

CURRENT AFFAIRS

WEEKLY

WEEK: 4
OCTOBER
2022

MAINS

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- ❑ REVISITING THE '1962 WAR' THAT SHAPED INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY
- ❑ CHINA'S 'NINE-DASH LINE' PUTS ECONOMIC INTEREST AT RISK: INDONESIA
- ❑ REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE
- ❑ MINISTRY OF I&B MANDATES TO TAKE NOD FOR STATE GOVERNMENTS' BEFORE ENTERING INTO THE BROADCASTING BUSINESS
- ❑ REGULATIONS FOR ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN INDIA

GS-III

- ❑ INDIA AS A GLOBAL ORGANIC FERTILIZER HUB
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- ❑ Genetically Modified mustard approved

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— Disclaimer —

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

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

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SECTION: A

(MAINS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

REVISITING THE '1962 WAR' THAT SHAPED INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

CONTEXT:

October 20, 2022, marked the 60th anniversary of a key event in modern Indian history, the 1962 border war with China.

◎ BACKGROUND

- The brief war, in which Beijing defeated Delhi, represents an often-underappreciated watershed in Delhi's foreign and security policies.
- 1962 marked the end of the **Nehruvian era** in Indian foreign policy and led to the emergence of a **decisively more muscular and more realist India** on the international stage.
- Even more importantly, the 1962 war inaugurated long-term changes in **Delhi's approach to international relations, which continue to shape Indian foreign policy to this day.**

India's Nehruvian foreign policy had five principal elements:

- non-alignment with the two Cold War superpowers
- the tendency toward *moral politik* inherited from India's independence movement
- the pursuit of Indian leadership among newly independent countries in the so-called Third World
- the preference for cooperation over competition;
- the de-emphasis of security and military power, for ideational and pragmatic reasons

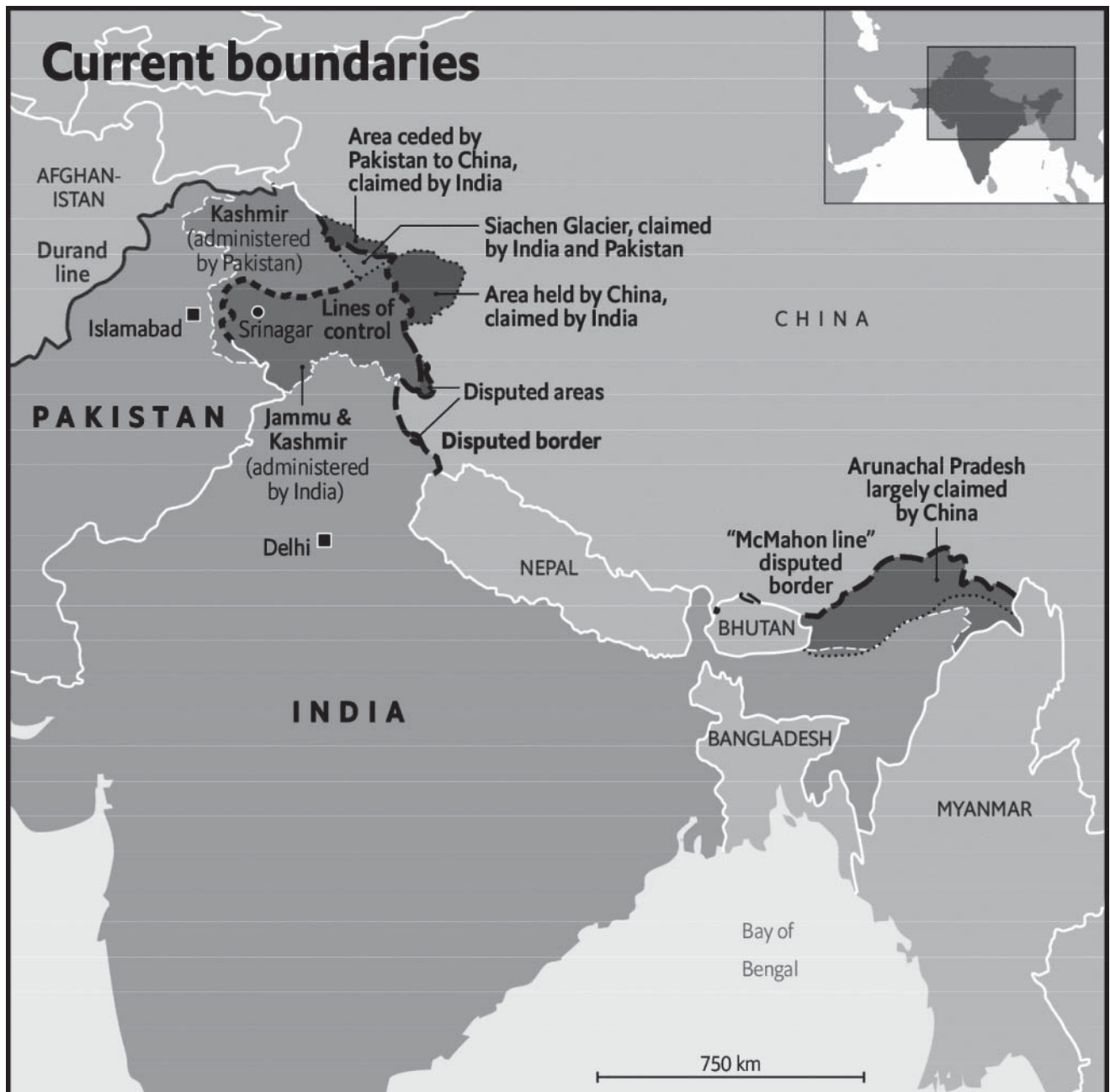
The course of War:

- **Main cause of the war:** a disputed **Himalayan border**, 1959 Tibetan uprising, when India granted asylum to the **Dalai Lama**.
- India initiated a **defensive Forward Policy** from 1960 to hinder Chinese military patrols and logistics, in which it placed outposts along the border, including several north of the McMahon Line, the eastern portion of the **Line of Actual Control** proclaimed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1959.
- Chinese military action grew increasingly aggressive after India rejected proposed Chinese diplomatic settlements throughout 1960–1962, with China re-commencing previously-banned "**forward patrols**" in Ladakh from 30 April 1962.

The McMahon Line:

- In 1826, British India gained a common border with China after the British wrested control of Manipur and Assam from the Burmese, following the **First Anglo-Burmese War** of 1824–1826.
- McMahon Line is **the effective boundary between China and India** and the line is named after **Sir Henry McMahon**, foreign secretary of the British-run Government of India and the chief negotiator of the convention at Simla.

- Chinese troops pushed back Indian forces in both theatres, capturing **Rezang La** in Chushul in the western theatre, as well as Tawang in the eastern theatre.
- The war ended when China declared a ceasefire on 20 November 1962, and simultaneously announced its withdrawal to its claimed "**Line of Actual Control**".



India-China (Territorial Disputes):

- China and India shared a long border, sectioned into **three stretches** by Nepal, Sikkim (then an Indian protectorate), and Bhutan, which follows the Himalayas between Burma and what was then West Pakistan.
- A number of disputed regions lie along this border. For ease of understanding, the India-China border can be divided into three areas - western sector, middle sector, and eastern sector.
 - Western Sector:** This sector comprises the area between Ladakh to Tibet and the Kunlun mountain range and also extends from Wakhan (Afghanistan edge) to the Karakoram Pass, thereafter following the alignment of the Kunlun mountain range.

Important Facts

- China and India share a disputed 3,488-km boundary.
- Besides India, Bhutan (477 km) is the only other country with which China has a disputed land border.

- **Middle Sector:** This comprises the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. This is the least disputed sector and covers 545 km of Indian borders. Except for the larger claim of China in the Barahoti sector in Uttarakhand, other claims and counterclaims are miniscule.
- **Eastern Sector:** The eastern sector conventionally refers to Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, but both these states have Bhutan separating them.

How the war changed India?

