CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

WEEK 3 DECEMBER 2024

MAINS ARTICLE

GS-I
- FAILED LA NIÑA
- PERIYAR E. V. RAMASAMY

GS-II
- INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY
- SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT'S INDIA VISIT ENERGIZES RELATIONS
- ASSESSMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OF INDIA
- SECTION 69 OF BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA
- RAILWAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

GS-III
- CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW RBI GOVERNOR
- PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON MSP
- CAG REPORT ON TAMIL NADU'S COASTAL REGULATION ZONE (CRZ)
- BEIJING'S WAR AGAINST AIR PPOLLUTION
- DISEASE X
- DISASTER MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

PRELIMS ARTICLE

NATIONAL
- World Chess Championship 2024

HISTORY
- 1971 India-Pakistan War

ART & CULTURE
- Durgadi Fort Dispute

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
- India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)
- India-China Cross-Border Cooperation
- Opec+ Concern about Rising US Oil Production

POLITY & GOVERNANCE
- Reimposition of Protected Area Regime
- Restructuring of National Testing Agency (NTA)

- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) Project

ECONOMY
- India's Retail Inflation
- Switzerland Suspends MFN Treatment for India
- Net Direct Tax Collections
- Mule Bank Accounts

ENVIRONMENT
- Paris Agreement
- Ganges river dolphins (Platanista gangetica)

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
- World Malaria Report 2024
- ISRO's HLVM3 Rocket
- INS Nirdeshak

GS SCORE
An Institute for Civil Services
www.iasscore.in

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.

CONTENT
3rd WEEK - DECEMBER, 2024

SECTION - A

SECTION - B

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

SECTION -A

MAINS ISSUES

FAILED LA NIÑA

Context

La Niña, a **climate phenomenon** expected to emerge in 2024, failed to materialize, bucking predictions and raising concerns about the accuracy of climate forecasts and its potential impacts on global weather patterns.

What is La Niña?

- La Niña is part of a natural climate cycle called the **El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO),** which has three phases:
    - El Niño (warm phase)
    - La Niña (cool phase)
    - Neutral Phase
- These phases are determined by changes in sea surface temperatures and atmospheric conditions along the **Pacific Ocean**, which affect global weather patterns.
- La Niña occurs when **trade winds** in the Pacific Ocean strengthen, pushing warm water towards the western Pacific (near Indonesia and the Philippines).
- This results in cooler water off the coast of South America and causes significant changes in global weather patterns, like increased rainfall in some areas (such as India) and cooler temperatures.
    - **El Niño** causes warmer waters in the eastern Pacific and less rainfall in regions like India, often leading to higher temperatures.
    - **La Niña** leads to cooler waters in the eastern Pacific, bringing more rainfall to some areas like India, which generally lowers temperatures.

La Niña Predictions for 2024:

- At the start of 2024, scientists expected La Niña to occur. **Weather models predicted** that La Niña would develop between August and December, but these predictions were incorrect. By December, sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific were either normal or slightly below average, meaning La Niña didn't materialize as expected.

Current Ocean Conditions:

- **ENSO-neutral** conditions continued into December 2024. This means sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific were not showing strong signs of either El Niño or La Niña.
- **Oceanic Nino Index (ONI)**, a key measure for identifying ENSO phases, showed -0.3°C in December. A La Niña would require this index to reach -0.5°C, but it didn't drop enough for a La Niña to officially begin.
- Even though some models predicted a weak La Niña between December and February, it is expected to be **short-lived and mild**, with the possibility of transitioning back to **neutral conditions** by March-May 2025.

Why La Niña Did Not Appear?

Several factors led to inaccurate predictions:

- **Ocean-Atmosphere Interaction:** Normally, changes in the ocean and atmosphere (like cooler waters in the eastern Pacific) help predict La Niña. But this year, the expected interaction didn't occur. El Niño conditions, which were still affecting ocean temperatures, led to an **ENSO-neutral** situation instead.
- **Westerly Wind Anomalies:** The winds that control ocean temperatures during La Niña development (called

trade winds) were weaker or in the wrong direction during critical months like September-October. These **westerly wind anomalies** are unfavorable for La Niña development, and they prevented the cooling of Pacific waters that would trigger La Niña.

- ◎ **Monsoon Effects:** The Indian Summer Monsoon (June-September) saw **bountiful rainfall** in 2024, which typically signals **ENSO-neutral** conditions. A strong monsoon can delay or alter the development of La Niña by affecting wind patterns that influence sea surface temperatures.

- ◪ **Impact on India:**

  - ➤ **Monsoon:** Despite the predictions, the Indian monsoon was **above normal**, showing no signs of the drought typically associated with El Niño.

  - ➤ **Winter Weather:** La Niña not materializing means that the **Indian winter will likely not be affected**, as a strong La Niña typically brings cooler temperatures and more rainfall.

PERIYAR E. V. RAMASAMY

Context
Over one and a half years after jointly inaugurating the centenary celebrations of the Vaikom Satyagraha, Kerala inaugurated the renovated memorial of **Tamil reformist E.V. Ramasami Naicker**, popularly known as **Thanthai Periyar.**

About Periyar E.V. Ramasamy:

- ◎ **Born:** September 17, 1879, in Erode, Madras Presidency (now Tamil Nadu).

- ◎ Tamil reformist E.V. Ramasami Naicker, popularly known as Thanthai Periyar was born into a **Kannada Balija merchant family**. His parents were Venkatappa Nayakar and Chinnathayee. He had one elder brother, Krishnaswamy, and two sisters, Kannamma and Ponnuthoy.

- ◎ Periyar married at the age of 19. He and his first wife had a daughter who tragically passed away after just 5 months. His first wife, Nagammai, passed away in 1933. In 1948, he remarried Maniammai, who continued his social work after his death in 1973.

- ◎ Periyar received **five years of schooling** before he joined his father's trade at the age of 12.

- ◎ Though his formal education was limited, he was proficient in **Kannada and Tamil, the two major Dravidian languages.**

- ◎ As a young man, he often welcomed **Tamil Vaishnavite gurus** into his home, engaging in discussions and learning about religious discourses.

- ◪ **Social and Religious Views:**

  - ➤ Early on, Periyar began to question the **contradictions in Hindu mythology** and the societal norms imposed by religion.

- ➤ He became deeply critical of how religion was used as a tool to deceive people and perpetuate superstition.

- ➤ He believed that priests and religious leaders exploited the masses, and he felt a personal responsibility to warn people against superstitions.

- ◎ **Social Activism:** Periyar was known for his strong **anti-caste stance** and efforts to challenge the **hierarchical caste system in Indian society.**

  - ➤ In 1929, at the **First Provincial Self-Respect Conference in Chengalpattu, Periyar** made a symbolic and impactful decision to remove his caste title **"Naicker"** from his name, signifying his rejection of caste-based identity.

  - ➤ His **Self-Respect Movement** focused on empowering marginalized communities, advocating for gender equality, caste abolition, and rational thinking.

- ◎ Periyar's ideologies were carried forward by the **Dravidar Kazhagam**, an organization he helped shape, which promoted his vision of social justice, rationalism, and self-respect.

- ◎ His efforts laid the foundation for significant social reforms in Tamil Nadu and inspired future generations of social reformers and activists.

- ◎ Periyar's life was marked by a **constant pursuit of social equality and rational thought**, and he remains a significant figure in the history of India's social reform movements.

What was the Vaikom Satyagraha?

- ◎ The Vaikom Satyagraha was a significant movement in Kerala (then the princely state of Travancore) in 1924, aimed at securing the **rights of untouchables** (people from lower castes, also called avarnas) to use public roads leading to a famous **Shiva temple in Vaikom.**

- ◎ The movement was not initially about entering the temple but about the **right to access public roads that were restricted to upper castes.**

- ◪ **Background of the Vaikom Satyagraha:**

  - ➤ **Travancore's Caste System:** Travancore had a harsh caste system, where lower castes faced extreme discrimination. They were not allowed to even look at or touch upper caste individuals.

    - ♦ This strict system was described by foreign travelers like Duarte Barbosa, who recorded how upper-caste people would force lower-caste people to get out of their way on the streets.

  - ➤ **Social Reforms Leading Up to the Movement:** In the 19th century, Christian missionaries and the influence of the British brought some reforms, such as **free primary education for all, including lower castes.**

    - ♦ The **Ezhava community**, once considered untouchable, became the most educated and organized lower caste group, but faced discrimination in jobs, especially in the government.

➤ **The Issue of Temple Entry:** The idea of opening temples to lower castes was raised as early as 1917 by Ezhava leader TK Madhavan. In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi supported this cause after a meeting with Madhavan.

◉ In 1924, the Vaikom Satyagraha was launched by leaders like **Periyar (E.V. Ramasami Naicker) and C. Rajagopalachari.** The focus was on opening the four roads around the Vaikom temple to people from all castes, not just the temple entry issue.

➤ Periyar, along with his wife Nagamma, had joined the Vaikom Satyagraha, recognised as the first organized movement for the rights of the `untouchable' communities in April 1924. He was jailed twice for his involvement and was later honoured with the title Vaikom Veeran for his leadership.

◉ The protestors, called **Satyagrahis**, were arrested repeatedly by the police for attempting to use the roads. The protests continued for months, with **violent resistance from conservative caste Hindus.**

• The Vaikom Satyagraha laid the foundation for further social reform movements in the region. In 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore signed the Temple Entry Proclamation, officially allowing marginalized castes to enter temples, a significant victory for caste equality.

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Context

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar responded to criticism regarding **India's neighborhood policy**, defending the government's approach to relations with neighboring countries like the **Maldives, Bangladesh, and Nepal.** Jaishankar emphasized that India's foreign policy aims for maturity and development-focused ties, despite the political dynamics in these countries.

What is India's Neighbourhood Policy?

◉ The country's **Neighbourhood First Policy** determines its engagement with neighbouring nations, including **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.**

◉ The policy prioritises improving **physical, digital, and people-to-people connectivity** within the region, while also boosting trade and commerce.

◉ Over time, the Neighbourhood First Policy has become a key institutional focus across various government departments responsible for managing relations and policies with our neighbours.

◉ India has historically shared deep cultural, economic and political ties with its neighbours. After independence, India aimed to establish itself as a regional leader. However, historical conflicts, differing political ideologies and border disputes often strained these relationships. It officially came to being in 2008.

Criticisms of India's Neighbourhood Policy

◉ **Over-reliance on Specific Leaders and Parties:** India's focus on individual leaders, like Sheikh Hasina in Bangladesh, limits flexibility and could cause instability if there are political shifts. Critics argue this reliance on specific leaders reduces India's ability to adapt to changing political dynamics in the region.

◉ **Lack of "India First" Policy from Neighbours:** India's neighbours, such as Nepal and Bhutan, often prioritize their own national interests or align with China, undermining India's influence. Critics point out the absence of a consistent "India First" policy among these countries.

◉ **Growing Chinese Influence:** China's increasing economic and strategic influence in South Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, and the Maldives, challenges India's position. Critics argue that India has not effectively countered China's growing presence in the region.

◉ **Ineffective Security Responses:** India's response to security threats, such as insurgent groups in Myanmar and cross-border terrorism, has been criticized as inconsistent. Critics argue that India's delicate approach in dealing with Myanmar has failed to address these ongoing security challenges.

◉ **Economic Dependence without Strategic Returns:** India's economic assistance, such as credit lines and aid to neighbours, has not always translated into strategic benefits or political support, leading to concerns that these investments are not yielding long-term advantages for India's regional security.

