

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 2
MARCH
2024

Section A: MAINS ARTICLE

GS- II

- INDIA INKS FTA WITH 4 EUROPEAN NATIONS
- JUDGES IN POLITICS
- INTERNET IN INDIA'S TRIBAL VILLAGES
- REVIVAL OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION WITH PLI SCHEME
- PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION OF INDIA SURPASSES HARVARD
- INDIA'S ZERO FOOD CHILDREN
- GIG WORKERS ARE SUFFERING: STUDY

GS- III

- INDIA-ASEAN FTA REVIEW
- EASE E-COMMERCE FOR MSME EXPORTS
- TRADING IN INDIAN CURRENCY
- KERALA'S MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT & MEASURES
- WATER CRISIS IN BENGALURU
- WORLD'S FIRST AI LAW
- NUCLEAR POWER AND WASTE

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- Rupa Tarakasi

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- Sabarmati Ashram

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- Madiga member in Scheduled Caste Panel
- Cabinet approves India AI Mission
- Centre extends Ujjwala Subsidy
- PM-SURAJ Portal
- Cauvery Panel
- Uttarakhand UCC bill gets President nod

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- 5th-gen Indigenous Fighter Aircraft
- Mission Divyastra
- LCA Tejas
- India remains world's top arms importer: SIPRI Report
- New Digital Arrest Cyber Fraud
- Devin, world's first AI Software Engineer

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- Upper-Middle Income Country

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- Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary

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- Red Sea

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- New scorpion species
- Begonia tripurensis*

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GS SCORE

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DISCLAIMER

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

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

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SECTION

A

MAINS ARTICLES

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- ☞ World's first AI Law
- ☞ Nuclear Power AND Waste

1. INDIA INKS FTA WITH 4 EUROPEAN NATIONS

Context: India has signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with a group of four European countries that are not members of the European Union.

1: Dimension- Significance of the deal for India

- ❖ **Investment opportunity:** The deal with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) will see investments in India of USD 100bn (£77.8bn). The investments do not cover foreign portfolio investment.
- ❖ **Major range of investment:** Under this deal, India will lift most **import tariffs** on industrial goods from the four countries in return for investments over 15 years. The investments are expected to be made across a range of industries, including pharmaceuticals, machinery and manufacturing.
- ❖ **Better market access:** The agreement enhances market access and simplifies customs procedures making it easier for Indian and EFTA businesses to expand their operations in the respective markets.
- ❖ **Boost to Make in India:** The agreement will give a boost to **Make in India** and provide opportunities to young & talented workforce. The FTA will provide a window to Indian exporters to access large European and global markets.
- ❖ **A show for UK:** The announcement comes as the UK and India have been holding negotiations over an FTA for the last two years. In the last two years, India has signed trade deals with **Australia and the United Arab Emirates**.

2: Dimension- Major Takeaways

- ❖ For the first ever time in the history of FTAs, a legal commitment is being made about promoting target-oriented investment and creation of jobs.
- ❖ **EFTA is offering** 92.2% of its tariff lines which covers 99.6% of India's exports. The EFTA's market access offer covers 100% of non-agri products and tariff concession on Processed Agricultural Products (PAP).
- ❖ **India is offering** 82.7% of its tariff lines which covers 95.3% of EFTA exports of which more than 80% import is Gold. The effective duty on Gold remains untouched. Sensitivity related to PLI in sectors such as pharma, medical devices & processed food etc. have been taken while extending offers. Sectors such as dairy, soya, coal and sensitive agricultural products are kept in exclusion list.

FACT BOX: EFTA

- EFTA is an inter-governmental organization set up in 1960 for the promotion of free trade and economic integration for the benefit of its four Member States.

- The EFTA is made up of **Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein**.
- EFTA is one important economic block out of the three (other two - EU & UK) in Europe. Among EFTA countries, Switzerland is the largest trading partner of India followed by Norway.

2. JUDGES IN POLITICS

Context: The recent resignation of a Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay from Calcutta high court and subsequent entry into active politics has reignited discussions about the ethical boundaries for judges and raised concerns regarding the post-retirement activities of judicial officers. This transition from the judiciary to political involvement has sparked controversy and prompted calls for safeguards to uphold judicial independence and integrity.

1: Dimension- Judicial Independence and Post-Retirement Engagements:

- ❖ **Controversial Transition:** The development has raised concerns about the impartiality and integrity of the judiciary.
- ❖ **Ethical Dilemma:** The move highlights the ethical dilemma faced by judges regarding post-retirement engagements and political affiliations. Former Union Minister Arun Jaitley's proposition for a cooling-off period for judges underscores the need to address potential conflicts of interest arising from post-retirement appointments or political involvements.
- ❖ **Challenges to Judicial Independence:** While judges enjoy significant powers and privileges, concerns persist over external influences and pressures that could compromise judicial independence. The Constitution and international declarations emphasize the importance of judicial impartiality, integrity, and dignity in upholding the rule of law.

2: Dimension-Call for Judicial Reforms and Accountability:

- ❖ **Ensuring Judicial Integrity:** The episode underscores the imperative for robust mechanisms to ensure judicial accountability and uphold the sanctity of the judiciary.
- ❖ **Need for Proactive Measures:** Establishing clear rules prohibiting judges from engaging in partisan politics post-retirement can help maintain the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.
- ❖ **Strengthening Judicial Oversight:** The judiciary must proactively safeguard its independence and credibility by enacting judge-made laws to regulate post-retirement engagements and uphold the principles enshrined in the Constitution and international conventions.

3. INTERNET IN INDIA'S TRIBAL VILLAGES

Context: The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is planning to collaborate with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) to deploy V-SAT stations on a pilot basis for around 80 tribal villages in Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Maharashtra to bring Internet services there.

1: Dimension-e-Governance in India's remote regions

- ◆ In the remotest villages of India, the implementation of e-governance initiatives has emerged as a crucial necessity to **bridge the gap between rural communities and government services**.
- ◆ The collaboration with ISRO will see the government set up **V-SAT (very small aperture terminal) stations** for these 80 villages that are geographically remote and have difficult terrain, challenges that have kept them out of reach of connectivity for the longest time.
- ◆ This pilot project would be monitored so that it could be scaled up to other similar tribal villages in other States as well, adding the goal is also to help with e-governance in these remote areas.

Important e-Governance initiatives: Digital India Mission, Digi-Locker, Mobile Seva, myGov.in

2: Dimension-e-Governance empowering remote villages

- ◆ **Challenges:** With limited access to traditional administrative facilities, such as government offices and banks, remote villages often face challenges in accessing essential services and information.
- ◆ **Objective:** E-governance initiatives aim to address these challenges by leveraging digital technologies to provide efficient and accessible government services directly to the doorsteps of rural citizens.
- ◆ Through the establishment of digital infrastructure, including **internet connectivity and digital service centers**, villagers can now access a range of services such as **applying for government schemes, obtaining certificates, and accessing information on entitlements and benefits**.
- ◆ This transformation has had a **significant impact on rural communities**, empowering them with **greater access to government services, enhancing transparency and accountability** in governance, and fostering socio-economic development in the remotest corners of the country.

4. REVIVAL OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTION WITH PLI SCHEME

Context: India is set to start manufacturing the common antibiotic **Penicillin G** later this year, three decades after the country's last plant shut down. This revival is one of the successes of the **Production Linked Incentive scheme** launched during the pandemic to promote domestic manufacturing — the scheme gives incentives to companies on incremental sales.

1: Dimension-The issue of market flooding

- ◆ Penicillin G is the active **pharmaceutical ingredient (API)** used in manufacturing several common **antibiotics**.
- ◆ Penicillin G, just like many other APIs that India manufactured, was phased out of production because of **subsidy-driven cheaper** Chinese products flooding the market.

