

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 2
OCTOBER
2023

MAINS

GS- II

- ▣ ELEVATING INDIA-TANZANIA RELATIONS: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UNVEILED
- ▣ RUSSIA PLANS TO PULL OUT OF CTBT
- ▣ FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (FCNM)
- ▣ 'BAIGA' TRIBAL GROUP GETS HABITAT RIGHTS
- ▣ GLOBAL NET FREEDOM ON THE DECLINE: FREEDOM HOUSE REPORT
- ▣ OTT PLATFORMS AND TRAI JURISDICTION
- ▣ NEED FOR A CODE OF POLICE INVESTIGATION
- ▣ SUPREME COURT GAVE A SPLIT VERDICT ON PLEA TO 'RECALL TERMINATION OF 26-WEEK PREGNANCY'
- ▣ DISMAL PICTURE OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONS (ICS) IN INDIA

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- ▣ INDIA ACCOUNTED FOR 20% GLOBAL PRE-TERM BIRTHS: LANCET STUDY
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- ▣ AMPHIBIAN CRISIS
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- ▣ Parliament to hold 'P20 Summit' with G20 member countries

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- ▣ SC to hear petition challenging electoral bonds
- ▣ Information Disorder Tackling Unit
- ▣ One year of Tele-MANAS
- ▣ National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS)

ECONOMY

- ▣ Government approves royalty rates for lithium, niobium, and

rare earth

- ▣ RBI's Open Market Operation (OMO) plan
- ▣ ICAR-CIRG signs MoU to transform India's goat value chain

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- ▣ Asiatic wild dog-tiger coexistence

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- ▣ Multimodal artificial intelligence
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- ▣ Indian Cooperative Network for Women
- ▣ World Space Week
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- ▣ Israel-Palestine Conflict: History, Wars & the Present Scenario

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— Disclaimer —

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

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

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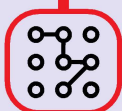


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GS SCORE

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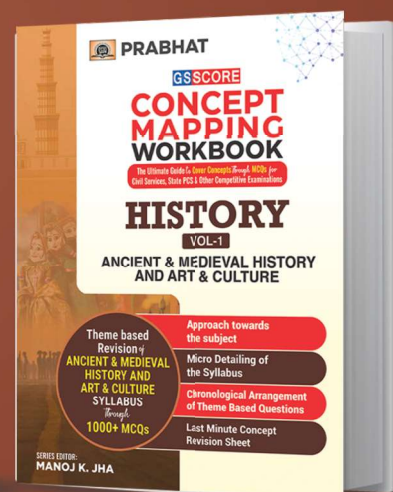
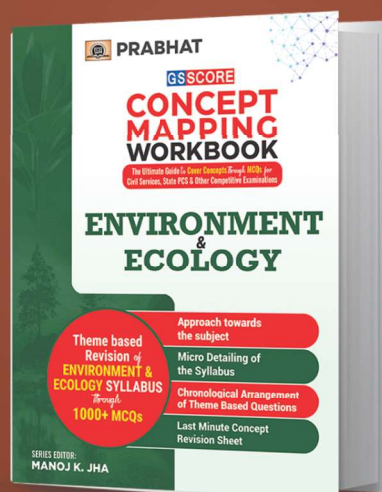
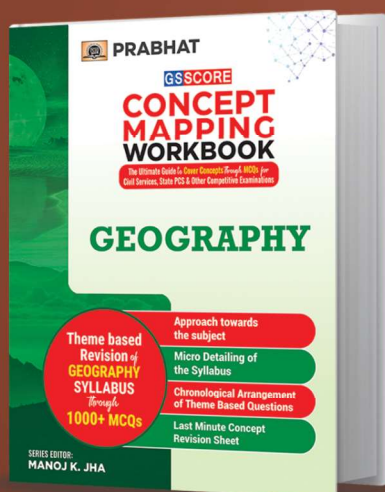
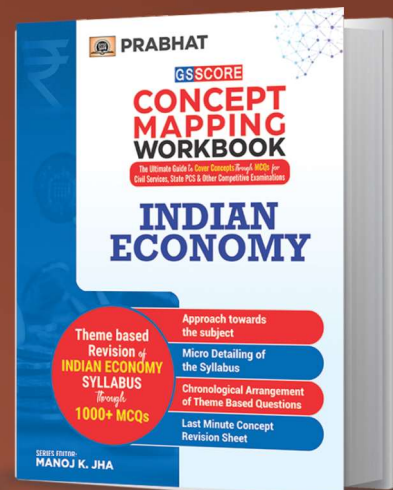
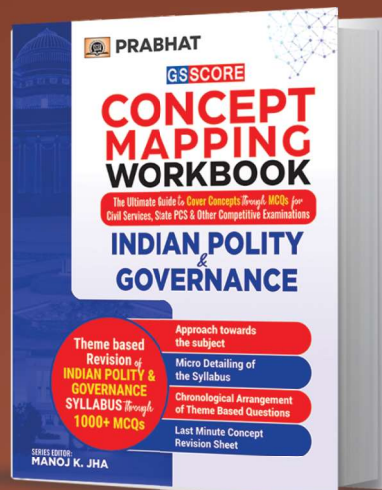
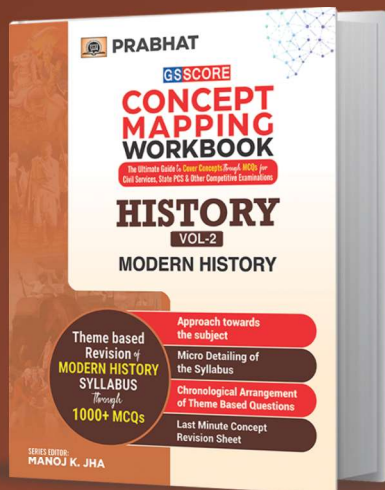
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Section A [MAINS]

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ELEVATING INDIA-TANZANIA RELATIONS: A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UNVEILED

Context: During Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan's State Visit to India, the two countries agreed on a five-year defence roadmap and decided to elevate their ties to a "strategic partnership."

Key-highlights of the Pact

- ◆ **Defence:** The two countries have agreed on a five-year roadmap. This roadmap encompasses military training, maritime activities, and the expansion of defence industries.
- ◆ **Participation in Indian initiatives:** Tanzania extended its involvement in significant Indian initiatives, notably:
 - ▶ International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)
 - ▶ Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)
- ◆ **ITEC:** India has pledged an additional 1,000 **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** slots to Tanzania, focusing on key areas such as smart ports, space exploration, biotechnology, and more, spanning a five-year horizon.
- ◆ **White shipping information sharing:** The two sides also signed a technical agreement on sharing white shipping information and beginning a cultural exchange program between the two governments for 2023-2027.
- ◆ India called Tanzania an important partner in the Indo-Pacific.

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan was also conferred with an honorary doctorate by the Jawaharlal Nehru University for fostering stronger India-Tanzania ties.

India-Tanzania Relations:

- ◆ Tanzania is **India's largest and closest development partner** in Africa.
- ◆ India currently holds the esteemed position of being Tanzania's **third-largest trading partner** and the **fifth-largest investor** in the nation.
- ◆ Tanzania has expressed unwavering support for India's aspiration to secure non-permanent membership in the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)** for the year 2028.



Why Tanzania assumes significance for India?

- ◆ **Essential gateway in Africa:** The African nation offers a diverse and robust economy that offers avenues for trade and investment across various sectors, including agriculture, mining, energy, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, and information technology.
- ◆ **Maritime connectivity:** Tanzania's coastline along the Indian Ocean provides crucial maritime connectivity and trade routes.
 - ▶ The port of **Dar es Salaam**, the largest port in East Africa, plays a pivotal role in facilitating trade and commerce not only for Tanzania but also for landlocked countries in the region.
- ◆ **Important place in policies:** Both are maritime neighbours with a long history of trade and people to people linkages therefore Tanzania has an important place in India's vision of **SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region)**.
- ◆ **Energy resource:** It has substantial energy resources, including natural gas and renewable energy potential.

Tanzania is the largest country in **East Africa** and includes the islands of **Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mafia**. About twice the size of California, this African country is bordered by the Indian Ocean and eight countries: **Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique**.



RUSSIA PLANS TO PULL OUT OF CTBT

Context: President Vladimir Putin announced that Russia's potential revocation of its ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) would not be for the purpose of resuming nuclear testing but rather to achieve parity with the United States.

What is Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)?

- ◆ The CTBT is a **multilateral treaty** that bans all nuclear explosions, whether for military or peaceful purposes.
- ◆ Although it was adopted by the **United Nations General Assembly** in 1996, it's still in the ratification stage — 18 countries are yet to ratify (the process by which a state indicates its consent to be bound to a treaty).
- ◆ While **Russia** ratified the agreement in 2000, the US is still to do so.
- ◆ **Which key countries haven't ratified CTBT?** Notably, for the treaty to enter into force, it must be signed and ratified by **44 specific nuclear technology** holder countries, eight of which have yet to ratify the agreement: **China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the United States.**

How did CTBT come into being?

- ◆ The United States conducted the world's first successful nuclear weapons test in July 1945. Four years later, the Soviet Union tested their first nuclear weapon.
- ◆ These tests triggered a decades-long arms race between the two superpowers.
- ◆ Between 1945 and 1996, more than 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out — 1,032 of them by the United States and 715 of them by the Soviet Union.
- ◆ Britain carried out 45 tests, France 210 and China 45.
- ◆ The radioactive fallout from those tests drew criticism from around the globe. As a result, several attempts to curb the explosive tests were made.
 - ▶ **Limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (LTBT):** The 1963 LTBT prohibited nuclear testing in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater, but underground tests were still permitted.

- ▶ **Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT):** Six years later, the US and Soviet Union agreed to sign **TTBT**, which established a nuclear "threshold" by banning the two countries from conducting tests that would produce a yield exceeding 150 kilotons (equivalent to 150,000 tons of TNT).
- ▶ **Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT):** After the Cold War ended around 1990 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the geopolitical tensions simmered down. The UN took advantage of the situation and adopted the CTBT, which put a blanket ban on the explosive testing of nuclear weapons.

Did the CTBT stop nuclear testing?

- ◆ Since the CTBT, **10 nuclear tests** have taken place.
 - ▶ India conducted two in 1998, Pakistan also two in 1998, and **North Korea** conducted tests in 2006, 2009, 2013, 2016 (twice) and 2017.
- ◆ The United States last tested in 1992, **China and France** in 1996 and the **Soviet Union** in 1990. Russia, which inherited most of the **Soviet nuclear arsenal**, has never conducted a nuclear test.

What if Russia withdraws?

- ◆ Russia withdrawing could be a blow to the treaty since, like those eight states, Russia is one of the so-called "Annex 2" countries that must all have ratified the treaty for it to enter into force.



FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES (FCNM)

Context: President Vladimir Putin recently introduced a bill greenlighting Russia's exit from the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM).

What is FCNM?

- ◆ FCNM is the **world's most comprehensive legally binding treaty** devoted to safeguarding the rights of minority groups.
- ◆ FCNM was adopted by the **Council of Europe** in 1994 and ratified by Russia upon its ascension to the multinational body in February 1996.
- ◆ The convention sets out a handful of principles that the signatories are expected to follow when developing national policies toward various minority groups, including indigenous peoples, stateless minorities and minorities with national autonomy.

- ◆ FCNM is widely hailed by human rights specialists for covering a vastly diverse set of issues pertaining to minority rights, including the usage of minority languages in media and education and the **promotion and protection of minority cultures, histories, languages and religions.**

Council of Europe:

- **Founded in:** 1949
- The Council of Europe is an **international organisation** (not an EU organisation) in Strasbourg.
- All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the **European Convention on Human Rights**, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

What does this mean for Russia's minorities?

Russia is home to representatives of as many as **193 ethnic groups** who speak at least 270 languages and dialects

- ◆ Russia's policies and actions towards minorities have long contradicted some of the key principles of the Framework Convention. Among such discriminatory policies are:
 - ▶ repressions against ethnic and decolonial activists
 - ▶ restrictions on teaching and public usage of minority languages
 - ▶ forced assimilation and discrimination of ethnic Ukrainians in Russia and the occupied Ukrainian territories
- ◆ The denunciation of the FCNM appears to be yet another step on the country's path toward **greater international isolation.**
- ◆ Russia's exit from the convention is a **"distressing" development** due to the mere fact that human rights defenders will no longer be able to voice their concerns in Strasbourg and consult the Council of Europe on key issues.



'BAIGA' TRIBAL GROUP GETS HABITAT RIGHTS

Context: The Baiga, a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) became the second to get habitat rights in the Chhattisgarh, after the Kamar PVTG.

4

What are habitat rights?

- ◆ Habitat rights recognition provides the community concerned rights over their;

- ▶ customary territory of habitation
- ▶ socio-cultural practices
- ▶ economic and livelihood means
- ▶ intellectual knowledge of biodiversity and ecology
- ▶ traditional knowledge of use of natural resources
- ▶ protection and conservation of their natural and cultural heritage

- ◆ These rights safeguard and promote traditional livelihood and ecological knowledge passed down through generations.
- ◆ They also help converge different government schemes and initiatives from various departments to empower PVTG communities to develop their habitats.

About Baiga PVTG:

- ◆ The Baiga community primarily resides in **Rajnandgaon, Kawardha, Mungeli, Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi (GPM), Manendra-Bharatpur-Chirmiri, and Bilaspur districts** of the state.
- ◆ The community also lives in the adjacent districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- ◆ A total of 19 Baiga villages with a population of 6,483 people (2,085 families) have been given the habitat rights.

What does 'habitat' mean, under what law are such rights granted?

- ◆ Habitat rights are given to PVTGs under **section 3(1) (e) [rights including community tenures of habitat and habitation for primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities]** of The **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006** also known as the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)**.
- ◆ According to **Section 2(h) of FRA**, "Habitat includes the area comprising the customary habitat and such other habitats in reserved forests and protected forests of primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities and other forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes."

How powerful are these rights?

- ◆ Forest Rights have **legal protection** under the **Forest Conservation Act**, the **Land Acquisition law of 2013**, and even the **SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act**.
- ◆ Grant of habitat rights under the Forest Rights Act provides an **additional layer of legal protection**.
- ◆ If any kind of development activity is hampering their habitat rights, the tribal group concerned can take up the matter with the administration under the Forest

Rights Act, and if not resolved, **the matter can be taken to court.**

How many PVTG have recognised habitat rights?

- ◆ Out of 75 PVTG in India, only three have habitat rights.
- ◆ The Bharia PVTG in Madhya Pradesh was the first, followed by the Kamar tribe and now the Baiga tribe in Chhattisgarh.

About Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)

- Tribal communities who are technologically backward, who have stagnant or declining population growth, extremely low level of literacy, and a subsistence level of economy are declared as PVTG.
- PVTGs have low health indices and largely reside in isolated, remote, and difficult areas in small and scattered hamlets/habitats.
- There are **75 PVTGs in 18 states** and one Union Territory.

GLOBAL NET FREEDOM ON THE DECLINE: FREEDOM HOUSE REPORT

Context: According to a new report by Freedom House, Global Internet freedom has declined for the 13th consecutive year.

Highlights of the Report:

- ◆ **About:** The report, titled '*Freedom on the Net 2023: The Repressive Power of Artificial Intelligence*', has raised a red flag on the increasing use of artificial intelligence by governments for censorship and spread of disinformation.
- ◆ This is the **13th edition** of an annual study of human rights online
- ◆ The report covers developments between **June 2022 and May 2023**.
- ◆ On a range of **1 to 100** where '100' represented **highest digital freedom** and '1' the **worst repression**.
- ◆ **Key Points:**
 - **Country-wise data:** It evaluates Internet freedom in **70 countries**, accounting for **88% of the world's Internet users**.
 - The environment for human rights online has deteriorated in **29 countries**, with only 20

countries registering net gains.

- **Iceland** scored **94**, emerged as the country with the best climate of Internet freedom.
- **India** scored **50** remained at the middle ground.
- As per the report, the sharpest rise in digital repression was witnessed in **Iran**, where authorities shut down Internet service, blocked WhatsApp and Instagram, and increased surveillance in a bid to quell anti-government protests.
- **China**, for the ninth straight year, ranked as the **world's worst environment** for Internet freedom.
- Also **Myanmar** found to be the **world's second most repressive for online freedom**.
- People faced legal repercussions for expressing themselves online in a record **55 countries** this year, and the number of countries where authorities carry out widespread arrests and impose multi-year prison terms for online activity has risen sharply over the past decade, from **18 in 2014 to 31 in 2023**.
- The report also detailed how elections were a trigger for digital repression.
- The report evaluates countries on **five censorship methods** —
 - Internet connectivity restrictions,
 - blocks on social media platforms,
 - blocks on websites,
 - blocks on VPNs, and
 - forced removal of content
- ◆ **For India:**
 - **Detailing AI-enabled digital repression in India:** The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules require large social media platforms to use AI-based moderation tools for broadly defined types of content — **such as speech that could undermine public order, decency, morality, or the country's sovereignty, integrity, and security, or content that officials had previously ordered removed**.
 - **Warning of adverse repercussions for Indian democracy:** As the country prepares for general elections in 2024, the government's expanding censorship regime is creating an uneven playing field by silencing criticism of and independent reporting on the ruling party.
 - India also figured among the list of countries that blocked websites hosting political, social, or religious content, deliberately disrupted ICT

networks, used pro-government commentators to manipulate online discussions, and conducted technical attacks against government critics or human rights organisations.

- ▶ India engaged in all types of censorship methods, except one (VPN blocking).

OTT PLATFORMS AND TRAI JURISDICTION

Context: Recently, The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) are attempting to regulate OTT services, which have been challenged by the IT Ministry.

Background:

- ◆ The DoT had released a **draft telecom Bill** under which it wanted to classify OTT platforms as telecommunication services and regulate them like telecom operators.
- ◆ The TRAI, separately, has issued a consultation paper on how to regulate OTT platforms.
- ◆ The IT Ministry, however, believes that under the Allocation of Business Rules, internet-based communication services are not part of DoT's jurisdiction.

About the information:

- ◆ As per the India's telecom appellate panel, **over the top (OTT) streaming platforms** do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and are governed under the **Information Technology Rules, 2021**, as notified by the IT Ministry.
- ◆ In an order passed, the **Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT)** said OTT platforms such as Disney+ Hotstar are outside the purview of the **TRAI Act** since they do not require **any permission or a licence** from the Union government.
- ◆ This is a significant position given that the TRAI and the **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** are attempting to regulate OTT services, something that has been challenged by the IT Ministry.

What is Online Curated Content (OCC) Platforms?

- ◆ OCC Platforms are companies that carry on the business which curates and presents a wide variety of content by means of online **video-on-demand** platforms.

- ◆ **Amazon Prime, Netflix, Hotstar, Zee5, etc.,** are examples of OCC Platforms operating in India.
- ◆ These platforms operate on the basis of a "**pull model**", whereby customers have the choice of viewing content as per their own convenience.

Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code Rules, 2021:

- ◆ Recently, the government has notified Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021.
- ◆ These new rules broadly deal with **social media and over-the-top (OTT) platforms**.
- ◆ These rules have been framed in **exercise of powers** under **Section 87 (2) of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** and in supersession of the earlier Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011.

Rules for OTT Platforms:

- ◆ **Self-Classification of Content:** The OTT platforms, called as the publishers of online curated content in the rules, would self-classify the content into five age based categories- U (Universal), U/A 7+, U/A 13+, U/A 16+, and A (Adult).
- ◆ **Parental Lock:** Platforms would be required to implement parental locks for content classified as U/A 13+ or higher and reliable age verification mechanisms for content classified as "A".
- ◆ **Display Rating:** Shall prominently display the classification rating specific to each content or programme together with a content descriptor informing the user about the nature of the content, and advising on viewer description (if applicable) at the beginning of every programme enabling the user to make an informed decision, prior to watching the programme.
- ◆ **For Publishers of News on Digital Media :** They would be required to observe Norms of Journalistic Conduct of the Press Council of India



and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act 1995 thereby providing a level playing field between the offline (Print, TV) and digital media.

- ◆ **Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** A three-level grievance redressal mechanism has been established under the rules with different levels of self-regulation.
 - ▶ Level-I: Self-regulation by the publishers;
 - ▶ Level-II: Self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the publishers;
 - ▶ Level-III: Oversight mechanism.
- ◆ **Self-regulation by the Publisher:** Publisher shall appoint a Grievance Redressal Officer based in India who shall be responsible for the redressal of grievances received by it.
 - ▶ The officer shall take decision on every grievance received by it within 15 days.
- ◆ **Self-Regulatory Body:**
 - ▶ There may be one or more self-regulatory bodies of publishers.
 - ▶ Such a body shall be headed by a retired judge of the SC, a High Court or independent eminent person and have not more than six members.
 - ▶ Such a body will have to register with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
 - ▶ This body will oversee the adherence by the publisher to the Code of Ethics and address grievances that have not been resolved by the publisher within 15 days.
- ◆ **Oversight Mechanism:**
 - ▶ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting shall formulate an oversight mechanism.
 - ▶ It shall publish a charter for self-regulating bodies, including Codes of Practices.
 - ▶ It shall establish an Inter-Departmental Committee for hearing grievances.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI):

- It is a statutory body and regulates the telecommunications sector in the country.
- The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established with effect from February 20, 1997, by an Act of Parliament, called the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India Act, 1997.
- TRAI's mission is to ensure that the interests of consumers are protected and at the same time nurture conditions for growth of telecommunications, broadcasting and cable services in a manner and at a pace which will enable India to play a leading role in emerging global information society.

**NEED FOR A CODE OF POLICE INVESTIGATION**

Context: The Supreme Court (SC), in a recent judgment, has highlighted the need for a “consistent and dependable code of investigation” to prevent lapses in police probes leading to the guilty getting acquitted on technical grounds.

About the SC judgement:

- ◆ The Court took the highlights of **V.S. Malimath Committee** on Reforms of Criminal Justice System.
- ◆ The Report has emphasized on successful prosecution of the guilty depends on a thorough and careful search for **truth and collection of evidence** which is both admissible and probative.
- ◆ The aim is to prevent lapses in police probes leading to the guilty getting acquitted on technical grounds.

Malimath Committee:

- ◆ The Committee on Reforms of the Criminal Justice System was constituted by the Government of India, **Ministry of Home Affairs** to consider measures for **revamping the Criminal Justice System**.
- ◆ The terms of reference for the Committee are:
 - ▶ To examine the fundamental principles of criminal jurisprudence,
 - ▶ To examine in the light of findings on fundamental principles and aspects of criminal jurisprudence as to whether there is a need to re-write the **Code of Criminal Procedure**, the Indian Penal Code and the Indian Evidence Act
 - ▶ To make specific recommendations on simplifying judicial procedures and practices and making the delivery of justice to the common man closer, faster, uncomplicated and inexpensive;
 - ▶ To suggest ways and means of developing such synergy among the judiciary,
 - ▶ To suggest sound system of managing, on professional lines, the pendency of cases at investigation and trial stages and making the Police,
 - ▶ To examine the feasibility of introducing the concept of “**Federal Crime**” which can be put on **List I in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution**.

Why there is a need for reforms in Police probe system?

- ◆ The State discharges the obligation to protect **life, liberty and property** of the citizens by taking suitable preventive and punitive measures which also serve the object of preventing private retribution so essential for maintenance of **peace and law and order** in the society.
- ◆ When there is an invasion of these rights of the citizens it becomes the **duty of the State** to apprehend the person guilty for such invasion, subject him to **fair trial and if found guilty** to punish him.
- ◆ **Substantive penal laws** can be effective only when the procedural laws for enforcing them are efficient.

What is the Structure of the Criminal Justice System in India?

- ◆ The Indian Criminal Justice System is composed of government agencies that enforce the **law, adjudicate crimes, and correct criminal behavior.**
- ◆ **It has four subsystems:**
 - ▶ Legislature (Parliament)
 - ▶ Enforcement (Police)
 - ▶ Adjudication (Courts)
 - ▶ Corrections (Prisons, Community Facilities)

Role of Police in Criminal Justice system:

- ◆ The Criminal justice system in India has three important players, namely, **the police, the prosecution, and the judiciary.**
- ◆ The activities of the police are crucial to rendering justice in criminal cases and affect the operations of the entire criminal justice system.
- ◆ The police are usually the first to make contact with the **victims, the witnesses, and the accused.**
- ◆ The police play a key role through the **course of investigation**, particularly in the identification of the accused, and establishing the guilt of the accused during trial in criminal cases.

Challenges faced by Police

- ◆ **Lack of Trust in the Police:** The police and investigation agencies face a widespread lack of trust. This mistrust hinders their ability to carry out their duties effectively, undermining the rule of law.
- ◆ **Custodial Interrogation Challenges:** Police struggle with limited **custodial interrogation time (14 days)** when dealing with suspects. Extended and intermittent interrogation rights would aid in thorough investigations.

- ◆ **Securing and Preserving Evidence:** Police often lose evidence due to inadequate tools, witness hostility, and apathy. A techno-legal solution is needed to preserve evidence systematically, including digital storage and improved evidence management in courts.

SUPREME COURT GAVE A SPLIT VERDICT ON PLEA TO 'RECALL TERMINATION OF 26-WEEK PREGNANCY'

Context: The Supreme Court bench, while hearing the recall application filed by the Union government against the Court's order allowing medical termination of a 26-week pregnancy of a married woman, referred the matter to a larger bench.

About the case:

- ◆ On October 9, the Bench of **Justices Kohli and Nagarathna** had, after getting a report from an **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) medical board**, allowed the medical termination of the woman's pregnancy in accordance with her wish.
- ◆ However, the Union government returned to the apex court with an application.
- ◆ The application said that one of the expert doctors on the medical board had emailed Ms. Bhati on October 10 against the abortion, saying the child should be **given a chance to survive.**



Government's Argument:

- ◆ Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, for the Union government, mentioned that the woman has no **"absolute right of autonomy to exercise her reproductive rights in a way that would take away the rights of her unborn child"**.
- ◆ Referring to the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy**

(Amendment) Act of 2021, which extended the deadline for abortion in "exceptional circumstances" to 24 weeks.

- ▶ These exceptional circumstances allowed medical termination only if it was necessary to save the **life of the mother** or in case of a **fatal deformity** detected in the foetus.
- ◆ Once there is a viable baby, the relief **cannot be one-sided**.
- ◆ Unless she wants to keep the child, her right to bodily autonomy or integrity cannot be beyond the Act. Mother's fundamental right to choice can be **curtailed by the Parliament**.

Supreme Court's Split Verdict:

- ◆ **Perspective 1: Justice Kohli**, in her opinion, agreed with the government that woman should **not be permitted to terminate the pregnancy**.
 - ▶ The court also asked the woman if she would be willing to foster the **unborn child** till the government could arrange for its adoption.
- ◆ **Perspective 2:** However, **Justice Nagarathna** disagreed saying the woman's decision ought to be respected, considering mother's **socio-economic** grounds.

What are women's reproductive rights?

Based on the multiple definitions of reproductive rights, it can be said that they include some or all of the following rights:

- ◆ Right to safe and legal abortion.
- ◆ Right to control one's reproductive functions.
- ◆ Right to access in order to make reproductive choices

free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

- ◆ Right to access education about contraception and sexually transmitted diseases and freedom from coerced sterilization and contraception.
- ◆ Right to protection from gender-based practices such as female genital cutting and male genital mutilation.

MTP Amendment Act, 2021

- ◆ In 2021, Parliament amended the law to allow for abortions based on the advice of one doctor for pregnancies up to 20 weeks.
- ◆ The modified law needs the opinion of two doctors for pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks.
- ◆ Further, for pregnancies between 20 and 24 weeks, rules specified seven categories of women who would be eligible for seeking termination under Section 3B of rules prescribed under the MTP Act;
 - ▶ Survivors of sexual assault or rape or incest,
 - ▶ Minors,
 - ▶ Change of marital status during the on-going pregnancy (widowhood and divorce),
 - ▶ Women with physical disabilities (major disability as per criteria laid down under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016)
 - ▶ Mentally ill women including mental retardation,
 - ▶ The foetal malformation that has a substantial risk of being incompatible with life or if the child is born it may suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities to be seriously handicapped, and
 - ▶ Women with pregnancy in humanitarian settings or disasters or emergencies may be declared by the Government.

Arguments in favour of bodily rights	Argument against bodily rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A female is considered a moral person that is entitled to rights, including the right to life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ So, abortion is deemed acceptable as the foetus is not a person. ▶ A list of criteria of personhood is identified, which includes consciousness, reasoning, activity, communication and self-awareness. A foetus undeniably is incapable of fulfilling these criteria. • The mother, who is a person, has a right to life and it supersedes the rights of the foetus to choose whether or not it remains connected to her body. • Also, pregnancy is assumed to be a foreseeable consequence of heterosexual intercourse, that too when there is no intention to 'have a baby'. So, denying her the right to abort the child when she was not planning for it is unwarranted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Future like ours' argument: Abortion is wrong because it deprives the foetus of a potential 'future like ours'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ It suggests that death is a bad thing because it deprives people of all the experiences, enjoyments, opportunities that would make up their future personal life. • Moral conduct: Killing an innocent human being is a moral wrong. Those who are against abortions believe that human life begins at conception, and by drawing the same analogy, the foetus is an innocent human being. • So, killing the foetus is wrong and abortion is always wrong.