Significance of India's Neighbourhood Policy	Challenges of India's Neighbourhood Policy
◉ **Countering Chinese Influence:** Close collaboration with neighboring countries enables India to counterbalance China's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region, strengthening its own position in the region. ◉ **Support in Multilateral Forums** enhance India's role as a leader for the Global South, enabling better representation of shared interests in international organizations.	◉ **Geopolitical Tensions:** Border disputes and political disagreements often create complexities in relations with neighboring countries, affecting long-term cooperation. ◉ **Implementation Issues:** Logistical and bureaucratic challenges complicate the successful execution of cross-border projects, hindering collaboration.

- ⊙ **Ensuring Territorial Integrity**: Cooperation with neighboring countries is vital for India to safeguard its borders and address separatist movements, ensuring national security.

- ⊙ **Increasing Maritime Security**, enabling India to address transnational security threats effectively, particularly in the Indian Ocean.

- ⊙ Collaboration with neighbors is crucial for ensuring **energy security**, especially concerning the importation of oil and gas through sea routes.

- ⊙ Engaging aids in the development of India's northeastern states, thereby **reducing regional development disparities.**

- ⊙ **Leveraging Soft Power Diplomacy**

- ⊙ **Economic Differences**: The varying economic development levels of neighboring countries create disparities in cooperation, which may affect the effectiveness of joint initiatives.

Major initiatives

- ⊙ **SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation):** India has played a major role in SAARC, aimed at promoting regional cooperation. However, the effectiveness of SAARC has been limited due to political differences, particularly between India and Pakistan.

- ⊙ **BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation):** BIMSTEC has gained prominence as an alternative to SAARC, focusing on economic cooperation, security, and cultural exchange among countries bordering the Bay of Bengal.

Infrastructure projects

- ➤ **BBIN Initiative (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal):** Improving road and rail connectivity.

- ➤ **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**: Connecting India with Myanmar and further with Southeast Asia.

- ➤ **Chabahar Port**: Developing a strategic port in Iran to improve connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

UPSC PYQ

Q: **India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in the light of the preceding statement. (2022)**

Q: **Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of Indian government to improve relationship with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? (2015)**

Q: **In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (2013)**

SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT'S INDIA VISIT ENERGIZES RELATIONS

Context

The newly elected Sri Lankan President, Anura Kumara Dissanayake (AKD), made his first official overseas visit to India. This visit aimed to discuss various topics such as Indian projects in Sri Lanka, the proposed **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**, the **Tamil issue**, and **regional security cooperation**. It is important because India had been a crucial partner to Sri Lanka during its **economic crisis** and post-pandemic recovery.

Key-takeaways of the Meeting

Economic Cooperation:

- ➤ **Sri Lanka's Economic Recovery**: Dissanayake expressed deep gratitude for India's support during Sri Lanka's economic crisis in 2022. India provided **USD 4 billion in credit lines and grants**, which helped stabilize Sri Lanka's economy.

- ➤ **Continued Support from India**: India would continue supporting Sri Lanka's recovery, focusing on long-term **economic cooperation**. The leaders agreed to explore new avenues for trade and investment, particularly in sectors like **agriculture**, **dairy**, and **textiles**.

- ➤ **Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)**: Both countries discussed expanding the **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)** to enhance trade relations. Sri Lanka sees India's large market as a vital opportunity for its exports.

Defence and Regional Security:

- ➤ **Security Concerns in the Indian Ocean**: The leaders discussed the growing security challenges in the Indian Ocean, especially with **China's increasing presence** in the region. President Dissanayake assured that Sri Lanka would not allow its territory to be used against India's security.

- ➤ **Maritime Cooperation**: Both leaders highlighted the importance of strengthening **defence and maritime security cooperation**. India has provided Sri Lanka with **Offshore Patrol Vessels** and helped set up a **Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre** to enhance Sri Lanka's maritime capabilities. Joint efforts between both countries' navies are also tackling **narcotics trafficking** in the region.

➤ **Joint Exercises**: Both countries agreed to conduct **joint military exercises**, share intelligence, and collaborate on maritime security.

🔖 **Strategic and Economic Cooperation:**

➤ **Infrastructure and Renewable Energy**: The leaders agreed to focus on **infrastructure development**, **renewable energy**, and **digital connectivity** between the two countries.

➤ **Agricultural Modernization**: A **Joint Working Group** will be set up to explore collaboration in **modernizing Sri Lanka's agriculture** and promoting **sustainable farming practices**, including in the **dairy sector**.

➤ **Cyber Security and Climate Change**: They also discussed **cooperation on countering cyber threats** and addressing **climate change** in the region.

◉ Fishermen's Issue: The India-Sri Lanka fisherman is a long-standing dispute between the two over fishing rights in the Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.

◉ The Palk Strait is a narrow strip of water that separates the state of Tamil Nadu in India from the northern regions of Sri Lanka.

Challenges in Relations:

◉ **Economic Cooperation:** India and Sri Lanka have had complex discussions over economic agreements, such as the **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** and **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).** Political resistance in Sri Lanka has slowed progress in these areas.

◉ **China's Influence:** China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects**, like the **Hambantota Port**, have become a major competitor to India's infrastructure efforts in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka handed over control of Hambantota port to China for 99 years after struggling with debt repayment.

◉ **Tamil Political Issue**: The unresolved Tamil political question has been a longstanding issue in Sri Lanka's domestic politics. President Dissanayake promised to return Tamil lands occupied by state agencies. However, his party, JVP, does not support political devolution for Tamils, which remains a point of contention in the relationship between India and Sri Lanka.

India-Sri Lanka Relations

◉ **Trade Relations:** The Merchandise trade between India and Sri Lanka reached USD 5.5 billion in FY 2023-24 with India's exports amounted to USD 4.1 billion while Sri Lanka's exports reached USD 1.4 billion.

➤ India has so far provided **Lines of Credit** and grant assistance worth $5 billion to Sri Lanka.

◉ **India's Foreign Policy:** Sri Lanka has an important place in both India's **'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'SAGAR' vision.**

◉ **Defence**: India and Sri Lanka conduct joint Military (Mitra Shakti) and Naval exercises (SLINEX).

◉ **Common Membership:** India and Sri Lanka are members of organizations such as **SAARC, BIMSTEC and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).** Both are part of international organizations such as the **United Nations (UN), World Trade Organizations (WTO), World Health Organizations (WHO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank.**

UPSC PYQ

Q: **Consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)**

(1) The value of Indo-Sri Lanka trade has consistently increased in the last decade.

(2) "Textile and textile articles" constitute an important item of trade between India and Bangladesh

(3) In the last five years, Nepal has been the largest trading partner of India in South Asia.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

UPSC Mains Question

Q: **India is an age-old friend of Sri Lanka.' Discuss India's role in the recent crisis in Sri Lanka in the light of the preceding statement. (UPSC 2022**

Q: **In respect of India — Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. (UPSC 2013)**

ASSESSMENT OF WATER RESOURCES OF INDIA

Context

The **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, in its 2024 study titled *"Assessment of Water Resources of India"*, estimates India's **average annual water availability** between 1985 and 2023 at **2,115.95 billion cubic meters (BCM)**.

Key Points from the CWC Study:

◉ **Basis of the Water Availability Figure:** The estimate is based on **annual net-runoff**, which incorporates **precipitation, evapotranspiration, land use, land cover**, and **soil datasets**.

➤ The water availability was calculated for all river basins in India, excluding the **Indus basin**'s three western tributaries (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab).

Water Availability Across Regions:

➤ The **top three basins** with the highest water availability are:

♦ **Brahmaputra Basin**: 592.32 BCM

♦ **Ganga Basin**: 581.75 BCM

♦ **Godavari Basin**: 129.17 BCM

➤ The **bottom three basins** with the least water availability are:

♦ **Sabarmati Basin**: 9.87 BCM

♦ **Pennar Basin**: 10.42 BCM

♦ **Mahi Basin**: 13.03 BCM

◉ **Comparison with Previous Assessments:** The **2024 figure** of 2,115.95 BCM is **higher** than the **2019 estimate** of 1,999.2 BCM, which was based on data from 1985 to 2015.

➤ Earlier assessments (since 1901) consistently found India's water availability to be below 2,000 BCM.

◉ **Reasons for the Higher Figure in 2024:** The updated assessment includes water contributions from **Bhutan** to the **Brahmaputra** basin, which were not accounted for in previous studies.

➤ The full contribution of **Nepal** to the **Ganga** basin is also considered in this assessment, whereas only partial inclusion was made in 2019.

• **Usability of Water:**

➤ The **CWC's water availability figures** do not refer to **utilizable water**.

➤ For example, in 2019, out of the estimated **1,999.2 BCM** of water, only about **690 BCM** was considered **utilizable**.

➤ Smaller river basins tend to have a higher proportion of **utilizable water**, except in basins like **West Flowing Rivers** and **Sabarmati**.

➤ The **Brahmaputra basin** has a relatively **low proportion of utilisable water**.

🔍 FACT BOX

Water Stress and Scarcity:

◉ According to the **Falkenmark Indicator**:

➤ **Water Stress**: If per capita water availability is **below 1,700 cubic meters**.

➤ **Water Scarcity**: If it is **below 1,000 cubic meters**.

➤ **Absolute Water Scarcity**: If it is **below 500 cubic meters**.

About Central Water Commission

◉ **Established in:** 1945

◉ Central Water Commission is a premier Technical Organisation in the country in the field of water resources.

◉ It is charged with the general responsibilities of initiating, coordinating and furthering, in consultation with the State Governments concerned, schemes for control, conservation and utilization of water resources throughout the country, for purpose of Flood Control, Irrigation, Navigation, Drinking Water Supply and Water Power Development.

SECTION 69 OF BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA

Context

Section 69 of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS),** a newly introduced provision replacing the **colonial-era Indian Penal Code (IPC),** criminalizes **sexual intercourse** obtained through deceit, specifically when a **promise to marry is made without the intent to fulfill it**. This section has raised significant **legal and societal debate,** with various viewpoints regarding its fairness, applicability, and gender implications.

Key Provisions of Section 69

◉ Section 69 addresses situations where a man engages in sexual relations under the **false pretense of marriage**, with no intention of honoring the promise.

◉ It prescribes a penalty of up to **10 years of imprisonment** and a fine for those found guilty of such acts.

◉ **Scope and Application:** The law extends to situations involving **false promises of marriage, employment, or promotion**, where the person who deceives the victim is penalized for inducing sexual intercourse through deceit. It does not classify such cases as rape but as **"inducement"** through fraudulent means.

◉ **Support for Section 69:** It addresses the gaps left by the IPC, especially in cases where sexual intercourse is obtained through deceit. Section 69 broadens the definition of coercion to include emotional and psychological pressure, which was not explicitly covered under the previous law.

Critical Views and Concerns

◉ The law is gender-biased and treats women as passive victims incapable of exercising agency in their sexual relationships.

◉ Section 69 presupposes that **only men can deceive women into sex** through false promises of marriage.

◉ This law ignores the power dynamics within relationships and fails to address cases where women might deceive men through similar means.

◉ Section 69 may criminalize consensual sexual relationships that later turn contentious. It places undue emphasis on the failure to fulfill marriage promises, overlooking the complexities of long-term relationships, especially when both parties were initially consenting.

◉ The **exclusion of the LGBTQ community**, making the law discriminatory and unconstitutional.

◎ Criminalizing a verbal promise could infringe upon **individual privacy and autonomy**, leading to **inconsistencies in judicial enforcement.**

Section 69 of the BNS represents a shift in how sexual relationships based on deceit are addressed legally in India. While it aims to protect women from exploitation through false promises, its broad application, gender implications, and the subjective nature of proving intent have raised serious legal and societal concerns. Ongoing debates and court rulings will continue to shape how this law is enforced and interpreted in the future.

RAILWAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

Context

The **Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024** was passed in the Lok Sabha, after being introduced five months earlier. This significant piece of legislation seeks to modernize and streamline the legal framework governing Indian Railways. It aims to incorporate provisions from the **Indian Railway Board Act, 1905, into the Railways Act, 1989**, simplifying the laws and enhancing the functioning of the Railway Board.

Key Provisions of the Railways (Amendment) Bill, 2024

◎ The Bill aims to integrate the **Indian Railway Board Act, 1905**, into the existing **Railways Act, 1989**. This merger is intended to reduce reliance on multiple laws, simplifying the regulatory structure for the railways.

◎ **Statutory Backing**: The amendment provides statutory backing to the Railway Board, which has been functioning without formal sanction since its inception. This provision seeks to formalize the powers and responsibilities of the Board.

◎ **Enhanced Powers**: The Bill empowers the Central Government to decide the composition of the Railway Board, including determining the number of members, their qualifications, and the terms of service. This move is aimed at improving the operational efficiency and governance of Indian Railways.

◎ **Decentralization and Autonomy**: The amendment seeks to increase the autonomy of various Railway Zones, addressing long-standing demands for greater regional independence. This is expected to improve operational efficiency and decision-making at the local level.

◎ **Independent Regulator**: The Bill proposes the establishment of an independent regulator to oversee key areas such as tariffs, safety, and the participation of the private sector in the railway system. This recommendation was first made in 2015 by the Committee on Restructuring Railways.

◎ **Faster Approval Process for Train Services**: The amendment is designed to expedite the approval process for new train services, helping meet the growing demand in various regions of the country. One example of such improvements includes the extension of the Arunachal Express via key routes in Bihar.

Evolution of Indian Railways Law

◎ The Indian Railways network was initially established as part of the **Public Works Department** during British rule.

◎ The **Indian Railways Act, 1890**, was enacted to organize and regulate the expanding railway network. Following this, the **Railway Board Act, 1905**, formalized the governance structure of Indian Railways.

◎ The **Railways Act, 1989**, was introduced to replace the 1890 Act, marking a shift towards modernizing and consolidating the legal framework for Indian Railways.

◎ **Railway Board's Lack of Statutory Authority:** Despite the enactment of the 1989 Act, the Railway Board continued to operate based on executive decisions rather than statutory backing, which the current amendment seeks to rectify.

CHALLENGES FOR THE NEW RBI GOVERNOR

Context

Sanjay Malhotra has recently taken over as the **26th Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, succeeding Shaktikanta Das, who served as the Governor during a challenging period. Sanjay Malhotra steps into a challenging role with significant expectations, inheriting a legacy that sets a high bar. As the new RBI Governor, he will contend with seven critical priorities.

Shaktikanta Das's leadership

◎ Das's leadership was marked by his ability to manage various crises, such as the **Covid-19 pandemic, financial troubles with companies like IL&FS and Yes Bank, and tensions between the RBI and the government.**

◎ His tenure focused on maintaining financial stability, improving the banking system, and promoting digital innovations like the central bank digital currency and UPI.

◎ Das's work earned him recognition as one of the **best central bankers** globally.

Critical Priorities in front of RBI's Governor

◎ **Taming Inflation Without Hurting Growth**: Inflation has been volatile, mainly due to **supply-side issues** in sectors like food and energy. Malhotra must find ways to control inflation without **negatively affecting economic growth.** Traditional methods like **raising interest rates** may not work well because inflation is driven by factors like global supply shocks, not just domestic demand. A balance is needed to ensure liquidity in the market and support sectors in need of credit, while **managing inflation.**

◎ **Global Monetary Policy Differences**: Global monetary policy divergence is at its peak, with the **US Federal Reserve** maintaining **restrictive monetary policies** to **combat inflation** while several emerging markets are exploring rate cuts to support growth.

➤ India's interconnectedness with global capital flows and trade necessitates a calibrated approach to avoid capital flight and rupee depreciation.

➤ RBI must employ nuanced tools, including targeted liquidity operations and foreign exchange market interventions, to preserve external sector stability without undermining domestic growth prospects.

◉ **Reassessing the Inflation Targeting Framework (FIT)**: The RBI follows a framework that targets keeping inflation at around 4% (with a margin of 2% above or below). However, **rising global uncertainties** and **supply-side challenges** (like climate change and geopolitical issues) make this framework less effective. Malhotra may need to revise this framework, potentially allowing for more flexibility and considering both inflation control and economic growth.

➤ In particular, the persistence of **supply-side shocks** has flattened the **Phillips Curve**, weakened monetary transmission channels, and complicated the extraction of accurate signals from headline inflation. The reduced efficacy of standard policy levers against predominantly cost-push shocks, coupled with shifts in consumption patterns and digitalisation-induced pricing anomalies, highlights the technical challenges of maintaining rigid, point-based targets in a changing economic landscape.

◉ **Managing Currency Volatility**: The Indian rupee has been fluctuating due to global financial instability and other factors. The RBI has tried to stabilize the rupee, but it's a challenge. Malhotra may need to use strategies like diversifying reserves, promoting trade in currencies other than the dollar, and working with other central banks. While a weaker rupee could help exports by making Indian products cheaper, it also poses risks like higher import costs and pressure on companies with foreign debt.

◉ **Enhancing Financial Inclusion**: India has made significant progress in financial inclusion, with over 500 million accounts opened under the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY).** However, there are still challenges in ensuring these accounts are used effectively, providing better access to credit, and bridging the digital divide. Malhotra will need to support digital banking and ensure that people are well-equipped to use financial services.

◉ **Addressing Climate Risks and Green Finance**: Climate change poses risks to the financial system. Malhotra will need to address these risks by promoting **"green finance"** and encouraging investments in sustainable projects. This might involve offering incentives for green investments, requiring companies to disclose their climate-related risks, and working with other countries on climate stress testing.

◉ **Maintaining Financial Stability**: The financial system must be stable to support economic growth. This includes ensuring that **non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)** are well-regulated, addressing risks related to the growing fintech sector, and preventing any gaps in regulations. Malhotra will need to strengthen the oversight of these institutions and ensure that they don't pose risks to the broader financial system.

FACT BOX

Key-Concepts

◉ **Inflation:** Inflation refers to the general increase in the prices of goods and services over time, reducing the purchasing power of money.

'Demand-pull inflation'	'Cost-push inflation'
◉ Demand-pull inflation arises when the total demand for goods and services (i.e. 'aggregate demand') increases to exceed the supply of goods and services (i.e. 'aggregate supply') that can be sustainably produced.	◉ Cost-push inflation occurs when the total supply of goods and services in the economy which can be produced (aggregate supply) falls. ◉ A fall in aggregate supply is often caused by an increase in the cost of production.

Table No. 01

- There are different methods for measuring inflation such as
  - Consumer Price Index (CPI)
    - Wholesale Price Index (WPI)
    - GDP deflator
    - Producer Price Index (PPI)
    - Wage inflation

(See Table No. 01 on pervious page)

- **Phillips Curve:** The inverse relationship between unemployment rate and inflation when graphically charted is called the **Phillips curve**. The theory states that the higher the rate of inflation, the lower the unemployment and vice-versa. Thus, high levels of employment can be achieved only at high levels of inflation.
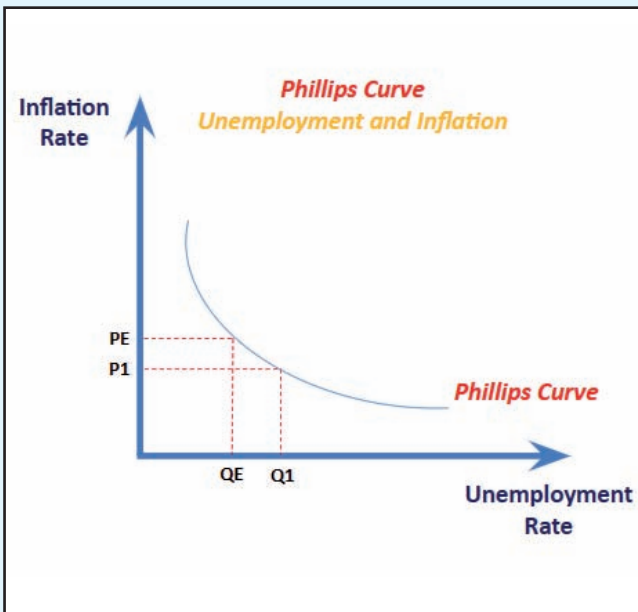
  - The policies to induce growth in an economy, increase in employment and sustained development are heavily dependent on the findings of the Phillips curve.

- **Currency Volatility:** Currency volatility refers to the fluctuations in the exchange rate of a country's currency relative to others.

- **Inflation Targeting Framework (FIT):** The Inflation Targeting Framework (FIT) is a monetary policy strategy where the central bank sets an explicit target for inflation (in India, around 4% with a tolerance band of 2% above or below).

- **Supply-Side Shocks:** Supply-side shocks are disruptions that affect the supply of goods and services, leading to price increases. These include factors like natural disasters, geopolitical tensions, and climate change. These shocks often lead to inflation without an increase in demand, complicating traditional monetary policy tools, such as interest rate hikes, which are typically aimed at managing demand-driven inflation.

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON MSP

Context

A **Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, and Food Processing** presented its first report on the demands for grants for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare for the fiscal year **2024-25**. The report, chaired by **Charanjit Singh Channi** (former Chief Minister of Punjab), contains several **key recommendations** aimed at improving **farmers' welfare** and addressing issues in the agricultural sector.

Key Recommendations from the Report:

- **Legal Guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP):** The committee has recommended that the **government** introduce a **legal guarantee for MSP**. This means farmers will be **assured of a minimum price** for their produce, which will **reduce market volatility**, **prevent farmer suicides**, and ensure a stable income. It would also **promote food security** and encourage farmers to invest in farming, thereby boosting **rural economic growth**.
  - The committee has stressed the need to **declare a roadmap** for implementing this legal guarantee, and regularly inform **Parliament** about the number of farmers selling produce at MSP.

- **Compensation for Paddy Waste Management:** To address the environmental issue of **burning paddy stubble** (parali), the committee recommends that farmers should be **compensated** for **disposing of crop residue** properly.
  - The **Punjab government** has proposed a compensation of **Rs 2,000 per acre**, with the **central government** covering half of this amount.

- **Increase in PM-KISAN Support:** The committee has suggested that the **PM-KISAN scheme** should be enhanced by doubling the **monetary support** from **Rs 6,000** per year to **Rs 12,000** per year.
  - The committee also recommends extending **seasonal incentives** to **tenant farmers** and **farm labourers**.

- **Debt Waiver for Farmers:**
  - To address the growing **farmer distress** and **rural indebtedness**, the committee recommends a **debt waiver scheme** for farmers and farm labourers.
  - **Loan dependency** among rural families has risen sharply, with more families borrowing money to cover rising expenses. This has contributed to a rise in farmer **suicides** due to financial stress.

- **Increase in Budget Allocation for Agriculture:** The committee pointed out that despite **absolute increases** in budget allocation for agriculture, its share as a percentage of the total **central plan** has been decreasing. It recommended that the **central government increase** its budget allocation to **boost agricultural growth**.

- The **growth rate of agriculture** has slowed down significantly, falling to **1.4%** in 2023-24, the **lowest in seven years**, down from the average of **4.18%** over the past four years.

◎ **Compulsory Crop Insurance for Small Farmers:** The committee recommended implementing **compulsory crop insurance** for small farmers, especially those with land holdings of up to **2 acres**, similar to the **PM-JAY health insurance scheme**.

◎ **National Commission for Minimum Living Wages for Farm Labourers:** A new **National Commission** should be set up to ensure **minimum living wages** for **farm labourers** and address their long-pending rights.

