

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 4
NOVEMBER
2023

MAINS

GS-I

- ❑ SOCIAL JUSTICE, SEXUAL EDUCATION, THE NEED OF OUR TIMES
- ❑ FEMICIDES AT 20-YEAR PEAK ACROSS THE GLOBE

GS-II

- ❑ THE CHALLENGE OF MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH
- ❑ MGNREGA AND SOCIAL AUDIT: A SAGA OF 'ON PAPER PERFECTION' AND 'ON GROUND PERFDY'
- ❑ CENTRE EXEMPTS CERT-IN FROM AMBIT OF RTI ACT
- ❑ CONSTITUTIONALITY OF GOVERNOR'S VETO POWER OVER BILLS
- ❑ ALL INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE
- ❑ TURMERIC BOARD SET TO BE A REALITY
- ❑ ENHANCING DEMOCRACY THROUGH TRANSPARENT POLITICAL FUNDING

GS-III

- ❑ INDIA'S DISPLAY FAB SUBSIDY
- ❑ SEBI TO INTRODUCE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR INDEX PROVIDERS
- ❑ INDIA, EU SIGN SEMICONDUCTOR PACT
- ❑ COP28: WHAT IS CARBON DIOXIDE REMOVAL?
- ❑ IUCN RED LIST OUTDATED AND UNRELIABLE
- ❑ \$293 BILLION NEEDED FOR INDIA'S TRIPLING OF RENEWABLES BY 2030
- ❑ HOW A NEW STUDY REJECTS THE IDEA OF 'MAN, THE HUNTER', THROUGH FEMALE BIOLOGY

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- ❑ Kambala to be held in Bengaluru for the first time

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- ❑ Criminal Conspiracy as 'Scheduled offence' under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002
- ❑ Amplifi 2.0 portal' for Urban Development
- ❑ Cabinet Approval for 16th Finance Commission

ECONOMY

- ❑ Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2023
- ❑ Government makes biogas blending mandatory

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- ❑ Generic drugs to treat four rare diseases launched
- ❑ Decentralised Autonomous Organisations
- ❑ 25 years of the International Space Station

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- ❑ First Night Sky Sanctuary
- ❑ Bihar Cabinet passed a proposal seeking special category status for the State
- ❑ Centre to pay Rs.8 lakh each to 15,000 women SHGs for buying drones
- ❑ Ayushman Arogya Mandir'
- ❑ Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)
- ❑ ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation Forum (AIGIF)

- ❑ Amyloidosis
- ❑ Navy advanced warship 'Imphal'

PERSONALITY IN NEWS

- ❑ Justice Fathima Beevi (1927-2023)

LOCATION IN NEWS

- ❑ North Andaman's Atlanta Bay

SPECIES IN NEWS

- ❑ New species of 'music frog' in Arunachal

SPECIALS

- ❑ Shifting Dynamics in Gulf Energy Landscape

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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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CSE Qualifier 2024

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CONCEPT MAPPING WORKBOOK PRELIMS PRACTICE MCQs

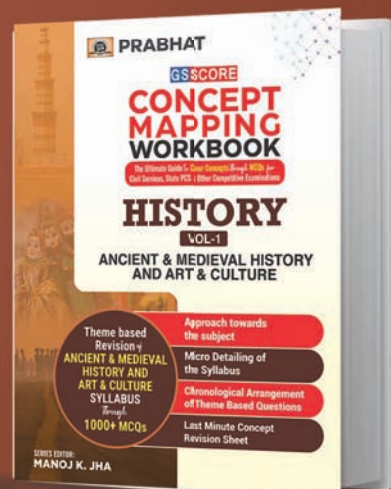
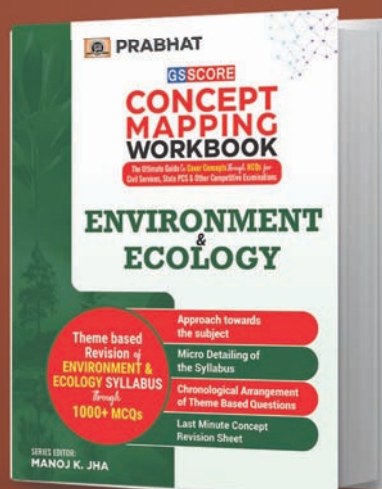
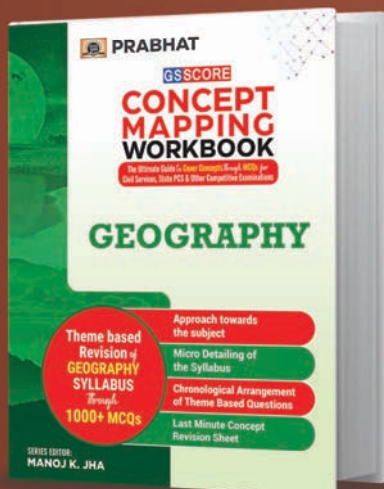
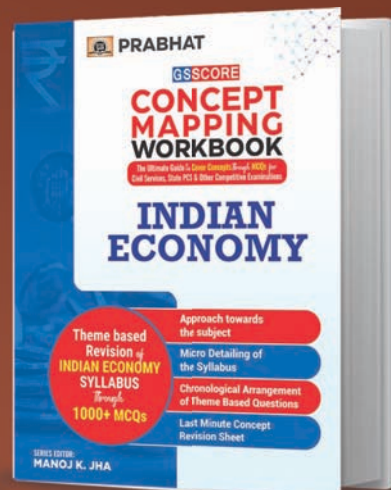
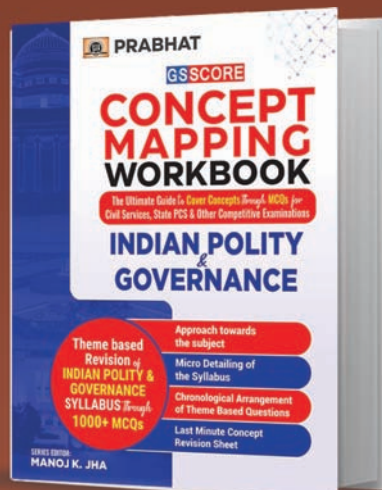
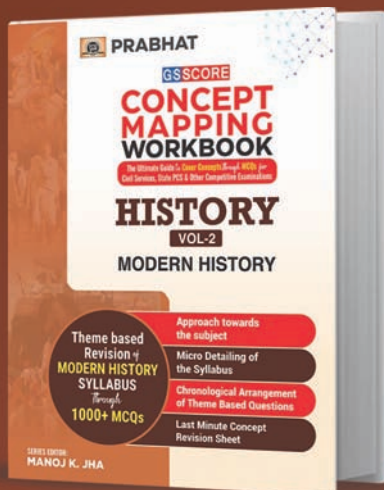
for **UPSC CSE &
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Coverage of Essential Concepts
through MCQs

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SECTION A

[MAINS]

SOCIETY

- ▣ Social justice, sexual education, the need of our times
- ▣ Femicides at 20-Year peak across the Globe

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- ▣ The challenge of maritime security in the Global South

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- ▣ MGNREGA and Social Audit: A saga of 'On paper perfection' and 'On ground Perfidy'
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- ▣ How a new study rejects the idea of 'Man, the Hunter', through female biology

SOCIAL JUSTICE, SEXUAL EDUCATION, THE NEED OF OUR TIMES

Context: When education is a right, it is only natural that sexual education is a part of it, which will transform gender relationships in society.

Background:

- Caste and gender are the **deepest social cleavages** in our society. The intersection of these two social identities plays havoc with the lives of adolescents/young adults in Indian schools and colleges.
- **Caste conflicts:** There are frequent reports in the media on the **caste conflicts among adolescents/young adults** as well as consensual sexual relationships between adolescents/young adults of different castes inviting criminal penalties and action.
- Education about social change and sexuality are closely related. Training young minds in critical thinking and social justice is essential to address this issue and to create a healthy society.

Education for democracy

- In a hierarchical society, it is hard to create well-functioning democratic institutions based on equal rights for everyone. In the name of celebrating tradition, an emphasis on **racial purity and a protection of cultural values** only leads to the majority/powerful being dominant and aggressive towards the weak.
- Electoral democracy encourages and establishes affirmative action of distributing opportunities for the depressed communities.
- The state even **criminalises caste and gender-based discrimination**.
 - In reality, this has **little effect on destabilising unequal social codes and discrimination** in practice.
 - The state as an organisation reflects the structure of society and thus makes the rights of the depressed difficult to realise.
 - The idea of **citizenship in a democratic society** demands the empathetic understanding of the lives of fellow citizens and critical thinking about one's own life.
 - Enhancing empathetic understanding of others in a modern society that contains many divisions is the only hope of sustaining democratic

institutions.

- **Education for critical thinking** requires challenging our own lives, beliefs and faith and how they affect the lives of others in a complex world. This is what education is supposed to aim and achieve.
- **Self-help for children:** Parents and the elderly try to keep children comfortable and in the process, children learn that they can command others. On the contrary we should teach them that self-help and at the same time seeking help is not a sign of weakness.
 - Rather, weakness is something to be recognized as inevitable. When seeking help is not a shame, helping is a responsibility. That makes us more humane and sociable.
- **Social and economic settings:** As a child enters adolescence, he realizes that vulnerability is not only because of one's physical frailties but also because of social and economic settings in life.
 - Recognizing this aspect of vulnerability is a key step in attaining social justice.
- **Controlling Weak:** Education should remove the **narcissistic tendencies** that we may develop in our desire to control others, particularly women and the weak. Thus, children develop compassion and raise a supporting and critical voice for the weak.
- **Active Learning:** Socratic active learning is important in this education venture. Humanities and arts provide scope for active learning. Artists move beyond the mental confines of ideologies. Humanities give us the intellectual training to accept ideas and also search for alternative ideas.
- **Reasonable disagreements:** Rigorous training in logical reasoning and critical thinking creates the vision that lives in a democracy are full of reasonable disagreements among citizens of different religions, cultures, wealth, class, physical impairment, gender and sexuality.
- **Role of Teachers:** Teachers should understand and accept that social justice education is essential for a well-functioning democracy. Teacher absenteeism, blaming children for a lack of learning potential, discouraging children and physically abusing them are all outcomes of this lack of faith in social justice education.

A different yet vital education

- **Sexual education:** It is also an important aspect of social justice education. More than providing knowledge about healthy sexual development and sex education, sexual education prepares students to respect gender identities and interpersonal relationships.

- **Sexual abuse:** The importance of consent in sexual intercourse and a respect for personal boundaries, as well as the ability to stop perpetrators of sexual abuse are important aspects of sexuality education.
- **Right to access sexual education:** In a recent judgment, the **Calcutta High Court** said that children have a right to access sexual education and sexual and reproductive health services. When education is a right, it is but natural that sexual education is a part of it.
- **Role of Sexual Education:** Research has shown that sexual education delays the time of the first sexual intercourse, reduces its frequency and curbs sexual abuse and risky sexual behaviour.
 - Sexual education **trains students to understand the social constructs of gender** and to respect others' sexual preferences. In this perspective it has a social justice content as boys and girls treat each other with respect and also develop a deeper understanding of other gender identities (LGBTQA+).
 - **Sexual education in school** will transform gender relationships at home and in society, and will be the most desirable outcome.

Way Forward: Need for government support

- **Government Support:** As in the case of social justice education, sexual education requires a **strong impetus from the government**.
- Just as there is a questioning of caste and social hierarchy through social justice education, it is essential that through sexual education, children are given a perceptive understanding of gender relationship stereotypes, guard against abusive and risky sexual relationships.
- Though sex education is a small part of the general school education curriculum, sexual education has rarely been taught in Indian schools.
- The **Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Strategy (ARSH) (2005)** and the are two recent initiatives by the Union government.

Recent Debates:

- While courts in India are debating the **criminalising aspect of consensual sexual relationships of adolescents**, the education sector should inform the legal aspects of sexual relationships as well.
- There is **no dearth for curriculum design, teaching aids and pedagogy** for sexual education.
- Many **international and national bodies have created curricula**, reading materials and teaching aids.
- All that is needed is to **train teachers and implement**

sexual education as a **compulsory part** of the school curriculum.

Committee Formulation:

The Government of Tamil Nadu has instituted a committee (with Justice K. Chandru as Chairperson) to recommend measures to remove discriminations based on caste and community in schools and colleges.



FEMICIDES AT 20-YEAR PEAK ACROSS THE GLOBE

Context: In India, Dowry related reasons are still prevalent as a main cause of Femicide.

What does Femicide means?

- The issue of women being killed by their partners is a serious and concerning problem that affects many individuals and communities around the world, and they are increasing at an alarming rate in India.
- This type of violence, which is often referred to as intimate partner **homicide or femicide**, is a form of gender-based violence and a violation of women's human rights.
- Research shows that women are more likely to be killed by their intimate partners than men and that such violence is often the culmination of a pattern of abuse that includes **emotional, physical, and sexual violence**.

DO YOU KNOW?