2: Dimension- Role of PLI Scheme for the economy

- ◆ Production Linked Incentive scheme (PLI) has become a crucial part of the vision of making India a \$ 5 trillion economy. In the post-pandemic scenario, PLI is proving to be a huge catalyst in creating 'AatmaNirbhar Bharat'.
- ◆ The scheme currently targets 14 sectors of strategic and economic importance for India's economic growth.
- ◆ The 14 sectors are:
 - Mobile Manufacturing and Specified Electronic Components,
 - Critical Key Starting Materials/Drug Intermediaries & Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients,
 - Manufacturing of Medical Devices
 - Automobiles and Auto Components,
 - Pharmaceuticals Drugs, Specialty Steel,
 - Telecom & Networking Products,
 - Electronic/Technology Products,
 - White Goods (ACs and LEDs),
 - Food Products,
 - Textile Products: MMF segment and technical textiles,
 - High efficiency solar PV modules,
 - Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery, and
 - Drones and Drone Components.
- ◆ The purpose of the PLI Schemes is to
 - attract investments in key sectors and cutting-edge technology
 - ensure efficiency and bring economies of size and scale in the manufacturing sector

- ▶ make Indian companies and manufacturers globally competitive
- ◆ These schemes have the potential of significantly boosting production, employment and economic growth over the next five years or so.

5. PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION OF INDIA SURPASSES HARVARD

Context: In the first global rankings for schools of public health, the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) has secured an impressive second place, surpassing Harvard.

1: Dimension-Significance of Public Health in today's times

- ◆ **Development & security:** Public health is pivotal to national development and global security. The ranking reflect the **increasing importance of public health research** in non-high-income countries.
- ◆ **Contributes to economic and social development:** Public health is important today because it addresses the health challenges and opportunities that affect the well-being of people and societies.
- ◆ **Empowerment:** Not only it responds to emerging and global health threats, it empowers individuals and communities.

2: Dimension- Role of Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI)

- ◆ **Protecting the system:** PHFI has established six institutes in different regions of India to promote multidisciplinary education and research which can inform and assist multi-sectoral policies and programmes for protecting people's health.
- ◆ **Treating relevancy:** It has aimed to be locally relevant, nationally impactful, and globally respected.
- ◆ **More focus on quality:** PHFI has ranked exceptionally well not because of the 'productivity' criterion but thanks to the 'quality' criterion, which are all at the maximum.

FACT BOX: The Report (Key-highlights)

- **Report title:** The ranking was part of a report 'A New Model for Ranking Schools of Public Health: The Public Health Academic Ranking'.
- The leading five institutions in the list include the **London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+) and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.**

6. INDIA'S ZERO FOOD CHILDREN

Context: In a study conducted to assess the number of children aged six-23 months who have not consumed any food over a 24-hour period, India has disturbingly ranked high. With 19.3 per cent of children classified as 'zero-food,' India ranked third globally, following west African countries Guinea (21.8 per cent) and Mali (20.5 per cent).

1: Dimension-Scope of the problem

- ◆ India has by far the highest number of 'zero-food' children at 6.7 million (67,00,000), accounting for almost half of all 'zero-food children' across 92 countries in the survey.
- ◆ The problem of such extreme food deprivation is severe among children in U.P.
- ◆ The states of Uttar Pradesh (28.4%), Bihar (14.2%), Maharashtra (7.1%), Rajasthan (6.5%), and Madhya Pradesh (6%) account for nearly two-thirds of the total zero-food children in India.

2: Dimension-Root cause of the issue

- ◆ Alongside **poverty and marginalisation** in economic backgrounds, it's rapid **urbanisation and nuclearised families** that have contributed to such a large number of 'zero food children' in the India's most populous State.
- ◆ Women from underprivileged economic backgrounds work to sustain their families, resulting in their having **insufficient time to complement breastfeeding** for children above six months of age
- ◆ Most women are **not aware** of the government's schemes (e.g.,- **Poshan Abhiyan** targeting holistic development and adequate nutrition for children, pregnant women and mothers, and primarily focused on children in the 0-6 years age group)
- ◆ There is need to introduce solid or semisolid foods to a child's diet -- as breastfeeding alone is not sufficient to provide children with nutrition, which, in turn might hinder their growth and development.

FACT BOX: Share of food

- According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the share of other food contributing to calorific requirements should be about 50% for children aged nine to 11 months (that is, 300 out of 700 Kcal/day), while the share of breastmilk should be greater than other food for children aged six-eight months (that is, 400 out of 600 Kcal/day).

7. GIG WORKERS ARE SUFFERING: STUDY

Context: A recent study of app-based workers shows they work long hours for low pay, with no social security, creating a loop of issues for them.

1: Dimension- Scope of the problem

- ◆ **Overburdened with work:** Almost a third of app-based cab drivers work for over 14 hours a day, while more than 83% work more than 10 hours and 60% work over 12 hours.
- ◆ **Social disparities:** Over 60% of the drivers from Scheduled Castes and Tribes working for over 14 hours a day, while only 16% from the unreserved category work such long hours.
- ◆ **Income disparities:** There exists income disparities and these income disparities further exacerbate the already existing social inequalities and perpetuate cycles of poverty and distress within these communities.
- ◆ **Risks:** Due to the demanding work hours, the drivers are physically exhausted, and exposed to an increased risk of road traffic accidents, especially due to the '10-minute delivery at the doorstep' policy of certain e-commerce platforms.
- ◆ **Additional stress:** The lack of social and job security creates additional stress and leads to potential health issues.

2: Dimension-Rules in developed economies

- ◆ **UK Supreme Court:** In 2021, in a landmark judgment, the UK Supreme Court classified Uber drivers as 'workers' under the **UK Employment Rights Act 1996**, thus entitling them to various benefits like paid holidays and minimum wages.
- ◆ **Dutch High Court** also handed down a similar ruling, stating that the legal relationship between Uber and the drivers meets all the characteristics of an employment contract, making them entitled to workers' rights under local labour laws.
- ◆ **The Superior Court of California** struck down a **2020 ballot measure known as Proposition 22** that excluded gig workers from labour laws by declaring them 'independent contractors'.
- ◆ **Germany's Temporary Employment Act** provides for equal pay and equal treatment of gig workers.

3: Dimension- Required Measures

- ◆ There is need of stronger social security for app-based workers.
- ◆ The government needs to exercise oversight on the fairness of algorithms and mechanisms used by platforms to monitor such workers.

8. INDIA-ASEAN FTA REVIEW

Context: India is negotiating with the ten-member ASEAN for greater market access for its goods, more flexibility in determining origin of products through product-specific rules and redressal of non-tariff barriers. This comes as part of the **India-ASEAN FTA review** initiated by New Delhi to address its **growing trade deficit** with the bloc.

1: Dimension- Objective behind India's demand

- ◆ India had been urging the ASEAN for a **review of the FTA** as its trade deficit with the region ballooned since the trade pact was implemented in January 2010.
- ◆ The India-ASEAN FTA, formally known as the **ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITGA)**, has resulted in **disproportionate gains for the ASEAN countries**.

2: Dimension- India's solutions

- ◆ Seeking **product-specific rules (PSRs)** in the **rules of origin (ROO)** determination is one solution being pursued by India for greater exports.
- ◆ ROO are the criteria to determine the origin of a product and establish if it qualifies for duty cuts under a FTA.
- ◆ PSRs can be introduced in the ROO chapter for relaxing rules for certain items where meeting the prescribed ROO is difficult.
- ◆ India is also looking for tariff cuts in items such as **chemicals, metals and alloys, machinery, plastic and rubber, textiles, leather and gems and jewellery**.

3: ASEAN's demands

- ◆ ASEAN too wants its own set of PSRs for items such as electronics, chemicals and textiles.
- ◆ Moreover, the ASEAN (especially Thailand) is unhappy with the **Customs (Administration of Rules of Origin under Trade Agreements) Rules, 2020 (CAROTAR, 2020)** rules introduced in India which aims to supplement the operational certification procedures related to implementing the ROO as prescribed under the respective trade agreement.