◎ **Renaming the Department of Agriculture:** The committee suggested renaming the **Department of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare** to the **Department of Agriculture, Farmers, and Farm Labourers Welfare** to reflect a **broader focus** on the **welfare of farm labourers**.

Significance:

◎ These recommendations come in the context of **farmers' protests** in Punjab and Haryana, where farmers have been demanding a **legal guarantee for MSP**.

◎ The committee's recommendations aim to **reduce the financial burden** on farmers, ensure **stable incomes**, and **improve the agricultural sector's performance**.

◎ The report also emphasizes **environmental protection** and **addressing farmer suicides** due to rising debts and financial stress.

CAG REPORT ON TAMIL NADU'S COASTAL REGULATION ZONE (CRZ)

Context

The **Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)** of India has recently raised serious concerns about how Tamil Nadu is managing its coastal areas under the **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2011**. The CAG report, tabled in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, highlights several delays, violations, and lapses in the enforcement of the CRZ rules, particularly between 2015 and 2022.

Major Issues Highlighted in the CAG Report:

◻ Delays in Preparing Maps:

- In 2017, the state government approved the preparation of maps that would help local authorities enforce CRZ regulations.

- However, this project faced a **30-month delay**, and the maps were only completed by **mid-2022**. This delay meant that local authorities couldn't properly monitor or enforce the CRZ rules, leading to several violations.

◻ Unauthorised Approvals:

- Between **2015 and 2022**, the **Tamil Nadu State Coastal Zone Management Authority (TNSCZMA)** approved **114 out of 175 projects** without sending them for proper review by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** or the **State Environmental Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA)**.

- This bypassing of the scrutiny process meant that projects were approved without proper environmental checks, violating the rules set under the CRZ Notification.

◎ **Unauthorised Constructions and Violations**: The report identified several instances of **illegal construction** and violations of CRZ regulations, including:

  ♦ **Bridge construction at Nemmeli** in Chengalpattu.

  ♦ A **beach resort at Koovathur** in Chengalpattu.

  ♦ **Cold storage units in Kanniyakumari**.

- There was also the issue of **chemical waste dumping** at **Marakkanam**, and an **illegal housing layout** in the same area.

◎ **Failure in Monitoring and Surveillance**:

- The CAG noted that **TNSCZMA** did not have adequate monitoring mechanisms in place to track violations, which is a requirement under the CRZ rules.

- Despite multiple requests, the TNSCZMA failed to provide the necessary **CZMP maps**, which led the CAG to use **Google Earth imagery** to identify **90 unauthorised constructions** in the **No Development Zone** in areas like **Chennai**, **Chengalpattu**, and **Thoothukudi**.

- The TNSCZMA, relying on the **Department of Environment's staff**, lacked dedicated resources for effective monitoring, which allowed several violations, like construction of beach houses, to go undetected.

◎ **Lack of Local Community Representation**: The CAG also flagged the **lack of local community representatives** in the **District Coastal Zone Management Authorities (DCZMAs)**. The **CRZ Notification** mandates that these authorities should include local community members, but only **four districts** complied with this requirement as of **May 2023**.

What is a Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)?

◎ The **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)** refers to specific areas along the coastline that are regulated to protect coastal ecosystems from harmful activities.

◎ The **CRZ rules** were first established under the **Environment Protection Act of 1986** and officially notified in **February 1991** by the **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.

◎ These regulations are aimed at conserving the environment, preventing over-exploitation of natural resources, and protecting the livelihoods of coastal communities.

⊙ The rules have been updated several times, with the **2011 CRZ Notification** and the **2018 CRZ Notification** being the most recent changes.

⊙ **Coastal Areas Defined**: The CRZ regulations apply to the land and water between the **low tide line (LTL)** and **high tide line (HTL)**, as well as the areas subject to tidal influence, such as **creeks, rivers, seas, bays, and backwaters**, extending up to **500 meters** from the HTL.

⊙ **Purpose**:

   ➤ To protect **fragile coastal ecosystems** (such as **mangroves**, **coral reefs**, **sand dunes**, etc.).

   ➤ To manage development along the coast in a sustainable manner, ensuring it does not harm the environment or communities dependent on it.

◫ Key Features of the 2018 CRZ Notification:

➤ **Floor Space Index (FSI) in CRZ-II (Urban Areas)**: The 2018 notification allows increased **floor space index (FSI)** or **floor area ratio** in **urban coastal zones (CRZ-II)**, enabling taller buildings and more intensive use of land.

➤ **CRZ-III (Rural Areas)**: CRZ-III areas (rural, undeveloped regions) are now divided into two categories, giving more room for **development** while still protecting the environment.

➤ **Promotion of Tourism**: The 2018 rules encourage the development of **tourism infrastructure** along coastal areas, including **eco-tourism** and **resorts**, in certain zones.

➤ **Streamlined CRZ Clearance Process**: The clearance process for development projects in coastal areas has been **simplified** to speed up approvals, making it easier for developers to undertake projects like roads, ports, and tourism facilities.

➤ **No-Development Zone (NDZ) for Islands**: A **20-meter NDZ** has been mandated for all islands, protecting them from overdevelopment and ensuring that development is controlled.

➤ **Pollution Control**: The 2018 notification allows the creation of **treatment facilities** in certain areas (CRZ-I B) to deal with **pollution**, especially in **eco-sensitive zones**.

➤ **Exemptions for Defense and Strategic Projects**: The notification provides **exemptions for defense and strategic infrastructure** development, allowing them to bypass some of the restrictions for national security reasons.

Four Types of Coastal Regulation Zones (CRZ):

⊙ **CRZ-I (Ecologically Sensitive Areas)**: This zone includes **mangrove swamps**, **coral reefs**, **sand dunes**, **maritime parks**, **wildlife sanctuaries**, and **reserve forests**. These areas are highly sensitive and have the highest level of protection. No construction is allowed except for **defense**, **strategic**, or **public utility projects**.

⊙ **CRZ-II (Urban Areas)**: These are **built-up** areas within **municipal boundaries** that are already developed. This zone permits construction but only **authorized projects**. **Unauthorized construction** is strictly prohibited in this zone.

⊙ **CRZ-III (Rural Areas)**: These are **undeveloped rural areas**, including agricultural and **natural spaces**. Limited development is allowed, primarily for **agriculture** and **essential public utilities** (e.g., schools, hospitals).

⊙ **CRZ-IV (Water Bodies)**: This zone includes the **tidally-influenced areas of water bodies** such as **rivers, lakes, and seas** extending up to the territorial waters. It is important for **fishing** and **marine life** and is subject to regulations regarding pollution and development activities.

BEIJING'S WAR AGAINST AIR PPOLLUTION

Context

Beijing, in 2015, had an average **Air Quality Index (AQI) of 144**, which is similar to Delhi's AQI of 155 in 2024. However, Beijing has made significant progress in reducing pollution, cutting its levels by one-third between 2013 and 2017. This decline can be attributed to a series of policies and actions taken by Beijing to control air pollution, starting with a long-term plan initiated in 1998.

Beijing's Pollution Control Efforts (1998-2017):

⊙ **Economic Growth and Pollution:** By the late 1990s, Beijing's rapid economic growth led to an increase in energy consumption and pollution, especially from coal used for residential heating.

⊙ **The Anti-Pollution Program:** Beijing's pollution control program can be divided into three phases:

   ➤ **1998-2008:** Initial steps to address pollution.

   ➤ **2009-2012**: Strengthening efforts to target pollution sources.

   ➤ **2013-2017:** Aggressive actions, including regional cooperation to combat pollution from neighboring provinces.

⊙ **Key Sources of Pollution**: Beijing identified three major sources of pollution:

   ➤ **Energy and Coal Combustion (22% of PM2.5):** Coal-dependent power plants and residential heating.

   ➤ **Transportation (31%):** Emissions from vehicles.

   ➤ **Construction and Industry (33%):** Pollution from industrial activities and construction.

Measures Taken:

⊙ **Energy & Coal**: Beijing renovated power plants to reduce emissions, transitioned to cleaner energy, and eliminated coal used for heating.

⊙ **Transportation:** Vehicles were **retrofitted with diesel filters**, old and polluting vehicles were scrapped with subsidies, and public transport (buses and subways) was expanded.

◉ **Industry & Construction:** Strict environmental requirements were imposed on industries and construction sites. Polluting factories were closed or renovated, and construction was tightly regulated.

◉ **Regional Cooperation:** Between 2013 and 2017, Beijing worked with neighboring provinces to coordinate efforts and reduce pollution in the entire region.

◉ **Financial Commitment**: Beijing made large financial investments in pollution control measures, increasing the budget six times over four years. This financial commitment played a key role in the success of the program.

Achievements (2013-2017):

◉ The pollution control efforts resulted in significant reductions:

  ➤ Sulphur Dioxide: Down by 83%

  ➤ Nitrogen Oxide: Down by 43%

  ➤ Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): Down by 42%

  ➤ PM2.5 (particulate matter): Down by 59%

What Delhi Can Learn from Beijing?

◉ **Transport System:** Delhi needs a better public transport system, integrating buses and metro services, and offering last-mile connectivity. Old, polluting vehicles must be scrapped, and alternatives like cycling lanes should be introduced.

◉ **Energy Overhaul:** Delhi's electricity comes mainly from coal-fired plants. Transitioning to cleaner energy sources, such as solar power, and offering incentives for rooftop solar panels can help.

◉ **Regional Coordination:** Delhi must work with neighboring states (National Capital Region or NCR) to reduce pollution originating from these areas, just as Beijing did.

◉ **Public Awareness and Accountability:** Delhi's residents need to demand clean air and hold the government accountable for pollution. The attitude toward poor air quality should change; exposure to pollution, even at moderate levels, can be harmful in the long term.

DISEASE X

Context

The recent outbreak in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** (DRC), which has claimed over **400 lives** and remains **unclassified**, has raised concerns that it could be an instance of **Disease X**. It shows the global vulnerability to **unknown pathogens**, underscoring the importance of being prepared for such unpredictable threats.

What is Disease X?

◉ **Disease X** is a term coined by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** in 2018 to refer to a **hypothetical, yet-to-be-discovered pathogen** that could cause a global pandemic.

◉ It was introduced to raise awareness and prepare for diseases that are difficult to predict or identify but have the potential to create severe health crises.

◉ The WHO's **Blueprint for Priority Diseases**, published in 2018, includes **Disease X** as a placeholder for unknown pathogens with epidemic potential, emphasizing the need for readiness to respond to emerging infectious diseases.

◉ **Origin of the Concept:** The idea of **Disease X** emerged in the wake of the **2014-2016 Ebola outbreak** in West Africa, which exposed significant gaps in global epidemic preparedness. The **WHO** recognized that future outbreaks could arise from unknown pathogens, so it created **Disease X** as a framework for preparing for the unknown.

  ➤ **COVID-19** is often seen as the first actual example of **Disease X**, with the emergence of the **SARS-CoV-2** virus in 2019 representing the unpredictable threat that Disease X was meant to address. The pandemic demonstrated how a novel pathogen could rapidly spread worldwide, overwhelming health systems and economies.

WHO's Priority List of Pathogens

◉ The WHO maintains a **priority list of pathogens** to guide global research and resource allocation.

◉ This list includes diseases that pose significant risks of spreading globally but have insufficient preventive measures, such as **vaccines** or **treatments**.

◉ The pathogens on the list include well-known diseases like **Ebola**, **Marburg virus**, **Zika**, **Nipah virus**, and **Lassa fever**, as well as **Disease X**.

◉ These diseases are selected based on factors such as:

  ➤ High **mortality rates**.

  ➤ **Rapid transmission potential**.

  ➤ Lack of **adequate vaccines** or **treatments**.

Why Is Disease X a Growing Concern?