Every **11 minutes**, a woman or girl falls prey to the hands of an **intimate partner or family member** and the increasing rate of femicide in India is an alarming trend that demands urgent attention and action.

Stance of Femicide in India:

- According to the NCRB report, of around **19 metropolitan** cities including Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore, Delhi City, Ghaziabad, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Indore, Kanpur, Kochi, Kolkata, Kozhikode, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Patna, Pune and Surat, 179 women were killed aged between 18-30 years, while 149 women were murdered in the year 2021 ageing between 30-45 years.
- The report graph shows a total of **7739 female adult victims** being murdered in the year 2021 while a total

Women in the cross hairs

The data for the charts were sourced from the report titled, "Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide)" published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UN Women



Chart 1: The chart shows the year-wise intentional murder of women/girls across the globe for gender-related reasons

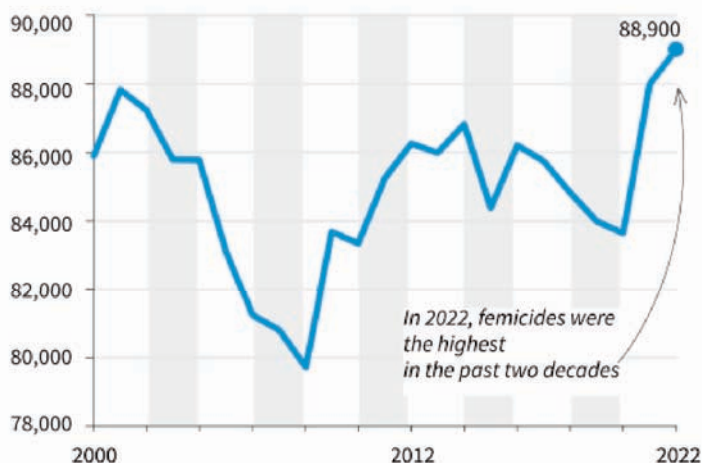


Chart 2: The chart shows male and female share of homicide victims. In general, victims of homicides worldwide tend to be men or boys



Chart 4: The chart shows the continent-wise split of the share of intimate partner/family-related homicides among all female and male homicides

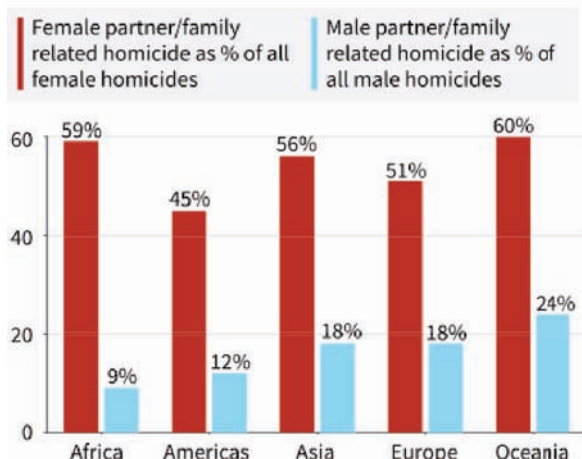


Chart 5: The chart shows the number of gender-related deaths in India between 2016-2021 and the reasons behind it

■ Honour killings | ■ Murders related to witchcraft accusations | ■ Murders related to dowry motives
■ Dowry deaths (as per Section 304B of the Penal Code)



of **8405 female victims** were murdered including children.

- The crime against women graph saw a surge in cases in the year 2021 with 428278 cases registered compared to 405326 cases and 371503 cases registered in the year 2019 and 2020 respectively.
- **In the year 2021;**
 - 284 cases were registered under murder with

rape/gang rape,

- 6753 cases under **dowry deaths,**
- 5292 cases under abetment to **suicide of women,**
- 136234 cases under **cruelty by husband or relatives** and
- 507 cases under the protection of women from **domestic violence act.**

Factors contributing to Femicide:

- There are many factors that contribute to this problem, including;
 - Gender inequality,
 - Patriarchal norms and values, and
 - Lack of access to resources and
 - Support services for survivors.

Concerns Associated:

- **Unclear definition in law:** The definition of femicide is unclear in India and in other parts of the globe, as gender relations and culture make for its different forms globally.
 - In India, it exists as honour crimes, dowry murders, murders of women for marrying outside of caste and religion, amniocentesis tests and abortion of female fetuses and death of girls by discrimination and abuse, etc.
- **Lack of consistency in India's National Crime Records Bureau's data collection** and classification over the years, making the comparability of data over years challenging.
- **The lack of accountability and transparency** is especially concerning, given the alarming rate at which women in India face violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Suggestive Measures:

- **Consolidation and Identification of Femicide Cases:** There needs to be an exercise involving **government representatives, scholars and activists** to understand how naming and proper **categorising of data** can help us in responding to homicides of women effectively in terms of preventive and corrective interventions.
 - The Crime in India bulletin has such categories as "**homicides**", "**murder with rape**", "**dowry deaths**", "**female foeticide**", "**female infanticide**" and "**suicide**" that need for instance to be consolidated in the case of women and girl victims to understand how many women and girls are being murdered or die due to unnatural causes.
- Involve initiatives such as education and awareness-raising campaigns, stricter laws and law enforcement to hold perpetrators accountable, and increased access to support services for survivors.

**THE CHALLENGE OF MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

Context: Implementing a collaborative strategy is challenging since it requires maritime agencies to improve interoperability, share intelligence, and agree on a regional rules-based order.

Background:

- **Charles Darwin** is reputed to have argued that the **key to human survival** is not humankind's innate superiority but its **natural adaptability**.
- He felt that it was **not the strongest or most intelligent species that survived**, but the **one with the capacity to adapt and adjust to the changing environment**.
- Darwin's notion of **resilient adaptability** has withstood the test of time. It is a truism that all human progress requires a flexible approach to dealing with emerging challenges. None more so than in the maritime domain.

New threats in the maritime domain

- **Security Challenges:** In recent years, hard security challenges in the maritime domain have acquired a new, menacing dimension.
 - Whether with **Ukraine's growing use of asymmetrical tactics against Russia** in the **Black Sea**.
 - **China's deployment** of maritime militias in the **South China Sea**, there is an unmistakable element of improvisation.
 - The radical new tactics at sea involve the use of **grey-zone warfare**, land attack missiles, and combat drones.
- **Unconventional security threats:** The bulk of the demand for maritime security in recent years has come from states facing unconventional security threats, such as illegal fishing, natural disasters, marine pollution, human and drug trafficking, and the impact of climate change.
- **State Preparedness:** States must be prepared to commit capital, resources, and specialist personnel over prolonged periods to meet security needs.
- **India voicing Global South:** Throughout its G20 presidency, India has sought to emphasise the concerns of the Global South in discussions to find

solutions to the most pressing issues in the maritime domain.

- ▶ Yet, there is no functioning template to **fight non-traditional threats at sea**.
- ▶ **Sustainable development goals in the littorals remain unrealised**, as voices from littoral states in Asia, Africa, and the Southern Pacific are ignored by the developed countries.
- **Zero-sum competition**: There is a widespread perception in the Global South that the zero-sum competition among powerful nations in the Indo-Pacific has been to the detriment of the developing world.
- **Security agenda**: The contemporary security agenda is an interconnected set of objectives involving national, environmental, economic, and human security goals.
- **Challenges of Global South**: This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the Global South, which finds itself especially challenged in meeting the objectives of marine governance.
 - ▶ What is more, rising sea levels, marine pollution, climate change, and natural disasters have had a disproportionate impact on less developed states, placing them in a position of vulnerability.
- **Littoral States issues**: Worryingly, littoral states in Asia and Africa have unequal law-enforcement capabilities and lack the security coordination required to jointly combat maritime threats.

Creative models of Maritime Security

- **India's Maritime Vision 2030** sets out a creative model.
- **Infrastructure development**: This 10-year blueprint for the maritime sector envisages the development of ports, shipping, and inland waterways as a way of generating growth and livelihoods.
- **Dhaka's inaugural official document** on the **Indo-Pacific** details **guiding principles and objectives** that demonstrate a developmental approach to maritime security, focused on the provisioning of goods and services, and the protection of marine resources.
- **Africa and Blue Economy**: The talk in Africa, too, is about a thriving Blue Economy and a secure maritime domain.
- **Illegal Fishing**: The sharp uptick in **illegal unreported and unregulated fishing** has been aided by faulty policies that encourage destructive fishing methods such as bottom trawling and seine fishing.
- **Environmentalists highlight three specific anomalies**:

- ▶ Lenient regulations that allow for the misuse of resources.
- ▶ Lax implementation of the law by security agencies.
- ▶ The harmful impact of subsidies that states offer to incentivise smaller fishermen to shift to motorised trawling.

Way Forward: No consensus

- Implementing a **collaborative strategy** is **challenging** since it requires maritime agencies to **improve interoperability, share intelligence, and agree on a regional rules-based order**.
- States must adapt to an **integrated form of maritime security operations** and overhaul regulatory frameworks to align domestic regulation with international law — an unappealing proposition for many that continue to prioritise sovereignty and strategic independence over collective action.
- Unsurprisingly, **consensus eludes the Global South**. Notwithstanding their espoused positions on the **need for cooperative security architecture**, many littoral states are reluctant to pursue concrete solutions to the challenges at sea. It highlights a **paradox of non-traditional maritime security**: the collective issues that developing nations face and the creative solutions they seek are at odds with their sense of political and strategic autonomy.

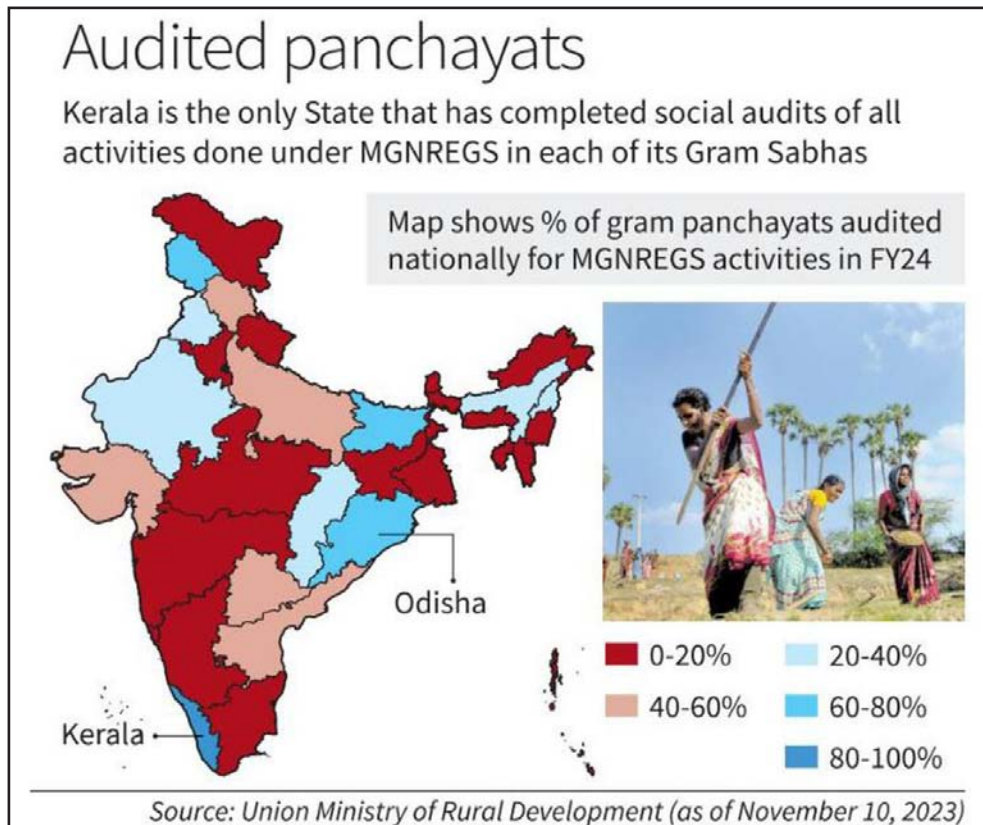


MGNREGA AND SOCIAL AUDIT: A SAGA OF 'ON PAPER PERFECTION' AND 'ON GROUND PERFDY'

Context: Lack of compliance and fulfillment of Social Audit as part of the MGNREGA initiative.

The mandate of MGNREGA for Social Audit:

- Section 17 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (**MGNREGA**) says the **gram sabha** "shall monitor the execution of works".
- Each State has **social audit units** which are supposed to work independent of the implementing authorities.
- The **auditing standards** laid down by the **Comptroller and Auditor General** were issued **only on December 19, 2016**.
- Every Social Audit Unit is entitled to **funds equivalent to 0.5% of the MGNREGA** expenditure incurred by



the State in the previous year.

- The audit involves quality checks of infrastructure created under the MGNREGA, financial misappropriation in wages, and checking for any procedural deviations.