DISMAL PICTURE OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONS (ICS) IN INDIA

Context: The 'Report Card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India 2022-23' by the Satark Nagrik Sangathan (SNS) provides a dismal picture as the number of states with defunct Information Commissions, rising pendency of cases and many headless commissions.

Findings of the Report:

- ◆ **Period:** The analysis of the criteria was from a period between **July 2022 and June 2023**.
- ◆ **Defunct ICs:** Showed that Information Commissions are "**completely defunct**" in
 - ▶ Jharkhand (37 months), Tripura (27 months), Telangana (7 months) and Mizoram (ten days).
- ◆ **Headless states:** The CIC and Information Commissions in five states;
 - ▶ Manipur (56 months),
 - ▶ Chhattisgarh (since December 2022),
 - ▶ Maharashtra (since April),
 - ▶ Bihar (since May) and
 - ▶ Punjab (since September)
- ◆ **Pendency of Cases:** West Bengal with a pendency of **11,871 cases** would take around **24 years** and one month to dispose of an appeal filed on July 1 this year.
 - ▶ Uttar Pradesh which has **27,163 pending cases** may take seven months to clear an appeal and
 - ▶ Karnataka with 41,047 pending cases may take **one year and 11 months**.
 - ▶ Maharashtra with the highest pendency of **1.11 lakh cases** may take four years.
- ◆ **Reasons:** One of the primary reasons for the backlogs

is the failure of **Central and state governments** to take timely action to appoint information commissions to the **Central Information Commission** and state information commissions.

- ◆ **Penalties:** The report also noted that Information Commissions did not impose penalties in **91 per cent of the cases** where penalties were potentially imposable.
 - ▶ In terms of penalty imposition, of the **23 commissions** which provided relevant information, penalty was imposed in a **total of 8,074 cases**.
 - ▶ Penalty amounting to Rs.15.37 crore was imposed by 23 commissions during the period under review.
- ◆ **State-wise Appeals and Complaints:** The SIC of Karnataka registered 30,207 appeals and complaints, while Uttar Pradesh registered 29,637 and the CIC registered 20,083 appeals/complaints.

About Information Commissions (ICs):

- ◆ CIC is a **statutory body** constituted under **section 12** of the Right to Information Act, 2005.
- ◆ Similar to CIC, SIC is also a statutory body constituted under **section 15 of the Right to Information Act, 2005**.
- ◆ The Central Information Commission shall consist of the **Chief Information Commissioner** and such number of Central Information Commissioners not **exceeding 10** as may be deemed necessary.

What does Information Commission do?

The main objectives of CIC and SIC are:

- ◆ To exercise the powers conferred on them under the RTI Act, 2005.
- ◆ To receive and inquire into complaints from any citizen (Section 18 of the RTI Act, 2005).
- ◆ To receive and decide upon the second appeal from any citizen (Section 19 of the RTI Act, 2005).
- ◆ To perform the duty of "**Monitoring and Reporting**" (Section 25 of the RTI Act, 2005).

Features	CIC	SIC
Composition	CIC consists of a Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten Information Commissioners.	SIC consists of a State Chief Information Commissioner and not more than ten State Information Commissioners.
Appointment	They are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, and a Union Cabinet Minister nominated by the Prime Minister.	They are appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of a committee consisting of Chief Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, and a State Cabinet Minister nominated by the Chief Minister.

Removal	<p>The President can remove the members of CIC and the Governor can remove the members of SIC from the office under the following circumstances:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the member is adjudged as an insolvent • If the Central government (for CIC) /Governor (for SIC) holds him responsible for an offense involving moral turpitude/ or he is convicted for such an offense. • If he engages during his term of office in any paid employment outside the duties of his office • If he is declared unfit by reason of infirmity of mind or body, by the President (for CIC)/Governor (for SIC). <p>The President/Governor can also remove the members on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity. In such cases, the President (for CIC)/Governor (for SIC) has to refer the matter to the Supreme Court for an enquiry. After the enquiry, if the Supreme Court upholds the cause of removal and advises so, then the President (for CIC) /Governor (for SIC) can remove him.</p> <p>During the inquiry by the Supreme Court the President (for CIC)/Governor (for SIC) may suspend the member from office or prohibit him from attending the office.</p>
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INDIA ACCOUNTED FOR 20% GLOBAL PRE-TERM BIRTHS: LANCET STUDY

Context: As per the findings of a new Lancet study highlighted that India had the highest number of pre-term births in 2020 which is around 3.02 million in the world.

What is a Pre-term birth?

- ◆ Pre-term birth means delivery of the foetus in less than **37 weeks of gestation** and is considered to be one of the main risk factors for **neonatal mortality** (aged under five years).
- ◆ In 2010, there were **3.49 million pre-term births in India**.
- ◆ The common reasons include;
 - Acute or long-standing sickness in the mother,
 - Twins or triplet pregnancy and
 - Cervical problems.

Findings of the study:

- ◆ India's pre-term birth accounts for over **20 per cent** of all pre-term births worldwide.
 - It was followed by **Pakistan, Nigeria, China, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the USA**.
- ◆ At the global level, there has not been any change in pre-term birth rate between 2010 (9.8 per cent of live births) and 2020 (9.9 per cent of live births).
 - Approximately **15 per cent of all pre-term births** between 2010 and 2020 occurred at **less than 32 weeks** of gestation, highlighting the **need for better prenatal and neonatal care**.

- ◆ Also a few, about 13 countries experienced a **decline in pre-term births** by 0.5 per cent or more namely, **Austria, Brazil, Brunei, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, the Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland**.

◆ Concerns highlighted:

- Many survivors of pre-term birth face lifetime disabilities, including **learning difficulties, behavioural disorders, visual and hearing impairments**.
- The true global burden of pre-term birth is unknown due to a shortage of data in many countries, especially in **low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs)**.
- According to the report, this situation is a result of inadequate record keeping, poor measurement of gestational age, and the absence of systems in countries for routinely collecting and reporting pre-term birth data.

◆ Recommendations:

- Gaps in national routine data for preterm birth are most marked in regions of **southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa**, which also have the highest estimated burden of pre-term births.
- Countries need to prioritize programmatic investments to prevent pre-term birth and **to ensure evidence-based quality care** when pre-term birth occurs.
- Investments in improving data quality are crucial so that pre-term birth data can be improved and used for action and accountability processes.

Government Interventions:

- ◆ **Janani Suraksha Yojana:** Institutional deliveries were first incentivised by the central government in 2005 with Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), under which a direct cash transfer is promised if a woman delivered a baby at a medical facility, rather than at home.

- ▶ JSY is a 100% centrally sponsored scheme which is being implemented with the objective of reducing maternal and infant mortality by promoting institutional delivery among pregnant women.

◆ **Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK):** The Government of India launched Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) in June, 2011.

- ▶ It is an initiative to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women including normal deliveries and caesarean operations and sick newborn (up to 30 days after birth) in Government health institutions in both rural & urban areas.
- ▶ In 2013, the cost of treating "complications during ante-natal and postnatal period and sick infants up to one year of age" was also brought within the ambit of the scheme.

◆ **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):** It is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in all districts of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.

◆ **Poshan Abhiyaan:** The goal of Poshan Abhiyaan is to achieve improvement in the nutritional status of Children (0-6 years) and Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers in a time-bound manner.

Way forward:

- ◆ **Holistic Approach is needed:** Schemes incentivising institutional delivery are not enough to ensure a safe birth. A holistic approach is needed to address infrastructure and human resource shortcomings.
- ◆ **Strengthened Workforce:** The workforce involved in delivery of the various government schemes need to be strengthened to bring about a noticeable change.
 - ▶ Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and Auxiliary nurse midwives are the backbone of the government schemes but are severely burdened.
- ◆ **Expansion of Eligibility Criteria:** The eligibility criteria for such schemes need to be expanded, because currently it excludes those who actually need it.
 - ▶ Some schemes are applicable only if the mother is 19 years of age or above, some are only for the first child and some require 'below poverty line' identification.
 - ▶ An 18-year-old pregnant woman living below the poverty line is most vulnerable but would not make the cut for several schemes.
- ◆ **Monitoring of the Scheme:** An ideal institutional delivery needs to be defined for better monitoring of the scheme outcomes, so there is a need to monitor outcomes to understand how successful the scheme really is.

- ◆ **Address Data Gaps:** India must also close the data gap; each institution must publish their morbidity and mortality data regularly. Health centres must also be incentivised to deal with such a high load.



NOBEL ECONOMICS PRIZE 2023

Context: The Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences has been awarded to Claudia Goldin for exemplary contribution in "women's labour market outcomes."

About:

- ◆ The **Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences** in Stockholm has been given this award.



- ◆ Claudia Goldin has worked in creating "the first comprehensive account of women's earnings and labour market participation through the centuries".
- ◆ She is one among the **other three women** got the Nobel Prize for economics since its inception.

The Nobel Prize in economics has been awarded to **two other women** in its 54-year history: **Elinor Ostrom** of Indiana University Bloomington (in 2009) and **Esther Duflo** of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (in 2019).

- ◆ Despite decades of progress, women remain underrepresented in the workforce and earn less than their male counterparts.
- ◆ Goldin's analysis of more than **200 years of U.S. labor force data shows** how employment rates and the gender wage gap depend not just on the economy but also on evolving **social norms related to women's education and roles in the home and family.**

◆ Her Contribution:

- ▶ Goldin's work pushes back against long-held notions that a strong economy and technological advancements would be enough to pull women into the workforce.
- ▶ Her research found that a large share of married women — **nearly 60 percent** were in the workforce in the 1790s, when much of the U.S. economy was built on agriculture.
- ▶ But **women's labor force participation** declined dramatically in the 1800s with the rise of industrialization, which made it difficult for them to juggle outside work with domestic responsibilities.
- ▶ Her research also explores the reasons for **stubborn wage gaps between men and women**, including pay discrimination and parenthood.
- ▶ Although in the past, the gender pay gap was mostly related to differences in education levels and career choices, study has shown that pay inequities persist among **men and women in the same jobs**.
- ▶ Women, she found, take an immediate hit to their earnings after the **birth of their first child**, when many are forced to scale back their hours or forgo advancement opportunities because they handle the bulk of child care.

Understanding Women's Role in Economy in India:

- ◆ The economic role of women in India has traditionally been limited, with many women facing **cultural, social, and economic barriers** that prevent them from fully participating in the workforce. However, in recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the important role that women play in the Indian economy.
- ◆ The present contribution of women to the National GDP is around **18%**.
- ◆ **Sector-wise contribution:**
 - ▶ In India, women comprise **48% of the agricultural workforce** and own **only 13% of the land**.
 - ▶ Women in India constitute around 20% of the manufacturing workforce and around 30% of the total workforce in the services sector.
 - ▶ At present, there are 432 million women of working age in India, out of which 343 million are employed in the **unorganized sector**.
- ◆ India has the **3rd largest ecosystem** in terms of Startups in the world, and 10% of them have been led by women founders.
 - ▶ Also, research shows that ventures started by women are more sustainable in nature.

In 2022, a survey among **250 Indian companies** revealed that the share of women in the Chief Executive Officer or Managing Director roles has increased by **55%** which reflected significant growth in their role in driving the economy.

What are the challenges faced by working women?

- ◆ **Pay Disparity:** While the World Inequality Report of 2022 noted that men earn 82% of the labour income while women earn 18% of it.
- ◆ **Sexual harassment:** Despite the 2013 Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act in place, a data analysis compiled by Complykaro.com, an anti-sexual harassment advisory witnessed a rise in workplace sexual harassment complaints by 27% in March 2022.
- ◆ **Pregnancy discrimination:** Women still feel apprehensive about starting a family as it affects their careers. The **Maternity Benefit Act, Sec. 5(3)**, states that a minimum of 14 weeks of paid leaves be provided to a new mother.
 - ▶ Yet women face unfair treatment at work like stereotyping, intrusive comments, and even a lack of relevant projects being handed to them.
- ◆ **Imposter syndrome:** It is a self-doubting tendency that leads an individual to feel skeptical and underserving of their accomplishments.
 - ▶ A 2020 KPMG study revealed that almost **75% of female executives** across industries have faced imposter syndrome. While almost 47% of female executives were in disbelief about reaching their level of success.
- ◆ **Ignorance and lack of sensitivity:** Female health that most men in our society are unaware of the pain most women undergo during their menstrual cycle

Impacts:

- ◆ **Less diversified Skills:** Women and men bring different skills and perspectives to the workplace, including different attitudes to risk and collaboration.
 - ▶ Lack of women participation makes the skill-set limited.
- ◆ **Production:** Adding more women to the labor force should bring larger economic gains than an equal increase in male workers (reflecting the fact that, in economists' jargon, the elasticity of substitution between women and men in production is low).
- ◆ **Lesser growth or stagnant growth:** Because women bring new skills to the workplace, the productivity and growth gains from adding women to the labor force (by reducing barriers to women's participation in the labor force) are larger than previously thought.

What measures could help enhance the role of women?

- ◆ **Improving access to education:** By increasing access to quality education for girls, as well as education and training programs that help women to develop the skills they need to participate in the workforce.
- ◆ **Providing support services:** Support services such as affordable childcare, healthcare, and transportation can help women to balance the demands of work and family life.
- ◆ **Encouraging women's participation in leadership roles:** Initiatives to promote women's leadership in politics, business, and other fields, as well as mentoring and networking programs that help women to develop the skills and connections they need to succeed.
- ◆ **Addressing discrimination and bias:** This includes efforts to combat discrimination and bias in the workplace, as well as in other areas of life.
- ◆ **Encouraging community participation:** Encouraging community participation and creating an enabling environment for women to take on leadership roles through creating platforms for dialogue, capacity-building, and networking.

RUPAY DOMESTIC CARD SCHEME AGREEMENT

Context: Recently, International Payments Limited (NIPL) has entered into a strategic partnership agreement with AI Etihad Payments (AEP) for Domestic Card Scheme (DCS) Implementation in UAE.

- ◆ NIPL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.

About the agreement:

- ◆ As per the agreement, NIPL and AEP will work together to build, implement, and operationalize UAE's **national domestic card scheme (DCS)**.
- ◆ The DCS will aim to facilitate the growth of **e-commerce and digital transactions** in the UAE, bolster financial inclusion, support the UAE's digitization agenda, increase alternate payment options, reduce the cost of payments, and enhance the UAE's competitiveness and position as a global payments leader.
- ◆ The partnership aligns perfectly with NIPL's mission to offer its knowledge and expertise to assist other countries in establishing their own cost-efficient and secure payment systems.

