-NER 1.0), eight States were covered and 38 Districts were visited by the teams of TRIFED and NEHHDC.
- With this initiative, TRIFED reached out to 2526 Artisans from 44 Tribes, empanelling 1056 of them and identifying 1465 for training capsules.

Agro Processing Clusters scheme

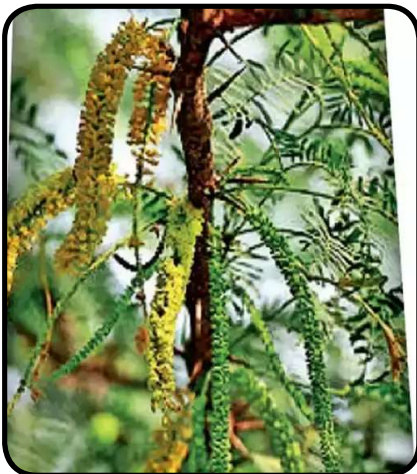
The Union Government's **cluster development programme (CDP)** is launched as an initiative to reform agriculture markets.

About:

- Under CDP, the government has allowed five firms to undertake cluster farming of **specific horticulture crops** in a bid to boost farmers' income and make Indian produce globally competitive.
- The cluster-based approach in **horticulture crops** will facilitate production, post-harvest management, marketing and branding of crops. It will reduce post-harvest losses and ensure better price realisation for the farmers.

- CDP intends to aggregate **small and marginal farmers**, which will scale up the level of agriculture activities in the region with many forward and backward linkages and spill-over effects for the local economy.
- The **National Horticulture Board (NHB)** is the nodal agency for implementation of CDP.
- **Management:** A cluster development agency is appointed for each identified cluster, and implementing agencies (IA) for different verticals of the clusters: Pre-production and production; post-harvest management; value addition and logistics; marketing and branding.
- **Products included:** Five companies, which will be the implementing agencies, have been selected through the bidding process.
 - ▶ They will develop the cluster for banana, apple, grapes, turmeric and mango crops in a period of four years.

Gujarat bans invasive tree species



The Gujarat government has banned the plantation of '**Conocarpus**', an **invasive species in forest or non-forest area**, underlining its "adverse impacts on environment and human health.

About:

- **Conocarpus** is an **evergreen species** with dark-green shiny leaves.
- It is a fast-growing species which is reported to be **not palatable to wild herbivores or domesticated animals**.
- Roots of this species go deep inside the soil and develop extensively, damaging telecommunication lines, drainage lines and freshwater systems.
- The forest department has also been directed to **raise public awareness** about its adverse impacts.

Kaimur Wildlife sanctuary



Bihar state Officials have been working towards obtaining the **National Tiger Reserve Conservation Authority's** approval for declaring **Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary** as the **state's 2nd tiger reserve**.

About Kaimur Wildlife sanctuary:

- Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Kaimur district of Bihar, India.
- It is situated in the **southwestern part of Bihar**, close to the borders with Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand.
- The sanctuary covers an extensive area in the Kaimur Hills, which are part of the Vindhya Range.
- It is the Bihar's largest Wildlife Sanctuary and is a **tiger corridor**.
- The main animals found at Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary are **Bengal tigers, Indian leopards, Indian boars, sloth bears, sambar deers, chitals, four-horned antelope and nilgais**.

World Environment Health Day



World Environmental Health Day is celebrated annually on **September 26th** to raise awareness of the importance of environmental health and to promote actions to protect human health and the environment.

About the day:

- The day is organised by the **International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH)** which is a global organisation that represents environmental health professionals in **over 100 countries**.
- Environmental health is the branch of public health that focuses on the relationships between the environment and human health.
- It encompasses a wide range of issues, including air and water quality, food safety, waste management, and climate change.