While the exact nature of **Disease X** remains unknown, there are several factors that contribute to the likelihood of its emergence:

◉ **Zoonotic Spillover**: Many emerging infectious diseases, including COVID-19, are **zoonotic**, meaning they are transmitted from animals to humans. Activities such as **deforestation**, **urbanization**, and **agriculture** are pushing humans into closer contact with wildlife, increasing the risk of zoonotic diseases.

◉ **Environmental and Ecological Disruptions**: Human-induced changes to the environment, such as **climate change**, are reshaping disease transmission dynamics, with **vector-borne illnesses** like **malaria** and **dengue** expanding into new regions.

◉ **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)**: The growing threat of antimicrobial resistance, where pathogens evolve to resist existing drugs, could make responding to new outbreaks more challenging.

◉ **Global Connectivity**: Increased international travel and trade mean that localized outbreaks can rapidly become global pandemics, as seen with COVID-19.

Challenges in Predicting Disease X

Predicting the exact origin or timing of **Disease X** is extremely difficult because its emergence depends on many unpredictable factors, including:

⊙ Mutations in existing pathogens.

⊙ **Laboratory accidents** or **bioterrorism**.

⊙ **Climate change** affecting the behavior and spread of diseases.

⊙ Scientists estimate that there are over **1.7 million undiscovered viruses** in wildlife, with many potentially capable of infecting humans. Only a fraction of these pathogens have been identified, leaving the world vulnerable to emerging threats.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2024

Context

The Lok Sabha passed the **Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, 2024**, aimed at strengthening India's disaster management framework. The Bill empowers the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA)** to take the lead in disaster planning and response.

Key Provisions of the Bill:

⊙ **Enhanced Powers for NDMA and SDMA:** The Bill empowers the NDMA and SDMA to prepare national and state-level disaster plans, respectively.

⊙ **Urban Disaster Management Authority:** State governments can now establish separate Urban Disaster Management Authorities for major cities and state capitals.

⊙ **Disaster Database:** The Bill mandates the creation of a comprehensive disaster database at both national and state levels.

Government Initiatives

⊙ National Landslide Risk Mitigation Programme

⊙ Aapda Mitra Scheme

⊙ **Alerting System:** SMS, TV, Radio, Indian Railways, Costal Sirens, Cell broadcast, Internet (RSS feed & Browser Notification), Satellite Receiver of GAGAN & NavIC etc.

⊙ National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP)

⊙ **Institutions:**

➤ National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)

➤ Indian Universities and Institutions Network (IUINDRR-NIDM)

➤ National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF)

➤ State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)

India's Vulnerability to disasters

⊙ India, with 2.4% of the world's land area, is home to about 17.78% of the global population.

⊙ This induces pressure on resources and sees competition over fragile ecosystems, which in turn increases the risk for disasters.

⊙ **Climate change:** India witnessed the death of over 5,000 people between 2014 and 2020 due to heatwaves, the intensity of which appears to be rising due to global warming.

⊙ **Displacement:** The **Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre** has estimated that **over 2.5 million people were displaced in India in 2022** due to natural disasters, especially floods and cyclones.

⊙ **Coastline: 33.6% of India's coastline** is vulnerable to erosion, a point of concern for coastal States including Andhra Pradesh which has one of India's longest coastlines. There is increased frequency as well as intensity of cyclones on India's western coast. The incidence of summer cyclones and the accompanying damage is equally worrisome.

⊙ As tracked by the **Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) for 2023-2024**, India reports over 3,500 fatalities, more than 15 million people affected, suffering from displacement, loss of property, and disruption of daily life.

➤ The cumulative losses including damage to roads, bridges, buildings, and essential public infrastructure, exceeded USD 12 billion due to weather-related disasters, including floods, cyclones, and heatwaves.

➤ The impact on wildlife and livestock has also been severe, with tens of thousands of animals displaced or killed, particularly in flood-prone areas.

➤ In August alone, India witnessed 387 deaths; 271,485 people affected, and 39,414 houses damaged.

⊙ Several factors exacerbate this vulnerability, including shifting demographic and socio-economic conditions, unplanned urbanisation, development in high-risk zones, environmental degradation, climate change, and geological hazards.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TARGET PT

AN ULTIMATE COURSE *for*

MICRO MANAGEMENT *of the* SYLLABUS

PRELIMS TARGETED CLASSES

- Micro-management of the syllabus through 40 Concept Classes and Daily Tests for GS
- 10+ Classes and Tests for CSAT Paper
- 20+ Current Affairs Tests and Classes covering 800+ Topics from last 2 years
- Special Emphasis on High Yielding Topics

ASSESSMENT

- Daily Tests are designed to reinforce learning, measure understanding and progress.
- Apart from Daily Tests, the following tests are:
  - 6 subject Revision Tests
  - 6 Sectional Tests
  - 20 Mock Tests (GS + CSAT)

PERSONAL MENTORSHIP

- One-on-one session to get Tailor-made individual strategy through Mentorship

PRELIMS STUDY MATERIAL

- Yearly Compilation of Prelims Current Affairs (pdf)
- Prelims Fact File (pdf)

COURSE FEE ₹ 12,500 (+GST)

📱 **8448496262**   🌐 **iasscore.in**

SECTION -B

QUICK BYTES

WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP 2024

Context
In a dramatic finale at the **2024 World Chess Championship**, Indian prodigy Gukesh D. emerged as the **youngest world champion in history**, dethroning reigning champion Ding Liren after a critical blunder in the final game.

Gukesh creates history

- Gukesh becomes the first Indian World Chess Champion since Viswanathan Anand in 2012.

- It caps off a stunning year for Gukesh, who has also won the Candidates 2024 tournament and the Chess Olympiad gold.

- Gukesh also became the first teenager to become **World Chess Champion.**

  ➤ The **World Chess Championship** is an event that decides the world champion in standard or classical chess, currently GM Gukesh Dommaraju.

  ➤ Official World Chess Championships started in **1886** with players arranging the matches themselves.

  ➤ The **World Championship Match** consists of 14 games. The player who scores 7.5 points or more

List of Chess world champions over the years				
Sr. No.	Player	Dates	Wins	Years Won
1	Wilhelm Steinitz	1886-94	4	1886, 1889, 1890, 1892
2	Emanuel Lasker	1894-1921	6	1894, 1896, 1907, 1908, 1910*, 1910
3	Jose Raul Capablanca	1921-27	1	1921
4	Alexander Alekhine	1927-35, 1937-46	4	1927, 1929, 1934, 1937
5	Max Euwe	1935-37	1	1935
6	Mikhail Botvinnik	1948-57, 1958-60, 1961-63	5	1948t, 1951*, 1954*, 1958, 1961
7	Vasily Smyslov	1957-58	1	1957
8	Mikhail Tal	1960-61	1	1960
9	Tigran V. Petrosian	1963-69	2	1963, 1966
10	Boris Spassky	1969-72	1	1969
11	Bobby Fischer	1972-75	1	1972
12	Anatoly Karpov	1975-85	3#	1975d, 1978, 1981, 1984#
13	Garry Kasparov	1985-2000	6	1985, 1986, 1987*, 1990, 1993, 1995
14	Vladimir Kramnik	2000-07	3	2000, 2004*, 2006**
15	Viswanathan Anand	2007-13	4	2007t, 2008, 2010, 2012**
16	Magnus Carlsen	2013-2023	5	2013, 2014, 2016**, 2018**, 2021
17	Ding Liren	2023	1	2023
18	D Gukesh	2024	1	2024

Table No. 02

wins the Match, and no further games are played. If the score after 14 games is equal, the winner is decided on a tiebreak.

- **FIDE** has remained responsible for organizing the **World Championship** ever since.

- Besides the open World Championship, there are also other tournaments designated for different categories. Those are the **Women's World Championship, World Junior Championship, World Senior Championship, World Rapid Championship, and World Blitz Championship.**

(See Table No. 2 on previous page)

1971 INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR

Context

Every year on 16 December, both India and Bangladesh celebrate **Vijay Diwas (Victory Day)** to mark India's decisive victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war, which also led to the birth of Bangladesh.

About Vijay Diwas

- Vijay Diwas commemorates India's significant victory against Pakistan during the **Liberation War in 1971.**

- The day signifies the end of an intense **13-day battle** that resulted in Pakistan's submission through a surrender agreement in Dhaka.

- This pivotal moment led to the ultimate liberation of Bangladesh, once recognized as East Pakistan.

- **Factors responsible for 1971 India-Pakistan war**

  - **Ethnic and Linguistic Differences:** The division between **East Pakistan (now Bangladesh)** and **West Pakistan (now Pakistan)** was primarily rooted in cultural and linguistic differences.

    - East Pakistanis were predominantly Bengali-speaking and felt marginalized by the Urdu imposition from the West Pakistani government, which led to a growing sense of alienation and resentment.

  - East Pakistanis were also discriminated against in terms of economic development and political power.

  - **Political Tensions and the Demand for Autonomy:** In the mid-1960s, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a leader from East Pakistan, began advocating for greater autonomy for East Pakistan through his Six-Point Programme. However, the Pakistani refused to grant these demands, leading to political tension and conflict between the two regions.

  - **Operation Searchlight and the Genocide:** In March 1971, Pakistan's military launched **Operation Searchlight** to suppress the growing separatist movement in East Pakistan. This operation involved mass atrocities, including widespread killings, rapes, and the targeting of Hindu minorities, which has been referred to as a genocide. The brutal repression triggered a mass exodus of refugees, leading to millions fleeing to neighboring India.

- **India's Role in the Liberation of Bangladesh**: India provided **military and logistical support** to the **Mukti Bahini**, a guerrilla force made up of **Bangladeshi soldiers and civilians** trained by India. The Mukti Bahini played a crucial role in **gathering intelligence**, launching sabotage operations, and creating instability for Pakistani forces in East Pakistan.

DURGADI FORT DISPUTE

Context

The **Durgadi Fort** controversy has resurfaced recently.

About Durgadi Fort:

- **Durgadi Fort** is located in **Kalyan**, Maharashtra, and dates back to the **16th century**. It was originally built by the **Adil Shahi Sultanate** of Bijapur.

- The fort, spread over **70 acres**, has both a **mosque** and a **temple** inside. It was a key location for the **Muslim community**, especially for **Eid prayers**.

- **Changes Under the Marathas:**

  - In **1760**, the **Marathas** took over Kalyan and **renamed the fort** as **Durgadi Killa** (fort of Goddess Durga). They built a **temple to Goddess Durgadevi** inside the fort, near the existing mosque.

  - After the **British** took control in **1818**, the fort became less significant as a place of worship, and the **Durgadevi temple** stopped being used by the public after **1876** when its idol was stolen.

The Dispute Over the Fort:

- **1960s**: Tensions between the **Hindu and Muslim communities** began over the fort's control. The **Muslim community** claimed to have been offering **Eid prayers** there for centuries, while **Hindus** wanted to worship and assert control over the site as well.

- **1966**: The Maharashtra government tried to take control of the land, planning to turn part of it into a public park. This caused protests from the Muslim community. The **government** allowed Muslims to continue **Eid prayers** but said that neither Hindus nor Muslims could claim full control over the land.

- **2023**: After nearly **50 years** of legal battles, a **Kalyan civil court** ruled in favor of the **Maharashtra government**, affirming that the government owned the disputed land and rejecting the Muslim community's claim.

  - The court said that the Muslim community's claim was **barred by the statute of limitations**, as the dispute had started in **1968**, and the Muslim petition was filed in **1976**—after the legal deadline for challenging the ownership had passed.

  - However, the court did not rule on the **historical claims** about the **religious significance** of the structures in the fort. It only ruled that the land belonged to the Maharashtra government.

INDIA-MIDDLE EAST-EUROPE CORRIDOR (IMEEC)

Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and United Arab Emirates (UAE) Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held high-level talks to discuss the implementation of the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)**, a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing regional connectivity and prosperity.