- ◆ The DCS solution is based on the principles of sovereignty, speed to market, innovation, digitization, and strategic independence.
- ◆ The DCS solution provided by NIPL consists of a RuPay stack and value-added services like fraud monitoring services and analytics.
- ◆ NIPL will also **assist AEP** in formulating the operating regulations for their domestic card scheme.

RuPay:

- RuPay is an **indigenous, highly secure, and widely accepted card payment network** in India.
- RuPay cards have **debit, credit, and prepaid propositions**.
- More than 750 Million RuPay cards are in circulation as of date. RuPay cards make up more than 60% of total cards issued in India, with every second Indian having a RuPay card now.
- These cards are issued through the entire **banking spectrum, including public sector, private, and small banks**.



INDIAN VOLUNTARY CARBON CREDIT (VCC) MARKET IS GROWING EXPONENTIALLY

Context: India's lucrative carbon market is worth over 1.2 billion dollars. It will only grow as the crisis of climate change becomes more urgent and companies strive to attain net-zero emission goals.

Background:

- ◆ In August last year, during a debate in the Parliament on the Amendments to the **Energy Conservation Act**, which proposed the creation of a **domestic carbon market**, has agreed that India would not allow any export of carbon credits until the nation meets its climate goals.
- ◆ Under the Paris Agreement of 2015, India has pledged to reduce the emissions intensity of its **GDP by 45 per cent by 2030, from the 2005 level**.
- ◆ These credits will have to be generated and bought by domestic industries.
- ◆ However, recently, India's power minister has announced at an event that the country was **open to the export of carbon credits**.

What are Carbon Credits?

- ◆ Carbon credits were devised as a mechanism to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by **creating a**

market in which companies can trade in emissions permits.

- Under the system, companies get a **set number of carbon credits**, which decline over time.
- They can sell any **excess to another company**.

India's Carbon Market:

- India has **1,451 projects registered** or under various stages of consideration at the world's two leading carbon registries.
- Carbon credits issued to Indian entities are worth **11% of India's annual greenhouse gas emissions** in 2021.
- Indian entities have already earned about **652 million dollars** from carbon credits used to offset emissions.

What is Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM)?

- The VCM gives companies, **non-profit organizations, governments, and individuals** the opportunity to **buy and sell carbon offset credits**.
- A carbon offset is an instrument that represents the reduction of one metric tonne of carbon dioxide or GHG emissions.
- Companies that are unable to reach their **greenhouse gas (GHG) emission targets** can purchase carbon offset credits by investing in environmental projects that can avoid, reduce, or remove carbon emissions.

Currently no centralized voluntary carbon credit market. Project developers can sell credits directly to buyers, through a broker or an exchange, or sell to a retailer who then resells to a buyer.=

Potential of VCC Derivatives in India:

- The National Stock Exchange (NSE) of India, in its quest to become a **multi-asset stock exchange**, is actively exploring opportunities in the voluntary carbon credit (VCC) market.
- The introduction of VCC derivatives can serve as a **catalyst for sustainable investments** by providing investors with a new avenue to participate in the carbon credit market.

How they can offset the Carbon Footprint?

- Carbon credits create a monetary incentive for companies to reduce their carbon emissions.
- Those that cannot easily reduce emissions can still operate, but at a higher financial cost.
- Proponents of the carbon credit system say that it leads to measurable, verifiable emission reductions.

Global Guidelines:

- The **United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** developed a carbon credit proposal to reduce worldwide carbon emissions in a 1997 agreement known as the Kyoto Protocol.
- The agreement set binding emission reduction targets for the countries that signed it.
- Another agreement, known as the **Marrakesh Accords**, spelled out the rules for how the system would work.
- The Kyoto Protocol divided countries into **industrialized and developing economies**.
 - Industrialized countries, collectively called Annex 1, operated in their own emissions trading market.
 - If a country emitted less than its target amount of hydrocarbons, it could sell its surplus credits to countries that did not achieve its Kyoto level goals, through an **Emissions Reduction Purchase Agreement (ERPA)**.



AMPHIBIAN CRISIS

Context: According to a new global assessment, **41% of species of the Earth's amphibians are now threatened with extinction.**

Key-highlights of the Report:

- Amphibians are in the worst shape among the vertebrates - with **27% of mammals, 21% of reptiles** and **13% of birds** found to be threatened with extinction in separate assessments.
- The state of the world's amphibians is direr now than at the time of the first such assessment in 2004, when 39% of species were threatened, according to updated data for that period.
- The researchers identified four amphibian species - a frog from Australia, a **frog from Guatemala**, a **salamander from Guatemala** and a **toad from Costa Rica** - that have disappeared since 2004.
- They also listed 185 species as "possibly extinct," with no known surviving population.
- The heaviest concentrations of threatened amphibians were found to be in the **Caribbean islands, Mexico and Central America, the tropical Andes region, India, Sri Lanka, Cameroon, Nigeria and Madagascar**.
- Who is to be blamed?**
 - Human activities and climate change.
 - Habitat destruction and degradation
 - Increasing disease (fungal pathogen that causes the disease **chytridiomycosis**)

Finding a species to be **threatened with extinction** means it has been evaluated as "critically endangered," "endangered" or "vulnerable" on **the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) "red list" of threatened species**, the global authority on wildlife extinction risk.

Who are Amphibians?

- Amphibians are **vertebrates** that require water to survive, are cold-blooded, and spend time both on land and in water.

There are **447 amphibian species** in India and over 5000 across the globe and approx 90% of them are frogs.

- Amphibians first appeared more than 300 million years ago.
- They are made up of frogs, toads, salamanders, newts, and caecilians (wormlike animals with poorly developed eyes).
- Three orders of amphibians exist today:
 - Salamanders and newts** (60% threatened with extinction)

- Frogs and toads** (39%)

- Limbless and serpentine caecilians** (16%)

- Since 2004, 306 species have crept closer to extinction.

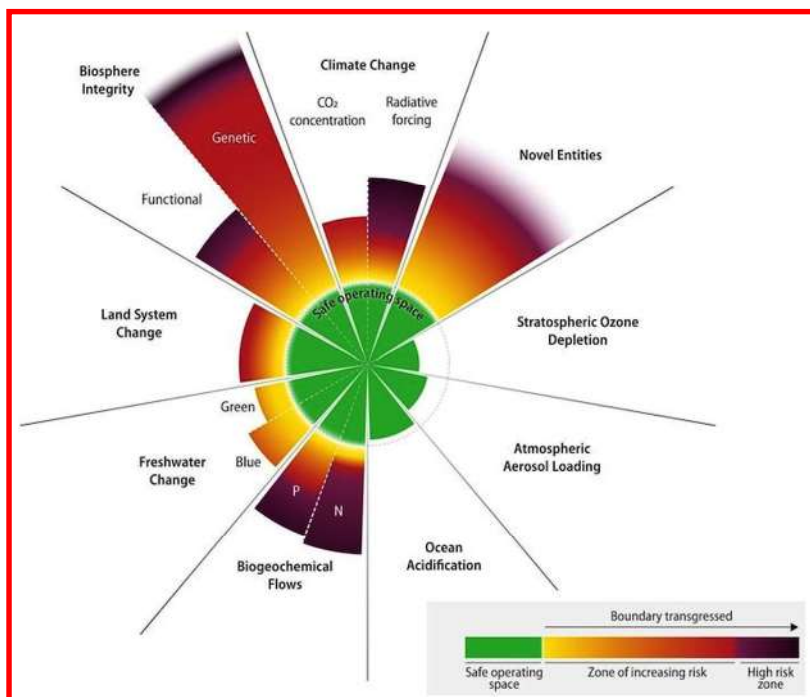
- Susceptibility (to threats):** They are extremely susceptible to environmental threats because of their porous eggs and semipermeable skin. Every major threat, from climate change to pollution to disease, affects amphibians and has put them at serious risk.

- Important features:**

- Cold-blooded
- Ectothermic
- Soft, absorbent skin (that needs to be kept moist)

Earth's sixth mass extinction

- Amphibian declines are in line with a larger global biodiversity crisis.
- More than a million plant and animal species are currently threatened with extinction, suggests the **Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)**, marking what many call **Earth's sixth mass extinction**.



Why do they matter?

Amphibians - frogs, toads, salamanders - are a critical part of nature as both predator and prey.

- Balanced food chain:** They eat insect pests which are a benefit to agriculture and help control mosquitos which benefits human health. Amphibians are also an important part of the food chain, providing food

resources for numerous animals from snakes to raptors.

- Medical value:** They are also important from a medical point of view. The skin of amphibians contains different types of peptides and offers the possibility of medical cures for several human diseases.
- Vital ecological indicators:** Due to a high degree

of sensitivity, they are studied and indicate habitat fragmentation, ecosystem stress, the impact of pesticides, and various anthropogenic activities

NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE & PEACE 2023

Context: Recently, the Nobel Prize for Literature and Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to Norwegian author Jon Fosse and Narges Mohammadi respectively.

About his contribution:

- ◆ Fosse was awarded the Nobel laureate award “for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable.”
- ◆ Known as “new Norwegian” and used by only about 10% of the country’s population, Fosse’s version of the language was developed in the 19th century with rural dialects at its base, making it an alternative to the dominant use of Danish that followed from a 400-year union with Denmark.
- ◆ In addition to more than two dozen plays, the prolific writer has also published novels, essays, collections of poetry and a string of children’s books over a period of four decades.



His work has been translated into more than 40 languages, and there have been more than 1,000 different productions of his plays.

Nobel Prize for Literature:

- ◆ The Nobel Prize in Literature is awarded by the Swedish Academy, Stockholm, Sweden.
- ◆ It is one of the five Nobel Prizes established by the will of Alfred Nobel in 1895.
- ◆ The Nobel Prizes carry a cash award of 11 million Swedish kronor (1 million Dollars) from a bequest left by their creator, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel.
- ◆ Fosse will receive the Nobel from King Carl XVI Gustaf, at a formal ceremony in Stockholm, at death anniversary of scientist Alfred Nobel.
- ◆ Winners also receive an 18-carat gold medal and diploma at the award ceremonies in December.

Nobel Peace Prize:

- ◆ Jailed Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2023 for her “fight against the oppression of women” in her country and for “promoting human rights and freedom for all”.

About:

- ◆ Narges Mohammadi is a woman, a human rights advocate, and a freedom fighter.
- ◆ The Iranian regime has arrested Narges Mohammadi 13 times, convicted her five times, and sentenced her to a total of 31 years in prison and 154 lashes. Mohammadi is still in prison.
- ◆ Mohammadi is the second Iranian woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Before her, Shirin Ebadi was awarded the prize in



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Section B [SPECIALS]

Topic

☞ Israel-Palestine Conflict: History, Wars & the Present Scenario



ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT: HISTORY, WARS & THE PRESENT SCENARIO

Context: Israel has declared war on the Palestinian militant group Hamas after it carried out an unprecedented attack by air, sea and land.

What happened (Background)?

- ◆ Militants from Gaza fired thousands of rockets towards Israeli towns, before breaking through the heavily fortified border fence with Israel and sending militants deep into Israeli territory.
- ◆ There, Hamas gunmen killed hundreds of people, including civilians and soldiers, and took hostages, sometimes from their homes.
- ◆ It took Israeli troops more than two days to take back control as fighting raged in the streets.
- ◆ Hamas called the operation "**Al-Aqsa Storm**" and said that the assault was a response to what it described as Israeli attacks on women, the desecration of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem and the ongoing siege of Gaza.
- ◆ The attacks were unprecedented in tactic and scale as Israel has not faced its adversaries in street battles on its own territory since the **1948 Arab-Israeli war**.
- ◆ In response to the attack, Israel has declared war and launched "**Operation Swords of Iron**,"

striking suspected Hamas and Islamic Jihad targets in **Gaza**.

How did the two sides get here?

- ◆ Tensions between Israelis and the Palestinians have existed since before Israel's founding in 1948.
- ◆ Thousands of people on both sides have been killed and many more injured over decades.
- ◆ Israel captured Gaza from Egypt in the 1967 war, and then withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005.

Gaza has been called the territory an "**open-air prison**." More than half of its population lives in poverty and is food insecure, and nearly 80% of its population relies on humanitarian assistance.

- ◆ The territory, home to some **2 million Palestinians**, fell under Hamas' control in 2007 after a brief civil war with Fatah, a rival Palestinian faction that is the backbone of the **Palestinian Authority**.
- ◆ After Hamas seized control, Israel and Egypt imposed a strict siege on the territory, which is ongoing. Israel also maintains an air and naval blockade on Gaza.



What is Hamas?

- ◆ Hamas is an **Islamist organization** with a military wing that came into being in 1987, emerging out of the **Muslim Brotherhood**, a **Sunni Islamist group** that was founded in the late 1920s in Egypt.
- ◆ The group, like most Palestinian factions and political parties, insists that **Israel is an occupying power** and that it is trying to liberate the Palestinian territories. It considers Israel an illegitimate state and has called for its downfall.

Timeline of War and Agreements:

- ◆ The Israel-Palestine conflict – often referred to as the ‘**world’s most intractable conflict**’ – is rooted in a dispute over land claimed by Jews as their biblical birthright and by the Palestinians, who seek self-determination. Despite repeated attempts to end the conflict between the two countries, there is no peace settlement in sight.
- ◆ **The Camp David Accords of 1978** changed politics in the region — Israel agreed to pull out of Sinai if Egypt were to establish diplomatic ties. Part of the framework of the Accords was to recognise the rights of the Palestinian people and the formation of an autonomous governing body in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.



- ◆ The **Oslo Accords of 1993 and 1995** led to the creation of the **Palestinian National Authority** with the Fatah-controlled administration controlling parts of the West Bank and, until 2006, the Gaza Strip.
- ◆ That year, Hamas, the **militant Palestinian organisation** founded in 1987 with the aim of armed resistance to Israeli occupation, won the elections.

The Location:

- ◆ Gaza Strip is a land between **Israel and Egypt**, the Mediterranean to its west.

- ◆ It is home to more than **20 lakh Palestinians** in an area barely **365 sq km in size**, one of the most densely populated regions on the planet

What does the Palestine wants?

- ◆ They want Israeli to withdraw from **pre-1967 borders** and establish an independent Palestine state in West Bank and Gaza.
- ◆ Israel should stop all expansion of settlements before coming to peace talks.
- ◆ Palestine wants Palestine refugees who lost their homes in 1948 to be able to come back.
- ◆ Palestine wants **East Jerusalem** as the capital of the Independent Palestine state.

Israel's say:

- ◆ Sovereignty over **Jerusalem**.
- ◆ Recognition of Israel as a Jewish State. Note: Israel is the only country in the world created for a religious community.
- ◆ The right of return of Palestine refugees only to Palestine and not to Israel.