DATA Box

- In 2022-23, India exported goods worth \$44 billion to the region while its imports were valued at \$87.57 billion.
- Trade deficit in 2022-23 was \$43.75 billion compared to \$7.5 billion during the implementation of the agreement.

9. EASE E-COMMERCE FOR MSME EXPORTS

Context: Niti Aayog has called for **easing of access** to export finance and a concerted push to **boost e-commerce exports** to realise the potential of the country's **micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs)**.

1: Dimension- Significance of MSME

- ◆ The **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)** sector plays an important role in the growth of the Indian economy. The share of **MSME Gross Value Added (GVA)** in All India **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)** is around 30%.
- ◆ In developing countries like India, where majority of the population resides in the rural areas, these MSMEs are crucial - socially and economically.
- ◆ Because, these enterprises are wide dispersed across rural areas, they are extremely important for rural economic development.
- ◆ Further, these enterprises play a key role as a place for entrepreneurship and business skill development, especially in rural areas due to their easy accessibility.

2: Dimension- Issues faced by MSMEs (highlighted by NITI Aayog)

- ◆ **Constant obstacles:** The Aayog said small firms have encountered difficulties in tapping into export markets due to the inherent obstacles posed by economies of scale.
- ◆ **Cumbersome compliance process:** It proves more challenging for small enterprises to enter foreign markets, adhere to compliance requirements, achieve cost-effective production, and efficiently manage logistics for clients.
- ◆ **Lack of access to finance** is regularly seen as a key bottleneck for MSMEs.
- ◆ India has not been able to tap into e-commerce to work around market access barriers, unlike China. In 2022, China's e-commerce exports by MSMEs were worth \$200 billion, which is 100 times that of exports by Indian MSMEs.

3: Dimension-Measures to catalyse a radical transformation of MSME

- ◆ **Seamless Process:** There is need of modifying the business environment to facilitate **seamless exports** through **e-commerce platforms**, coupled with addressing essential ease-of-doing-business factors.
- ◆ **Green Channel:** As part of six key recommendations, Niti Aayog called for "green channel" clearances of MSME e-commerce exporters.

- ◆ **Better access:** For better access to finance, there is need of promotion of **Export Credit Guarantee** can help improve working capital availability for MSMEs.

FACT BOX: Schemes for MSMEs

The **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises** implements various schemes for the growth and development of MSME sector and training and market assistance to MSMEs. The schemes/programmes inter alia include

- Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
- Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)
- Micro and Small Enterprises-Cluster Development Programme (MSE-CDP)
- Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme (ESDP)
- Procurement and Marketing Support Scheme (PMS)
- National SC/ST Hub (NSSH)

10. TRADING IN INDIAN CURRENCY

Context: In what could be a "very game-changing" development for India's trade with the world, many economies big and small have expressed willingness to start trading in rupee with India.

1: Dimension: India's push for using the rupee globally

- ◆ More and more countries are realising the advantages of trading in their own domestic currencies and a shift towards direct transactions between local currencies is gaining traction.
- ◆ Some of these countries include neighbours like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as well as nations from the Gulf.
- ◆ India has already commenced trade in rupees with neighboring countries like Nepal and Bhutan. Additionally, the rupee has been included in Sri Lanka's list of designated foreign currencies to facilitate trade.
- ◆ India's push for using the rupee globally began with its first-ever payment in rupees for crude oil purchased from the UAE.
- ◆ This initiative has encouraged the world's third-largest energy consumer to seek similar arrangements with other suppliers.
- ◆ To support the use of the Indian Rupee in international trade, changes have been made to the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)**.

- ▶ These alterations allow for trade settlement in rupees and aim to establish the INR as a global currency.
- ▶ In July 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) authorised Indian banks to open and maintain special rupee Vostro accounts for partner trading countries' banks. These accounts hold the foreign banks' rupee holdings with their Indian counterparts.

2: Dimension: The Economic Perspective (significance)

- ◆ **Reduced transaction cost:** By avoiding the need to convert transactions into a third currency, both parties can significantly reduce transaction costs.
- ◆ **Stability:** Trade using the Indian Rupee is also advantageous because the currency remains stable against most international currencies. This stability has attracted different nations to build trade relations based on rupee trade.
- ◆ **Solution for dollar shortage:** Besides, the rupee trade mechanism has proven beneficial for countries experiencing a shortage of US dollars.

FACT BOX: Vostro Account

- When an Indian trader needs to make a payment to a foreign trader in rupees, the amount is credited to the Vostro account.
- Similarly, when an Indian trader is owed payment, the amount is deducted from the Vostro account and credited to their regular account.

11. KERALA'S MAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT & MEASURES

Context: In the wake of recurring incidents of loss of lives in human settlements due to elephant attacks, Kerala has come up with long, short-term measures to prevent man-animal conflict. Also, the Kerala cabinet declared instances of **man-animal conflict** as a **state-specific disaster**. Declaration of the man-animal conflict as a state specific disaster will give more power to the district collectors to address the menace.

1: Dimension-The pressing issue of human-animal conflict

- ◆ In contemporary Kerala, particularly in the district of Wayanad, human-animal conflict is a pressing issue shaped by the intricate interplay of agrarian transformation and forest conservation efforts.
- ◆ As capitalist settler agriculture expands into forested areas, encroaching upon wildlife habitats, conflicts between humans and animals intensify.

- ◆ This conflict reflects a historical narrative of **ecological modernity**, where state-led and globalizing conservation initiatives intersect with agrarian changes, creating **complex dynamics of coexistence and competition** between human livelihoods and wildlife survival.

2: Dimension- States attempt to prevent the menace Measures

- ◆ **Long-term Measures:**
 - ▶ **Smart elephant fence:** A smart elephant fence to prevent marauding wild elephants from reaching human habitations and reduce the instances of man-animal conflict in Wayanad.
 - ▶ **Improvement of wildlife habitats: Eradication of invasive plants** such as **senna**, eco-restoration activities by removing **eucalyptus and acacia plantations**, supporting the regeneration of natural vegetation, improvement of wildlife habitats, and charging fees for entry of private vehicles into the forest area will also be explored.
- ◆ **Short-term Measures**
 - ▶ **Coordination:** The meetings of the inter-State coordination committee, the setting up of a Command Control Centre in Wayanad, and steps for strengthening the early warning system to alert people about the possible presence of wild animals in human habitations.
 - ▶ **Deployment of drones for surveillance,** clearing compensation to victims of wild animal attacks, setting up of a new forest station, and closure of ecotourism destinations in the forest till the issue of man-animal conflict is reduced are also being implemented, the State informed the court.

3: Dimension-Impact

- ◆ The measures reflects the state's proactive approach to addressing this pressing issue. Through these initiatives, the state aims to improve early warning systems and response mechanisms.
- ◆ These efforts demonstrate a holistic approach to managing conflict and ensuring the safety of both communities and wildlife.

12. WATER CRISIS IN BENGALURU

Context: India's **third-most populous city** is facing the worst potable water crisis in its nearly 500-year history.

1: Dimension- Factors related to Water Crisis

- ◆ There are several factors contributing to the water problem in Bengaluru, such as **insufficient**

precipitation, diminishing groundwater levels, poor planning of infrastructure, and the impact of water tanker operations.

- ❖ The situation is further exacerbated by **insufficient rainfall** and the **proliferation of unscientifically drilled borewells**.
- ❖ The rapid **de-notification of lands** reserved for **green cover, wetlands, urban forests and river courses** is also one of the major factor.