Reasons for lack of Compliance:

- High rate of corruption is one of the primary complaints against the scheme and social audit is the inbuilt anti-corruption mechanism in the Act.
- Lack of Functional Social Audit Teams
- Lack of Training and capacity building of Teams
- Lack of awareness about social audit.
- Ritualistic nature of the social audit process.
- 5% of the MGNREGA is too little for the Process.

The numbers and all pervasive problems:

- Other than **Kerala** the only States to cross the **50%** mark are **Bihar** (64.4%), **Gujarat** (58.8%), **Jammu & Kashmir** (64.1%), **Odisha** (60.42%) and **Uttar Pradesh** (54.97%).
- Only three States have covered **40%** or more villages — **Telangana** (40.5%), **Himachal Pradesh** (45.32%) and **Andhra Pradesh** (49.7%).
- Other than **Telangana**, among the poll-bound States, the numbers are really low — **Madhya Pradesh**

(1.73%), **Mizoram** (17.5%), **Chhattisgarh** (25.06%), and **Rajasthan** (34.74%).

- **The problem is uniform irrespective of the party in power across the country.**
- **Social audit is the inbuilt anti-corruption mechanism in the Act.**

(Statistics are sourced from the Management Information System (MIS) on Social Audit maintained by the Union Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) as on November 10.)

Concept: Social Audit:

- Social Audit is the **examination and assessment** of a programme/scheme conducted with the **active involvement of people** and comparing official records with actual ground realities.
- Social Audit is a powerful **tool** for **social transformation, community participation and government accountability.**
- Social audits are conducted in **partnership with civil society organisations**, with auditors emerging from among scheme beneficiaries, **who are trained over a period of time** on how to conduct a social audit.
- Since **awareness generation is an important component** of these audits, it becomes necessary to have conduits that can be relied upon to transfer factually correct information.

Mechanisms of Social Audit:

- The **Department of Rural Development** in states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Meghalaya has set up its Society for Social Audit and Transparency which are autonomous institutions that conduct social audits of the MGNREG Scheme.
- This is in furtherance of the **Social Audit Manual of the Ministry of Rural Development** which requires every State to set up an independent Social Audit Unit consisting of resource persons from the State, District and Village as well as experts on relevant themes.
- **Other related Initiatives: The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017.**
- **Meghalaya** became the **first state** in India to operationalize a law that makes social audits of government programmes and schemes a part of government practice.

Centre-State and Social Audit:

- The Centre has, multiple times, reminded the States that if the social audits are not conducted regularly, then the **funds under the MGNREGS will be withheld.**
- The States complain that the **audit is delayed** because the **Centre does not release the funds** for the social audit units, which work independent of the State governments, in time.
- There are recurrent **complaints of delayed salaries for the village-level auditors.**

Silver Lining:

- Kerala is the only State to cover 100% gram Panchayats.
- State holds **periodic Social Audit Public Hearings (Janakeeya Sabhas) at the panchayat level** to subject the audit reports to close public scrutiny.
- The goal of deepening of democracy and democratic decentralization will continue to remain a pipe dream till initiatives like Social Audit are implemented in letter and spirit.

**CENTRE EXEMPTS CERT-IN FROM AMBIT OF RTI ACT**

Context: According to the latest update, the Central government has exempted the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) from the ambit of the Right to

Information (RTI) Act.**About the information:**

- The CERT-IN, which functions under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents.
- It has also been tasked to **perform emergency measures** for handling cyber security incidents besides issuing guidelines and advisories for their prevention.
- The Personnel Ministry has amended **Section 24 of the RTI Act** and put "Indian Computer Emergency Response Team" or CERT-In under the list of organisations exempted from the purview of the RTI law.

There are already **26 intelligence** and security organisations, which are exempted from providing information under the RTI Act except for matters related to the allegations of **corruption and human rights violations.**

Which are the other organisations being exempted from the RTI law?

- The organisations exempted under the RTI Act includes;
 - The Intelligence Bureau,
 - Research and Analysis Wing,
 - Directorate of Revenue Intelligence,
 - Aviation Research Centre and
 - Enforcement Directorate, among others.

What are the criteria to get an exclusion/exemption from RTI's ambit?

- **Section 8(1) of RTI Act**, lists all of the exemptions:
 - Information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the security, **sovereignty and integrity of India;**
 - information which may constitute **contempt of court;**
 - information that would cause a breach of **privilege of Parliament or the State Legislature;**
 - information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that **larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information;**
 - information available to a person in his fiduciary

relationship, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger **public interest warrants the disclosure of such information**;

- ▶ information received in confidence from **foreign government**;
- ▶ information, the disclosure of which would endanger the **life or physical safety of any person**;
- ▶ information which would impede the process of **investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders**;
- ▶ cabinet papers including records of deliberations, which come under the specified exemptions;
- ▶ Information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has not relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause **unwarranted invasion of the privacy**.

Others Situations of Relaxation:

- **According to the Section 8(1)(g) of RTI Act** : If the disclosure would endanger the **life and physical safety of any person or identify the source of information** or assistance given in confidence for law enforcement or security purposes, then public authority is exempted from **disclosure of such information**.
 - ▶ **Meaning of LIFE under Article 21** is given an expansive and liberal construction such as to include, the right to live with dignity, right to shelter, right to basic needs and even the right to reputation. This meaning is applicable for section 8(1)(g) the RTI Act.
 - ▶ **'PHYSICAL SAFETY'** means the likelihood of assault to physical existence of a person.
 - ▶ Information putting an individual's **safety or liberty at risk**, e.g., the identity of people who blow the whistle on corruption inside their organization should be protected, because otherwise they may be targeted for discrimination or even violence.
- **Section 8(1)(h) of the RTI Act** :
 - ▶ **Public authority** is not under obligation to furnish information that would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders.
 - ▶ Definition of **"investigation"** under CrPC can be applicable for RTI Act also. It would mean all actions of **law enforcement, disciplinary proceedings, enquiries, adjudications** and so on.
- **Right to Information (RTI Act) 2005**:
 - ▶ The RTI Act empowers citizens to seek time-

bound information on governance-related matters from government organisations by filing an application.

- ▶ **The objectives of the Right to Information Act 2005**: To encourage transparency in all public bodies. To ensure accountability in public and government bodies.

◦ **Right to Information (Amendment) Act, 2019:**

- ▶ It provided that the **Chief Information Commissioner** and an **Information Commissioner** (of Centre as well as States) shall hold office for such term as prescribed by the Central Government.
 - Before this amendment, their term was **fixed for 5 years**.
- ▶ It provided that the **salary, allowances and other service conditions** of the Chief Information Commissioner and an Information Commissioner (of Centre as well as States) shall be such as prescribed by the Central Government.
 - Before this amendment, the salary, allowances and other service conditions of the Chief Information Commissioner were similar to those of the Chief Election Commissioner and that of an Information Commissioner were similar to those of an Election Commissioner (State Election Commissioners in case of States).
- It removed the provisions regarding deductions in salary of the **Chief Information Commissioner**, an Information Commissioner, the State Chief Information Commissioner and a State Information Commissioner due to pension or any other retirement benefits received by them for their previous government service.
- The RTI (Amendment) Act, 2019 was criticized on grounds of diluting the law and giving more powers to the central government.

Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In):

- The constituency of CERT-In is the **Indian Cyber Community**.
- CERT-In is the **national nodal agency** for responding to computer security incidents as and when they occur.
- CERT-In has been designated to serve as the national agency to perform the following functions in the area of cyber security:
 - ▶ Collection, analysis and dissemination of information on cyber incidents.
 - ▶ Forecast and alerts of cyber security incidents
 - ▶ Emergency measures for handling cyber security incidents
 - ▶ Coordination of cyber incident response activities.
 - ▶ Issue guidelines, advisories, vulnerability notes and whitepapers relating to information security practices, procedures, prevention, response and reporting of cyber incidents.
 - ▶ Such other functions relating to cyber security as may be prescribed.

**CONSTITUTIONALITY OF GOVERNOR'S VETO POWER OVER BILLS**

Context: Supreme Courts' Ruling on a petition by the Punjab government against Governor Action to hold back crucial Bills that a Governor withholding a Bill without doing anything further would be acting in contravention of the Constitution.

What's the issue?

- Recent **instances of Governor who is an unelected Head** of state or better called as agent of centre in states is **withholding some bills in states like Punjab and Tamil Nadu**.
- This action was opposed and **dissented by respective state legislature**. The main contention pertains to the Constitutionality of the action.
- The action also **defeats the spirit of the constitution by holding assent** indefinitely on a bill/law passed by duly elected State legislature.
- The action of governor **contravenes the popular**

mandate and values of democracy.

What are the Constitutional provisions?

- **Article 200 empowers the Governor to withhold assent to the Bill.** In such an event, the Governor must mandatorily follow the **course of action which is indicated in the first proviso** of communicating to the State Legislature 'as soon as possible' a message warranting the reconsideration of the Bill.
- The **ultimate decision on whether or not to accept the advice of the Governor as contained in the message belongs to the legislature alone.**
- That the message of the Governor does not bind the legislature is evident from the use of the expression 'if the Bill is passed again ...**with or without amendments**','
- The Governor is under **Article 168 a part of the legislature and is bound by the constitutional regime**

What is the observation of Supreme Court?

- It Laid down the law that a Governor, in case he withholds assent, should send back a Bill forwarded to him by a **State Legislature "as soon as possible" with a message to reconsider** the proposed law.
- The expression "**as soon as possible**" conveyed a "**constitutional imperative of expedition**".
- In case, the **State Assembly reiterates the Bill "with or without amendments"**, the Governor has **no choice or discretion, and has to give his assent to it.**
- Message of the Governor does not bind the legislature is evident from the use of the expression 'if the Bill is passed again ...with or without amendments.
- A Governor who chooses to withhold a Bill without doing anything **further would be acting in contravention of the Constitution**. Because such a course of action would be contrary to fundamental principles of a constitutional **democracy based on a Parliamentary pattern of**
- The verdict is **also a significant boost to Tamil Nadu's case**. The Tamil Nadu Assembly had returned 10 crucial Bills to Governor R.N. Ravi without any amendments. The Governor had withheld assent to the Bills in the first instance.

The role of the Governor in legislature:

- **Article 200 of the Constitution** lays down that when a Bill, passed by a State Legislature, is presented to the Governor for their assent, **they have four alternatives:**
- He may **give assent to the Bill**; may **withhold**

assent to the Bill, that is, reject the Bill in which case the Bill fails to become law; **may return the Bill** (if it is not a Money Bill) for reconsideration of the State Legislature; or **may reserve the Bill for the consideration of the President**.

- As held by the **Supreme Court in various cases including the Shamsher Singh case (1974)**, the **Governor does not exercise their discretionary powers while withholding assent** or returning a Bill to the State Legislature.
- They are **required to act as per the advice of the Council of Ministers**. The situation of 'withholding assent' may arise in case of a Private Members' Bill (any Member of State Legislature other than a Minister) passed by the State Legislature, which the council of ministers do not want to be enacted into a law. In such an instance, they would advise the Governor to 'withhold assent'.
- However, this is an unlikely scenario as the council of ministers who enjoy a majority in the Legislative Assembly would not allow the passage of such a Bill.
- Secondly, if the **incumbent government whose Bill has been passed by the legislature** falls or resigns before it is assented to by the Governor, the new council may advise the Governor to 'withhold assent'.
- The Governor must reserve certain Bills, like those which reduce the powers of the High Court, for the **consideration of the President. They may also reserve Bills on concurrent list that are repugnant to a Union law based on ministerial advice**.
- It is only under rare circumstances that the Governor may exercise their discretion, where they feel that the provisions of the Bill will contravene the provisions of the Constitution and therefore, should be reserved for the **consideration of the President**.
- It must however be noted that the **Constitution does not lay down any time limit** within which the Governor is **required to make a decision**.



ALL INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE

Context: On the constitution day (Nov 26, 2023) President of India has suggested for creation of All India Judicial Service to recruit Judges.

What is 'All-Indian Judicial Service'?

- The AIJS is a reform push to centralize the recruitment of judges.
- It would work at the level of additional district judges

and district judges for all states.

- This idea has been discussed in legal circles for many years, and remains debatable.
- In 2006, the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice** in its 15th Report pushed the idea of a **pan-Indian judicial service**, and made a draft Bill.

Background:

- The proposal for an All-India Judicial Service was first suggested in the early 1960s.
- While the proposal was revived a few times, including in 2012, it could not be implemented due to opposition from some high courts and states.
- In December 2019, reported that the government's proposal had received mixed response from various states and high courts.

Who deals with All-India Services?

- Article 312** of the Indian Constitution, which deals with '**All-India Services**', says that Parliament may, among other things, provide for the creation of one or more all India services, including an all-India judicial service, common to the Union and the states.
- Article 312 also lays down that such a service may be created if the Rajya Sabha declares "by resolution supported by not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting that it is necessary or expedient in the national interest so to do".
- It adds that no law providing for the creation of AIJS — which "shall not include any post inferior to that of a district judge" — "shall be deemed to be an amendment of this Constitution".