Religious conflict:

- Jerusalem is a city that straddles the border between Israel and the West Bank.
- It's home to some of the holiest sites in **both Judaism and Islam**, and so both Israel and Palestine want to make it their cap the solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Israel's Defense mechanism: The Iron Dome system

- ◆ It is a short-range, **ground-to-air**, air defence system.
- ◆ It is used for countering **rockets, artillery & mortars (C-RAM)** as well as aircraft, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.
- ◆ **Components:** The Iron Dome has three main systems that work together to provide a shield over the area where it is deployed which are:
 - **Radar:** It has detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats.
 - **Weapon Control:** It has a battle management and weapon control system (BMC),
 - **Missile Fire:** It also has a missile firing unit. The BMC basically liaises between the radar and the interceptor missile.

How does it work?

- ◆ The Iron Dome has three main systems that work together to provide a shield over the area where it is **deployed, handling multiple threats**.
- ◆ It has detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats, a battle management and weapon control system (BMC), and a missile firing unit.
- ◆ The BMC basically liaises between the **radar and the interceptor missile**.
- ◆ It is capable of being used in **all weather conditions**, including during the day and night.

Impacts of Conflict:

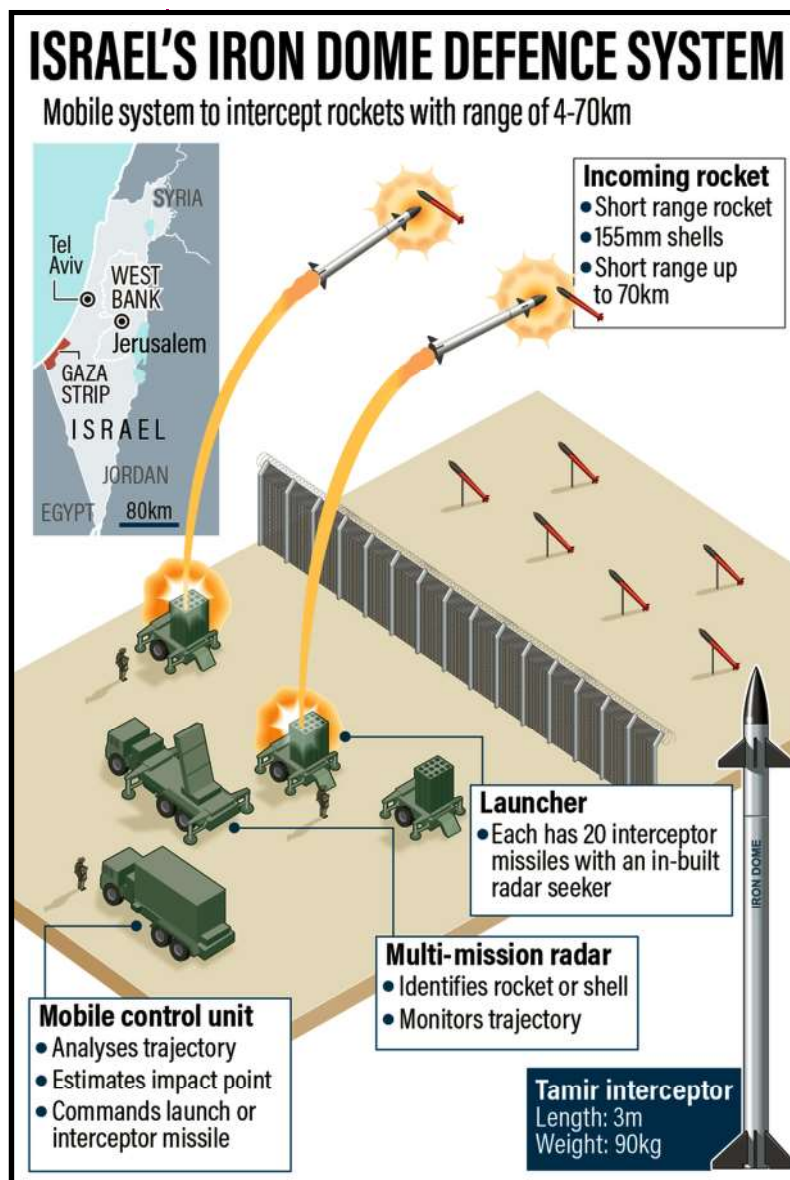
- ◆ Israel temporarily halted supplies from the Tamar gas field, located about 24 kilometers off Israel's southern coast.
- ◆ Located about 25 kilometres off the Israeli city of Ashdod along the country's southern Mediterranean coast, Tamar supplies account for **70 per cent of Israel's energy** demand for power generation.

Israel-Palestine conflict and US

- ◆ The US has been playing a significant role as the mediator in the Israel-Palestine. However, its credibility as a mediator had long been questioned by Palestinians.
- ◆ The United States has been criticized by the **OIC (Organization of Islamic cooperation)** and other Arab organizations, for vetoing most **Security Council decisions critical of Israel**.

Note: The USA has more Jews than Israel. Jews have significant control over **US media and the economy**.

- ◆ Also, Israel receives about **\$3 billion in direct foreign assistance** each year, which is roughly one-fifth of America's entire foreign aid budget.
- ◆ On the other side, United States has been vocal about its intention to veto any Palestinian bid for statehood. Due to which Palestine had to be satisfied with a '**non-member observer status in UN**'.
- ◆ However, the second term of the Obama administration saw a degrading US-Israel relationship. Iran Nuclear deal of 2015 irritated Israel and it criticized the US for the deal.



- ◆ Obama administration allowed the United Nations to pass a resolution that declared Israel's growing settlements in the occupied territories illegal. Until that vote, the Obama administration had blocked resolutions criticizing Israel by using its veto power in the UN Security Council.
- ◆ With the presidency regime under Trump, who was more inclined to Israel, the illegal settlements by Israel in West Bank and Gaza saw a rise.

The Gaza Strip and India:

- ◆ The Gaza Strip and West Bank constitute the **State of Palestine**, and India became one of the first countries to grant it recognition in **1988**.
- ◆ Eight years later, India opened a **representative office in Gaza**, which was shifted in 2003 to Ramallah, a city in the West Bank and the de facto capital of the State of Palestine.
- ◆ Indians call the Gaza Strip the '**Gaza Patti**'.

Ways of settlement:

- ◆ The best solution is a “**two-state solution**” that would establish Palestine as an independent state in Gaza and most of the West Bank, leaving the rest of the land to Israel.
 - Though the two-state plan is clear in theory, the two sides are still deeply divided over how to make it work in practice.
 - One state solution (**only Palestine or only Israel**) is not a viable option.
- ◆ **Road Map for Peace:** The **European Union, UN, US, and Russia** had released a road map in 2003, which outlined a clear timetable towards a Palestinian state.
 - The democratization of the Palestinian society

through which new credible leadership can emerge is necessary.

Conclusion:

The need of the hour is to treat this conflict as an Israeli-Arab conflict rather Israel-Palestine. As we have seen, conflict is not only between Israel and Palestine but also with other Arab countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Syria etc. All of them should participate in the negotiations and the final agreement should be recognized formally by each one of them along with UN general assembly and Security Council. It is time for the international community to find a just and lasting peaceful solution to the World's most intractable conflict soon.




Section C [PRELIMS]

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- ❧ Sri Lanka is going to hold chairmanship of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)
- ❧ Parliament to hold 'P20 Summit' with G20 member countries
- ❧ SC to hear petition challenging electoral bonds
- ❧ Information Disorder Tackling Unit
- ❧ One year of Tele-MANAS
- ❧ National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS)
- ❧ Government approves royalty rates for lithium, niobium, and rare earth
- ❧ RBI's Open Market Operation (OMO) plan
- ❧ ICAR-CIRG signs MoU to transform India's goat value chain
- ❧ Global Positioning System (GPS) Spoofing
- ❧ Multimodal artificial intelligence
- ❧ R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine
- ❧ Indian Air Force unveils its new ensign after 72 years
- ❧ Delhi air turns 'poor', time for GRAP-1
- ❧ Ganga-Ghagra basin canals pose a threat to dolphins: study
- ❧ Asiatic wild dog-tiger coexistence



SRI LANKA IS GOING TO HOLD CHAIRMANSHIP OF INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

Context: During the 23rd Council of Ministers' Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka took over the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

About the Ministers' meet:

- ◆ Sri Lanka's chairmanship of the association is going to remain from **2023 to 2025**.

The Council of Ministers is the **highest decision-making** body of IORA.


- ◆ **Area of Discussion:** The ministers will deliberate on ways to cooperate on the six priority areas including;
 - ▶ Trade and investment;
 - ▶ Maritime safety and
 - ▶ Security;
 - ▶ Fisheries management;
 - ▶ Disaster risk management and
 - ▶ Blue economy

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):

- ◆ Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is the largest and pre-eminent organisation in the Indian Ocean Region with **23 members and 10 dialogue partners**.
 - ▶ **Member countries:** Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, UAE, and Yemen.
 - ▶ **Newest country member:** France first joined IORA as a "Dialogue Partner" in 2001, before becoming a formal Member State on 17 December 2020 (with effect from 1 January 2021).
 - ▶ **Dialogue partners: 11 dialogue partners:** China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, US and UK.
- ◆ It was established in **1997** and is a regional forum that seeks to build and expand understanding and mutually beneficial cooperation through a consensus-based, evolutionary and non-intrusive approach.
- ◆ **Headquarters:** Its Secretariat is based in **Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius**.

◆ Roles and Functions:

- ▶ It manages, coordinates, services and monitors the implementation of policy decisions, work programmes and projects adopted by the member states.
- ▶ The association gains importance by the fact that the Indian Ocean carries half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments.
- ▶ It is a lifeline of international trade and transport and the Indian Ocean region is woven together by trade routes and commands control of major sea-lanes.



PARLIAMENT TO HOLD 'P20 SUMMIT' WITH G20 MEMBER COUNTRIES

Context: Recently India held the P20 conference, which saw the attendance of the speakers of G20 countries.

What is P20?

- ◆ P20 is a congregation of **Parliamentary Speakers** from the **Parliaments of G20 nations**.
- ◆ It is a meeting which pertains to Speakers and presiding officers of the Parliament from the G20 countries and invitee nations.
- ◆ The P20 group was set up during the G20 Presidency of Canada in 2010.
- ◆ The P20 provides an opportunity to deepen the recognition of G20 member nations' efforts and methods of international collaboration in related policies by deliberating upon emerging issues faced by the global community.

Key-highlights:

- ◆ P20 is being held for the ninth year.
- ◆ It will be held at the **Yashobhoomi**, the India International Convention and Expo Centre at Delhi's Dwarka.
- ◆ During the Parliament-20 meeting of the presiding officers of the G20 nations, presiding officers of 25 countries and 10 deputy speakers from the G20 member nations and invitee countries are expected to attend.
- ◆ **This year's Theme:** 'Parliaments for One Earth, One Family, One Future'

- ◆ **Important sessions:** 'Transformation in People's Lives through Public Digital Platforms', 'Women-led Development', 'Accelerating SDGs' and 'Sustainable Energy Transition'.

SC TO HEAR PETITION CHALLENGING ELECTORAL BONDS

Context: The Supreme Court has mentioned that it will hear petitions challenging the electoral bonds scheme on October 31, 2023.

Points made in the petition:

- ◆ The Association for Democratic Reforms, which monitors the criminal antecedents of the candidates of various parties, has alleged that the **ruling party had received more than 60% of total electoral bonds** in the audit of the parties in two years of 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- ◆ The NGO has noted that even the **Election Commission and the Reserve Bank of India** had in 2017 objected to the electoral bonds, advising against their issuance as a mode of donation to the political parties.
- ◆ Simply put, the scheme is said to be **"an obscure funding system which is unchecked by any authority"**.
- ◆ The government has all through defended the electoral bond scheme, describing it as completely transparent that takes care of unaccounted funding of the political parties.

Electoral bonds were introduced through **Finance Act 2017**, which amended three other statutes - **the RBI Act, the Income Tax Act and the Representation of People Act** for enabling introduction of such bonds.

What are electoral bonds?

- ◆ An electoral bond is a bearer instrument like a promissory note that can be purchased by citizens or entities to donate funds to political parties.
- ◆ Such bonds are issued in multiples of **Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1 lakh, Rs 10 lakh, and Rs 1 crore** at select branches of the **State Bank of India (SBI)**.
- ◆ Similar to bank notes, these bonds are payable to the bearer on demand and are interest-free.
- ◆ These bonds are available for **purchase for 10-day periods** each in the months of January, April, July and October.

- ◆ The Centre can specify an **additional period of 30 days** in the year of Lok Sabha elections.
- ◆ The political parties can **encash such bonds within 15 days** of receiving them.

Why they attract Criticism?

- ◆ **Contradicting its Basic Idea:** The scheme does the exact opposite of what it was meant to do i.e. to bring transparency to election funding.
- ◆ **Possibility of Extortion:** The fact that such bonds are sold via a government-owned bank (SBI) leaves the door open for the government to know exactly who is funding its opponents.
- ◆ **A Blow to Democracy:** Political parties are exempted from disclosing donations received through electoral bonds.
- ◆ **Against Free & Fair Elections:** Electoral bonds provide no details to the citizens.

INFORMATION DISORDER TACKLING UNIT

Context: The Karnataka government has begun working on a unit that will scrutinise complaints and monitor the internet for misinformation and hate speech.

- ◆ It comes against the backdrop of the Union government's attempts to create its **own fact-check unit**.

What is Fake News?

- Fake news refers to intentionally **fabricated or misleading information** presented as if it were real news.
- It can be spread through traditional media sources like **newspapers or television**, but it is more commonly associated with social media platforms and other online sources.

About the Plan:

- ◆ The plan to create such a unit — named the **Information Disorder Tackling Unit** — was first announced in June 2023.
- ◆ **Procedure:**
 - Before the fact check is made public, the review **a single point of contact (SPOC)**, appointed by the state government, must first approve initiating a fact check.
 - **SPOC** will also determine if the content violates a social media platform's policies, is **illegal, or needs to be blocked**.

- ▶ They will subsequently either inform the **social media company, or lodge a complaint (with the police)**, or refer the matter to the central government to recommend blocking under **Section 69A of the Information technology Act, respectively**.
- ◆ **Members:**
 - ▶ The fact check team will consist of independent fact check agencies whose fact checks must be **"unbiased and evidence based"**.
 - ▶ Its remit will be restricted to the jurisdiction of Karnataka.

Concerns:

- ◆ Fact-checking in India can come from public submissions or proactive searches. **State-appointed SPOCs** must approve the **fact-check process**.
- ◆ If needed, fact-checkers can request information from **state departments**. After analysis, an internal review takes place.
- ◆ The final step involves review by the **state-appointed SPOC**, which may affect editorial independence due to multiple approvals.