2: Dimension- Impact of urbanisation (unplanned)

- ❖ Only uncertain rains and changing climatic conditions cannot be blamed for the water crisis in Bengaluru, population explosion, unplanned urbanisation, unfriendly industrial and agricultural policies have also resulted in this problem.
- ❖ Unplanned urbanisation leads to **haphazard growth, altering the local ecology, hydrology and environment**.
- ❖ The consequences of unplanned urbanisation are **enhanced pollution levels** and a **lack of adequate infrastructure and basic amenities**.
- ❖ This is evident in Bangalore with **severe scarcity of water, frequent flooding, enhanced pollution levels, uncongenial buildings, mismanagement of solid and liquid wastes**.

Case Study

- Just like Bengaluru, **Cape Town** destroyed all its water bodies and wetlands in its pursuit of surfing the global real estate boom since 1990.
- In less than 25 years, the city is now totally dependent on a river hundreds of kilometres away through an augmented water supply system. Due to the drought situation prevailing year after year, even the river and the reservoirs are holding less water.
- Bengaluru appears to be following the same pattern. Bengaluru, up until 1961, had 262 lakes. This figure has now come down to 81.

FACT BOX: Layers holding water

- The Deccan plateau broadly has three layers –
 - top soil on which plants grow
 - a 'weathered zone' beneath the top soil
 - hard rock (particularly important from a groundwater perspective)
- The weathered zone layer acts like a sponge and holds water in between particles. Water percolating further down fills up the fissures/ cracks/ faults in the hard rock.

- When it rains and water percolates down, it passes through the weathered zone and then into the hard rock fissures.
- A large connected set of fissures, in effect one single body of water under the ground, is called an **aquifer**.
- **Aquifers in the hard rock and are referred to as 'confined aquifers' as they are under pressure. Water in the weathered zone is shallow and is referred to as shallow unconfined aquifer.**

13. WORLD'S FIRST AI LAW

Context: European Union lawmakers gave final approval to a **landmark law governing artificial intelligence (AI)** to limit its use in businesses and organizations in Europe for everything from health care decisions to policing.

1: Dimension- Need of AI Act

- ❖ The rapid rise in **AI** has created many opportunities globally. However, these **rapid changes** also raise profound concerns.
 - **Concerns related to AI:** Privacy, Transparency, Accountability, Job Disruption, Safety, Inequality, Manipulation and Disinformation, Human Dignity and Autonomy, Cultural and Social Impact, Environmental Impact.
- ❖ The AI Act can make **AI trust worthy**.

2: Dimension- Objectives of the EU AI Act

- ❖ The Act is the **world's first major set of regulatory ground** rules to govern the mediatized AI at the forefront of tech investment.
- ❖ The main idea of the law is to regulate AI based on its capacity to cause harm to society. The higher the risk, the stricter the rules.
- ❖ The first-of-its-kind law imposes blanket-bans some "unacceptable" uses of the technology while enacting stiff guardrails for other applications deemed "**high-risk**."
 - **Areas of high-risk:** Critical infrastructure, education and vocational training, employment, essential services such as healthcare or banking, as well as law enforcement, migration and border management, justice, and democratic processes.
- ❖ The **EU AI Act** outlaws **social scoring systems** powered by AI and any **biometric-based tools** used to guess a person's race, political leanings or sexual orientation.
- ❖ It also bans the use of **AI to interpret the emotions of people in schools and workplaces**, as well as some types of automated profiling intended to predict a person's likelihood of committing future crimes.
- ❖ The law further outlines a separate category of '**high-risk**' uses of AI, particularly for education, hiring and

access to government services, and imposes a separate set of transparency and other obligations on them.

- ◆ It also requires all **AI-generated deepfakes** to be clearly labelled, targeting concerns about manipulated media that could lead to disinformation and election meddling.

3: Dimension- EU's Landmark AI Law and the "Brussels Effect"

- ◆ **Impact on India:** The final approval could have significant implications for India, particularly in terms of **global regulatory standards and market access**.
 - ▶ The **"Brussels Effect" phenomenon**, whereby EU regulations become **de facto** global standards, may compel multinational companies operating in India to comply with the EU AI Act in order to access the lucrative EU market.
 - ▶ This could prompt India to consider aligning its own AI regulations with the EU standards to maintain competitiveness and facilitate international trade.
- ◆ **Regulatory Void in India's Surveillance Systems:** India's current deployment of surveillance systems, including facial recognition technology, lacks adequate regulatory oversight, raising concerns about potential privacy violations and discriminatory practices.
 - ▶ While India has historically pursued independent legislative efforts, it has drawn inspiration from international regulations like the **GDPR**.
 - ▶ The EU's AI Act may serve as a **benchmark for India** as it navigates the development of its own regulatory framework for emerging technologies, including AI and surveillance systems.

14. NUCLEAR POWER AND WASTE

Context: India recently reached a significant milestone in its nuclear program by loading the core of its **prototype fast breeder reactor (PFBR)**, advancing towards stage

II of its three-stage nuclear program, aimed at achieving energy independence through the utilization of thorium reserves. However, the large-scale use of nuclear power is accompanied by a difficult problem: **waste management**.

1: Dimension- Production of Nuclear Waste & Handling

- ◆ Nuclear waste is produced when atoms in a **fission reactor** absorb **neutrons**, resulting in the creation of radioactive elements that cannot undergo further fission. This waste, also known as spent fuel, contains **radioactive fission** products and elements formed through the conversion of uranium.
- ◆ It is **hot and highly radioactive**, and needs to be kept underwater for up to a few decades. Once it has cooled, it can be transferred to dry casks for longer-term storage.
- ◆ All countries with longstanding nuclear power programmes have accumulated a considerable inventory of spent fuel. For example, the U.S. had 69,682 tonnes (as of 2015), Canada 54,000 tonnes (2016), and Russia 21,362 tonnes (2014).

2: Dimension- Issues associated with nuclear waste

- ◆ **Danger for health:** These waste materials can remain radioactive and dangerous to human health for thousands of years.
 - ▶ Two of the world's biggest nuclear accidents – the Fukushima nuclear disaster (2011) and the Chernobyl disaster (1986) – were responsible for the release of a significant amount of **radioactive isotopes into the atmosphere**, which created huge consequences for people and the environment.
- ◆ **Costly maintenance:** Radioactive wastes are subject to special regulations that govern their handling, transportation, storage, and disposal to protect human health and the environment. The maintenance of these sites can be extremely costly and it requires a large amount of manpower.



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SECTION

B

SPECIALS

☞ Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)

CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA)

The Ministry of Home Affairs notified the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), facilitating citizenship for undocumented non-Muslim migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, passed by Parliament in December 2019.

1: Dimension- Impact of CAA

- ◆ Citizenship: CAA was introduced to benefit the six minorities from the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The citizens of India will not be impacted by the CAA.
- ◆ Preservation: The objectives of the CAA are centred around removing **legal barriers** that impede the resettlement and attainment of Indian citizenship for migrants, thereby **preserving their cultural, linguistic, and social identity**.
- ◆ **Economic benefits:** Furthermore, the legislation aims to ensure **economic, commercial, freedom of movement, and property acquisition rights** for these migrants.
- ◆ **Why only these three countries?** The CAA deals with religious persecution in three neighboring countries where the Constitution provides for a specific state religion. Followers of other religions have been **persecuted in these three countries**.

2: Dimension- Concerns vs Significance

◆ Concerns

- Discrimination against Muslims: Critics argue that the CAA discriminates against Muslims. However, Muslims are not included in CAA as they are not in minority in the specified countries.
- Potential Impact on NPR and NRC: There are apprehensions about the potential implications of the CAA on the National Population Register (NPR) and the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC).

◆ Significance

- The Centre has defended the CAA on several grounds:
- Historical Obligation: India bears a historical responsibility and moral obligation to provide refuge to persecuted minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.
- Humanitarian Grounds: The CAA is framed as a humanitarian response to the plight of religious minorities who have endured persecution in the neighboring countries.
- Protection of Religious Minorities: The primary aim of the CAA is to offer legal protection and a pathway to citizenship for religious minorities.