Supreme Court's View

- In 1992, the Supreme Court(SC) in **All India Judges' Association v. The Union of India** directed the Centre to set up an AIJS.
- In a 1993 assessment of the judgment, however, the court left the Centre at liberty to take the initiative on the issue.
- In 2017, the SC took *suo motu* cognizance of the issue of appointment of district judges, and mooted a Central Selection Mechanism.
- Based on the merit list, High Courts can hold interviews and recruit judges.

How are district judges currently recruited?

- The selection process is conducted by the **State Public Service Commissions** and the concerned **High Court** since High Courts exercise jurisdiction over the subordinate judiciary in the state.

- Panels of High Court judges interview candidates after the exam and select them for an appointment.
- Articles 233 and 234 of the Constitution of India deal with the appointment of district judges, and place it in the domain of the states.
- All judges of the lower judiciary up to the level of district judge are selected through the **Provincial Civil Services (Judicial) exam**.

How would AIJS improve the judiciary system?

- Efficient Judiciary
- Ease of Doing Business
- Equal representation of marginalized and underprivileged elements of society in Judiciary
- Creation of a pool of brilliant individuals
- Addressing concerns such as corruption and nepotism

President's View:

- AIJS will be a way to ensure equal representation of India's diversity in the judiciary.
- She believes that AIJS will emphasize on that the cause of justice, making it is best served by making it accessible to all — which she emphasised that it still remains to be.
- **Cost and Language Barriers:** Accessibility of Justice: barriers such as cost and language are in the way of making this a reality.
- **AIJS will lead to** a "Citizen-centric approach" to improve access to justice.
- Decolonisation: Present system is largely a product of colonialism. De-colonisation could be sped up with conscious efforts.

The Constitution day:

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment on 19th November 2015 notified the decision of the Government of India to celebrate the 26th day of November every year as **Constitution Day of India** to promote Constitution values among citizens.
- The day was previously celebrated as **National Law Day**.



TURMERIC BOARD SET TO BE A REALITY

Context: As recently announced by the Prime Minister, National Turmeric Board is set to work at its capacity to boost the turmeric production and help tribals who are cultivating it.

National Turmeric Board Overview:

- **Legal Status:** The National Turmeric Board operates as a **non-statutory body**.
- **Administrative Oversight:** It falls under the purview of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- **Board Composition:**
 - **Chairperson:** Appointed by the Central Government, responsible for providing strategic direction to the Board's activities.
 - **Secretary:** Appointed by the Department of Commerce, responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Board.
- **Board Members:**
 - **Ministry Representatives:** Officials from the Ministry of AYUSH, Departments of Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Commerce & Industry of the Union Government to offer governmental perspectives.
 - **State Government Representatives:** Senior officials from three states on a rotational basis to ensure regional considerations.
 - **Research and Industry Experts:** Representatives from select national/state institutions involved in turmeric research and industry.
 - **Turmeric Stakeholders:** Representatives from turmeric farmers and exporters to advocate for the community's interests.

Objectives of the National Turmeric Board:

- **Increasing Awareness and Consumption:** Initiate awareness campaigns promoting the health benefits of turmeric to elevate its consumption within India.
- **Collaborate** with the **Ministry of AYUSH** to encourage the use of turmeric in traditional medicine systems like Ayurveda.
- **Developing International Markets:** Conduct market research to identify potential international markets for turmeric and its products.
- Facilitate **Indian turmeric exporters'** participation in international trade fairs and exhibitions.
- Collaborate with the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to negotiate favourable trade agreements benefiting turmeric exports.
- **Research and Development:** Invest in research and

development to create new turmeric-based products, exploring both culinary and medicinal applications.



- **Document and preserve** traditional knowledge related to turmeric for future generations, ensuring ethical use.
- **Capacity Building and Skill Development:** Organize **training programs for turmeric growers**, emphasizing modern cultivation techniques, sustainable farming practices, and post-harvest handling.
- **Provide workshops** to enhance **farmers' skills** in areas such as organic farming, pest management, and irrigation practices.
- **Ensuring Quality and Food Safety:** Develop and enforce quality standards for turmeric and its products to comply with international regulations.
- **Implement food safety measures** across the turmeric supply chain to ensure products meet high-quality standards.

ENHANCING DEMOCRACY THROUGH TRANSPARENT POLITICAL FUNDING

Context: Amendments to the Representation of the People Act 1951 grant electoral bonds' donors complete anonymity, contrary to global norms favouring full disclosure of political contributions.

Importance of Electoral Bond Challenge

- Supreme Court hearings on electoral bonds are crucial for democracy and rule of law in India.
- Political parties are vital in the democratic process, necessitating transparent and accountable funding.

Global Perspectives on Political Funding

- **Historical overview:** In 1910, the U.S. enacted the Publicity Act, emphasizing full disclosure and limiting political contributions.
- **EU Regulation 2014:** Imposed limits on donations with anonymization for small amounts, mandating disclosure for larger sums.
- **U.K.'s Political Parties Act 2000:** Imposed restrictions on donations and required declaration of donation sources.

Key Regulatory Requirements for Political Funding

- **Complete Disclosure:** Most legal regulations emphasize full disclosure of donors above specific minimal amounts.
- **Limits or Caps on Donations:** Restrictions on the size of donations to prevent unchecked influence on the democratic process.

Importance of Public Disclosure:

- **Pillars of democracy:** Transparent accounts foster citizen trust in parties and politicians, upholding the rule of law.
- **Curbing corruption:** Limits on donations prevent democracy from being tarnished by unchecked large contributions.

Electoral Justice for Democracy

- Electoral justice ensures adherence to laws, protecting electoral rights and guaranteeing free, fair, and genuine elections.
- Electoral bonds with undisclosed donors violate transparency, undermining the democratic principles of fairness.

The Way Forward

- **Constitutional challenge insufficient:** A separate law is necessary for full publication of political donations.
- **Proposed legislation should mandate:**
 - Public disclosure of donor identities above a nominal limit.
 - Immediate reporting of large donations to the election commission.
 - Public availability of political party accounts.
 - Auditing of political party accounts by an independent authority.
 - Setting limits on funding and expenditure.
 - Mechanisms for law enforcement.



INDIA'S DISPLAY FAB SUBSIDY

Context: India's ambition to establish itself as a global electronics manufacturing hub is underpinned by the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) policy, which has an outlay of Rs.76,000 crore.

About ESDM Policy and Display Fab Scheme:

- **Strategic Investment in Electronics:** India's vision as a global electronics manufacturing hub is supported by the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) policy, with a substantial outlay of Rs 76,000 crore.
 - ▶ The focus extends beyond semiconductors to include the less-discussed but equally critical display fab scheme.
- **Essential Role of Electronics Industry:** The electronics sector is integral to India's economic and strategic growth, permeating all segments. With the global Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) market projected to reach 1,145 billion dollars by 2026.
 - ▶ India aims to leverage emerging technologies, fostering innovation and capturing a significant market share.
- **Display Fab Scheme's Untapped Potential:** While attention often centers on semiconductors, the display fab scheme holds immense promise.
 - ▶ Acknowledging India's status as the largest importer of Liquid Crystal Displays (LCDs), the scheme provides a unique opportunity to reduce dependence, achieve self-reliance, and play a pivotal role in the global electronics market.

India's Display Market Potential and Policy Support

- The global display market, set to reach 187.8 billion dollars by 2028, presents a lucrative opportunity. India's display market, expected to triple in size by 2030, requires **10-12 fabrication units**.
- LCDs, dominating the market, are poised for sustained growth despite emerging technologies like OLED.
- To position India as a global display manufacturing hub, the Modified Display Fab policy offers compelling incentives.
- These include capital subsidies, tax reimbursements, interest subvention, fostering a conducive environment for investments, and reducing reliance on imported displays.

- Vedanta Group and Elest (backed by Rajesh Exports) are early players, with Vedanta partnering with Innolux for a fabrication unit in Gujarat.
- The removal of the subsidy cap and government invitations for the Modified Display Fab Scheme has intensified industry interest, indicating a potential surge in participation.

India's Strategic Opportunity and Economic Transformation

- **Strategic Importance of Display Subsidy:** India stands at a critical juncture, mirroring South Korea's success in display glass fabrication.
 - ▶ The display subsidy has the potential to revolutionize India's economic landscape, decrease electronics manufacturing costs, reduce import dependencies, foster innovation, and create significant employment opportunities.
- **Replicating South Korea's Success:** South Korea's investment in display glass fabrication catapulted it to global prominence, driving economic renaissance.
 - ▶ India's strategic focus on display technology, with supportive policies, holds the key to becoming Aatmanirbhar in electronics manufacturing and a hub for electronics exports.
- **Trajectory of India's Electronics Industry:** Localizing system design, strategic investments in display technology, and the implementation of supportive policies are pivotal.
 - ▶ These steps not only ensure self-reliance but also position India as a formidable player in the global electronics market, driving economic transformation.



SEBI TO INTRODUCE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR INDEX PROVIDERS

Context: A regulatory framework will be introduced for the index providers to foster transparency and accountability in governance and administration of financial benchmarks in the securities market.

Key Highlights :

- **Flexibility for NPO Fundraising**
 - ▶ SEBI grants flexibility to **Not for Profit Organisations (NPOs)** in raising funds through the social stock exchange.

- ▶ The minimum issue size for public issuance of **Zero Coupon Zero Principal Instruments (ZCZP)** on the social stock exchange is reduced to Rs 50 lakh from Rs 1 crore.

■ Regulatory Framework for Index Providers

- ▶ SEBI decides to introduce a regulatory framework for index providers in the securities market.
- ▶ The aim is to enhance transparency and accountability in the governance and administration of financial benchmarks.

■ Public Issuance Changes for NPOs

- ▶ NPOs on the **social stock exchange** can now issue ZCZP with a reduced minimum size of Rs 50 lakh.
- ▶ This move is expected to facilitate easier fundraising for Not for Profit Organisations.

■ Governance and Transparency Focus

- ▶ Sebi's decision to regulate index providers underscores a commitment to improving governance and transparency in financial benchmarks.
- ▶ The regulatory framework aims to ensure responsible and accountable practices in the administration of indices.

■ Market Development and Social Impact

- ▶ The approval for flexibility in NPO fundraising aligns with efforts to develop the social stock exchange and promote social impact initiatives.
- ▶ These decisions collectively contribute to creating a more conducive environment for both financial markets and socially responsible activities.

Who are market index providers?

- Index providers are companies that design and calculate indexes.
- They have the responsibility to set the rules that decide what securities to include in each index, how the index will be managed and how securities will be added or removed from that index over time.

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

How they help investors?

- The process of listing usually determine how stocks can be classified, e.g. are a particular stock a Healthcare or an Oil & Gas stock, or are it a Developed or Emerging market stock.

- An index allows investors and other stakeholders to get a snapshot/idea of the market.

What are index funds?

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

Need for regulation:

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

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

Significance:

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

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

Role of Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

- It is the regulator for the securities market in India. It was established in 1988 and given statutory powers on 30 January 1992 through the SEBI Act, 1992.

- It has empowered to exercise on following areas;
 - To approve by-laws of Securities exchanges.
 - To require the Securities exchange to amend their by-laws.
 - Inspect the books of accounts and call for periodical returns from recognized Securities exchanges.
 - Inspect the books of accounts of financial intermediaries.
 - Compel certain companies to list their shares in one or more Securities exchanges.
 - Registration of Brokers and sub-brokers.

INDIA, EU SIGN SEMICONDUCTOR PACT

Context: India and the European Union on Friday signed a Memorandum of Understanding on semiconductors that will help in building a “robust supply chain” and support innovation.

Key Objectives of the MoU –

- Comprehensive Information Exchange:** The MoU facilitates detailed information exchange between India and the EU, focusing on their semiconductor ecosystems, fostering collaborative insights, and knowledge-sharing for mutual development.
- Emphasis on Research, Development, and Innovation:** Prioritizing collaboration in critical areas like research, development, and innovation, the agreement involves active participation from universities, research bodies, and businesses in both regions.
- Addressing Semiconductors as a Strategic Commodity:** Acknowledging the strategic importance of semiconductors, the MoU aims to address their significance, especially in diversifying global supply chains and reducing dependence on key players like China.

Current State of Semiconductor Production in India

- Investing in Semiconductor Fabrication:** India has strategically invested substantial funds in semiconductor fabrication, recognizing its pivotal role across industries through the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes.

- Underutilized Funds and Strategic Concerns:** Despite the financial backing, concerns arise due to the underutilization of these funds, prompting a critical evaluation of the strategy's effectiveness.
- Strength in Design, Gaps in Manufacturing:** India boasts excellence in semiconductor design however, attention is warranted to bridge the gaps in the manufacturing ecosystem. Strengthening this aspect is crucial for a comprehensive and successful semiconductor strategy in the country.