- Beyond ending the **Nehruvian period**, the war prompted three major long-term transformations in India's foreign and security policy that shape it to this day.
- **Strong defence:** The war led Delhi to focus on its military and thus inaugurated the rise of India as a major military power. After the war India's defense spending rose massively.
- **Realpolitik direction:** Second, the 1962 war produced a long-term shift toward greater *realpolitik* in Indian foreign policy.
- **Marking threat:** It led Delhi to permanently redefine China as a potential security threat and thus change its understanding of its own security environment.
- Even after Beijing and Delhi relaunched their relationship in 1988 and signed major defense agreements in 1993 and 1996, India continued to identify China as a major, potential security threat.

CHINA'S 'NINE-DASH LINE' PUTS ECONOMIC INTEREST AT RISK: INDONESIA

CONTEXT:

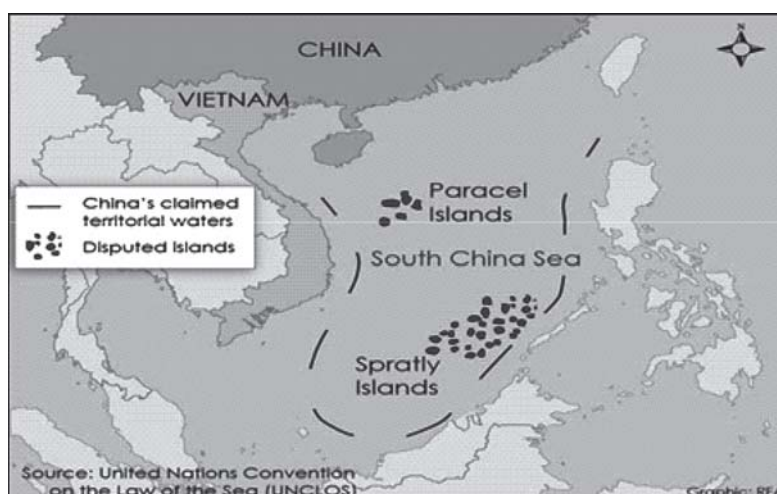
Recently, the Chinese government said it has “overlapping claims” with Vietnam over maritime rights in parts of the East Sea, Indonesia showed the concerns and rejected China's offer for any negotiations and said that Jakarta's economic interests are threatened by China's Nine-Dash Line.

◎ ABOUT

- China currently claims 'indisputable sovereignty' over the **South China Sea**.
- These nine dash lines are not geographical boundaries but are interpreted by China to advance its claims.
- The line runs as far as 2,000km from the Chinese mainland to within a few hundred kilometres of the **Philippines, Malaysia and Vietnam**.

Countries maritime Borders in South China Sea:

- **Several countries are bordering the South China Sea:** Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand (via the Gulf of Thailand), Philippines, Singapore, East Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, and Taiwan.