3: Dimension- Connection with NRC

- ◆ The National Register of Citizens (NRC) has only thus far been introduced in Assam, a region battling challenges due to illegal immigration. The aim is two-pronged: to expunge unauthorised entries and act as a deterrent against prospective migrations.
- ◆ CAA has no link with NRC.

FACT BOX

About CAA

- ◆ The legislation grants citizenship to six minorities (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian) fleeing religious persecution from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh.
- ◆ The citizenship will be granted to those who entered India from these countries on or before December 31, 2014.
- ◆ CAA is an amendment to the Citizenship Act of 1955. According to CAA, the migrants will be granted fast track Indian citizenship in six years.
- ◆ The amendment also relaxed the residence requirement for naturalization of these migrants from eleven years to five. This deviates from the previous norm of a 12-year residency requirement for naturalisation.



SECTION



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- ❧ Rupa Tarakasi
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- ❧ Madiga member in Scheduled Caste panel
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TEST: 08	07 APRIL, 2024	PAPER 2 (CSAT)	TEST: 18	01 MAY, 2024	PAPER 2 (CSAT)
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1. GI TAG FOR MAJULI MASKS OF ASSAM

Context: The traditional **Majuli masks** in Assam were given a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** by the Centre. **Majuli manuscript painting** also got the GI label.

About Majuli Masks

- ✦ **Majuli**, the largest river island in the world and the seat of **Assam's neo-Vaishnavite tradition**, has been home to the art of mask-making since the 16th century.
- ✦ The **Samaguri satra located in Majuli stands** as the **epicenter of mask-making** art in the region.
- ✦ The handmade masks are traditionally used to depict characters in **bhaonas**, or theatrical performances with devotional messages under the **neo-Vaishnavite tradition**, introduced by the **15th-16th century reformer saint Srimanta Sankardeva**.
- ✦ The masks can depict **gods, goddesses, demons, animals and birds** — **Ravana, Garuda, Narasimha, Hanuman, Varaha Surpanakha** all feature among the masks.
- ✦ They can range in size from those covering just the face (*mukh mukha*), which take around five days to make, to those covering the whole head and body of the performer (*cho mukha*), which can take up to one-and-a-half months to make.

Manuscript Painting (xasipaata)

- Manuscript painting is practiced on the barks of ***Aquilaria malaccensis***, locally known as '**Sashi**' (agarwood tree).

- **Manuscript paintings** depict stories from Hindu mythological epics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata Purana.
- These paintings primarily focus on events related to Lord Krishna, and the Bhagavata Purana is a testament to that.
- The region is known for three popular styles of manuscript writing, namely **Gargayan script, Kaithall, and Bamunia**.

2. RUPA TARAKASI

Context: Rupa Tarakasi, the silver filigree work of Cuttack in Odisha. This handicraft has recently received the **geographical indication (GI) tag**.

About

- ✦ Tarakasi is one of Odisha's most stunning handicrafts. The word "**tara**" in Odia means wire, while "**kasi**" means design.
- ✦ This handicraft involves cutting silver bricks into thin wires or foils to create jewellery and showpieces.
- ✦ Tarakasi ornaments are perfect for any occasion, but the wide range of artefacts available, including floral and animal shapes, boxes and containers, tiny boats, and figurines, can also be used for interior decoration or as gifts.
- ✦ The delicate silver wires are beaten and shaped into various objects, from jewellery and ornaments to intricate items such as peacocks, boxes, and even the Sun deity riding his chariot pulled by seven horses.
- ✦ Tarakasi craftsmen have even decorated idols of the goddess **Durga** with their exquisite workmanship.

OTHER PRODUCTS TO JOIN THE GI LEAGUE

Ambaji White Marble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a type of Indian marble that has a pure white color with light gray veins running through it. This marble is quarried in the marble mines located in Gujarat, India. • Ambaji Superior White Marble is formed when limestone undergoes a process of recrystallization under the earth's crust due to intense pressure and heat.
Banglar muslin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banglar muslin is a traditional handloom craft from Bengal that is very popular. • It is made from cotton, and the threads used to weave it maintain high tensile strength at counts above 300 counts and up to 600 counts. This makes it stronger than any other cotton product available.
Hyderabad Lac Bangles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lac bangles are a traditional form of jewellery made from natural resin and adorned with colorful stones and beads.
Lace crochet of Narsapur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The origin of the lace industry is connected with the history of the missionaries in the Godavari delta. • The town's crochet craft is famous worldwide for its intricate craftsmanship, unique designs, and good quality.

Ratlam Riyawan Lahsun (Garlic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a variety of garlic named after Riyawan village in Ratlam district of Madhya Pradesh.
Tripura Risa Textile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The traditional attire worn by Tripuri females consists of three parts - risa, rignai, and rikutu. Risa is a handwoven cloth that can be used as an upper garment, headgear, stole, or as a sign of respect. When worn as an upper garment, it is wrapped twice around the torso.

3. SABARMATI ASHRAM

Context: PM Modi launched the redevelopment of **Sabarmati Ashram**.

About the Ashram

- ✦ The Sabarmati Ashram (also known as Harijan Ashram) was home to **Mohandas Gandhi and Kasturba** from 1917 until 1930.
- ✦ It served as one of the main centres of the **Indian freedom struggle**.
- ✦ Originally called the **Satyagraha Ashram**, reflecting the movement toward passive resistance launched by the Mahatma, the Ashram became home to the ideology that set India free.
- ✦ Sabarmati Ashram named for the river on which it sits, was created with a dual mission.
- ✦ On the 12 March 1930, Gandhi launched the famous **Dandi march** 241 miles from the Ashram in protest of the **British Salt Law**.

4. MADIGA MEMBER IN SCHEDULED CASTE PANEL

Context: The Union government has chosen to constitute the most-recent **National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC)** by ensuring the presence of at least one member from the **Madiga community**, one of the most populous **Scheduled Caste communities** in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Who are the Madigas?

- ✦ The Madiga community is a Telugu caste, mainly living in the southern states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka. However, Madigas also live in **Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Odisha**.
- ✦ The community has historically worked in handicraft, leatherwork, tannery, and agriculture.
- ✦ The Indian government categorises the community within the SC category.
- ✦ There are various sub-castes within Madigas.
- ✦ As per the 2011 census, the Madiga community in the undivided **Andhra Pradesh (before the creation of Telangana in 2014)** constituted more than 48 per cent of the SC population.

5. CABINET APPROVES INDIA AI MISSION

Context: The Cabinet approved the **India AI Mission** with an outlay of Rs 10,372 crore for five years to encourage AI development in the country.

About the Mission

- ✦ The approved corpus will be used to build a high-end scalable AI ecosystem in public-private partnership mode.
- ✦ The mission will be implemented through the **IndiaAI Independent Business Division (IBD)** under **Digital India Corporation (DIC)**.
- ✦ **Supercomputing capacity**, comprising over 10,000 GPUs (graphics processing unit), will be made available to various stakeholders for creating an AI ecosystem.
- ✦ **An India AI Innovation Centre (IAIC)** will be set up under the mission. The IAIC will be a leading academic institution, ensuring streamlined implementation and retention of top research talent.
- ✦ **A National Data Management Office** will be set up under the mission that will coordinate with various government departments and ministries to improve the quality of data and make them available for AI development and deployment.

6. CENTRE EXTENDS UJJWALA SUBSIDY

Context: The Centre announced the extension of Rs 300 per LPG cylinder subsidy to poor women under the **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)** for the next fiscal starting April 1.

About the Scheme

- ✦ **Launched in:** 2016
- ✦ To make **Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG)**, a clean cooking fuel, available to rural and deprived poor households, the government launched Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) to provide deposit-free LPG connections to adult women of poor households.
- ✦ While the connection was provided for free, the beneficiaries had to purchase LPG refills at market price.
- ✦ **Beneficiaries:** Adult women of poor households.