India Semiconductor Mission and PLI Schemes

- Strategic Mission for Semiconductor Ecosystem:** The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) stands as a pivotal initiative. Despite its significant allocation of funds, the mission faces challenges that need careful consideration.
- PLI Schemes' Limited Impact:** Existing Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes, despite their substantial funding, demonstrate limited promise concerning employment generation and value addition. The need for a more comprehensive approach becomes evident as the impact falls short of expectations.
- Challenges with Large Manufacturing Emphasis:** The emphasis on incentivizing large manufacturing plants raises concerns about the limited scope of these incentives. Multinational chipmakers exhibit hesitancy in making substantial commitments, highlighting the need for a nuanced and adaptable strategy.

COP28: WHAT IS CARBON DIOXIDE REMOVAL?

Context: CDR methods require appropriate governance and policies as they can also cause adverse side-effects apart from the predicted benefits.

COP 28 and CO2 removal:

- Ahead of the 2023 Climate Summit, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in a press release said that countries must go further than the current pledges under the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5°C with no or low overshoot during this century.
- According to the Emissions Gap report, delaying greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction will

further increase the future dependence on carbon dioxide removal (CDR) from the atmosphere.

Carbon Dioxide Removal:

- **CDR:** Carbon dioxide removal, or CDR, is using technologies, practices, and approaches to remove carbon dioxide from our atmosphere through deliberate and intentional human actions.
- **Traditional Methods:** This includes traditional methods like afforestation, as well as more sophisticated technologies like direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS).
- **Natural Processes:** Natural processes, like the growth of a natural forest, are not CDR methods.
- **Carbon Storage:** CDR also includes durable and efficient storage of extracted carbon dioxide in natural reservoirs like soil and vegetation, or in manufactured products like carbonated drinks.

CDR methods:

- **Afforestation/reforestation:** Converting abandoned or degraded agricultural lands into forests can contribute to negative emissions. Additional plants and trees can sequester more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the soil.
 - According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), afforestation is a relatively cheaper method of CDR, costing approximately under \$240 per tonne of CO₂. The storage time can last from decades to centuries.
- **Biochar:** Biochar is the substance produced by burning organic waste from agricultural lands and forests in a controlled process called pyrolysis. Although it resembles common charcoal in appearance, the production of biochar reduces contamination and is a method to safely store carbon.
 - IPCC estimates biochar as a CDR method costs \$10-345 per tonne of CO₂. The downside of the technology includes negative impact from dust, and increased competition for biomass.
- **BECCS: Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage,** or BECCS, is similar to biochar in the sense that it also uses biomass to produce energy while preventing the release of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. However, BECCS involves bioenergy production, often through combustion to generate electricity or heat. The resulting CO₂ emissions from this combustion are captured and stored underground, preventing them from contributing to the greenhouse effect.
 - According to IPCC, BECCS costs \$50-200 per tonne of CO₂. Growing energy crops for BECCS can also lead to increased competition for land.

- **DACCS: Direct air carbon capture and storage,** or DACCS (also called DACS), extracts CO₂ directly from the atmosphere at any location. This captured CO₂ is then permanently stored in deep geological formations or used for other applications.
 - According to an update from the International Energy Agency (IEA), 27 DACCS plants have been commissioned worldwide till 2023, capturing almost 0.01 Mt CO₂/year.
 - DACCS is also the most expensive form of CDR. Atmospheric CO₂ exists in a very diluted form, leading to high costs and energy needs for efficient extraction.
- **Enhanced rock weathering:** This CDR method involves pulverising silicate rocks to bypass the conventionally slow weathering action. The resultant product, usually a powder, has higher reactive surface area, which is then spread on agricultural lands for further chemical reactions.
 - Estimated cost for enhanced rock weathering stands at \$50-200 per tonne of CO₂, according to IPCC. Dust emissions and potential for increased GHG emissions from energy generation are a few drawbacks of the technology.
- **Ocean alkalinity enhancement:** Like forests and green patches on land, oceans are also vast natural sinks for carbon. Ocean alkalinity enhancement is a CDR method that involves adding alkaline substances to seawater to accelerate this natural sink.
- The process costs approximately **40-260 Dollars per tonne** of CO₂, according to IPCC. However, it also comes with certain risks, like potential for increased GHG emissions from **mining, transport, and deployment**. Weathering of alkaline materials can also release byproducts like trace metals, impacting fragile marine ecosystems.

Way Forward: CDR as a policy

- According to IPCC, CDR methods require appropriate governance and policies as they can also cause adverse side-effects apart from the predicted benefits. To accelerate research and development and incentivise CDR deployment, a political commitment to formal integration into existing climate policy frameworks is required, including reliable measurement, reporting, and verification of carbon flows.
- According to IPCC, CDR methods require appropriate governance and policies as they can also cause adverse side-effects apart from the predicted benefits.



IUCN RED LIST OUTDATED AND UNRELIABLE

Context: Existing practice disallows wider participation and use of researcher knowledge, defeating purpose of conservation

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List

- **Outdated Data:** Scientists and conservationists across the world have expressed concerns that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species is outdated and unreliable.

About IUCN

- **Formation:** Formed in 1964, the Red List — an extinction risk assessment tool — serves as the most extensive and credible listing of species' extinction risk and acts as a significant resource for species conservation.
- **Effects of IUCN:** Even though the Red List has been "instrumental" in improving species conservation status, 25 scientists have expressed multiple concerns about the Red List affecting conservation efforts, especially in the Global South.
- **IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC):** The paper is the first time that scientists, researchers and conservationists across diverse taxa have critically reviewed the flaws in the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) system of assigning species status.
- **Low Assessment by IUCN:** There are only 150,000 species assessed by IUCN, the manuscript stated, which contributes less than 10 per cent of the two million described species in the world. The percentage gets skewed dramatically after considering the recent global biodiversity estimates, which suggest animal species exceeding 50 million.
- **Red List:** While the Red List has about 42,100 species threatened, the IPBES, on the other hand, states that more than a million species are facing potential extinction threats.
 - **Undescribed Species:** Furthermore, more undescribed species may face extinction threats, and many classified species may already be threatened, but IUCN-recommended reassessments every 10 years have not been completed.
 - For instance, in the marine realm, over 40 per cent of top-fished species have out-

dated assessments. Overall, 28 per cent of assessments have already been declared outdated, potentially undermining the long-term use of the Red List.

- **Challenges in IUCN:** He shared that threatened species don't receive adequate funding or it becomes challenging to seek the same for a species that is not threatened.

IUCN Classification:

As per the IUCN, species are classified into nine categories of extinction risks: Not evaluated, data deficient, least concern, near threatened, vulnerable, endangered, critically endangered, extinct in the wild and extinct.

- **Locally Endangered Population:** The need for conservation of locally endangered populations, as species extinction occurs one population at a time.
- **Need for version 2.0 of the Red List: To overhaul the systems.**
 - There are several examples highlighting the need for a new version of the Red List.
 - Woolly-necked storks were erroneously elevated to the vulnerable category using the assumption that farming was harming this species.
 - However, scientists across south and southeast Asia showed the birds to be faring very well, with the majority of their populations thriving in farmlands.
 - In Myanmar, more woolly-necked storks were seen on farmlands compared to protected forests.
- **Downlisting of Species:** The Greater adjutant stork has recently been down listed to least concern from endangered despite submissions from several scientists that this is incorrect. The species status assignment to this species is a strong example of the existing hegemony in some parts of the IUCN SSC, leading to incorrect Red List statuses for species.
- **Issues with List:** One of the major problems with these assignments is the assumption that all farmlands are poor stork habitats. While farming is a threat to some stork species in some regions, it is not the case in India and many African countries. The assignment of stork statuses has been due to the predicament a couple of species face and the assumption that all farmlands are affecting all stork species similarly.
- **Resources for Least Concern Species:** Researchers have strongly advised that even species categorised as least concern require resources so that they are monitored and managers can ensure that common species stay common. Once such species decline, it is

usually exceedingly difficult and expensive to restore them.

- **Extinction risk as Criteria:** Extinction risk alone is not adequate to direct conservation efforts and have recommended broadening conservation planning and decision-making without entirely depending on the Red List.
- **Top-Down Approach:** The entire exercise that disallows a wider participation and use of researcher knowledge in favour of a top-down approach defeats the purpose of both the IUCN ethos and the Red List.



\$293 BILLION NEEDED FOR INDIA'S TRIPLING OF RENEWABLES BY 2030

Context: If the IEA global net zero pathways are to be met, India would require an additional financing of \$101 billion, over and above the money required for tripling, as per the report by Ember.

- **Tripling of renewable energy:** An agreement on tripling of renewable energy installed capacity is expected to be one of the main points of discussion at the upcoming COP28 climate meeting in Dubai.
- **Investment challenges:** But highlighting the challenges in effecting such a transition, a new report has found that India would need an investment of about \$293 billion to triple its renewable energy installed capacity by 2030. That translates to about Rs 24 lakh crore.
- **Tripling ineffective:** But a mere tripling of renewable capacity by India might not be an adequate contribution if the world is to align itself to a net-zero pathway.
- The International Energy Agency (IEA) net zero scenarios are contingent on India being able to do much more than just tripling its renewable capacity.

Ember (UK-based independent think tank) report Analysis:

- **Highlights of Report:** A new report by Ember, focused on climate affairs, notes that **India had already set its sights** on tripling its renewable energy capacity for 2030, **much before it was acknowledged as a mandatory global goal** to ensure that there is still some chance of **holding global temperature rise** within 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial times.
 - **India's Renewable Goals:** India has announced its plans to **reach 450 GW** of renewable installed

capacity by 2030, **more than three times** the current capacity of about 135 GW.

- **Need for enhanced capacity:** But if the IEA global net zero pathways are to be met, India would need to take its renewable **installed capacity to about 570 GW by 2030**.
- **Additional financing:** That would require an additional financing of \$101 billion, over and above the money required for tripling.
 - This involves an extra investment of approximately
 - \$68 billion for solar
 - \$8 billion for wind
 - \$14 billion for storage
 - \$11 billion for transmission capacity additions.
- **Total Investment:** This brings the **total investment** in this scenario to **around \$394 billion** (about 32 lakh crore).

Way Forward: Renewable capacity and COP 28.

- The **tripling of global renewable energy** installed capacity is one of the key targets being pushed for **adoption at COP28**. The proposal was included in the G20 summit outcome in New Delhi in September and has been endorsed by about 60 countries after that.
- According to **IEA estimates**, this singular measure has the potential to **avoid about 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions** between now and 2030. **Installation of new renewable energy capacity has been growing at 9-10 per cent yearly**, but this would need to be almost doubled to reach the tripling target by 2030.



HOW A NEW STUDY REJECTS THE IDEA OF 'MAN, THE HUNTER', THROUGH FEMALE BIOLOGY

Context:

- Recently, a new study has argued that women not participated in Hunting activities in Palaeolithic times, but they also had certain biological advantages.
- A 2020 study from the University of California, Davis, found that between 30 per cent and 50 per cent of the hunters were female, while analysing burial records from the Americas.

About the Study:■ **Basis of study:**

- For a long time, history textbooks said that thousands of years ago, men hunted animals while women gathered fruits and firewood, and nurtured their kids. This commonly accepted view was also known as '**Man, the Hunter**'.
- But over the decades, several studies have challenged this idea, which is also used as an example to justify the **division of labour** on the **basis of sex** – that men and women should be restricted to certain professions and roles, because of their biological characteristics.

■ **Key Findings:**

- Two recent studies have mentioned that not only did women participate in hunting big animals just as the men did, but their biology gave them certain advantages as well.
- The report also mentioned that **during Paleolithic era (between 2.5 million to 10,000 years ago)** when humans used primitive tools and began residing in basic structures such as huts.

● **Arguments presented:** The researchers made a case for '**Woman, the Hunter**', from a **physiological and archaeological** lens:

- **Physiology:** They argue that on average, the role of the **estrogen hormone** is not taken into account to speak about female physical capabilities.
- Their study shows that "**females may be metabolically better suited for endurance activities such as running, which could have profound implications for understanding subsistence capabilities and patterns in the past.**"
- Estrogen also helps to regulate the reproductive system and also influences **fine-motor control and memory, enhances the growth and**

development of neurons, and helps to prevent hardening of the arteries.

- Also estrogen seems to encourage the body to use stored fat for energy before stored carbohydrates.
- Fat contains more **calories per gram** than carbohydrates do, so it burns more slowly, which can delay fatigue during endurance activity.
- **Archaeology:** Burial remains for **males and females**, and techniques for doing so. According to the researchers, the remains of our closest extinct human relatives, the Neandertals, do not differ in their **trauma or injury patterns** based on sex.
- Between **45,000 and 10,000 years ago**, males do show higher rates of a set of injuries to the right elbow region, reflecting the frequency of the action of throwing spears.
- Further, the fact that females and males were buried in the same way between **35,000 to 10,000 years ago**, and interred with the same kinds of artifacts, also suggests a lack of differentiation.