Capacity-building initiative for industry



The **Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil)** launched a **capacity-building programme for the industry** with support from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

About:

- As the **Indian pharma** units, especially in the MSME sector, are facing new challenges such as poor resources to meet global as well as domestic expectations in healthcare, the Centre is contemplating to implement the **Draft Schedule M (Good Manufacturing Practice) published in 2018 soon**.
- As part of the initiative, a capacity-building programme on quality compliance and patient safety (Industry Practices and Regulatory Expectations).
- It was launched in Ahmedabad to create awareness on best international practices for pharmaceutical manufacturing to enable them to maintain quality.
- The **Indian Drug Manufacturers Association (IDMA)** is also supporting the initiative and has called on its members to actively take part in the programme.
- The capacity-building programmes are also being planned to be conducted in **Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Indore, Visakhapatnam, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Sikkim, and Goa**.

General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES)

In-line with the Prime Minister's vision towards **maximizing digital technology** for social benefit, **Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (DA&FW)** launched the mobile application and the web portal for **GCES (General Crop Estimation Survey)**.



About the portal:

- **Comprehensive Information-** The portal and the app provide a comprehensive repository of yield estimation including village wise GCES plan and plot details where the crop cutting experiments are conducted.
- **Geo-referencing-** It would enable the primary worker to draw the boundary of the experimental plot and upload photos of the plot as well as of the crops through it. This feature will ensure transparency and accuracy of the data as well.

About General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES):

- GCES is a survey conducted to estimate crop yields and other agricultural statistics. The new portal and mobile app aim to streamline this process for enhanced accuracy and efficiency.

Geospatial intelligence



In summer 2023, **the US faced extreme weather events**, but **geospatial intelligence** provided vital information to protect people and communities.

What is Geospatial intelligence?

- Geospatial intelligence is the collection and integration of data from a network of technologies, including satellites, mobile sensors, ground-control stations and aerial images.
- The data is used to produce real-time maps and simulations to help identify when, where and to what extent a threat is likely to emerge.
- Government officials, individuals or both can use this information to make informed decisions.

CE20 E13 Engine



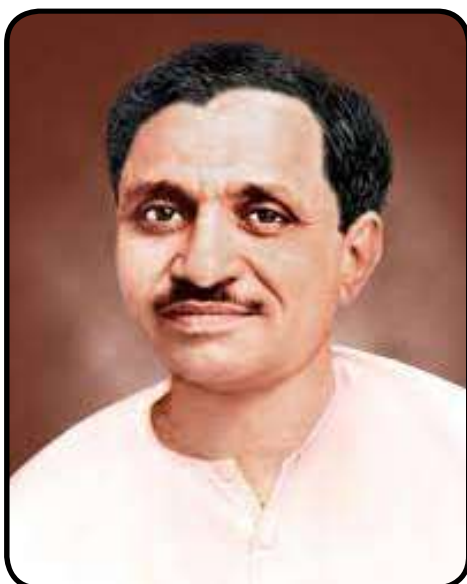
ISRO successfully completed the **CE20 E13 engine hot test** for the Gaganyaan qualification and 22-tonne thrust qualification.

About:

- CE-20 engine is a **cryogenic rocket engine**.
- It is a **vital component**, serving as the powerhouse of the **Cryogenic Upper Stage (CUS)** responsible for propelling the upper stage (C25) of the **LVM3 vehicle**.
- It has demonstrated its capability by successfully operating at a thrust level of 19 tonnes in six successive LVM3 missions, including the Chandrayaan-2, Chandrayaan-3, and two commercial OneWeb missions.
- The successful completion of **E13 HT-03 signifies** the culmination of rigorous testing and the readiness of the **CE20 engine for the Gaganyaan program**.
- **Developed by:** Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC) in Valiamala, Kerala.

LVM3 rocket

- The LVM3 rocket is a **three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle** developed by ISRO.
- The vehicle has two solid strap-on boosters (burns solid fuel), a core-stage liquid booster (burns a combination of liquid fuels) and a cryogenic upper stage (burns liquid hydrogen with liquid oxygen).
- LVM3 is designed to carry a 4-ton class of satellites into **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)** or about 10 tons to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**, which is about twice the capability of its predecessor, the GSLV Mk II or GSLV rocket.
- The LVM3 is powered by **three stages - solid, liquid and cryogenic**.