7. PM-SURAJ PORTAL

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan and Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan' (PM-SURAJ) national portal.

What is PM-SURAJ Portal?

- ◆ The PM-SURAJ portal symbolizes the ministry's dedication to placing the underprivileged at the forefront of development initiatives.
- ◆ The PM-SURAJ national portal will extend credit support to eligible individuals across the nation, with assistance channelled through banks, **NBFC-MFIs**, and other relevant organisations.
- ◆ PM-SURAJ will help in providing financial assistance directly to beneficiaries, eliminating middlemen and commissions.
- ◆ Furthermore, Ayushman health cards and personal protective equipment (PPE) kits were distributed by the ministry to sewer and septic tank workers (**Safai Mitras**) under the **National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)**.

Ayushman health card

- The Ayushman health card is a form of identification issued under the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)**, a government-sponsored health insurance scheme in India.
- It provides beneficiaries with access to cashless and paperless healthcare services at empaneled hospitals.
- The card contains essential information about the beneficiary, including their unique identification number and details of covered healthcare services.

8. CAUVERY PANEL

Context: The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) is all set to meet in Puducherry after four years

About the Panel

- ◆ The distribution of Cauvery water has been a long-standing dispute between **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**. It dates back to two agreements in 1892 and 1924 between the erstwhile Madras Presidency and the **Princely State of Mysore**.
- ◆ The Union government set up the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in 1990, which delivered its verdict in 2007.
- ◆ However, the verdict did not settle the dispute as both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka filed petitions to review the decision.

The Cauvery delta

- The Cauvery river basin is one of the largest river basins in South India and covers an area of 81,155 km².
- The basin is shared by the states of Karnataka (42.23 percent), Kerala (3.53 percent), Puducherry (0.2 percent), and Tamil Nadu (54.04 percent) with Karnataka and Tamil Nadu sharing the largest sections of the basin.
- The Cauvery river drains into the Bay of Bengal after traveling around 800 kmts.

9. UTTARAKHAND UCC BILL GETS PRESIDENT NOD

Context: The President gave her assent to the Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand, 2024 under **Article 201** of the **Constitution of India**.

About

- ◆ Uttarakhand is the **first state in the country** after **Independence to adopt the UCC**.
- ◆ The Bill, which has kept tribals out of its ambit, has a complete ban on practices like **halala, iddat, and talaq** (customs related to marriage and divorce in **Muslim Personal Law**).
- ◆ The UCC Bill also made it mandatory to register marriage and divorce, failing which the couple concerned will be deprived of the benefits of all government facilities.
- ◆ In case of divorce or domestic dispute between husband and wife, the custody of the child up to 5 years of age will remain with the mother.
- ◆ UCC will give **equal rights to all citizens**.

10. NEW TOLL COLLECTION SYSTEM

Context: The government plans to implement a new highway toll collection system based on the global navigation satellite system.

What is the new proposed highway tolling system?

- ◆ The **global navigation satellite** system uses a large **constellation of satellites** to provide more accurate location and navigation information to users globally as compared to the GPS alone.
- ◆ The new system's implementation will involve an **On-Board Unit (OBU)**, or a tracking device, fitted inside a vehicle whose location can be mapped using **GAGAN**.

- ◆ The co-ordinates of the entire length of the **country's national highways** will have to be logged with the help of **digital image processing**, and software will be used to assign the toll rate on a particular highway, calculate the toll amount for a vehicle as per the distance travelled by it and then deduct it from a wallet linked to the OBU.
- ◆ The system will additionally have **gantries, or arches** mounted with CCTV cameras, at various points on a highway for enforcement purposes.
- ◆ These will capture an image of the vehicle's high security registration plate and cross verify if a road user is trying to trick the system by either removing the tracking device or travelling without an OBU onboard.

FACT BOX: GPS Aided GEO Augmented Navigation (GAGAN)

- It is a **Satellite Based Augmentation System (SBAS)** implemented jointly with **Airport Authority of India (AAI)**.
- The main objectives of GAGAN are to provide **Satellite-based Navigation services** with accuracy and integrity required for civil aviation applications and to provide better Air Traffic Management over Indian Airspace.

11. 5TH-GEN INDIGENOUS FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

Context: The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has cleared the project to design and develop India's fifth-generation fighter jet **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)**.

Key-takeaways of the proposal

- ◆ The approval is for development and production of **five prototypes** in the next five years.
- ◆ The project involves designing and developing **twin-engine aircraft prototypes**.
- ◆ Under the plan, five prototypes of the AMCA will jointly be built by the **Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA)** and **state-run Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** with support from private industries.
- ◆ The AMCA aims to elevate India into an **exclusive category of nations** that have successfully developed fifth-generation fighters.

About fifth-generation aircraft

- ◆ Fifth generation fighters are the most technologically advanced jets ever built.
- ◆ Such platforms typically include **stealth, low-probability-of-intercept radar, agile airframes**

with **super cruise performance, advanced avionics features, and highly integrated computer systems** capable of networking with other elements within the battlespace for situational awareness and **C3 (command, control and communications) capabilities**.

Globally there are four fifth-generation aircraft – **F-22 Raptor** and **F-35A Lightning-II** from the **USA**; **J-20** of **China** and **Su-57** from **Russia**. Turkey's 5th-Gen fighter called **Kaan** also made it

12. MISSION DIVYASTRA

Context: In a major technological leap for India's nuclear deterrent, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted India's first successful flight test of the indigenously developed Agni-V missile.

Key-highlights

- ◆ The flight test was named **Mission Divyastra**.
- ◆ The weapon is equipped **Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology**.

About Agni-5 missiles

- ◆ **Agni V** is a **nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile**.
- ◆ It has a range of up to 5,000 km.
- ◆ It is road-mobile and can be transported by a truck and launched via a canister.
- ◆ This system is also equipped with indigenous Avionics systems and high-accuracy sensor packages that ensure that the re-entry vehicles reach the target points with the desired accuracy.
- ◆ With its range, it can bring almost the entire Asia including the northernmost part of China as well as some regions in Europe under its striking range.
- ◆ It will greatly enhance India's national security — delivering multiple warheads to different targets with precision.
- ◆ The country has already deployed the **Agni 1 to 4 missiles** — with ranges from 700 km to 3,500 km.

FACT BOX: MIRV technology

- The technology that goes into putting multiple warheads on a single rocket or missile is known as "multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle" (MIRV) technology.
- It involves **launching a single missile** carrying 4-6 warheads, each of which can be programmed to strike a separate target, several hundred kilometres apart.

- Launching a MIRV-tipped missile – say an **Agni-IV or Agni-V** – offers several tactical and strategic advantages. It provides more target options to the attacker.
- Meanwhile, the defender is forced to defend all of them simultaneously, with its anti-missile defences possibly being overwhelmed.

13. LCA TEJAS

Context: A Tejas aircraft of the **Indian Air Force** crashed near Jaisalmer, minutes after taking part in a tri-services exercise. This marks the first crash of the **light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas**, which IAF began inducting in July 2016.

What is Tejas Mk-1?

- ◆ The Tejas Mk-1 is light **supersonic multirole jet**, capable of doing multiple missions including-
 - ▶ air-defence (air-to-air)
 - ▶ intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR)
 - ▶ air-interdiction (striking enemy targets deep into enemy territory)
 - ▶ maritime strike and reconnaissance missions
- ◆ The jet carries, an **Israeli laser designating pod**, multi-mode radar, helmet mounted display system and self-protection suite.
- ◆ The Indian Air Force currently operates 40 Tejas MK-1 aircraft and it has 83 Tejas MK-1A fighters on order in a deal worth over ₹ 46,000 crore.