Laws related to fake News:

- ◆ The **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023** aim to tackle the dissemination of false or misleading information through the introduction of fact-checking units.
- ◆ In light of the detrimental impact of fake news, particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, governments worldwide have recognized the urgency to combat this menace.
- ◆ India, in particular, has experienced a surge in fake news related to the pandemic, making it crucial for the government to proactively address the issue.



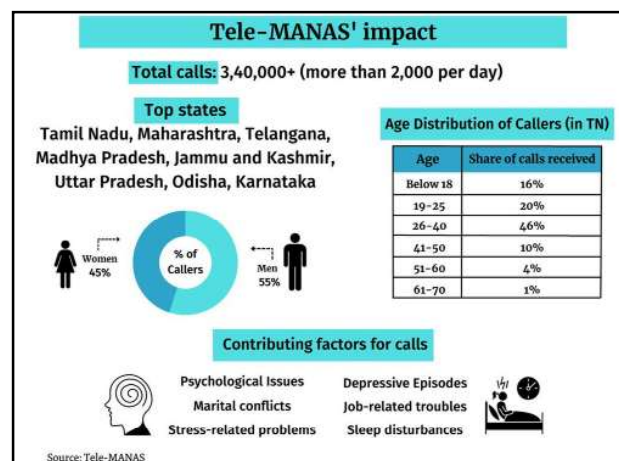
ONE YEAR OF TELE-MANAS

Context: The national tele mental health programme **Tele-MANAS** has counselled more than 3,50,000 people till date and over 1,000 calls are being received on this helpline every day.

About Tele-MANAS:

World Mental Health Day is observed on October 10th every year. The theme for the World Mental Health Day 2023 is **'Mental Health is a Universal Human Right'**.

- ◆ Tele-MANAS is India's round-the-clock mental health helpline.
- ◆ Launched in 2022 on the occasion of World Mental Health Day, the programme provides counselling to 2,000 people through its 44 Tele-MANAS cells, he said at the National Mental Health Conclave here organised to mark World Mental Health Day.
- ◆ It comprises two tiers:
 - ▶ **Trained counsellors** at State Tele-MANAS cells who provide immediate care
 - ▶ **Mental health professionals** (psychologists, clinicians, psychiatrists) at District Mental Health Programme (DMHP) who provide specialist care
- ◆ **NIMHANS, Bengaluru**, serves as the nodal centre while the International Institute of Information Technology (IIITB) in Bengaluru is tasked with providing the technical know-how for the helpline.



Need of the initiative:

- ◆ The helpline was a response to a mental health crisis inflamed by the COVID-19 pandemic: **isolation, financial precarity and illness** adversely impacted levels of **anxiety, depression** and **substance use disorders** globally.
- ◆ Estimates show that 70-92% of Indians do not receive medication or treatment for different mental conditions.

Other Government Initiatives:

- ◆ **National Mental Health Programme (NMHP):** Aim to be implemented in 704 districts for which support is provided to States/UTs through the National Health Mission.
- ◆ **Community Health Centre (CHC) and Primary Health Centre (PHC) levels** were established to address outpatient services, assessment, counselling/ psycho-social interventions, continuing care and support to persons with severe mental disorders, drugs, outreach services, ambulance services etc.

- ◆ **National Tele Mental Health Programme:** In Budget (2022-2023), India's Finance Minister announced the programme to improve access to quality mental health counselling and also care services.
- ◆ **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017:** It aims to provide mental healthcare services for persons with mental illness.
- ◆ **KIRAN:** The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has launched a 24/7 toll-free helpline to provide support to people facing anxiety, stress, depression, suicidal thoughts, and other mental health concerns.



NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CLIMATE SERVICES (NFCS)

Context: India is embarking on a major programme to launch its maiden national-level framework towards providing climate services and information.

About the framework:

- ◆ The framework envisions to bring a seamless working platform for users of climate information and services, and help decide and mitigate climate risks for key sectors — **agriculture, energy, disaster management, health and water.**
- ◆ It is based on the **Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS)**, which is a partnership of governments and organisations at a global level, for the production and better usage of climate information and services.
- ◆ The GFCS aims to facilitate researchers and users of climate information and services to join hands in order to make informed and actionable decisions for the long-term betterment.
- ◆ **Functions:**
 - ▶ The national framework will be based on **country-specific weather and stakeholder needs.**
 - ▶ The nodal agency for the formulation and implementation of the national framework in India will be the **Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).**
 - ▶ Along with the identified sectors of focus, India could add other relevant sectors like transport, tourism and other emerging sectors from time to time.
 - ▶ The NFCS will work in bridging functioning gaps between the various agencies who require climate services. These include the **hydrological, power, renewable energy, transport, dams and irrigation, health** agencies are central, state and other levels.

India has joined **Cuba, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Congo Brazzaville and Ethiopia**, where the NFCS-related national consultation workshops are being planned.

Need of such a framework:

- ◆ There is a need to have a complete composite of climatological information of all the weather parameters, in order to make **climate predictions.**
- ◆ There is a need to **integrate the weather and climate services.**

Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS):

- ◆ The announcement to establish a GFCS was made during the third World Climate Conference held in Geneva in 2009.
- ◆ GFCS envisages to generate high-quality data from national and international databases on temperature, rainfall, wind, soil moisture and ocean conditions and other vital weather parameters.
- ◆ This is aimed at creating long-term historical averages of these parameters, as well as maps, risk and vulnerability analyses, assessments and long-term projections and scenarios.
- ◆ This framework, led by **National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS)** in their respective nations, includes active participation of policymakers, planners, investors and vulnerable communities or sectors, as they need climate information and services in a user-friendly format, so that they can prepare for expected trends and changes in the long run.
- ◆ The five major components under GFCS are **Observations and Monitoring, Research, Modelling and Prediction, Climate Services Information System, User Interface Platform and Capacity Building.**
- ◆ At present, the priority sectors where the GFCS focuses upon are agriculture and food security, energy, health, water and disaster risk reduction.

Countries where the NFCS implementation is in **the advanced stages** include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Moldova, Niger, Senegal, Chad, Togo, Tanzania, Vanuatu and South Africa.

Indian Meteorological department (IMD):

- ◆ IMD was established in 1875.
- ◆ It is the **National Meteorological Service** of the

country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.

The IMD makes **daily weather forecasts** and season predictions for the winter, summer and the monsoon seasons.

- ◆ The Director General of Meteorology is the Head of the India Meteorological Department.
- ◆ There are **6 Regional Meteorological Centres**, each under a Deputy Director General with headquarters at **Mumbai, Chennai, New Delhi, Calcutta, Nagpur and Guwahati**.
- ◆ Its headquarters' is in **New Delhi**.
- ◆ At present IMD is under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**.



GOVERNMENT APPROVED ROYALTY RATES FOR LITHIUM, NIOBIUM, AND RARE EARTH

Context: Recently, the government sanctioned **royalty rates for three pivotal and strategic minerals – lithium, niobium, and rare earth elements (REEs)**.

About the move:

- ◆ The Cabinet's approval of specification of rate for royalty will enable the government to auction blocks for lithium, niobium and REEs for the first time for **the private sectors**.
- ◆ The royalty rates on these minerals are ---
 - ▶ Lithium **at 3% of the London Metal Exchange price**,
 - ▶ Niobium **at 3% of the average sale price**, both for primary and secondary sources, and
 - ▶ For REE the rate will be **1% of the average sale price** of rare earth oxide.

- Recently, **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment act, 2023**, was passed.
- The amendment, among other things, delisted **six minerals**, including **lithium and niobium**, from the list of atomic minerals, thereby allowing grant of concessions for these minerals to the private sector through auction.

What is a Royalty?

- ◆ A royalty is a legally binding payment made to an individual or company for the on-going use of their

assets, including copyrighted works, franchises, and natural resources.

- ◆ An example of royalties would be payments received by musicians when their original songs are played on the radio or television, used in movies, performed at concerts, bars, and restaurants, or consumed via streaming services.
- ◆ In most cases, royalties are revenue generators specifically designed to compensate the owners of songs or property when they license out their assets for another party's use.

Mineral royalties: Also called mineral rights, mineral royalties are paid by **mineral extractors to property owners**.

- The party that wants to extract the minerals will often pay the property owner an amount based on either revenue or units, such as barrels **of oil or tons of coal**.

Constituents of Royalty:

- ◆ Royalty payments typically constitute a percentage of the gross or net revenues obtained from the use of property.
- ◆ However, they can be negotiated on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the wishes of both parties involved in the transaction.
- ◆ An inventor or original owner may choose to sell their product to a third party in exchange for royalties from the future revenues the product may generate.
- ◆ For example, computer manufacturers pay Microsoft Corporation royalties for the right to use its Windows operating system in the computers they manufacture.



RBI'S OPEN MARKET OPERATION (OMO) PLAN

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently announced to potentially conduct **OMO sales of government securities** which impact the bond market, causing a **12 basis points rise in the 10-year bond yield to 7.34%**.

About the move:

- ◆ As, the Retail inflation at **6.83% in August** surprised the market.
- ◆ RBI may conduct OMO sales to control liquidity, given cash withdrawals during the festival season.

What is Open Market Operation (OMO)?

- ◆ Open market operations are conducted by the RBI by

way of sale or purchase of government securities (g-secs) to adjust money supply conditions.

- ◆ The central bank sells G-secs to suck out liquidity from the system and buys back g-secs to infuse liquidity into the system.
- ◆ These operations are often conducted on a day-to-day basis in a manner that balances inflation while helping banks continue to lend.
- ◆ The RBI uses OMO along with other monetary policy tools such as **repo rate, cash reserve ratio and statutory liquidity ratio** to adjust the quantum and price of money in the system.
- ◆ The Reserve Bank reserves the right to decide-
 - ▶ On the quantum of purchase/sale of individual securities
 - ▶ Accept bids/offers for less than the aggregate amount
 - ▶ Purchase/sell marginally higher/lower than the aggregate amount due to rounding-off
 - ▶ Accept or reject any or all the bid/offers either wholly or partially without assigning any reasons.

Impact on Money Supply:

- ◆ When RBI buys a Government bond in the open market, it pays for it by **giving a cheque**. This cheque increases the total amount of reserves in the economy and thus increases the money supply.
- ◆ Selling of a bond by RBI (to private individuals or institutions) leads to reduction in quantity of reserves and hence the money supply.

Government Securities (G-sec):

- A G-Sec is a tradable instrument issued by the **central government or state governments**. It acknowledges the Government's debt obligation.
- Short term securities (with original maturities of less than one year) are usually called **Treasury Bills**.
- Long term securities (with original maturities of more than one year or more) are usually called **Government Bonds or Dated Securities**.
- In India, the Central Government issues both treasury bills and bonds or dated securities while the State Governments issue only bonds or dated securities, which are called the **State Development Loans (SDLs)**.
- G-Secs carry practically **no risk of default** and, hence, are called **risk-free gilt-edged instruments**.
- Gilt-edged securities are high-grade investment bonds offered by governments and large corporations as a means of borrowing funds.

Importance of OMO:

- ◆ In India, liquidity conditions usually tighten during the second half of the financial year (mid-October onwards).
- ◆ This happens because the pace of government expenditure usually slows down, even as the onset of the festival season leads to a seasonal spike in currency demand.
- ◆ Moreover, activities of **foreign institutional investors, advance tax payments, etc.** also cause an ebb and flow of liquidity.
- ◆ However, the RBI smoothenes the availability of money through the year to make sure that liquidity conditions don't impact the ideal level of **interest rates** it would like to maintain in the economy.
- ◆ **Liquidity management:** Liquidity management is also essential so that banks and their borrowers don't face a cash crunch.
- ◆ The RBI buys G-Secs if it thinks systemic liquidity needs a boost and offloads them if it wants to mop up excess money.



ICAR-CIRG SIGNS MOU TO TRANSFORM INDIA'S GOAT VALUE CHAIN

Context: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research — Central Institute for Research on Goats (ICAR-CIRG) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Heifer India, a non-profit organization.

About the agreement:

- ◆ **Objective:** To enhance the lives of smallholder farmers and advance the goat farming sector in India and to forge a brighter future for all, transforming the **goat value chain**.



- ◆ The focus areas of the agreement include increasing goat productivity, providing advanced training in

breeding and healthcare practices and fostering sustainability throughout the goat value chain.

- ◆ The organisations have agreed to work towards boosting productivity along with generating employment opportunities and combat poverty in India's rural regions.
- ◆ Both organisations pledged to provide specialised training, unwavering support and essential resources to smallholder farmers and **Community Agro-Veterinary Entrepreneurs (CAVEs)**.
- ◆ **Significance:**
 - ▶ India's goat value chain and livelihoods of rural farmer communities is likely to see a boost.
 - ▶ Their focus areas include **elevating goat productivity, imparting advanced training in breeding and healthcare practices, and fostering sustainability within the goat value chain.**

India's Goat value chain:

- ◆ India has **135 million goat population**.
- ◆ The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) value of goat production is Rs. 386 billion.
- ◆ India being **second largest goat meat producer** has increased meat production from 0.47 to 0.596 million tons between 2002 and 2011 recording an annual growth rate of 2.4%.
- ◆ The goat production system in the country is categorized as;
 - ▶ Extensive Grazing (predominant in Odisha),
 - ▶ Tethering (Parts of Bihar and Eastern UP),
 - ▶ Semi-Intensive Production and
 - ▶ Intensive Production Systems.
- ◆ Women perform major activities in goat keeping while men play key role in marketing.
- ◆ Primary source of **goat nutrition** is through extensive grazing/browsing with zero to marginal supplements at homes.
- ◆ In addition, some of the challenges in goat feeding include **shortage of crop residue** with change in pulse cropping and stringent forest regulations.

Threats to Goat production and rearing:

- ◆ High mortality, especially of kids (up to 40%) due to diseases like **Peste des Petitis Ruminants (PPR)**, Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and poor management are major challenges in the goat sub-sector.
- ◆ **Non-availability of quality breeding stock** is another major challenge resulting in low productivity.

The **National Livestock Mission (NLM)** programme of the Government of India promotes small ruminant development initiatives by using the platforms of women's Self Help Groups (SHG) and also other cooperative structures.