About IMEC

- During the G20 summit in New Delhi in September, world leaders unveiled plans for a **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).**
- **Need:** Geopolitical and geoeconomic considerations underpin the rationale for the IMEC.
- The corridor aims to provide a **reliable and cost-effective ship-to-rail transit network** connecting **Asia, the Middle East, and Europe**, enhancing economic development through improved connectivity and integration.
- **Key Participants:** India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, USA, and the European Union are the key member nations involved in the project.

Project Components:

- ➤ The corridor will include a railway route to create a cross-border ship-to-rail transit network, supplementing existing maritime and road transport routes.
- ➤ This will allow the movement of goods and services between India, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe.
- ➤ Along the railway track, a clean hydrogen export cable will also be laid.

- **Structure of the Corridor:** The project consists of two separate corridors:
  - ➤ **Eastern Corridor:** Connecting India to the Arabian Gulf.
  - ➤ **Northern Corridor:** Connecting the Arabian Gulf to Europe.

Key Functions: The corridor aims to:

- ➤ Safeguard regional supply chains.
- ➤ Boost trade accessibility across these regions.
- ➤ Promote environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations.
- ➤ Increase efficiency, reduce costs, create jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

- This initiative is part of the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII),** a West-led project aimed at funding infrastructure projects globally, with a focus on economic integration, trade growth, and sustainability across **Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.**

Ports in the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

- **India:** Mundra Port (Gujarat), Kandla Port (Gujarat), Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Navi Mumbai)
- **Middle East:** Fujairah Port (UAE), Jebel Ali Port (UAE), Abu Dhabi Port (UAE), Dammam Port (Saudi Arabia), Ras Al Khair Port (Saudi Arabia)
- **Railway Line:** The railway will link Fujairah Port (UAE) to Haifa Port (Israel), passing through Saudi Arabia (via Ghuwaifat and Haradh) and Jordan.
- **Israel:** Haifa Port (Israel)
- **Europe:** Piraeus Port (Greece), Messina Port (Southern Italy), Marseille Port (France)

Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII):

- The infrastructure plan was first announced in June 2021 during the **G7 (or Group of Seven) summit** in the UK.
- The G7 countries include the United Kingdom, the **United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the European Union (EU).**
- US President had called it the **Build Back Better World (B3W) framework.**
- In 2022, during the G7 summit in Germany, the PGII was officially launched as a joint initiative to help fund infrastructure projects in developing countries through public and private investments.

INDIA-CHINA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Context

India and China have taken steps to improve their strained bilateral relations, which were affected by the **2020 military standoff in eastern Ladakh**. The two countries reached an agreement on a set of **six consensus measures** aimed at restoring cooperation and easing tensions.

Key Agreements and Steps Taken:

- **Resumption of Kailash Mansarovar Yatra:** The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, a pilgrimage that Indian citizens make to a sacred site in Tibet, had been disrupted due to the tensions along the India-China border. The two countries agreed to resume the Yatra, which is an important cultural and religious link between India and China.
- **Enhancement of Trans-Border River Cooperation:** India and China also agreed to improve cooperation related to the sharing of data and information on **trans-border rivers**. This includes sharing crucial water data to manage the flow of rivers that cross both countries, which is vital for water security in both regions.
- **Reopening Nathula Border Trade:** Nathula, a mountain pass in the eastern Himalayas, had been closed for

border trade after the standoff. The two countries have now agreed to reopen this trade route, which will help restore economic exchanges and improve connectivity between the two nations.

FACT BOX

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra

◉ The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is a pilgrimage to Mount Kailash and the Mansarovar Lake in Tibet, sacred for Hindus, Jains, Tibetans, and followers of the Bon religion.

◉ The Mt. Kailash is not only the highest parts of the world but the source of four mighty rivers of the region— **The Brahmaputra, The Sutlej, The Ganges, and the Indus**.

◉ **The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra** is the holiest form of the expedition to Lord Shiva's own house called Mt. Kailash.

◉ Every year thousands of pilgrims undertake the divine yatra from various parts of the country & the world as well.

Nathula Pass (Indo - China Border)

◉ Nathu la is a high altitude pass (altitude of 4302 m) situated on the old Silk route at the Indo-China border.

◉ Nathu La is one of the three open trading border posts between India and China.

India and China have signed a memorandum on opening border trade through the Sikkim-Tibet frontier crossing of Nathu La.

➤ Others are: **Shipkila (Himachal Pradesh) and Lipulekh or Lipulech (Uttrakhand).**

◉ It is one of the **highest motorable roads** in the world, is a mountain pass in the Himalayan peaks that co-joins Sikkim and China.

Major trans-border rivers between India and China are:

◉ **Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo in China):** In China, it is known as the **Yarlung Tsangpo**. The river originates from Tibet and flows into India through the northeastern states, primarily Arunachal Pradesh, before moving into Bangladesh. It is a vital river for water supply, agriculture, and transportation for the region.

◉ **Indus River:** The Indus River originates in Tibet, China, and flows through Pakistan. In India, it passes through the Ladakh region before entering Pakistan. The Indus and its tributaries are of critical importance for both India and Pakistan. India shares control over part of the river system, especially the tributaries like the Zanskar and Shyok rivers, which are connected to the larger Indus River basin.

◉ **Sutlej River**: The Sutlej originates from Tibet in China and flows into India through the state of Himachal Pradesh, before moving into Punjab. It is one of the five rivers that make up the Indus River system, and its water is shared between India and Pakistan as well.

◉ **Kailash Mansarovar Region (Sources of several rivers):** The Kailash Mansarovar region in Tibet is the source of several rivers that flow into India, including the Sarasvati and Kailash rivers, which join other river systems like the Indus and Brahmaputra. Though these rivers are less significant in terms of volume, they play an important role locally.

OPEC+ CONCERN ABOUT RISING US OIL PRODUCTION

Context

OPEC+ are now worried about the United States, which has become the world's largest oil producer.

The Situation:

◉ **US Oil Production Growth**: The United States has dramatically increased its oil production in recent years, mainly through **shale oil** extraction. Since 2022, US production has grown by 11%, and it now produces about **21.6 million barrels per day** (bpd), up from about **10 million bpd** just 11 years ago.

◉ **Opec+ Output**: Opec+ currently holds back **5.85 million bpd** from production to manage prices. Opec+ now controls only about **48%** of the world's oil supply, which is its lowest share since 2016, when it was over **55%**.

Why Opec+ is Concerned?

- ➤ **US Influence on Oil Prices**: With rising US oil production, Opec+ has lost some of its influence over global oil prices. If the US continues to increase its output, it could lead to lower oil prices, which would hurt Opec+ countries that rely heavily on oil revenue.

- ➤ **Trump's Potential Impact**: If **Donald Trump** returns to the White House, Opec+ fears that his **pro-business and deregulatory policies** could encourage even more oil production in the US. Trump's administration would likely ease environmental regulations, allowing more oil drilling, which would increase supply and potentially reduce global oil prices.

- ➤ **Trump's Election Campaign**: During his campaign, Trump focused on lowering energy prices and inflation, which he believes could be achieved by increasing oil production in the US.

OPEC+

- ⊙ The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** was established in **1960** by five founding countries: **Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia**, and **Venezuela**. Since its inception, OPEC has grown to include **13 member countries** that together control a significant portion of the world's oil reserves and production capacity.

- ⊙ However, in **2016**, in response to **falling oil prices** caused by rising **S. shale oil production**, OPEC expanded its reach by partnering with additional oil-producing nations that were not part of the original OPEC group. This broader coalition is known as **OPEC+**, which includes key non-OPEC oil producers like **Russia, Mexico, Kazakhstan**, and **Oman**.

- ⊙ **OPEC+ Members**
  - ➤ **OPEC Members**: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Venezuela.
  - ➤ **Non-OPEC Members in OPEC+**: Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Bahrain, Brunei, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, South Sudan, and Sudan.

- ⊙ OPEC+ collectively accounts for a significant portion of global oil production and plays a crucial role in determining **oil prices** worldwide through **production cuts** or **increases**.

REIMPOSITION OF PROTECTED AREA REGIME

Context

The Centre has re-imposed the **Protected Area Permit (PAP)** in the Manipur, **Mizoram** and **Nagaland**, due to growing security concerns linked to the influx of people from neighboring countries. This measure requires foreign nationals visiting these states to obtain **Protected Area Permits (PAP)** under the **Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958**.

What is Protected Area Permit (PAP)?

- ⊙ A **Protected Area Permit (PAP)** is issued under the **Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958**.

- ⊙ It is a regulatory mechanism for controlling the entry of non-Indian citizens into **designated areas** in India, primarily in the **Northeastern regions**, which include states like **Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram**, and others.

- ⊙ These areas are considered sensitive due to geopolitical concerns, security issues, and the need for controlled tourism and migration.

- ⊙ The **Ministry of Home Affairs** is the central authority responsible for issuing the PAP.

- ⊙ In addition, the **state authorities** of the concerned regions, such as the **state governments** of Northeastern states, can also issue PAPs.

- ⊙ **Duration**: The PAP is generally issued for a **10-day** period. However, it can be extended for an additional **7 days**, depending on the specific situation or requirement.

RESTRUCTURING OF NATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (NTA)

Context

The **National Testing Agency (NTA)** is set to undergo significant changes starting in the coming year, focusing exclusively on conducting **higher education entrance exams**. This decision follows recommendations from a **high-level committee** chaired by former ISRO chief **K Radhakrishnan**, which was tasked with addressing issues like exam leaks, technical glitches, and a lack of transparency in the examination process.

Key Recommendations and Changes:

The restructuring will allow NTA to focus on enhancing the quality and reliability of exams such as **NEET-UG 2025**, **CUET-UG 2025**, and **UGC NET 2025**, while **relinquishing its role in recruitment exams**.

- ⊙ **Focus on Higher Education Entrance Exams**: The NTA will no longer conduct recruitment exams, streamlining its operations to improve the conduct of exams for admission into higher education institutions.

- ⊙ **Multi-Level Exam Format**: A **multi-stage examination system** has been proposed, particularly for **NEET UG**, to ensure comprehensive and fair testing.
  - ➤ The committee suggested introducing a **Digi-exam system**, incorporating **multi-session testing**, and expanding **testing centers** to enhance accessibility and efficiency.

- ⊙ **Expansion of Testing Centres**: The panel proposed leveraging institutions like **Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas**, and **reputable universities** to create a network of about **400-500 testing centers** within a year. This network would significantly

increase the testing capacity, enabling the **conduct of Computer-Based Tests (CBT)** with a capacity of 2-2.5 lakh candidates in one session nationwide.

◎ **Permanent Staffing Recommendations**: Rather than making the staff permanent, the committee recommended **longer tenure for executives** and **domain experts**, with attractive service conditions. This change aims to improve the continuity and efficiency of the agency's operations.

◎ **Restructuring NTA's Governing Body**: The committee emphasized the need for an **empowered and accountable governing body** for the NTA. The body would consist of **three sub-committees** focused on **test audits**, **ethics and transparency**, and **stakeholder relationships**, ensuring that the exam processes are robust and trustworthy.

◎ **Oversight of Coaching Centres**: A system for the **oversight of coaching centers** has been proposed to mitigate any unfair advantages and maintain the integrity of the exam process.

◎ **Security and Transparency Enhancements**: The committee also suggested strengthening **security protocols** related to the paper-setting process and other critical aspects of the exams to prevent irregularities and leaks.

🔍 FACT BOX

National Testing Agency

◎ The NTA was set up in 2017 as an **autonomous and self-sustained testing organisation** under the **Education Ministry**, then known as the HRD Ministry.