LCA Program

- The **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) program** was started in the early 1980s, with the Government of India (GoI) establishing the project in 1983 to replace **Mig-21 fighters**.
- The first prototype took its first flight in January 2001.

14. INDIA REMAINS WORLD'S TOP ARMS IMPORTER: SIPRI REPORT

Context: India continues to be the world's top arms importer, according to a new report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Key-highlights of the Report

- ◆ The period between 2014 and 2018 was the first five-year stretch in 50 years (since 1960-1964) when

deliveries from Russia or the erstwhile Soviet Union (prior to 1991) made up less than half of India's arms imports.

- ◆ India was the world's top arms importer. Its arms imports increased by 4.7 per cent between 2014–18 and 2019–23. Although Russia remained India's main arms supplier (accounting for 36 per cent of its arms imports), this was the first five-year period since 1960–64 when deliveries from Russia (or the Soviet Union prior to 1991) made up less than half of India's arms imports.
- ◆ The increase in French arms exports was largely due to deliveries of combat aircraft to India, Qatar and Egypt. India was the largest single recipient of French arms exports, accounting for nearly 30 percent in the period 2019-2023.
- ◆ France's overall arms exports increased by 47 percent between 2014–2018 and 2019–2023. This is the first time that the country became the second-biggest arms exporter after the US and just ahead of Russia.
 - ▶ The Indian Air Force operates 36 Rafale fighter jets customised in accordance its needs, which were procured after a Euro 7.87 billion deal the two countries signed in September 2016.
 - ▶ Furthermore, India is in talks for 26 Rafale Marine jets to be procured for the Navy's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.
- ◆ Pakistan significantly increased its arms imports by 43 percent. Pakistan was the fifth largest arms importer in 2019-23 and China became even more dominant as its main supplier, providing 82 percent of its arms imports.
- ◆ For the first time in 25 years, the US has become the largest supplier to Asia and Oceania.

15. NEW DIGITAL ARREST CYBER FRAUD

Context: A new form of cybercrime known as "digital arrest" scams is emerging, where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials to deceive individuals into believing they are facing imminent digital arrest for fabricated legal violations.

What is digital arrest?

- ◆ Digital arrest is a new form of cybercrime where fraudsters pretending to be law enforcement officials deceive targets into believing their aadhaar card SIM, or bank account has been used for criminal activities.
- ◆ They make victims believe that they will be arrested if they don't agree to be interrogated over video call and then extort money.

16. DEVIN, WORLD'S FIRST AI SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Context: A US-based AI lab, Cognition, has announced the launch of what it calls the world's first fully autonomous AI software engineer, named Devin.

About

- ◆ The **new AI assistant** could change the way code is written and the way apps are deployed.
- ◆ Devin, which according to the start-up, is "**a tireless, skilled teammate**," is trained to perform a number of tasks, including building and deploying apps and finding and fixing bugs in codebases.
- ◆ Besides this, the **AI chatbot** can recall relevant context at every step, learn over time, and fix mistakes.
- ◆ Devin is equipped with common developer tools including the **shell, code editor, and a browser**, and it can perform tasks independently.
- ◆ Devin is a software development assistant in the vein of Copilot, which was built by **GitHub, Microsoft, and OpenAI**.

17. UPPER-MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRY

Context: The Indian economy is likely to transition to an **upper-middle income country**, with per capita income of USD 4466, between the financial years 2033 and 2036, as per **India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra)**.

About

- ◆ Until 2006, the World Bank classified India as a **low-income country**. In 2007, India moved to the lower-middle income country and since then has remained there.
- ◆ India's per capita GDP stood at USD 2,390 in 2022.
- ◆ A country with per capita income in the range of USD 4,466 to USD 13,845 is categorised as **upper-middle income economy**.

18. POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Context: The Supreme Court froze the Assam government's move to withdraw a nearly 26-year-old notification constituting the **Pobitora wildlife sanctuary**, which hosts one of the largest rhino populations in the country. The Assam government had established a committee to redraw the boundary of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

About

- ◆ Covering an area of 38.81 sq km, the **Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary** was notified by the Assam forest department in March 1998.
- ◆ According to a census carried out in 2022, the sanctuary has a population of 107 rhinos, which is the highest density of the species in the world.

Rhinos

- There are five species and 11 subspecies of rhino. **White, Black, Indian, Javan, and Sumatran** make up the five species of rhino in the world.
 - ▶ White and black rhinoceros are native to **Africa**.
 - ▶ Indian, Javan and Sumatran can be found in **India and Asia**.
- **Habitat:** The animal is primarily found in the Himalayan foothills — India and Nepal.
- **Conservation Status**
 - ▶ The **IUCN** lists the one-horned rhino, also known as the Indian rhinoceros, as **vulnerable**.
 - ▶ Rhinoceros are listed in **Schedule 1** of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, as **endangered animals**.
 - ▶ The **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** allows for destruction of wildlife parts (including rhino horn) under **Section 39 (3)**.
 - ▶ There is an **international ban** on trade of rhino horns under the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES)**.

19. GEE'S GOLDEN LANGUR (TRACHYPITHECUS GEEI)

Context: There are an estimated 7,396 golden langurs in India, the latest survey of the primate has revealed.

About

- ◆ Gee's golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*), also known as simply the golden langur, is an **Old World monkey** found in a small region of Western Assam, India and in the neighboring foothills of the Black Mountains of Bhutan.
- ◆ Adult males have a cream to golden coat with darker flanks while the females and juveniles are lighter.
- ◆ It has a black face and a long tail up to 50 cm (19.69 in) in length.
- ◆ It lives in high trees and has a herbivorous diet of ripe and unripe fruits, mature and young leaves, seeds, buds and flowers.
- ◆ The average group size is eight individuals, with a ratio of several females to each adult male.

- ◆ The entire distribution range of the species covers the Manas Biosphere Reserve and all fragmented forests in the western part of Assam.
- ◆ The previous population estimation in 2008-09, recorded 6,000 golden langurs in India.

20. NEW SCORPION SPECIES

Context: During a wildlife expedition in the Kaeng Krachan National Park, Thailand, a team of researchers made a remarkable discovery- a previously unknown species of scorpion.

About

- ◆ This new species belongs to the subgenus *Euscorpiops* and has been named *Euscorpiops Krachan* after the national park in Thailand, where it was found.
- ◆ The new species presents most features exhibited by scorpions of the subgenus *Euscorpiops*.
- ◆ They are 'very small in comparison to most other species of the subgenus'.
- ◆ They are brownish in colour; however, females are darker than males. They also have eight eyes and eight legs.

21. BEGONIA TRIPURENSIS

Context: A new plant species, *Begonia tripurensis*, was discovered in Dumboor Lake, Tirthamukh, Gomati district.

About

- ◆ It is discovered in the moist deciduous forest of Tirthamukh near Dumboor Lake, Tripura, India.
- ◆ It is similar to *B. scintillans*, *B. chindwinensis* and *B. thomsonii* but differs in plant size, hair characters, petiole length, flowers, stamens and fruits.
- ◆ The North Eastern Region of India is a hotspot for the genus *Begonia*. Tripura boasts moist to dry deciduous forests, Sal forests, secondary bamboo forests, and grasslands.

22. RED SEA

Context: Indian Navy warship **INS Kolkata** rescued 21 crew members, from the **Barbados-flagged cargo vessel** which was reportedly hit by a missile in the **Gulf of Aden**.

About

- ◆ The fresh incident comes amidst growing global concerns regarding attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea, particularly by Houthi militants.
- ◆ The Red Sea is an inlet of the **Indian Ocean** between **Africa and Asia**.
- ◆ The connection to the ocean is in the south through the **Bab el Mandeb** sound and the **Gulf of Aden**. In the north are the **Sinai Peninsula, the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Gulf of Suez (leading to the Suez Canal)**.