Existing Theories supporting 'Man as Hunter':

- A National Geographic article from 2007 explains: "Much of our anatomy, according to the Man-the-Hunter theory, was the result of adaptations for hunting.
- However, a study in May 2023 from **American researchers** analysed **63 present-day** foraging societies across the world.
- It found that **50 (79 per cent)** of them had documentation on women hunting, suggesting biology and processes such as pregnancy and menstruation had little role to play in participation in hunting.



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SECTION B

[SPECIAL]

- ▣ Shifting Dynamics in Gulf Energy Landscape



SHIFTING DYNAMICS IN GULF ENERGY LANDSCAPE

About the Economic Pivot -

- Gulf nations like **Saudi Arabia and the UAE** are investing in colossal renewable power projects, transitioning away from fossil fuels.
- Motivation behind this shift includes meeting emissions targets by 2030 and unlocking fossil fuel reserves for lucrative exports.

Need for the switch –**▣ Profit Maximization Strategy**

- Mohammad Al-Saidi of Qatar University cites freeing fossil fuel reserves for export as a key driver for the switch.
- In 2020, Saudi Arabia ranked fourth globally in oil consumption, emphasizing the need to maximize profits through international sales.

▣ International Image and Investment

- Gulf nations aim to attract international investment by showcasing commitment to renewable energy.
- Al-Saidi highlights the crucial role of image in attracting funds, making the transition not just an environmental consideration but an economic necessity.

▣ International Pressure:

- Globally, there's a growing chorus for sustainable practices and reduced dependence on fossil fuels.
- West Asian nations, with their significant oil reserves, face international scrutiny and pressure to align with global efforts to combat climate change.

▣ Climate Crisis Concerns

- Despite economic gains from oil exports, the Gulf faces existential threats due to climate change.
- Rising global temperatures, heatwaves exceeding 50 degrees Celsius, and vulnerability to climate impacts pose significant challenges.

▣ Climate Imperatives

- West Asian nations are increasingly feeling the heat, quite literally, with rising temperatures and extreme weather events.
- Addressing climate change becomes imperative, considering the region's susceptibility to heatwaves, water scarcity, and other climate-related challenges.

▣ Resilience:

- Dependence on oil has rendered West Asian economies vulnerable to market volatility.
- Diversification is not just an environmental necessity but a strategic move to build economic resilience against the uncertainties of the oil market.

Transition Strategies:**▣ Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)**

- Gulf nations, keen on maintaining fossil fuel exports, pin hopes on CCS technology to mitigate climate risks.
- CCS involves capturing emissions, but its effectiveness remains limited, raising concerns among climate activists.

▣ Diversification

- Gulf nations are exploring alternatives to oil revenue as demand is projected to decline in the future.
- Initiatives include green hydrogen production, renewable-powered commodities, and exploring economic opportunities in solar power.

▣ Renewable Energy Investments:

- West Asian countries are investing heavily in renewable energy projects.
- Solar and wind energy initiatives are gaining traction, with massive solar farms and wind power projects reshaping the energy landscape.

▣ Technological Innovation

- Embracing cutting-edge technologies like carbon capture and storage (CCS) is crucial.
- While not without challenges, CCS offers a pathway to continue oil exports while mitigating the environmental impact.

▣ Economic Diversification:

- Governments are actively diversifying their economies.
- Initiatives range from green hydrogen production to renewable-powered commodity production and exploring new economic opportunities beyond oil.

▣ Policy Reforms:

- Enacting policy reforms that support sustainable practices and incentivize the adoption of renewable energy technologies is a key aspect.

- ▶ Governments are revisiting regulatory frameworks to create an environment conducive to the transition.

Impact on the Region:

▣ Economic Resilience:

▶ Reduced Reliance on Oil Markets:

- Diversification efforts contribute to economic resilience by reducing dependence on volatile oil markets. Emerging sectors like tourism, technology, and sustainable industries become pillars of economic stability.

▶ Job Creation and Innovation:

- Economic diversification fosters job creation and innovation, laying the foundation for a more dynamic and adaptable regional economy.

▣ Environmental Sustainability:

▶ Mitigating Climate Change:

- The transition to renewable energy aligns West Asia with global sustainability goals. A reduced reliance on fossil fuels contributes significantly to mitigating climate change impacts, fostering environmental sustainability.

▶ Ecosystem Preservation:

- Efforts to diversify the economy often include measures to preserve ecosystems, ensuring a balance between economic development and environmental conservation.

▣ Global Geopolitical Dynamics:

▶ Shift in Influence:

- As West Asia transitions, geopolitical dynamics are poised to undergo significant shifts. The region's evolving influence on global energy markets may redefine relationships and alliances on the international stage.

▶ Emergence as a Sustainability Leader:

- West Asia has the potential to emerge as a leader in sustainable practices, influencing global perceptions and partnerships.

Impact on Indian Economy

▣ Energy Security:

▶ Strengthened Energy Security:

- India, a major importer of oil from West Asia, stands to benefit from a diversified and stable regional economy. Energy security gains reliability as the region transitions to sustainable practices.

▶ Exploration of Alternatives:

- India's exploration of renewable energy alternatives aligns with West Asia's transition, opening avenues for collaboration and mutual support.

▣ Economic Partnerships:

▶ Beyond Oil Trade:

- Beyond oil, India and West Asian nations can explore collaborations in renewable energy, technology, and sustainable industries. This diversification fosters stronger economic partnerships.

▣ Climate Collaboration:

▶ Diplomatic Ties Strengthened:

- Collaborative efforts between India and West Asian nations in addressing climate change contribute to strengthened diplomatic ties. Joint initiatives in renewable energy, afforestation, and climate adaptation projects become avenues for shared responsibility.

▶ Regional Climate Resilience:

- Joint climate initiatives contribute to building regional climate resilience, ensuring the well-being of both India and West Asia in the face of climate challenges.

Tourism's Ascendancy: A Cornerstone of West Asia's Post-Oil Economy

- West Asia, historically synonymous with oil-driven prosperity, is undergoing a paradigm shift as nations in the region diversify their economies in the aftermath of dwindling oil reliance.
- One of the most promising and transformative sectors leading this charge is tourism.

The Tourism Boom in West Asia

▣ Economic Diversification:

- ▶ The contribution of tourism to GDP in West Asia has shown a significant upward trend, with a regional average increase of 4% annually over the past decade.
- ▶ Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 aims to increase tourism's contribution to GDP from 3% to 10%.
- ▶ **Initiatives:** Countries like Oman and Bahrain are investing in developing tourist-friendly infrastructure, including hotels, resorts, and cultural attractions.

Job Creation and Innovation:

- ▶ The tourism sector in the UAE alone has created over 700,000 jobs, contributing to a diversified and dynamic labour market.
- ▶ **Innovation:** Initiatives like 'Tourism 365' in Dubai promote year-round tourism, ensuring a steady flow of employment opportunities.

Cultural Diplomacy:

- ▶ Qatar's hosting of the FIFA World Cup 2022 serves as a global platform for cultural exchange, drawing visitors worldwide.
- ▶ **Initiatives:** Investment in cultural festivals, museums, and heritage sites in Kuwait fosters international understanding.

UAE Case Study: A Paradigm of Success:

Visionary Leadership:

- ▶ The UAE's tourism boom is a result of long-term planning initiated by leaders like Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.
- ▶ **Strategic Planning:** The National Tourism Strategy aims to attract 25 million visitors annually by 2025.

Dubai: A Global Tourism Hub:

- ▶ Dubai attracted over **16 million** international tourists in 2019, making it one of the most-visited cities globally.
- ▶ **Iconic Projects:** Architectural marvels like the **Burj Khalifa and Palm Jumeirah** contribute to Dubai's status as a tourist magnet.

Diversification beyond Oil:

- ▶ The UAE's non-oil sector contributes around 80% to the country's GDP, showcasing successful economic diversification.
- ▶ **Strategic Move:** Reducing dependence on oil revenues ensures economic stability in the face of oil market fluctuations.

Innovative Attractions:

- ▶ **Event Impact:** Expo 2020 Dubai is expected to attract millions of visitors, showcasing the UAE's commitment to hosting large-scale innovative events.
- ▶ **Investment:** The UAE allocates substantial budgets for developing innovative attractions, such as the Mars Science City.

Sustainable Tourism Practices:

Environmental Stewardship:

- ▶ **Initiatives:** Qatar's 'Qatar Green Building Council' promotes eco-friendly accommodations, contributing to sustainable tourism.
- ▶ **Eco-Tourism:** Oman's focus on eco-tourism in areas like the Dhofar region aligns tourism with environmental conservation.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage:

- ▶ Jordan's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Petra, attract cultural enthusiasts, preserving historical landmarks.
- ▶ **Cultural Events:** Festivals in Lebanon, celebrating heritage, showcase a commitment to preserving and promoting cultural diversity.

Adventure and Luxury Tourism:

- ▶ **Tourist Demands:** Saudi Arabia's diverse landscapes, from Red Sea beaches to historical sites, cater to both adventure seekers and luxury travellers.
- ▶ **Investment:** Bahrain's luxury tourism initiatives, including high-end resorts, aim to attract a discerning global audience.

Challenges and the Road Ahead:

Balancing Tradition and Modernity

- ▶ **Initiatives:** Kuwait's Heritage Village project combines modern amenities with traditional architecture, striking a balance.
- ▶ **Awareness:** Public awareness campaigns in Iraq focus on preserving cultural authenticity amid rapid tourism growth.

Infrastructure Development

- ▶ **Investment:** Significant investments in airport expansions, transportation, and hospitality projects are underway in multiple West Asian nations.
- ▶ **Smart Cities:** The concept of smart cities, exemplified by NEOM in Saudi Arabia, integrates technology into infrastructure development.

Global Competitiveness

- ▶ **Marketing Strategies:** The use of innovative marketing strategies, as seen in the 'Visit Jordan' campaign, enhances global competitiveness.
- ▶ **Adaptation:** West Asian nations are adapting to evolving traveller preferences, emphasizing personalized experiences and sustainable tourism.

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SECTION C

[PRELIMS]

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ART & CULTURE

- ❑ Kambala to be held in Bengaluru for the first time

POLITY & GOVERNANCE

- ❑ Criminal Conspiracy as 'Scheduled offence' under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002
- ❑ Amplifi 2.0 portal' for Urban Development
- ❑ Cabinet Approval for 16th Finance Commission

ECONOMY

- ❑ Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2023
- ❑ Government makes biogas blending mandatory

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- ❑ Generic drugs to treat four rare diseases launched
- ❑ Decentralised Autonomous Organisations
- ❑ 25 years of the International Space Station

KAMBALA TO BE HELD IN BENGALURU FOR THE FIRST TIME

Context: Bengaluru Kambala Samiti to organise this Cultural sport event in Bengaluru for the first time. Expected to be big event showcasing the cultural significance to a larger audience.

About Kambala:

- An annual buffalo race taking the form of folk sport and a cultural celebration, held in the south western Indian state of Karnataka.
- The racers try to bring the buffaloes under control by holding their reins tight and whipping them. The Kambala racetrack is a slushy paddy field.
- In its traditional form, Kambala was non-competitive and buffalo pairs raced one after another in paddy fields.
- It has a 700-year-old history. During the early days of the festival it was known as Karaga celebrations. Later it came to be known as Kambala celebrations. Also observed as thanksgiving to gods for protecting the animals from diseases.
- Sponsored by local Tuluva landlords and households in the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod of Kerala, a region collectively known as Tulu Nadu.
- The Kambala season generally starts in November and lasts until March. These are organized through Kambala samithis.



Cultural significance of Event:

- Along with kambala sports, there will be a food court with close to 200 stalls showcasing food from the coastal Karnataka region,

- Cultural programmes celebrating Karavali culture. The goal is to bring the culture of Kambala to Bengaluru.
- Karavali in Kannada refers to the coastal area of Karnataka. This region has immense natural beauty also its own unique cultural traditions and rich heritage. The Karavali Utsav is a celebration of the rich dance, music, culture, and nature of the Karavali region.

Different beliefs on origin of Kambala:

- Originated in the farming community of Karnataka. The festival is dedicated to Lord Kadri Manjunatha, an incarnation of Lord Shiva.
- The festival was started by the Hoysala King to see if the buffaloes could be trained and used in war.

CRIMINAL CONSPIRACY AS 'SCHEDULED OFFENCE' UNDER THE PREVENTION OF MONEY LAUNDERING ACT, 2002

Context: The Supreme Court has held that criminal conspiracy will be treated as a scheduled offence under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, only if the same is to commit an offence included in the Schedule to the Act and not otherwise.

The SC's view:

Background:

- The Supreme Court held that the offence under **Section 120B of IPC** will become a scheduled offence only if the criminal conspiracy is to commit an offence already included in Parts A, B or C of the Schedule to PMLA.
- The Supreme Court again clarified that the criminal conspiracy must be linked to **committing an offence** already included in **Parts A, B, or C** of the Schedule to the PMLA.
- The decision has legal implications for cases involving money laundering allegations and criminal conspiracy.
- It establishes a precedent that a **criminal conspiracy**, for it to fall under the purview of the PMLA, must have a direct connection to an offence listed in the PMLA Schedule.
- **Need of such legislation:** The Court added that a **person made an accused** in a money laundering case, but not for a scheduled offence, would also stand to benefit if the money laundering case is ultimately quashed.
- This interpretation provides clarity on the application

of the law and ensures that the scheduled offences under the PMLA are directly linked to conspiracies intending to commit those specific offences.