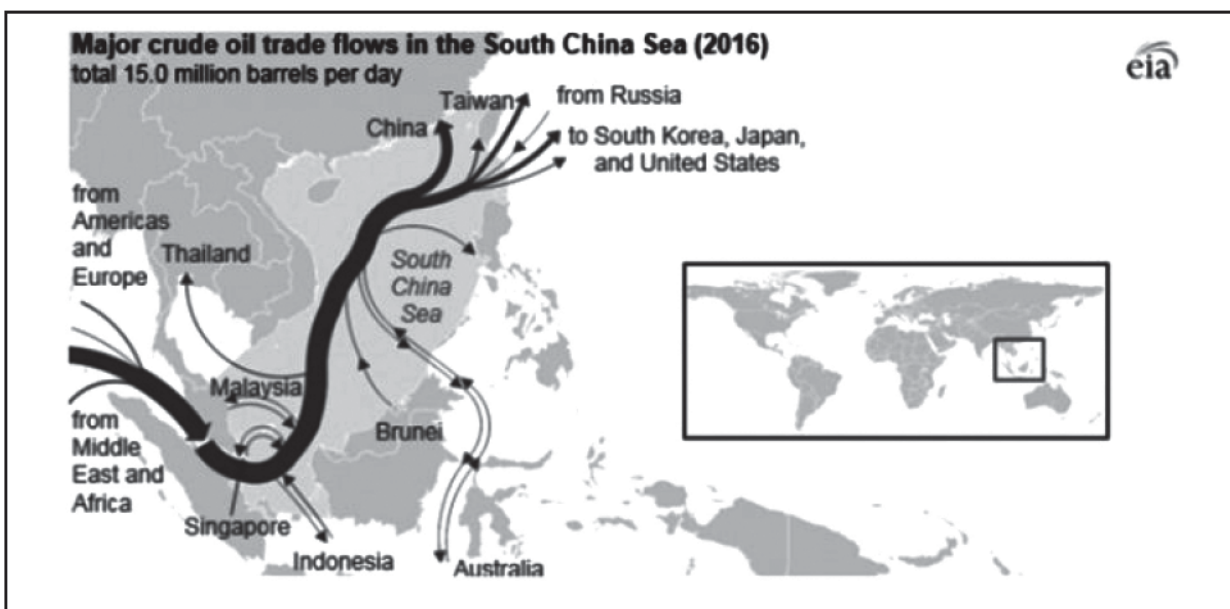


Why it is a significant location?

- **For China:** China claims most of the contested sea, reaching almost to the Philippines shores and has built artificial islands with heavy military developments on them which worries the neighbouring nations and it rejects the UN backed international tribunal ruling as well.
 - The nine dash line asserted by China violates the principle of **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)**.
- **For Other Island Countries:** The stalled negotiations between China and ASEAN made headway on Code of Conduct as four of the ASEAN nations also made territorial claims on the disputed waters which adds to the problem with already non-negotiable behaviour of China.
 - The 9-dash line makes China's exclusive rights on marine resources of the region and hence affects the economy of developing island countries like Indonesia.
- **For India:** The South China Sea holds the major Oil trade route for countries in the Pacific and India affects if the economy of these counties gets impacted.

Historical Background:

- The nine-dash line was originally an 11-dash line, and Chinese geographer Yang Huaren helped to draw it.
- In 1952, it became the nine-dash line when in a moment of Communist camaraderie with Vietnam; Mao gave up China's claims over the Gulf of Tonkin.



Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ)

- It is a formula based on compromise and was recognized by the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea in 1976.
- It covers an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea: it can extend to a maximum of 200 nautical miles from the baselines.
- The EEZ includes the territorial sea which extends to 12 nautical miles. While the countries have sovereign rights over the territorial sea, the EEZ provides them the right to existing natural resources.
- **Activities allowed in EEZ are -**
 - creation and use of artificial islands,
 - Installations and structures.
 - Marine scientific research and
 - protection and preservation of the marine environment

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE

CONTEXT:

- Recently, the Petitions against the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act 2021 and the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act 2021 (ART Act) have been filed before the Supreme Court challenging the Acts as being discriminatory and violative of reproductive autonomy and choice by denying access to Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ARTs) to single persons and people in live-in and same-sex relationships.
- Let us assess the provisions of both the laws.

ABOUT

What is Surrogacy?

- Surrogacy is an arrangement in which a woman (the surrogate) agrees to carry and give birth to a child on behalf of another person or couple (the intended parent/s).
- A surrogate, sometimes also called a **gestational carrier**, is a woman who conceives, carries and gives birth to a child for another person or couple (intended parent/s).

Types

- Altruistic surrogacy:** It involves no **monetary compensation** to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy.
- Commercial surrogacy:** It includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a **monetary benefit or reward** (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021:

- Under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, a woman who is a widow or a divorcee between the age of **35 to 45 years** or a couple, defined as a legally married woman and man, can avail of surrogacy if they have a medical condition necessitating this option.
- It also bans **commercial surrogacy**, which is punishable with a jail term of 10 years and a fine of up to Rs.10 lakhs.
- The law allows only **altruistic surrogacy** where no money exchanges hands and where a surrogate mother is genetically related to those seeking a child.

Assisted Reproductive Technology Act, 2021

- The act defines ART to include **all techniques** that seek to obtain a pregnancy by handling the sperm or the oocyte (immature egg cell) outside the human body and transferring the gamete or the embryo into the reproductive system of a woman.

Oocytes: is a cell in an ovary which may undergo meiotic division to form an ovum.

- ART services are to be provided through:
 - ART clinics, which offer ART related treatments and procedures, and
 - ART banks, which store and supply gametes.
- Rights of a child born through ART:**
 - A child born through ART will be deemed to be a biological child of the couple (commission couple) and will be entitled to the rights and privileges available to a natural child of the commissioning couple.
 - A donor will not have any parental rights over the child.
- The **National Registry** will be established under the act and will act as a central database with details of all ART clinics and banks in the country.