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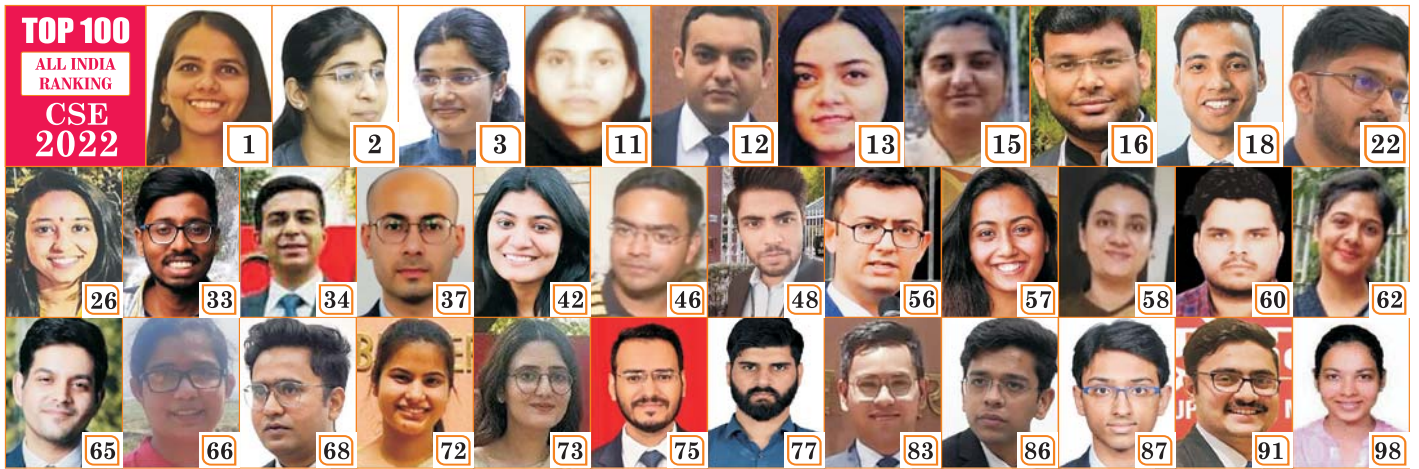
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SECTION **D**

TERMS OF THE WEEK

S.NO.	TERM	ABOUT
1	AGI (Artificial General Intelligence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) refers to AI systems with human-like cognitive abilities, capable of understanding, learning, and applying knowledge across diverse tasks and domains. Unlike narrow AI, which focuses on specific tasks, AGI aims to replicate the broad-ranging intelligence and adaptability of the human mind.
2	Brussels Effect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Brussels Effect refers to the remarkable ability of European Union regulations to influence global standards and policies. Coined by Anu Bradford, this term underscores the EU's unparalleled impact on regulatory frameworks beyond its borders.
3	Core Forest zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Core zone is where the actual forest exists and there are no villages inside this core zone.
4	Citizenship by Naturalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a common route to citizenship and usually applies to those who have entered the country through legal means, such as political asylum or having lawfully lived there for a mandated period. If a person has been a normal resident of India for 12 years (during the 12 months preceding the date of application and 11 years in total in an aggregate of 14 years) and meets all of the requirements in the Citizenship Act's third schedule, he or she can apply for citizenship by naturalization.
5	CPI-based Inflation or Retail Inflation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retail inflation refers to the increase in the overall price level of goods and services as experienced by consumers in an economy. It is typically measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which tracks the changes in prices of a basket of goods and services commonly purchased by households.
6	Dehyphenation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dehyphenation in international relations refers to the practice of engaging with countries independently, rather than grouping them together based on regional or ideological affiliations.
7	Delta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deltas are wetlands that form as rivers empty their water and sediment into another body of water, such as an ocean, lake, or another river. It is a "depositional feature of a river formed at the mouth of the river.
8	Free Trade Agreement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A free trade agreement reduces barriers to imports and exports between countries by eliminating all or most tariffs, quotas, subsidies, and prohibitions.
9	Foreign Exchange Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The foreign exchange market is an over-the-counter (OTC) marketplace that determines the exchange rate for global currencies.
10	Foreign Trade Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a set of guidelines and instructions established by the DGFT in matters related to the import and export of goods in India. The Government of India, Ministry of Commerce and Industry announces Export Import Policy every five years.
11	Foreign Portfolio Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) is securities and other assets passively held by foreign investors, allowing individuals to invest overseas.
12	GI Tag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A GI tag is conferred upon products originating from a specific geographical region, signifying unique characteristics and qualities. Essentially, it serves as a trademark in the international market.
13	Global Navigation Satellite System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The global navigation satellite system is a term used to refer to any satellite-based navigation system, including the United States' Global Positioning System (GPS).
14	Low Income Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The World Bank classifies economies for analytical purposes into four income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high income. The Low Income designation is defined by the World Bank as all countries with a gross national income per capita less than USD 1,036.
15	Import Tariff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Import tariffs are taxes charged by the customs authority on the importation of goods into a country.

16	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSMEs support industries as ancillary units, thereby contributing enormously to the overall industrial development of the country. Classification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Micro enterprise: An enterprise where the investment in the plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹1 crore, and turnover does not exceed ₹5 crores. Small enterprise: An enterprise where the investment in the plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹10 crores, and turnover does not exceed ₹50 crores. Medium enterprise: An enterprise where the investment in the plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed ₹50 crores, and turnover does not exceed ₹250 crores.
17	Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFIs are institutions primarily focused on providing microfinance services to individuals and small entrepreneurs, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas. MFIs are normally registered as Non-Banking Financial Companies-Microfinance Institutions (NBFC-MFIs) in India and are subject to RBI regulation.
18	Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While offering a wide variety of financial services, NBFCs are a diversified class of financial firms that do not possess a banking licence. They are governed by the RBI in accordance with the RBI Act of 1934 and operate under the Companies Act.
19	National Register of Citizens (NRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Register of Citizens (NRC), established in 1951, serves as a comprehensive database of Indian citizens. It is kept within the administrative domains of deputy commissioners and sub-divisional officers.
20	Nuclear Capable Missile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simply put, it is the ability to carry a nuclear warhead. It can carry either a conventional warhead or a nuclear one.
21	Net Metering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net metering enables households with rooftop solar systems to feed surplus energy into the grid, offsetting their electricity bills. This mechanism promotes renewable energy adoption by incentivizing consumers to generate and utilize their own solar power efficiently while contributing to the overall energy grid.
22	Oceania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oceania is collective name for the islands scattered throughout most of the Pacific Ocean. The term, in its widest sense, embraces the entire insular region between Asia and the Americas.
23	PLI Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PLI scheme is an initiative that provides incentives to domestic industries to boost local production.
24	Processed agricultural products (PAPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PAPs are non-agricultural food and drink items made out of agricultural products.
25	Repo Rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repo Rate full form is Repurchase Agreement or Repurchasing Option. Repo rate refers to the rate at which commercial banks borrow money by selling their securities to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to maintain liquidity, in case of shortage of funds or due to some statutory measures. The current Repo Rate in India, fixed by RBI is 6.50%
26	Supersonic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supersonic refers to any object traveling faster than the speed of sound. When an object moves faster than the speed of sound, it is actually "outrunning" the sound waves it generates as it moves.
27	Social Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Security in India includes a variety of statutory insurances and social grant schemes bundled into a formerly complex and fragmented system run by the Indian government at the federal and state level.
28	Trade Deficit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A trade deficit occurs when a country's imports exceed its exports during a given time period. It is also referred to as a negative balance of trade (BOT).
29	Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A very small aperture terminal (VSAT) is a two-way ground station that transmits and receives data from satellites. A VSAT is less than three meters tall and is capable of both narrow and broadband data to satellites in orbit in real-time.
30	Zero-Food Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They are those between 6-23 months who had not consumed any animal milk, formula, solid, or semisolid food in the last 24 hours.



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