◎ It is a registered society under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860** and is under the purview of the **Right of Information Act.**

◎ Before the NTA was formed, government bodies, such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), and central universities, such as the Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), conducted their own exams.

CRIME AND CRIMINAL TRACKING NETWORK AND SYSTEMS (CCTNS) PROJECT

Context

Nearly **15 years** after its launch, the **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)** has successfully linked all **17,130 police stations** across India. This **centralized online platform** facilitates the filing of **First Information Reports (FIRs)**, **chargesheets**, and **investigation reports**, and provides a nationwide database accessible to law enforcement authorities.

What is Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) project?

◎ Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) project, started in the year 2009.

◎ It aimed to **inter-link all police stations** under a common application software for the purpose of investigation, data analytics, research, policy making and providing Citizen Services such as reporting & tracking of complaints, request for antecedent verifications by Police etc.

◎ The project is being implemented with close collaboration between States and Union Government.

◎ CCTNS allows law enforcement to generate analytical reports on criminal cases, property crimes, and crime statistics at the police station level.

◎ **Support for New Criminal Laws:** The system has been upgraded to accommodate the implementation of three new criminal laws introduced on July 1:

  ➤ Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (replacing the Indian Penal Code of 1860)

  ➤ Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (replacing the Indian Evidence Act of 1872)

  ➤ Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (replacing the Code of Criminal Procedure of 1898)

◎ These laws have prompted 23 functional modifications in the CCTNS application, including:

  ➤ Senior officer approval for arrests in specific cases,

  ➤ Mandatory informant notifications about arrests and summons,

  ➤ Daily diary reports to the magistrate,

  ➤ Forensic investigations and videography at crime scenes,

  ➤ Timely updates on investigation progress to victims.

◎ **Expansion to Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS):** Over the years, the scope of CCTNS has expanded to connect with other components of the criminal justice system, such as courts, prisons, prosecution, forensics, and fingerprints.

  ➤ This integration has led to the development of the Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS), which streamlines the flow of data across these sectors.

◎ **Implementing Agency**: The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** is the central nodal agency that implements the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).

INDIA'S RETAIL INFLATION

Context

India's retail inflation in November was at 5.48 per cent as compared to 6.21 per cent logged in October, falling in line with the Reserve Bank of India's 2 to 6 per cent comfort band.

What is Inflation?

◉ **Inflation** is the rate at which the prices of goods and services increase over time.

◉ As prices rise, the **purchasing power of money** falls. This means with the same amount of money, you can buy fewer goods and services than before.

◉ Inflation affects the **cost of living**: when prices rise, people can buy less with the same amount of money, which is particularly tough for households with low or fixed incomes.

◉ **Why does this matter?** When inflation rises, the real interest rate goes down, making savings less attractive because the value of your money doesn't grow as much.

Measuring Inflation:

There are several ways to measure inflation, focusing on different aspects of the economy:

◉ **Consumer Price Index (CPI):** CPI tracks the price changes in the goods and services that households purchase, like food, clothing, and transportation. It helps calculate the general cost of living. If CPI increases, it means prices are going up for the typical consumer.

  ➤ The **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** in India releases the CPI each month.

◉ **Wholesale Price Index (WPI):** WPI measures the price changes in goods sold in bulk at the wholesale level, before they reach the retail market. Unlike CPI, WPI doesn't include services like banking or haircuts. The WPI shows price changes of around 700 commodities, including industrial products, agricultural items, etc.

◉ **GDP Deflator:** The GDP deflator measures inflation by comparing the current price of all goods and services produced within a country to the prices of those same goods in a base year. It's a broader measure than CPI, as it includes all domestically produced goods and services, but excludes imports.

◉ **Producer Price Index (PPI):** The PPI looks at the price changes that producers receive for their goods and services before they are sold to consumers. It excludes taxes, transport, and other retail costs, focusing purely on the supplier's price.

◉ **Wage Inflation:** Wage Inflation refers to the rate at which wages (salaries paid to workers) rise over time. Labour unions often use the expected inflation rate to negotiate higher wages, ensuring that workers' wages outpace inflation so that their real income increases.

SWITZERLAND SUSPENDS MFN TREATMENT FOR INDIA

Context

Switzerland has announced that it will suspend the most favoured nation (MFN) clause in its **double taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA)** with India, starting from January 1, 2025. This decision follows a ruling by the Indian Supreme Court, which declared that the MFN clause does not automatically trigger without a specific notification under the **Income Tax Act**.

What is the MFN clause?

◉ The MFN clause is a principle found in international treaties, including tax agreements that ensures equal treatment for all parties involved.

◉ If one country offers favourable tax rates or conditions to another, it must extend those same benefits to all other countries covered by the treaty.

◉ In simple words, the MFN clause ensures equal treatment for all parties involved.

◉ This clause is designed to guarantee that no country is treated less favourably than any other in trade or taxation matters.

▢ Impact of the suspension of MFN

  ➤ **Higher tax liabilities for Indian companies**: Indian companies receiving dividends from Switzerland will face an increased tax burden, as the withholding tax on those dividends will rise to 10 per cent from 5 per cent.

  ➤ **Effects on Swiss investments in India**: Swiss companies that receive dividends from Indian subsidiaries will continue to face a 10 per cent withholding tax, as this tax rate has always applied under the **India-Switzerland DTAA.**

  ➤ **EFTA investments unaffected**: Switzerland's decision is also unlikely to impact investments into India from the **European Free Trade Association (EFTA),** as these investments are already subject to the 10 per cent withholding tax rate.

  ➤ **No change for other DTAA benefits**: Indian companies operating in Switzerland will still be able to avail themselves of the other benefits provided under the **India-Switzerland DTAA**, such as **tax relief on royalties** and fees for technical services.

NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS

Context

The **net direct tax collections** for the current fiscal year have shown **robust growth**, rising by **16.45% year-on-year** to exceed **Rs 15.82 lakh crore**, according to the latest government data.

Key Insights:

◉ **Corporate Tax (CT) Performance**: Gross collections from corporate tax reached **Rs 9.24 lakh crore**, up from **Rs 7.90 lakh crore** in the same period last year.

➤ After refunds, the **net corporate tax** collections stood at **Rs 7.42 lakh crore**, compared to **Rs 6.83 lakh crore** in the previous fiscal year.

Non-Corporate Tax (NCT) Growth:

➤ Non-corporate tax, which mainly includes **personal income tax**, showed strong growth.

➤ **Gross collections** for this segment climbed to **Rs 9.53 lakh crore**, compared to **Rs 7.81 lakh crore** last year.

➤ **Net collections** grew significantly to **Rs 7.97 lakh crore**, up from **Rs 6.50 lakh crore** in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

Direct Taxes Overview:

➤ Direct taxes in India encompass a wide range of taxes including **corporate tax**, **personal income tax**, **securities transaction tax**, **equalization levy**, and others.

➤ These taxes are an essential source of revenue for the government and include **wealth tax**, **fringe benefits tax**, **banking cash transaction tax**, **hotel receipt tax**, **interest tax**, and **gift tax**, among others.

Tax Scan

	Collections (In ₹ Cr)	% growth
Net Collection	15,82,584	16.5
Gross Collection	19,21,508	20.3
Advanced Tax	7,56,015	20.9
Refund	338,924	42.5

MULE BANK ACCOUNTS

Context

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has developed an AI-powered model called **MuleHunter.AI** to combat the rising problem of **mule bank accounts** used for financial fraud. This initiative is part of RBI's broader efforts to reduce digital fraud and enhance security in the banking sector.

What is a Mule Bank Account?

◉ A **mule bank account** refers to a bank account that is used by criminals for illegal activities, including **money laundering**.

◉ Criminals typically take over these accounts, which are often owned by **victims**—individuals who may be from **lower-income groups** or lack technical literacy.

◉ These individuals, known as **money mules**, unknowingly become part of illegal schemes when their accounts are used to launder stolen or illicit funds.

◉ Unfortunately, when fraud is detected, the money mules are often the ones investigated, while the actual criminals remain hidden.

◉ **The Scale of the Problem in India:** Mule bank accounts are a significant issue in India, particularly in the context of **online financial fraud**.

➤ In the past few years, the government has taken action by freezing a large number of these accounts. **4.5 lakh mule accounts** were frozen by the Indian government, with notable numbers detected in major public sector banks.

➤ The involvement of such a large number of accounts demonstrates how prevalent the use of mule accounts is in financial crimes.

RBI's Initiative (MuleHunter.AI):

◉ To address this issue, the **Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH)** has developed **MuleHunter.AI**, a model that leverages **artificial intelligence (AI)** to detect mule bank accounts more efficiently.

◉ This AI-powered system aims to help banks identify suspicious accounts used for fraud, making the process quicker and more effective.

◉ A **pilot test** conducted with two large public sector banks showed positive results.

◉ The RBI has encouraged other banks to collaborate with RBIH to further enhance the MuleHunter.AI model.

◉ **Government and RBI Efforts to Tackle Mule Accounts:** The **Indian government** has taken several steps to address the problem of mule accounts. In December 2023, the **Department of Financial Services (DFS)** held a meeting with officials from the RBI, **Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C)**, and various banks to discuss strategies for combating digital financial fraud. Banks were urged to:

➤ Adopt **AI and machine learning** solutions for **real-time detection** of mule accounts.

➤ Train staff on fraud prevention and detection.

➤ Collaborate with other banks to share information and best practices.

PARIS AGREEMENT

Context

The **Paris Agreement**, adopted on December 12, 2015, was intended to limit global warming and prevent the worst impacts of climate change by keeping the increase in global average temperatures well below **2°C** above pre-industrial levels, with efforts to limit it to **1.5°C**. However, nine years later, the agreement is facing increasing criticism and challenges, as global emissions continue to rise, and climate impacts worsen.

Key Failures and Concerns:

◉ **Rising Emissions**: From 2015 to 2024, global CO2 emissions increased by 8%, from **49 billion tonnes** to **53**

billion tonnes annually. Despite the Paris Agreement's goals, emissions have continued to rise, undermining efforts to meet the temperature targets.

⊚ **Temperature Increase**: Global temperatures have already increased by **1.45°C** above pre-industrial levels.

➤ 2024 is expected to be the first year that breaches the **1.5°C threshold**, moving the world further away from the Paris Agreement's goal.

⊚ **Weak Commitment and Implementation**: Unlike the **Kyoto Protocol** (1997), which assigned specific emissions reduction targets to **developed countries**, the **Paris Agreement** allowed countries to set **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)**, meaning they could choose their own targets. This has led to insufficient action from many countries, especially developed nations.

⊚ **Finance Shortcomings**: Under the **Paris Agreement**, developed countries are supposed to provide **financial assistance** to developing countries for climate action, committing to raise **$100 billion annually** by 2020.

➤ However, this target has not been met, and in **2023**, developed nations agreed to increase this amount to **$300 billion annually by 2035**, a far cry from the trillions developing countries need to fight climate change effectively.

Paris Agreement

⊚ In 2015, world leaders pledged to try and prevent global temperatures rising by more than 1.5C.

⊚ It saw almost all the world's nations - for the first time - agree to cut the greenhouse gas emissions which cause global warming.

⊚ Adopted by 194 parties (193 countries plus the EU) in the French capital on 12 December 2015, the Paris Agreement came into force on 4 November 2016.

The agreement lists a series of commitments:

⊚ To "pursue efforts" to limit global temperature rises to 1.5C, and to keep them "well below" 2.0C above those recorded in pre-industrial times

⊚ To limit greenhouse gas emissions from human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally - known as net zero - between 2050 and 2100

⊚ Each country to set its own emission-reduction targets, reviewed every five years to raise ambitions

⊚ Richer countries to help poorer nations by providing funding, known as climate finance, to adapt to climate change and switch to renewable energy

⊚ The 1.5C target is generally accepted to mean a 20 year average, rather than a single year.