PERSONALITY IN NEWS**Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968)**

Recently, the birth Anniversary of **Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya** was observed on 25th September.

About:

- He was born in Mathura, **UP in 1916**.
- He was an Indian politician.
- He was one of the most important leaders of the **Bharatiya Jana Sangh**, the forerunner of the present day **Bharatiya Janata Party**.
- He qualified the **civil services examination**, where he got his nickname as Panditji for appearing in the examination hall wearing traditional **dhoti-kurta and cap**.
- He however did not join the service, but became in 1942, a life-time volunteer of the **Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)**.
- However, Upadhyaya is seen to have played a larger role in India's thought process and political life, transcending party lines.

Major Schemes in his name:

- Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (DAY) - integrating the NULM and NRLM for alleviating poverty.
- Deendayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) Antyodaya Diwas - to diversify the incomes of rural poor families and to cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
- Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana - to provide electricity to rural homes.
- Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya Shramev Jayate Karyakram - to create a conducive environment for industrial development primarily through skill training.
- Deendayal Upadhyaya Swaniyojan Yojana (DUSY) - the rural version of the Start Up India scheme.

SPECIES IN NEWS

Pterygotrigla intermedica

The scientists of the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)** have discovered a new species of a vibrant orange coloured deep water marine fish of species ***Pterygotrigla intermedica*** in West Bengal.

About the Species:

- **Name:** Pterygotrigla intermedica
- **Commonly known as:** gurnards or sea-robins
- **Family:** Triglidae
 - ▶ There are a total 178 species of the Triglidae family worldwide.
- It is the fourth species of Pterygotrigla genus reported in India so far.
- **Features:**
 - ▶ It is a deepwater marine fish with a striking orange coloration and distinctive **bony head** adorned with pointed **rostral spines**.
 - ▶ Their pectoral fins are fan-shaped, with the bottom few rays each forming separate feelers.
 - ▶ They are found in warm and temperate seas of the world.

Pterygotrigla is a genus of marine ray-finned fishes belonging to the family Triglidae, the gurnards and sea robins, one of two genera belonging to the subfamily Pterygotriglinae.

Vibrio vulnificus

Vibrio vulnificus is a bacterium found near oceans which can become a threat to coastal communities.

About the species:

- *V. vulnificus* belongs to the same family as ***Vibrio cholerae***, which causes cholera, a highly contagious diarrhoeal disease.
- *Vibrio vulnificus* is a bacterium that **causes septicemia**, severe wound infections, and gastroenteritis.
- Failure to recognize and treat this infection promptly leads to high **morbidity and mortality**.
- Most *Vibrio* infections are caused by eating raw or undercooked oysters or other shellfish.

Rhinos



World Rhino Day is celebrated on **September 22** every year to spread awareness about the need to protect and conserve all five species of rhinos.

About the species:

- Rhinoceroses are **large, herbivorous mammals** identified by their characteristic horned snouts.
- Characteristics:
 - ▶ They are characterized by the possession of one or two horns on the upper surface of the snout. These horns are not true horns but are composed of keratin.
 - ▶ Rhinoceroses are noted for their thick skin.
 - ▶ All rhinos are gray or brown in colour, including the white rhinoceros, which tends to be paler than the others.
 - ▶ Rhinoceroses have poor eyesight but acute senses of hearing and smell.
- **Conservation Status:** There are five species and 11 subspecies of rhino.
- Black rhinos, **Sumatran rhinos** and **Javan rhinos** are "critically endangered," which is the list's highest risk **category**.
- **Greater one-horned rhinos** are "vulnerable"
- **White rhinos** are "near threatened"

LOCATION IN NEWS

South China Sea



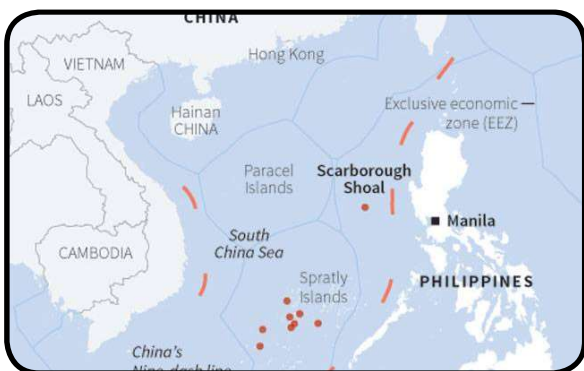
The **Philippine coast guard** had removed a floating barrier placed by China's coast guard to prevent Filipino fishing boats from entering a disputed area in the South China Sea.