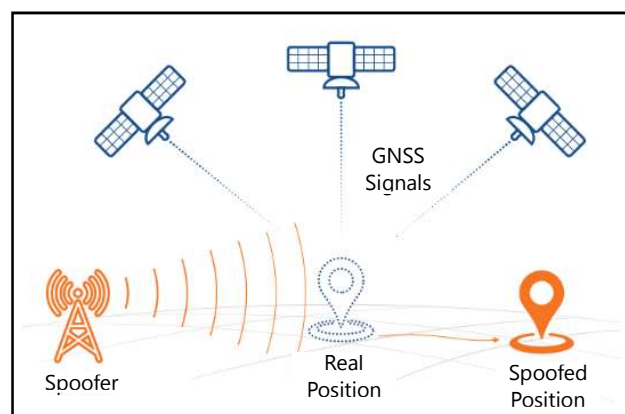


GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS) SPOOFING

Context: A committee has been established by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to keep an eye on GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) spoofing in Indian airspace.

What is GPS spoofing?

- ◆ An attempt to alter the initial location of a GPS-enabled device is known as **GPS spoofing**.
- ◆ GPS spoofing sends **false data** to a receiver to divert traffic, goods, or people with falsified information.
- ◆ **How is it done?** GPS spoofing involves a radio transmitter near a target that interferes with the actual GPS signals being transmitted.
 - ▶ GPS signals are often weak and transmitted through satellites.
 - ▶ A stronger radio transmitter can be used to override the weaker signal and send illegitimate coordinates and information to the receiver.
 - ▶ GPS spoofing can then send people off course or say that someone is somewhere that they are not.



Not the same as GPS jamming

GPS System:

- GPS is one of the global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) used in the world.

- Along with delivering location information, it is also used to keep accurate time.
- These functions can also be disrupted through spoofing or jamming.

- ◆ Spoofing is completely different from jamming and much more dangerous.
- ◆ As the name suggests, jamming is when the GPS signals are interfered with.
- ◆ While planes and other aircraft frequently deal with jamming, spoofing like the recent instances in Iran is reportedly unheard of.
- ◆ Compared to GPS jamming, spoofing is more difficult to detect.

Increasing instances

- ◆ Instances of GPS spoofing involving commercial and airline aircraft over Iranian airspace have increased.
- ◆ The navigation systems of at least 20 passenger planes travelling over Iran have been interfered with by phoney GPS signals.
- ◆ **Boeing 777, 737, and 747** are among the aircraft that were deceived into deviating from their intended route by these erroneous signals originating from the ground.
- ◆ These signals defeated the aircraft's in-built navigation system, which swiftly resulted in the loss of all navigational capabilities.

What are the harms of GPS spoofing?

- ◆ Misdirecting cargo shipments to alternate locations to steal the shipments
- ◆ Hijacking a boat for piracy purposes
- ◆ Interfering with GPS at airports
- ◆ Misdirecting cars
- ◆ Disrupting the universal time source
- ◆ Disrupting services through mobile apps and websites



MULTIMODAL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Context: After a report by *"The Information"* revealed that Google's new released multimodal large language model called 'Gemini' was already being tested in a bunch of companies.

Google is also working on a new project called 'Gobi' which is expected to be a **multimodal AI system** from scratch, unlike the GPT models.

About multimodal AI:

- ◆ Multimodal AI combines different types of information **like text, images, and audio** to perform various tasks, such as detecting hateful memes or predicting dialogue lines in videos.
- ◆ Models like **OpenAI's DALL·E** use this approach to generate images based on **text prompts**, by finding patterns that connect visual data with image descriptions.
- ◆ In the case of audio, **OpenAI's Whisper**, a **speech-to-text** translation model, enables the system to recognize speech in audio and convert it into simple text.

Applications of Multimodal AI:

- ◆ Meta introduced a complex open-source AI system called **ImageBind**, which incorporates text, visual data, audio, temperature, and movement readings.
 - This system hints at the possibility of future AI including more sensory data like **touch, smell, and brain signals**.
- ◆ Industries like medicine and autonomous driving benefit from multimodal AI.
 - It helps analyze complex datasets in areas like identifying rare genetic variations and processing **CT scans**.
 - Additionally, speech translation models like **Google Translate** use multiple modes for efficient translation across different languages.



R21/MATRIX-M MALARIA VACCINE

Context: The **R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine** developed by the University of Oxford and the Serum Institute of India has been recommended for use by the World Health Organisation (WHO) for use in Africa for children under five years.

- ◆ It is the age group and the continent that bears the burden of a disease that kills more than **6 lakh people** a year. Hence, this vaccine can become a game-changer in eradicating malaria.

Last year, the WHO formally endorsed **Mosquirix**, the **world's first Malaria vaccine** for the disease that was developed by GSK Plc and its partners.

About R21 vaccine:

- ◆ The R21, otherwise referred to as **Matrix-M malaria**

vaccine, is the second vaccine ever developed for a disease.

- ◆ Since 2015, **9 countries** have been certified by the WHO Director-General as malaria-free, including Maldives, Sri Lanka, Kyrgyzstan, Paraguay, Uzbekistan, Argentina, Algeria, China (2021) and El Salvador (2021).

Malaria burden across the World:

- ◆ According to the latest World malaria report, there were 247 million cases of malaria in 2021 compared to 245 million cases in 2020.
- ◆ In 2022 there were over 45 thousand cases of malaria reported in India.
- ◆ Children under five years of age accounted for about 80 per cent of all malaria deaths in the WHO African Region.

About Malaria:

- ◆ It is a **mosquito-borne blood disease** caused by **plasmodium protozoa**.
- ◆ The parasites spread through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- ◆ **Cause:** It is a life threatening disease caused by plasmodium parasites.
- ◆ **Transmission:**
 - ▶ The parasites spread through the bites of infected **female Anopheles mosquitoes**.
 - ▶ In the human body, parasites initially multiply in liver cells and then attack the **Red Blood Cells (RBCs)**.
 - ▶ There are **5 parasite species** that cause Malaria in humans and 2 of these species (Plasmodium falciparum and Plasmodium vivax) pose the greatest threat.

Why it is difficult to develop a vaccine?

- ◆ The parasites that cause the deadly disease are prone to mutations that allow them to develop resistance to treatments.

Initiatives against Malaria

- ◆ **Global Initiatives:**
 - ▶ The WHO has also identified 25 countries with the potential to eradicate malaria by 2025 under its 'E-2025 Initiative'.
 - ▶ The WHO's Global technical strategy for malaria 2016–2030 aims to reduce malaria case incidence and mortality rates by at least 40% by 2020, at least 75% by 2025 and **at least 90% by 2030** against a 2015 baseline.

- ▶ WHO has initiated the High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) initiative in 11 high malaria burden countries, including India.
- ▶ Implementation of "High Burden to High Impact (HBHI)" initiative has been started in four states i.e. West Bengal and Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

◆ India's Initiatives:

- ▶ The Government of India set a target to **eliminate malaria in India by 2027**.
- ▶ It developed a **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (2016-2030)**
- ▶ National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination for 5 years.
- ▶ It shifted focus from Malaria control to elimination.
- ▶ It provided a roadmap to end malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.
- ▶ Malaria Elimination Research Alliance-India (MERA-India)
- ▶ Established by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)



INDIAN AIR FORCE UNVEILS ITS NEW ENSIGN AFTER 72 YEARS

Context: Indian Air Force (IAF) has unveiled the Air Force's new ensign at the annual Air Force Day parade at Prayagraj.

- ◆ This is the first change to the **ensign since 1951**, when the Royal Indian Air Force (RIAF) ensign was changed to make it look 'Indian'.

About the New ensign:

- ◆ The IAF ensign was created by replacing the Union Jack with the **Indian tricolour** and the RAF roundels with the **IAF tricolour roundel** in the lower right canton.
- ◆ **A new IAF ensign set to;**
 - ▶ Be unveiled tomorrow has the Air Force crest in the top right corner. The crest has the national symbol, the Ashoka lion, on the top with the words 'Satyameva Jayate' in Devanagari below it.
 - ▶ A Himalayan eagle, with its wings spread, has a ring in **light blue colour** encircling it with words "Indian Air Force".
 - ▶ The existing motto of the IAF "Touching the sky with Glory" taken from the verse 24, Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gita will remain on the ensign.

The IAF motto has been taken from **verse 24, Chapter 11 of the Bhagavad Gita** and means "**Radiant Thou Touchedst Heaven**" or, in other words, "**touching the sky with glory**".



DELHI AIR TURNS 'POOR', TIME FOR GRAP-1

Context: Stage one of the revised Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) is likely to be activated in Delhi due to increasing pollution levels.

What is GRAP?

- GRAP is a **comprehensive strategy** designed to combat air pollution in cities across India. It consists of four stages, each tailored to address specific air quality concerns.
- It is an **emergency response mechanism** based on **AQI level** of Delhi and brings together multiple stakeholders, implementing agencies and authorities to respond to situations of deteriorating air quality in Delhi-NCR.
- Implementing Agency:** Committee for Air Quality Management (statutory body)

Stage	Quality	AQI	Measure
Stage I	'Poor' Air Quality	DELHI AQI ranging between 201-300	Initial measures to address deteriorating air quality.
Stage II	'Very Poor' Air Quality	DELHI AQI ranging between 301-400	Focused actions and intensified remedial measures in identified hotspots.
Stage III	'Severe' Air Quality	DELHI AQI ranging between 401-450	Stricter restrictions on "plying of BS III petrol and BS IV diesel LMVs (4 wheelers) in Delhi and in the districts of Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddh Nagar."
Stage IV	'Severe +' Air Quality	DELHI AQI > 450	The most stringent measures to tackle the worst air quality conditions. "Do not permit Light commercial vehicle (LCVs) registered outside Delhi, other than EVs / CNG / BS-VI diesel, to enter Delhi, except those carrying essential commodities / providing essential services," as per Stage 4 restrictions.

- A reading between zero and 50 on the AQI is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.
- Revision:** GRAP was revised in July 2023 with the aim of bolstering measures against deteriorating air quality as a result of rising stubble burning during the winter months.



GANGA-GHAGRA BASIN CANALS POSE A THREAT TO DOLPHINS: STUDY

Context: A recent publication by researchers has revealed that 19 Gangetic river dolphins had been rescued from the irrigation canals of the Ganga-Ghagra basin in Uttar Pradesh between 2013 and 2020.

Details about the publication:

- Title: '**Rescuing Ganges river dolphins (*Platanista gangetica*) from irrigation canals in Uttar Pradesh, North India, 2013-2020**'.
- The publication details about:
 - Highlights the capture and relocation methods
 - Describes the behavioral and demographic details of rescued animals and locations of these canals where the animals had been trapped

Key findings:

- 24 rescue operations had been conducted from 2013 to 2020 (19 successful rescue operations) and five dolphins had died.
- Dams and barrages had severely affected this habitat as dolphins moved into irrigation canals where they were at a risk of injury or death from multiple factors, such as rapidly receding waters, heat stroke and human interferences.
- The dolphins may either stray into the canal while

following prey upstream or get flushed into the canal by a sudden discharge of water from the barrage gates.

- Over **70% of entrapments** were reported either **post monsoon** or during **peak winter**.

About Ghagra River Basin:

- The river begins on the southern slopes of the Himalayas in Tibet, in the Mapchachungo glaciers, at an elevation of about 3962 meters.
- The river flows south through Nepal as the Karnali River, passing through one of Nepal's most desolate and unexplored regions.
- The **Seti River**, which drains the western part of the catchment and joins the Karnali River in Doti north of Dunderas Hill, is a 202-kilometer-long stream that feeds this river.
- The **Bheri River**, which runs for 264 kilometres through the eastern part of the Catchment and converges with the Karnali River near Kuineghat in Surkhet, is another feeder stream.

Key Facts:

- Ghagra** is the Left-Bank tributary of Ganga.
- Rara National Park** and **Royal Bardia Wildlife Park** are two other parks along the river's banks of Ghagra River.

Global efforts to protect dolphins:

- In 2016, the **International Whaling Commission's (IWC)** scientific committee recognized that both Ganges and Indus river dolphins require prompt and coordinated action to protect them from imminent threats.
- In 2017, the IWC created the **Asian River Dolphin Task Team (AR-TT)** to identify information gaps and research priorities and develop concerted action for the protection of the Ganges and Indus river species in their range.

Ganges river dolphins (*Platanista gangetica*)

- The Ganges river dolphin can **only live in freshwater** and is essentially blind.
- They hunt by emitting **ultrasonic sounds** or by echolocation.
- They are frequently found alone or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.
- Females are larger than males and give birth once **every two to three years** to only one calf.
- Gangetic dolphins are the **National aquatic animal of India**.



- National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has accorded the 5th October as National Dolphin Day in 2022.

Conservation Status:

- The Ganges river dolphin is in;
 - Schedule 1 of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972,**
 - Appendix 1 of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)**
 - Appendix 1 of the **Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)** and
 - It is as **"endangered"** on the IUCN Red List.



ASIATIC WILD DOG-TIGER COEXISTENCE

Context: The study through camera traps in western Assam's Manas National Park revealed that overlapping prey availability or habitat suitability could dictate a positive association between dholes and tigers, facilitating co-existence.

Findings of the study:

- The study revealed that the diurnal activity of the dholes had the highest temporal overlap with leopards and the lowest with clouded leopards.
- Objective:** The hypotheses included conflict with humans on the periphery of protected areas as the primary threat to dholes, higher habitat utilisation where small-medium prey species such as rodents, hares, and rhesus macaques, and a negative relationship between dhole habitat use and other large carnivores.
- The study was conducted to analyse, the **sympatrids of Dhole population**.

Sympatric refers to **animals, plant species, and populations** within the same or overlapping geographical areas.

- ◆ The findings also revealed a surprising positive relationship between dhole habitat use and tiger, rejecting the habitat exclusivity hypothesis.
- ◆ This unexpected result challenges the assumption of antagonistic interactions between these two species and suggests a more complex ecological dynamic.
- ◆ The positive association could be attributed to factors such as overlapping prey availability or habitat suitability, which may facilitate co-existence or even cooperative behaviours between **dholes and tigers**.

About Dhole (Asiatic Wild Dog):

- ◆ **Geographic Range:** From the Altai Mountains in Manchuria in Central and Eastern Asia, its range spreads southwards through the forest tracts of **India, Burma, and the Malayan Archipelago**.
- ◆ Three races of the **dhole exist in India alone**.
- ◆ **Habitat:** Dholes like open spaces and can often be found on jungle roads, river beds, jungle clearings, and paths, where they rest during the day.
 - ▶ The dhole is a highly social animal, living in large clans without rigid dominance hierarchies and containing multiple breeding females. Such clans usually consist of 12 individuals, but groups of over 40 are known.



◆ Conservation:

- ▶ The dhole is protected under Schedule 2 of the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- ◆ In 2014, the Indian government sanctioned its first dhole conservation breeding centre at the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park (IGZP) in Visakhapatnam.
- ◆ The global population of adult dholes, now classified as endangered on the **International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List**, is estimated to be **between 949 and 2,215 individuals**, scattered in localised areas of India and Thailand.
- ◆ **Threats:** Factors contributing to this decline include **habitat loss, loss of prey, and competition** with other species, persecution, and disease transfer from domestic dogs.