GANGES RIVER DOLPHINS (*PLATANISTA GANGETICA*)

Context

Today marks a significant milestone in wildlife conservation with the first-ever **tagging of a Ganges River Dolphin** (*Platanista gangetica*) in **Assam**. This initiative, which is part of the **Project Dolphin**, was conducted by the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**.

Key Points:

⊚ This is the first tagging of a Ganges River Dolphin, not just in India, but for the species globally.

⊚ The tagging of a healthy male river dolphin took place in Assam under strict veterinary care.

⊚ **Purpose of Tagging:** The primary goal of this tagging exercise is to gather data on the dolphin's seasonal movements, migratory patterns, and habitat utilization, especially in fragmented or disturbed river systems.

Significance of the Project:

➤ The tagging will help fill the **knowledge gaps** about the species, which is essential for its long-term **conservation**.

➤ As **apex predators** in their ecosystem, Ganges River Dolphins play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of the **river systems** they inhabit. Ensuring their survival supports the entire ecosystem, which includes the communities that depend on these waters.

Ganges river dolphins (*Platanista gangetica*)

⊚ The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.

⊚ They hunt by emitting ultrasonic sounds or by echolocation.

⊚ They are frequently found alone or in small groups, and generally a mother and calf travel together.

⊚ Females are larger than males and give birth once every two to three years to only one calf.

⊚ Gangetic dolphins are the National aquatic animal of India.

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

⊚ **Conservation Status:** The Ganges river dolphin is in;

➤ **Schedule 1** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972,

➤ **Appendix 1** of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)

➤ **Appendix 1** of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and

➤ It is as **"endangered"** on the IUCN Red List.

WORLD MALARIA REPORT 2024

Context

The **World Malaria Report 2024**, released by the **World Health Organization (WHO)** on **December 11, 2024**, highlights a concerning increase in global malaria cases and deaths. Here's a simplified explainer of the report's key findings:

Global Malaria Trends

- In **2023**, the number of **malaria cases** worldwide surged to **263 million**, up from **252 million** in 2022. This represents an increase from **226 million** cases in **2015**.

- **Malaria deaths** also rose to **597,000** in 2023, compared to **578,000** in 2015. However, this was a slight improvement compared to the **2020 spike**, which saw an additional **55,000** deaths due to the disruptions caused by the **COVID-19** pandemic.

- **Africa** remains the hardest-hit continent, accounting for **94%** of global malaria cases and **95%** of deaths in 2023. The countries with the highest number of malaria deaths in Africa were **Nigeria**, **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, **Niger**, and **Tanzania**.

- **India's Malaria Progress**
  - ➤ India has made **significant progress** in combating malaria. Between **2017 and 2023**, the country saw a **69% reduction** in **malaria cases** (from **6.4 million** to **2 million**) and a **68% reduction** in **deaths** (from **11,100** to **3,500**).
  - ➤ Despite this progress, India still accounted for **half** of all malaria cases in the **WHO South-East Asia Region** in 2023, with around **2 million** cases. India made significant gains, leading to its **official exit** from the **High Burden High Impact (HBHI)** initiative in **2024**.

About Malaria

- Malaria is a **life-threatening disease** caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female *Anopheles* **mosquitoes.**

- The infection is caused by a parasite and does not spread from person to person.

- There are 5 *Plasmodium* parasite species that cause malaria in humans:
  - ➤ *P. falciparum* is the deadliest malaria parasite and the most prevalent on the African continent.
  - ➤ *P. vivax* is the dominant malaria parasite in most countries outside of sub-Saharan Africa.
  - ➤ Other malaria species: *P. malariae, P. ovale* and *P. knowlesi.*

- **Causes:** Malaria is caused by a single-celled parasite of the genus plasmodium. The parasite is transmitted to humans most commonly through mosquito bites.

- **Symptoms:** Fever, Chills, General feeling of discomfort, Headache, Nausea and vomiting, Diarrhea, Abdominal pain, Muscle or joint pain, Fatigue, Rapid breathing, Rapid heart rate, Cough.

- It is preventable and curable.

ISRO'S HLVM3 ROCKET

Context

ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) has begun assembling the **Human-rated Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (HLVM3)** rocket, which is designed to carry Indian astronauts to space as part of India's **Gaganyaan** human spaceflight programme.

About Human-rated Launch Vehicle Mark 3 (HLVM3) Rocket

- The assembly of HLVM3 is taking place at **Sriharikota**, India's spaceport. This rocket will first fly a **humanoid robot, Vyommitra**, instead of astronauts on three test missions.

- These uncrewed missions will collect data vital for the success of future crewed missions.

- **Rocket Specifications:**
  - ➤ The HLVM3 is a **three-stage rocket** capable of carrying **10 tonnes** to **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**.
  - ➤ It stands **53 meters tall** and weighs **640 tonnes**.
  - ➤ The rocket uses **S200** solid motors in the first stage, **L110** liquid stage, and **C32** cryogenic stage for the second and final stages.

- **Crew Escape System**: The **Crew Escape System (CES)**, which is critical for astronaut safety during an emergency, has been integrated into the rocket. It is designed to eject the **Crew Module** (the capsule for astronauts) safely if an anomaly is detected during flight.

- **Project Milestones:**
  - ➤ The **LVM3-X/CARE mission** in 2014 validated crucial technologies like the **aerothermal performance** of the **Crew Module**, its **thermal protection systems**, **parachute deceleration mechanisms**, and recovery logistics.
  - ➤ These successful tests laid the foundation for **human spaceflight** and the development of a **human-rated rocket**.

INS NIRDESHAK

Context

The **INS Nirdeshak**, the second ship of the **Survey Vessel (Large) project**, was officially commissioned into the **Indian Navy** at a ceremony held at **Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam**.
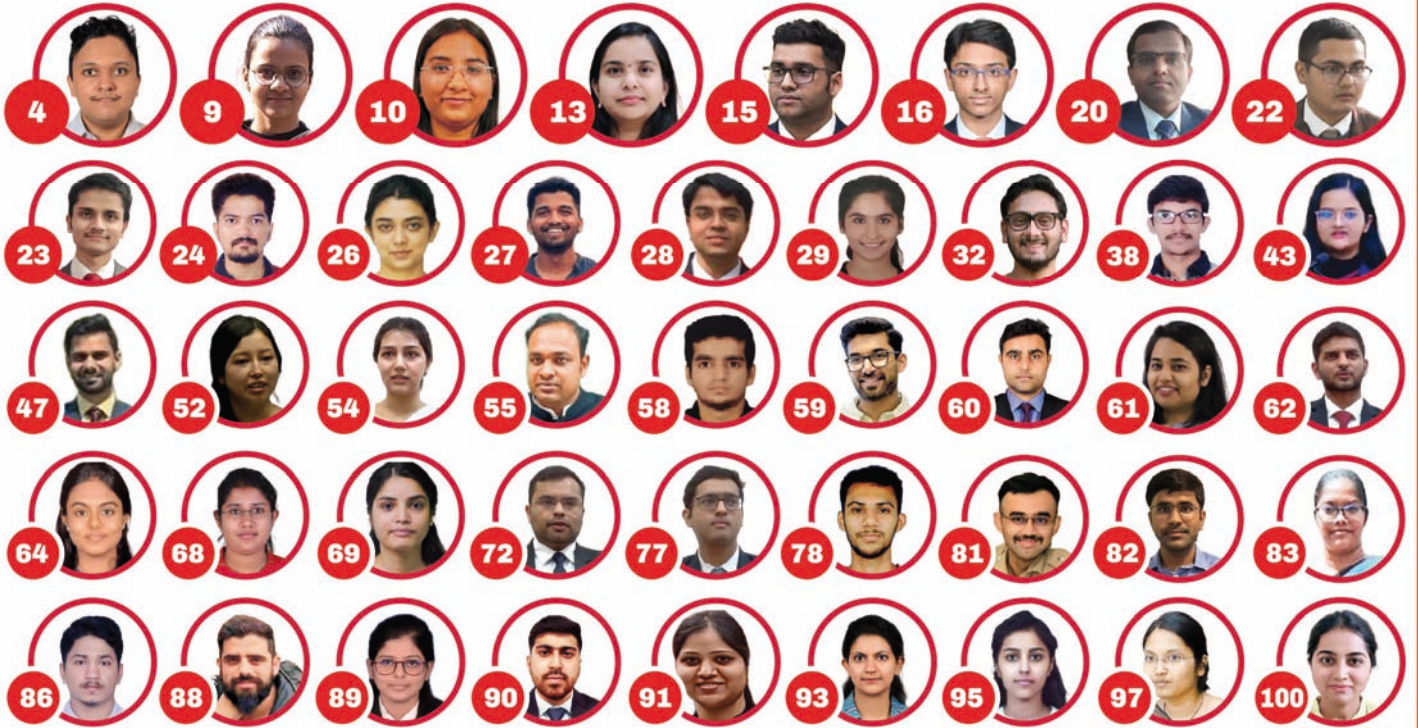
Key Details:

- **INS Nirdeshak** is the second of four ships being built under the **Survey Vessel (Large) project**, which is a part of the Indian Navy's ongoing efforts to modernize its fleet.

- The ship was constructed at **Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) in Kolkata**.

- **Role and Function**:

  ➤ INS Nirdeshak is designed for **hydrographic surveys**, which involve the study and mapping of oceanic and seafloor data.

  ➤ The ship will also assist in **navigation** and **support maritime operations**, which are critical for the safety and security of maritime activities in the region.

Significance of Survey Vessels:

  ➤ These highly specialized ships are vital for producing **accurate oceanic charts**, which are essential for navigation and maritime safety.

  ➤ Survey ships also enhance **maritime operations** by providing detailed, reliable data for planning and executing naval and commercial operations.

- The vessels act as a powerful tool for **maritime diplomacy**, strengthening **India's bilateral ties** with friendly countries by conducting hydrographic surveys in international waters and assisting other nations in charting their own waters.

- **Technological Features**: Built with over **80% indigenous content**, the INS Nirdeshak is equipped with advanced **hydrographic systems** such as:

  ♦ **Multi Beam Echo Sounders**

  ♦ **Side Scan Sonars**

  ♦ **Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs)**

  ♦ **Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs)**

  ➤ These systems enable precise **mapping of deep-sea areas**, facilitating operations like **wreck identification** and **environmental studies**, especially in **hazardous or restricted zones**.

- **Strategic Importance**: The ship will enhance India's capabilities in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**, contributing to regional **security**, **scientific exploration**, and **environmental health**.

  ➤ It will support **India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** initiative, which aims to foster **shared maritime data** with friendly countries and contribute to the region's **peacekeeping efforts**.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

GS SCORE
An Institute for Civil Services

CSE RESULT

Scan QR Code for detailed RESULT

TOP 100 ALL INDIA RANKING CSE 2023

4 | 9 | 10 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 20 | 22
23 | 24 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 32 | 38 | 43
47 | 52 | 54 | 55 | 58 | 59 | 60 | 61 | 62
64 | 68 | 69 | 72 | 77 | 78 | 81 | 82 | 83
86 | 88 | 89 | 90 | 91 | 93 | 95 | 97 | 100

TOP 100 ALL INDIA RANKING CSE 2022

1 | 2 | 3 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 22
26 | 33 | 34 | 37 | 42 | 46 | 48 | 56 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 62
65 | 66 | 68 | 72 | 73 | 75 | 77 | 83 | 86 | 87 | 91 | 98

TOP 100 ALL INDIA RANKING CSE 2021

02 | 04 | 07 | 12 | 24 | 25 | 29 | 31
32 | 43 | 44 | 45 | 46 | 49 | 52 | 53 | 54
66 | 67 | 68 | 80 | 83 | 89 | 92 | 93 | 95