What are Schedule Offences?

- The offences under **Sections 384 to 389 of the IPC** relating to “extortion” are scheduled offences included in Paragraph 1 of the Schedule to the PMLA.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002:

- The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) forms the core of the legal framework put in place by India to combat money laundering.
- The PMLA and rules notified thereunder impose obligation on banking companies, financial institutions, and intermediaries and persons carrying on a designated business or profession, to verify identity of clients, maintain records and furnish information to FIU-IND.
- PMLA is an act to prevent money-laundering and to provide for confiscation of property derived from, or involved in, money-laundering and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.



‘AMPLIFI 2.0 PORTAL’ FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Context: Recently, the Urban Affairs Ministry aims to provide data on Indian cities via dedicated portal.

The Need:

- The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is making raw data from Indian cities available on a single platform for academics, researchers, and stakeholders to help data-driven policy making.
- India has been witnessing rapid urbanisation over the last few years.
- By 2030, India is projected to have 60 crore (40%) of the population living in urban areas compared with 37.7 crore (31%) in 2011.
- According to the 2011 Census, urban India contributed 63% to the country's GDP, and this is projected to increase to 75% by 2030.

About the Portal:

- The Amplifi 2.0 (Assessment and Monitoring Platform for Liveable, Inclusive and Future-ready urban India) portal was launched by the Ministry three weeks ago.

- Currently, 258 urban local bodies have been on-boarded, and data for 150 cities is available on the portal.
- Issue: A lack of data maturity in cities, and thus only 150 ULBs were able to share their data.
- **Steps:** Data quality parameters to every city have been sent by the ministry
- The Ministry used data provided by ULBs to rank cities based on four indices — the Ease of Living Index, Municipal Performance Index, Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework, and Data Maturity Assessment Framework.

Application and Future aspirations:

- Data from the more than 4,000 Urban Local Bodies will eventually be made available on the portal.
- **Types of Data:** For example,
 - the total diesel consumption;
 - the number of samples tested for water quality;
 - the average annual expenditure on healthcare;
 - The total number of people residing in slums; the fatalities recorded due to road accidents.
- The government is also planning to bring out different reports on subsets of the four indices.
- The Urban Outcomes Framework 2022, which has been developed for the Ministry by the National Institute of Urban Affairs and Ernst and Young, shifts the focus from the indices to the data with a comprehensive list of indicators.
- With this, data across 14 sectors is streamlined to increase focus on data collection, and disaggregated data can be analysed by domain experts.
- The initiative also provides the opportunity to create new frameworks based on open data.
- The 14 sectors are — demography, economy, education, energy, environment, finance, governance, health, housing, mobility, planning, safety and security, solid waste management, and water and sanitation.



CABINET APPROVAL FOR 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION

Context: The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Sixteenth Finance Commission.

The **Fifteenth Finance Commission** was established in 2017, providing recommendations valid until the financial year 2025-26.

Terms of Reference for the 16th Finance Commission-

- **Distribution of Net Proceeds:** Addressing the division of net tax proceeds between the Union and States, along with the allocation among States.
- **Principles for Grants-in-Aid:** Defining principles governing grants-in-aid of State revenues from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Resource Augmentation:** Identifying measures to supplement the Consolidated Fund of a State for empowering Panchayats and Municipalities, aligning with State Finance Commission recommendations.
- **Disaster Management Financing:** Reviewing current financing arrangements for Disaster Management initiatives, proposing recommendations based on the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

The Constitution (Article 280) mandates the formation of a Finance Commission every fifth year or earlier, aligning with the fiscal cycle.

Timeline and Deliverables:

- The 16th Finance Commission is tasked to submit its report by October 31, 2025, covering a five-year period from April 1, 2026.
- This timeframe ensures a comprehensive assessment of the financial landscape preceding the recommendations.

Finance Commissions: FCs are constitutional bodies set up under Article 280 of the Constitution every five years to make recommendations on the distribution of financial resources between the Union and the states.

Recommendations cover three main aspects:

- **Vertical Devolution:**
The share of states in the divisible pool of central taxes.
- **Horizontal Distribution:**
The allocation of resources among states based on a formula that reflects their fiscal needs, capacities and performance.
- **Grants-in-aid:**
The additional transfers to specific states or sectors that are in need of assistance or reform.



BASIC ANIMAL HUSBANDRY STATISTICS 2023

Context: The Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying Parshottam Rupala released the **Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2023** (milk, egg, meat and wool production 2022-23) based on **Animal Integrated Sample Survey (March 2022-February 2023)** during the **National Milk Day** event at Guwahati.

The Mains Findings of Statistics are:

The Production of **Milk, Egg, Meat and wool** in the country is estimated annually based on the results of **Integrated Sample Survey (ISS)** which is conducted across the country in **three seasons** i.e., **summer (March-June), Rainy (July-October) and winter (November-February)**.

- **Milk Production:** The total Milk production in the country is estimated as 230.58 million tonnes during 2022-23 registered a growth of 22.81% over the past 5 years which was 187.75 million tonnes in 2018-19.
 - It was found that the highest milk producing State during 2022-23 was **Uttar Pradesh** with a share of 15.72 % of total milk production followed by **Rajasthan (14.44 %), Madhya Pradesh (8.73 %), Gujarat (7.49 %), and Andhra Pradesh (6.70 %)**.
 - In terms of **annual growth rate (AGR)**, the highest AGR recorded by;
 - Karnataka (8.76%) followed by West Bengal (8.65%) and Uttar Pradesh (6.99%) over the previous year.
- **Egg Production:** The total Egg production in the country has estimated as 138.38 billion nos. during 2022-23 registered a growth of 33.31% growth over the past 5 years as compared to the estimates of 103.80 billion numbers during 2018-19.
 - The major contribution in the total Egg production comes from **Andhra Pradesh** with a share of 20.13 % of total **Egg production** followed by **Tamil Nadu (15.58 %), Telangana (12.77 %), West Bengal (9.94%) and Karnataka (6.51 %)**.
 - In terms of AGR, the **highest growth rate** was recorded by West Bengal (20.10%) and followed by Sikkim (18.93%) and Uttar Pradesh (12.80%).
- **Meat Production:** The total Meat production in the country is estimated as 9.77 million tonnes during 2022-23 registered a growth of 20.39 % over the past

5 years as compared to the estimates of 8.11 million tonnes in 2018-19.

- ▶ The major contribution in the total meat production comes from Uttar Pradesh with 12.20 % share and followed by **West Bengal (11.93 %)**, **Maharashtra (11.50 %)**, **Andhra Pradesh (11.20 %)** and **Telangana (11.06 %)**.
- ▶ In terms of annual growth rate, the highest Annual Growth Rate (AGR) has recorded in Sikkim (63.08%) followed by **Meghalaya (38.34%)** and **Goa (22.98%)**.



GOVERNMENT MAKES BIOGAS BLENDING MANDATORY

Context: Government initiative on making Biogas blending mandatory with an aim of achieving net zero emissions targets by 2070.


Government Policy on Biofuel:

- The government announced compulsory blending of compressed biogas, which is extracted from municipal and agriculture waste, in natural gas to cut reliance on imports.
- **Biogas Blending:** Initially, 1 per cent of biogas will be blended in gas used in automobiles and household kitchens for cooking from April 2025. The share will be increased to around 5 per cent by 2028.
- **Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF):** The government also plans to have 1 per cent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in aircraft turbine fuel by 2027, doubling to 2 per cent in 2028. The SAF targets will initially apply to international flights.
- **CBG Blending Obligation (CBO):** It will promote production and consumption of Compressed Biogas (CBG) in the country.

The key objectives of the CBO

- To stimulate demand for CBG in city gas distribution sector, import substitution for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), saving in forex, promoting circular economy and to assist in achieving the target of net zero emission.
- The CBO will encourage investment of around Rs 37,500 crores and facilitate establishment of 750 CBG projects by 2028-29.
- The CBG blending will be voluntary till FY 2024-2025 and the mandatory blending obligation will start from FY 2025-26

- A **Central Repository Body (CRB)** shall monitor and implement the blending mandate based on the operational guidelines.



GENERIC DRUGS TO TREAT FOUR RARE DISEASES LAUNCHED

Context: These indigenous products will lead to drug prices being slashed up to 100 times of their current market value.

Four Rare Diseases:

- The **Union Health Ministry** has made available generic drugs to support the care and treatment of four ailments:
 - ▶ Tyrosinemia-Type 1
 - ▶ Gauchers Disease
 - ▶ Wilson's Disease
 - ▶ The Dravet-Lennox Gastaut Syndrome

The cost of these drugs will be slashed by anywhere between 60 and 100 times of their current market value.

Other Rare Diseases:

- The Ministry is also in the process of making available drugs for more rare diseases, including **Phenylketonuria and Hyperammonemia**.

Rare Disease:

- A rare disease is a health condition of particularly low prevalence that affects a small number of people.
- It collectively afflicts 6-8% of the population in any country at any given time, so India could have 8.4 crore to 10 crore such cases, according to the Ministry.
- Nearly 80% percent of these diseases are genetic in nature.

Priority diseases:

- **Thirteen rare diseases were prioritized** like sickle cell anemia for children.
- This venture is purely a **non-commercial venture** guided only with the motive to serve those in acute need.
- For years, the **Health Ministry** through various schemes has been trying to **financially help as**

many patients as possible but this is a more sustainable measure for not just patients in India but also worldwide.

- **Several companies** -- including Biophore India, Laurus Labs, Azico Biophore, MSN Pharmaceuticals, Akums Drugs and Pharmaceutical – have come forward to take part in the venture.

DECENTRALISED AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATIONS

Context: Decentralised Autonomous Organisations (DAOs) represent a ground-breaking innovation at the intersection of blockchain technology and governance.

What are DAOs?

- DAOs are encoded organizations on blockchain, governed by smart contracts, disrupting traditional structures.
- From decentralized finance to art and governance, DAOs reshape industries with borderless cooperation.
- Decentralization, transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration define the transformative potential of DAOs.

Key Highlights:

DAOs Revolutionizing Industries:

- ▶ DAOs operate without centralized control, governed by smart contracts and member consensus.
- ▶ They impact finance, art, governance, and supply chain management, offering transparent and democratic systems.

Principles and Implications:

- ▶ DAOs decentralize power, democratize decision-making, and promote transparency and trust.
- ▶ They champion inclusivity, breaking barriers, fostering diversity, and inspiring new forms of collaboration.

Challenges and Controversies:

- ▶ The 2016 DAO hack exposed vulnerabilities, emphasizing the need for security audits.
- ▶ Regulatory uncertainty, legal liability, and complex compliance issues challenge DAO adoption.

Legal Framework Evolution:

- ▶ Stakeholders collaborate to establish legal frameworks addressing governance, IP, and cross-border operations.

- ▶ Striking a balance between innovation and compliance is crucial for DAOs' coexistence with legal norms.

25 YEARS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION

Context: On the Occasion of 25 years of launch of International Space Station (ISS) there is recall to recognize its efforts to facilitate science and symbolizes international collaboration, peace, and diplomacy.

When did the International Space Station launch?

- The first part of the International Space Station (ISS), called '**Zarya**', was launched by Russia on November 20, 1998. It provided **fuel, power, and a docking zone** for other spacecraft.
- A month later, on December 4, 1998, the **United States** launched the **Unity Node 1 module**.
- Together with Zarya, they formed the **beginning of the ISS**, which, through 42 assembly flights, evolved into a fully functional **space laboratory**.

Details about International Space station (ISS):

- The ISS is equipped with various spaces for daily activities, including **six sleeping quarters, two bathrooms, a gym, and a unique 360-degree view bay window**.
- **Dimensions:** Measuring 109 meters (357 feet) end-to-end, the ISS is almost the length of a full American football field, including the end zones.
 - ▶ It surpasses the length of an **Olympic swimming pool** by more than twice. However, it is shorter than **SpaceX's Starship** by 12 meters.
- **Speed of travel:** The ISS orbits Earth numerous times in one day — every **90 minutes** to be precise — at a speed of **8 kilometers (5 miles) per second**.
- The ISS boasts a **solar array wingspan** of 109 meters, exceeding the wingspan of the largest commercial aircraft, the **Airbus A380 (79.8 meters)**.
- Additionally, the space station is intricately wired, with about **13 kilometers of electrical wires** running through its structure.

Significance of ISS:

- Astronauts have conducted **hundreds of scientific experiments** on the ISS.

Recent Experiments:

There have been discoveries to **benefit drug development**, new water purification systems, methods to mitigate muscle and **bone atrophy** and those that have led innovations in food production.