Section D [QUIK BYTES]

- ☞ Udangudi Panangkarupatti
- ☞ GI Tag to cashew of Goa
- ☞ Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)
- ☞ Operation Ajay
- ☞ Rajasthan gets three new districts
- ☞ District Mineral Foundation (DMF)
- ☞ Indian Cooperative Network for Women
- ☞ World Space Week
- ☞ Gaganyaan Mission
- ☞ World Cerebral Palsy Day
- ☞ 2023 Asian Games

[PERSONALITY IN NEWS]

- ☞ Shri Ramalinga Swamy (5 October 1823 – 30 January 1874)

[LOCATION IN NEWS]

- ☞ Georgian region of Abkhazia
- ☞ Baltic-Connector Pipeline

[SPECIES IN NEWS]

- ☞ Red-rumped Hawklet

Udangudi Panangkarupatti



❖ The **Intellectual Property of India (IPI)** has conferred a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for the famous '**Udangudi Panangkarupatti**'.

About:

- 'Udangudi Panangkarupatti' is primarily associated with the state of Tamil Nadu in India.
- It is a product that has received a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** for its unique characteristics, including sucrose concentration, sap collection method, traditional preparation, and packaging methods.

The GI tag recognizes the product's association with a specific geographical region and acknowledges its distinctiveness due to factors such as the **local environment, traditional knowledge, and production methods**.

- The 'Udangudi Panangkarupatti' is also referred to as **palm jaggery**, which is prepared using the palm sap collected from the inflorescence of palmyra trees that grow on the red sand dunes in and around the Tiruchendur region, such as Srivaikuntam, Thoothukudi, Eral, Sathankulam, and Tiruchendur taluks.

GI Tag to cashew of Goa



❖ Recently, the **Goan cashew (kernel)** got the geographical indication (GI) tag.

About:

- The application for the GI tag for **the Goan cashew** — derived from the Portuguese name '**caju**' or '**kaju**' in Konkani — was filed by the Goa Cashew Manufacturers' Association (GCMA), with the Department of Science, Technology and Waste Management, Government of Goa, acting as facilitator.
- Particularly, the larger size cashew nuts are unique to Goa.
- **Zantye's cashews** are harvested in the farms of Sanquelim, implementing the organic method of cultivation that is responsible for the production of high-quality cashew nuts.
- Cashews are native to **North-eastern Brazil** and South-eastern Venezuela — they were distributed around the world in the 1500s by the Portuguese.
- The cashew finally reached the **coastal state of Goa**, India, around the 16th century.
- From here, it spread throughout **Southeast Asia and eventually Africa**.

Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)



India has been elected president of the **Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD)** General Conference (GC) for the third successive term.

About the organization:

- Established in 1977 under UNESCO, this international organisation comprises **92 member organisations from 44 countries**.
- These include **26 government members** represented by 48 broadcasting authorities, along with 44 affiliates represented by **28 countries** and regions across Asia, the Pacific, Europe, Africa, Arab States, and North America.
- India is one of the **founding members** of the group.
- India is the current President of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) General Conference (GC).
- Prasar Bharati**, India's public service broadcaster represents the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, at the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development.

Operation Ajay



As the **Israel-Hamas war** escalated, many countries including India are trying to safeguard native people trapped in the fighting. India has announced to launch '**Operation Ajay**' to repatriate its citizens from Israel and Palestine.

About the Operation:

- Under the mission, the Indian government will facilitate the return of Indian citizens through special chartered flights.
- Indian Navy ships will also be pressed into service should the need arise.

- There are around **18,000 Indian citizens** living and working/studying in Israel.
- Majority of people work as caregivers but there are also about **1,000 students, several IT professionals and diamond traders**.

Rajasthan gets three new districts

Rajasthan Government announced the formation of **three new districts** in the state.

Key-highlights

- New districts:** Malpura, Sujangarh and Kuchaman City
- With the addition of the three districts, the total number of districts in the state has now reached 53.



- Earlier in August, the state government announced 17 new districts and redrawn the two large urban districts – **Jaipur and Jodhpur**.

Procedure to form a new District

- The power to create **new districts or alter or abolish existing districts** rests with the **State government**.
- This can either be done through an **executive order or by passing a law** in the State Assembly.
- The Centre has **no role to play** in the alteration of districts or the creation of new ones. States are free to decide on this matter.

District Mineral Foundation (DMF)



The Government launched **Pradhan Mantri Khanij Kshetra Kalyan Yojna (PMKKKY)** to be implemented by the **DMFs** of the respective fields to ameliorate the condition of mining affected persons and create a win-win situation for the stakeholders.

About:

- District Mineral Foundation (DMF) is a trust set up as a non-profit body, in those districts affected by the mining works, to work for the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining related operations.
- It is funded through the contributions from miners.
- Its manner of operation comes under the jurisdiction of the relevant State Government.
- The objective of the DMF is to work for the interest and benefit of the persons and areas affected by mining related activities in such manner as may be prescribed by the state government.

Indian Cooperative Network for Women



Nandini Azad, president of the **Chennai-based Indian Cooperative Network for Women (ICNW)**, has been elected to the board of the **International Raiffeisen Union (IRU)**, one of the oldest cooperative bodies in the world responsible for evolving a global policy on cooperatives in agriculture and other allied sectors.

About Indian Cooperative Network:

- **Vision:**
 - To challenge socio-economic inequalities through social mobilization of marginalized women.
 - To enable sustainable livelihood towards self-reliance through viable financial and other support services.

• **Objectives:**

- To alleviate poverty and enhance Socio-economic development of poor women.
- To improve women's access to economic resources.
- To promote women's participation and leadership in decision making at all levels through collective consciousness.
- To promote equal opportunities for poor marginalized women through self-help, self-management process.
- To provide financial services predominantly for poor women.
- To provide relevant training for leadership, financial literacy, healthcare, skill training, etc., towards enhancement of micro-entrepreneurship and women's empowerment.

World Space Week



The **World Space Week (4-10 October)** is the largest annual space event in the world.

About:

- World Space Week was after a resolution was passed by the UN General Assembly on December 6, 1999.
- The UN General Assembly proclaimed World Space Week to celebrate the contributions of space science and technology to the betterment of the human condition.
- The beginning and closing dates of World Space Week were chosen to commemorate two significant events in space exploration.
- One of them occurred on October 4, 1957, when the first human-made Earth satellite, Sputnik 1, was launched.
- On October 10, 1967, a treaty was signed to ensure the peaceful use of Outer Space, including the Moon and other celestial bodies.
- Hence, thousands of people from around the world participate to celebrate the week between October 4 and October 10 every year.

The theme of **World Space Week 2023** is "Space and Entrepreneurship". Each year a theme is selected by the World Space Week Association Board of Directors in close coordination with the UN Office of Outer Space Affairs.

Gaganyaan Mission



ISRO is all set to carry out the first of several test flights ahead of the Gaganyaan mission on October 21, 2023.

About Gaganyaan mission

- The Gaganyaan mission aims to **demonstrate the capability to launch human beings** (three crew members) to **low earth orbit (LEO)** and bring them back safely to earth by landing them in either the **Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea**.
- Launch Vehicles:** The **Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3)** is the launch vehicle for the **Gaganyaan mission**.
 - All systems in the **LVM3 launch vehicle** are reconfigured to meet human rating requirements and named **Human Rated LVM3 (HLVM3)**.

World Cerebral Palsy Day



World Cerebral Palsy Day is celebrated every year on **October 6th**.

What is Cerebral Palsy (CP)?

- CP is the most common **motor disability** in childhood.
- Cerebral means having to do with the brain. Palsy means weakness or problems with using the muscles.
- CP is caused by **abnormal brain development** or damage to the developing brain that affects a person's ability to **control his or her muscles**.

About the day:

- The event is a global observance which aims to highlight on **cerebral palsy (CP)** and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.
- This day serves as a platform to raise awareness about CP, support those living with the condition, and advocate for greater inclusion and understanding.
- The theme for World Cerebral Palsy Day in 2023 is **"Together Stronger."**
- This theme highlights the importance of unity, collaboration, and mutual support within the cerebral palsy community and beyond.

Significance:

- It emphasizes that when **individuals, families, caregivers, and communities** come together, they become a powerful force for positive change and inclusion.
- Children and adults affected by cerebral palsy often face challenges that hinder their full participation in society.

2023 Asian Games



The **2023 Asian Games in Hangzhou** has been the best ever continental games for India. In this 19th edition of the Asian Games, India grabbed a record **107 medals** – a big jump from its previous best of 70 in the **2018 Jakarta Asian Games**.

Key-highlights:

- India finishes fourth in overall standings.
- Out of these 107 medals, 55 medals were won in individual events and 52 medals were won in team events.
- States with Most Medal Winners in Asian Games 2023
 - With 14 medal winners, **Haryana** has produced the highest number of medalists in individual events of the 2023 Asian Games.
 - While seven medal winners hail from **Uttar Pradesh**, six are from **Telangana**, and four each from **Kerala**, **Maharashtra**, and **Madhya Pradesh**.
 - **West Bengal**, **Tamil Nadu**, and **Delhi** have 2 medalists each.
 - Players from **Rajasthan**, **Odisha**, **Manipur**, **Karnataka**, **Assam** and **Andhra Pradesh** won one medal each.

Asian Games

- The Asian Games, also known as **Asiad**, is a **continental multi-sport event** held every fourth year among athletes from all over Asia.
- The Asian Games is recognised by the **International Olympic Committee** and is the **second largest multi-sport event** after the **Olympics**.

PERSONALITY IN NEWS

Shri Ramalinga Swamy (5 October 1823 – 30 January 1874)



Recently, the Prime Minister commemorated the **200th birth anniversary** of Shri Ramalinga Swamy also known as '**Vallalar**'.

About the Personality:

- He was a **social reformer, a saint and a poet**.
- Arutprakasa Vallalar Chidambaram Ramalingam was his full name.
- He is commonly known in India and across the world as Vallalar, Ramalinga Swamigal, or Ramalinga Adigal.
- He is also one of the greatest Tamil poets of the 19th century belonging to a line of Tamil saints known as '**gnana siddhars**'.
- According to **Suddha Sanmarga**, the prime aspects of human life should be love, connected with charity and divine practice, leading to pure knowledge.

- He wanted the youth to be fluent in **Tamil, Sanskrit and English**.
- His teachings aimed to work for an equal society.
- In 1867, he established a free food facility named '**The Sathya Dharma Salai**' in Vadalur. There all people are served free food without any caste distinctions.
- On 25 January 1872, Ramalingam opened the '**Sathya Gnana Sabha**' (Hall of True Knowledge) at Vadalur.
- **Teachings:** One of the primary teachings of Vallalar is 'Service to Living Beings is the path of Liberation/ Moksha'.

LOCATION IN NEWS

Georgian region of Abkhazia



Russia has signed a deal with the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia to set up a naval base on the Black Sea coast.

About:

- Abkhazia lies in the **north-western corner of Georgia** and borders **Russia**.
- It is situated in the north-western corner of Georgia with the **Black Sea** to the south-west and the **Caucasus mountains** and Russia to the north-east.
- The region fought a war of secession with Georgia from 1992-93 and declared independence in 1999, but has little international recognition.
- In 2014, Russia and Abkhazia sign a "**strategic partnership**" agreement. Georgia accuses Moscow of seeking to annex Abkhazia.

Baltic-Connector Pipeline



A subsea gas pipeline, the **Baltic-connector**, connecting Finland and Estonia under the **Baltic Sea** has been likely damaged by "outside activity".

What is Balticconnector?

- The Balticconnector pipeline connects **Inkoo** in **Finland** and **Paldiski** in **Estonia**, with its subsea section running 77 km (48 miles) across the **Gulf of Finland**, an arm of the **Baltic Sea** that stretches eastwards into Russian waters and ends at the **port of St Petersburg**.

SPECIES IN NEWS

Red-rumped Hawklet

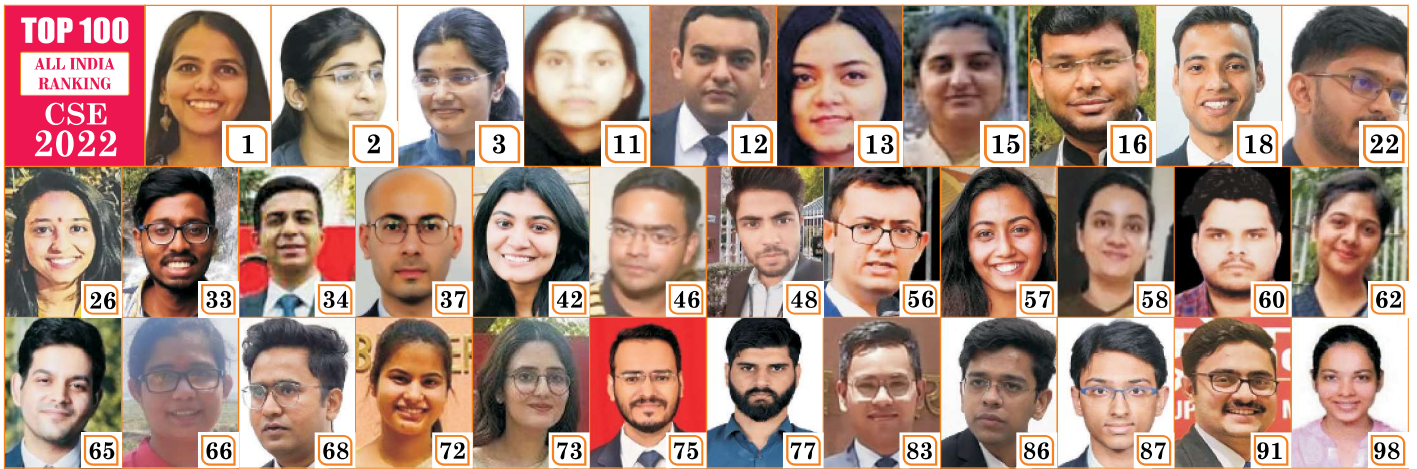


A new dragonfly species named **Christened Red-rumped Hawklet**, has been discovered in the verdant landscapes of Wayanad.

About:

- A new dragonfly species has been discovered in the verdant landscapes of Wayanad.
- Christened Red-rumped Hawklet, the dragonfly has been given the scientific nomenclature *Epithemis wayanadensis*, to mark the lush and biodiverse Wayanad plateau nestled in the Western Ghats.
- This newfound species is distinguished by its darker pigmentation, a restricted red coloration on the abdomen, and the absence of the yellow antehumeral stripe.
- This dragonfly species is profoundly seasonal, taking to the skies exclusively during the month of October.





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