About the region:

- The South China Sea is situated just south of the Chinese mainland and is bordered by the countries of **Brunei, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam**.
- The countries have bickered over territorial control in the **sea for centuries**, but in recent years tensions have soared to new heights.
- The South China Sea is one of the most strategically **critical maritime areas** (more on this later) and China eyes its control to assert more power over the region.

What is the 'nine-dash line'?

- The nine-dash line demarcates China's territorial claims in the **South China Sea on Chinese maps.**
- The line runs as far as 2,000 km from the Chinese mainland to within a few hundred kilometres of the **Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam.**

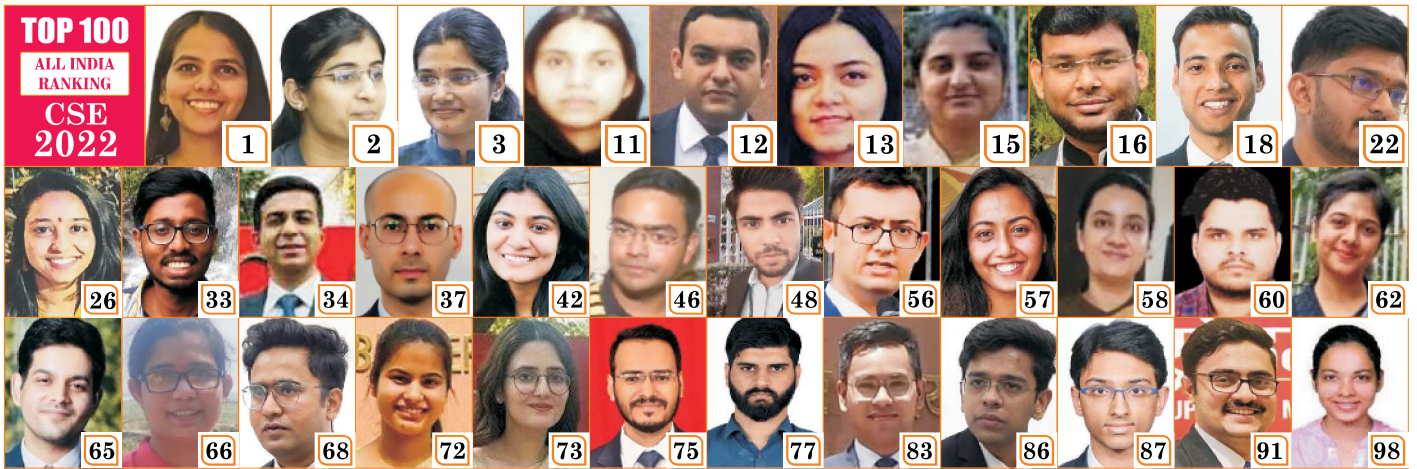
Scarborough Shoal

Scarborough Shoal is the disputed area between **China and Philippines.**

About:

- Scarborough Shoal is located in the **eastern part of the South China Sea.**
- It is uninhabited and shaped like **an atoll** consisting mainly of rocks and barely consists of any land except for very small islands.
- It is located at about **220 kilometers from the Philippines** and is located inside the Exclusive Economic zone of the Philippines.
- Its location is much closer to the Philippines' shore as compared to the China's shore.
- It is also referred to as **'Bajo de Masingloc'** and **'Panatag'** by the Philippines and **'Huangyan Island'** by China.
- The present name Scarborough was given after an East India company's ship named 'Scarborough' got grounded on one of the rocks in the atoll.





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