- ▶ They experiment on themselves, monitoring their **general health, nutrition or the effects of solar radiation**.
- ▶ They also conduct experiments for scientists on Earth. These experiments have led to numerous scientific breakthroughs.
 - From **Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease** to cancer, asthma and heart disease — it's all been studied in space.
 - Scientists say some medical experiments are best done in space because cells behave in microgravity more like they do inside the

human body, but it's difficult to recreate such conditions on Earth.

How long will the ISS be operational?

- Plans for the future operation of the ISS were thrown into uncertainty with the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022.
- Due to **geopolitical tensions**, both the European Space Agency and national bodies have withdrawn from collaborations with Russia.
- Beyond **geopolitical factors**, various spacefaring nations, including **Japan, China, India, and the United Arab Emirates**, are eager to establish their presence in space independently.
- While the **US and Europe** express commitment to the ISS until 2030, NASA focuses on its Artemis program for lunar exploration, and the European Space Agency (ESA) is actively working on a new space station named **Starlab**.



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SECTION 'D'

[QUICK BYTES]

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- ❑ First Night Sky Sanctuary
- ❑ Bihar Cabinet passed a proposal seeking special category status for the State
- ❑ Centre to pay Rs.8 lakh each to 15,000 women SHGs for buying drones
- ❑ Ayushman Arogya Mandir'
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SPECIES IN NEWS

- ❑ New species of 'music frog' in Arunachal

Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam



The Ministry of Tourism, in association with Ministry of Culture, Sangeet Natak Academy and State Government of Andhra Pradesh has successfully organised the prequel event of Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam.

About the event:

- The Krishnaveni Sangeetha Neerajanam will be organized from 10th to 12th December, 2023 in Vijayawada.
- It is a **first of its kind festival** to celebrate the rich heritage of classical music and promote lesser-known tourist attractions.
- The event will also feature spectacular display and sale of regional cuisine, local handicrafts and handlooms.
- The festival also aims to promote the hidden gems of the region including spiritual, heritage and eco destinations.
- This event held at **Bobilli, Rajahmundry, Lepakshi, Movva, Nellore** and **Kurnool** brought together renowned artists and witnessed active participation from students representing music colleges of Andhra Pradesh and music enthusiasts from the region.

First Night Sky Sanctuary



Ladakh will soon have **South East Asia's first Night Sky Sanctuary**.

About the Location:

- The Dark Sky Reserve will be located at Hanle village in Eastern Ladakh as a part of Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary.
- It will boost Astro-tourism in India and will be one of the world's highest-located sites for optical, infra-red, and gamma-ray telescopes.
- Spread over 1,073 square kilometres, the Night Sky Reserve is located within the Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary and adjacent to the Indian Astronomical Observatory.
- A tripartite MoU was signed among the UT Administration, Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh and the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) for launching the Dark Space Reserve.

Do you Know?

Indian Astronomical Observatory is the second-highest optical telescope in the world, of Indian Institute of Astrophysics at **Hanle at an elevation of 4500 metres**.

Bihar Cabinet passed a proposal seeking special category status for the State

The Bihar Cabinet passed a proposal seeking **special category status (SCS)** for the State and asked the Central government to clarify its stand on the issue in the public domain.

What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

- SCS is a classification given by the Centre to assist development of states that face geographical and socio-economic disadvantages.
- Constitution does not make a provision for SCS and this classification was later done on the recommendations of the **Fifth Finance Commission** in 1969.

States with Special Category Status:

Presently, **Assam, Nagaland, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, and Telangana** are among the **eleven states** in the nation with the special category status.

Centre to pay Rs.8 lakh each to 15,000 women SHGs for buying drones

More than three months after Prime Minister announced to provide **drones to women self-help groups (SHGs)**, the Cabinet has approved a scheme with an outlay of Rs.1,261 crore for two years under which each such group will be eligible to get up to Rs.8 lakh financial support for purchase of drones.

About the Scheme:

- The scheme will help provide drones to **15,000 selected women SHGs** during 2024-25 and 2025-2026 for providing rental services to farmers for agriculture purpose.
- Financial assistance:** Financial assistance will be provided by the Centre to each SHG at 80 per cent of the cost of drone, including accessories/ ancillary charges but up to a maximum of Rs.8 lakh.
 - As one drone costs around **Rs.10 lakh**, the government has allowed SHGs to take loan from banks under the **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF)** at lower interest rate since the Centre bears **3 per cent** interest costs through subsidy.
- Members of the SHGs with inclination to take up repairs of electrical goods, fitting and mechanical works will be selected by the SRLM and LFC and will be trained as drone technician/assistant.
- The government guidelines have also made LFCs to act as a link between drone suppliers and SHGs in purchase of drones as well as their repair and maintenance.

'Ayushman Arogya Mandir'

The Union Government has decided to rename the existing Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWCs) as '**Ayushman Arogya Mandir**' with the tag-line '**Arogyam Parmam Dhanam**'.

About:

- As part of this effort, states have been instructed to upload photographs of the rebranded primary health facilities onto the AB-HWC portal.
- It has been underlined that the National Health Mission (NHM) logo is to be retained in the rebranded centres.
- If scripts other than **Devanagari (Hindi) or English** are to be used for branding, then the full and exact title can be translated into the state language(s), but the tagline must be transliterated in the state language(s).
- The Centre offers screenings for **hypertension, diabetes, oral, breast and cervical cancer**.

Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)

The Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, GoI is organizing the **19th Working Party on Data Collection and Statistics (WPDCS19)** of the **Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC)** from 28th November to 2nd December 2023.

About:

- There were participants from countries namely, Indonesia, France, Spain, other countries of the **European Union (EU)**, **Seychelles, Tanzania, Iran, Thailand, Japan, Sri Lanka, Oman and India** attending the meeting in person.
- This is an important meeting organized by the IOTC and hosted by Department of Fisheries, GoI, which will bring together the renowned Scientists and

ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation Forum (AIGIF)

India along with **10 ASEAN Member States (AMS)** was represented by 200 participants, at the **4th edition of the annual ASEAN India Grassroots Innovation Forum (AIGIF)** that was launched in Langkawi, Malaysia on 28th November 2023.

About:

- The AIGIF is an annual programme focused on fostering a strengthened relationship between India and AMS on the premise of cooperation in **Science, Technology and Innovation (STI)**.

- While on one side it aims to give exposure to social innovations in different countries, it also strengthens governance in the grassroots innovation ecosystem.
- The annual program is a collaboration between the **ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology, and Innovation (COSTI)**; Department of Science & Technology (DST), Government of India; National Innovation Foundation (NIF) – India and the Science and Technology Ministry of the host nation, Malaysia's Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) in the year 2023.
- Yayasan Inovasi Malaysia (YIM)** is an agency under MOSTI which is executing the AIGIF this year.

Amyloidosis



Recently, Scientists fabricate **2D protein monolayer** that can help to study diseases like **Amyloidosis**.

About the invention:

- A 2D protein monolayer was fabricated by scientists by assembling lysozyme molecules -- model protein in studying diseases like **Amyloidosis**.
- Amyloidosis is a **rare disease** that occurs when a protein called amyloid builds up in organs.
- This amyloid build-up can affect the working of organs like heart, kidneys, liver, spleen, nervous system and digestive tract.
- Lysozyme, a protein present in mucosal secretions and a principal component of airway fluid can be regarded as a model protein in studying diseases like Amyloidosis which ultimately leads to multi-organ dysfunction.

Navy advanced warship 'Imphal'



Recently, the Indian Defence Minister has unveiled the crest of the Navy's stealth guided missile destroyer **Imphal**, which is fitted with BrahMos surface-to-surface missiles among other indigenous weapons.

About:

- The ship — which is the third among the four Project 15B stealth guided missile destroyers — was delivered to the Navy last month by **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL)**.
- Unveiling of Imphal's crest, adorned with the **Kangla Palace** and 'Kangla-Sa' is a tribute to the sacrifice made by the people of Manipur towards India's independence, sovereignty and security.
- '**Kangla-Sa**' is also the **state emblem of Manipur**.
- The crest design depicts the Kangla Palace on the left and '**Kangla-Sa**' on the right.

- The ship has a displacement of **7,400 tonnes**, an overall length of 164 metres and is equipped with state-of-the-art weapons and sensors, including surface-to-air missiles, anti-ship missiles and torpedoes.

PERSONALITY IN IN NEWS

Justice Fathima Beevi (1927-2023)



Former Supreme Court Justice **M. Fathima Beevi**, who was the first female judge at Supreme Court died at 96.

About:

- Fathima Beevi was born to Annaveetil Meeran Sahib and Khadeeja Beevi of **Pathanamthitta** in 1927.
- She completed her schooling at the Catholicate High School and did an undergraduate degree in Chemistry from the University College, Thiruvananthapuram.
- In line with her father's aspiration to make her a lawyer, she did a degree in law and enrolled as lawyer in November 1950.
- She was also the **Governor of Tamil Nadu** from 1997 to 2001.
- Years later, she became the **first woman** member of the country's **Income Tax Appellate Tribunal**, before becoming the first Muslim woman to enter the higher judiciary as a judge with the **Kerala High Court in 1983**.
- **Determined to recast the role of women in Indian judiciary, she then went on to become the first woman judge in the Supreme Court of India in 1989.**

LOCATION IN NEWS

North Andaman's Atlanta Bay

The Central Government is assessing the feasibility of developing a **Bulk Cargo trans-shipment hub** in **Atlanta Bay** near Diglipur in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

- This is in addition to the Rs 44,000 crore **Galathea bay projects** near the Southern tip of the Great Nicobar Island.

About Atlanta Bay:

- The Atlanta Bay has a natural draft of **19-20m**, there is availability of natural break and it is well connected by road.
- Considering the strategic location and other facilities available, a Bulk Cargo trans-shipment hub can be developed in Atlanta Bay.



- The feasibility study for developing Atlanta bay major Harbour is under process.
- There is availability of Natural break and is well connected by road. Also, sufficient land can be reclaimed from the sea.
- This transshipment hub is on the route from East & NE India to East & SE Asia, Australia-New Zealand countries.
- It is also on the route, of Coal, Sand & others construction materials, Iron ore etc., to Bangladesh and Myanmar.

SPECIES IN NEWS

New species of 'music frog' in Arunachal



Scientists have discovered a new species of '**music frog**' in Arunachal Pradesh.

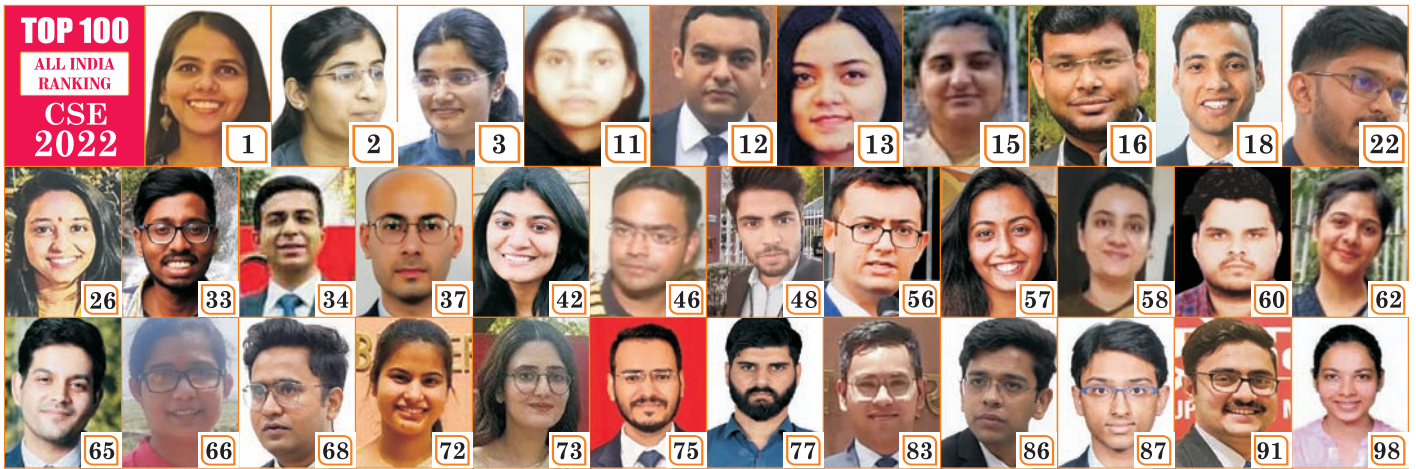
About the Species:

- The speciality of this new species of frog, **Nidirana noadihing**, is that both the **male and female** are vocal.
- This newly discovered frog has a **unique call pattern** consisting of **two-three** notes.
- Initially, we heard the call from a marsh near the **Noa-Dihing River**, which is quite similar to wild duck species, which we never heard before.
- The new species was named after the Noa-Dihing River, which is near where the specimens were discovered and collected.

Features:

- The frogs have a '**rounded**' snout and '**smooth**' skin with bony protrusions on their backs.
- The amphibians have a '**pale cream**' line bordered with dark brown running down the centre of their bodies.
- Their light brown limbs are adorned with **dark stripes**.





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