- The **State governments** will appoint registration authorities for facilitating the registration process. The Clinics and banks will be registered only if they adhere to certain standards (specialized manpower, physical infrastructure, and diagnostic facilities).

Need of regulated industry in India:

- The technologies can be used to transform traditional notions of family and strengthen the status of same-sex and other queer couples by expanding the ability to reproduce beyond heterosexual marital unions.
- Use of ARTs can also entrench notions of genetic parenthood as the "true" form of parenthood.
- **Issues:**
 - In India, ARTs are offered by an **expensive privatised medical industry** that was unregulated for decades.
 - ARTs provoke complex legal, ethical and social dilemmas, and their regulation requires consideration and balancing of conflicting interests and values.
 - Therefore, the law has been introduced for the related issues.

What are the loopholes?

- **Leaving the other stakeholders':** The Acts allow only married infertile couples and certain categories of women to avail of ARTs and surrogacy.
- **No Compensatory Allowance to the Surrogate mother:** Sale of gametes and any payment to the surrogate mother, other than insurance coverage and medical expenses, has been prohibited. Clinics and banks offering ART procedures have to be registered.
- **Health issues associated:** The availability of **donor oocytes**, considered fundamental for many ART procedures, is also in question since a limited number of oocytes can be retrieved and women can be oocyte donors only once. Such stipulations have been imposed to protect oocyte donors from health risks and exploitation. Shortage of oocytes due to regulatory pressures may lead to a shadow market of gametes.
- **Privacy issues:** The ART Act also requires the oocyte donor to share their **Aadhaar number**, which threatens the donors' privacy.

Arguments in favour of Compensatory Surrogacy:

- A Parliamentary Standing Committee in 2017 recommended compensated surrogacy and stated that mandating altruistic surrogacy was based on moralistic and paternalistic assumptions, and expecting free reproductive labour from women was "**grossly unfair and arbitrary**".

Against Commercial surrogacy:

- A **Parliamentary Select Committee** which examined the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill 2019 took the stand that **commercial surrogacy** was unethical and antithetical to the "noble" and "selfless" instinct of motherhood.

MINISTRY OF I&B MANDATES TO TAKE NOD FOR STATE GOVERNMENTS' BEFORE ENTERING INTO THE BROADCASTING BUSINESS

CONTEXT:

In view of the recommendations as per Telecom regulatory authority of India (TRAI), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has ordered that the State Governments' are not allowed to enter into Educational broadcasting on their own and need to take consent from the public broadcaster, the 'Prasar Bharati'.

Key-highlights of Guidelines:

- The entry of Central/State/Union Territory governments into the broadcast activity for educational purposes would be allowed through **Prasar Bharati** route via "suitable" means.
- All such existing activities would also have to be brought under its purview.

TRAI:

- TRAI regulates telecom services including fixation/revision of tariffs for telecom services which were earlier vested in the Central Government.
- It also aims to provide a fair and transparent policy environment which promotes a level playing field and facilitates fair competition.
- **Headquarters:** New Delhi.

Broadcasting in India:

- Broadcasting is referred to as a central source of news and information across the globe.
 - ▶ **Broadcasting services:** Cable TV, DTH Services, Terrestrial services (Doordarshan), Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), Radio (FM, AM, Community Radio).
- The body that regulates and governs the media and entertainment sector in India is enshrined in the **Cable Networks Act, 1995** and the **Prasar Bharti Act, 1990**. These are regulated by the
 - ▶ Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
 - ▶ Prasar Bharti
- The Information and Broadcasting Ministry is the nodal ministry for all matters relating to broadcasting.

Prasar Bharati

- Prasar Bharati is India's largest public broadcasting agency.
- It is a statutory autonomous body set up by an Act of Parliament.
- It comprises the **Doordarshan Television Network** and **All India Radio**, which were earlier media units of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- **Headquartered in:** New Delhi

**Do States have a call on their own Broadcasting in India?**

- Only the central government, as per **Article 246** of the Constitution, can legislate on such subject.
 - ▶ **Entry No. 31 in List I (Union List)** of the **Seventh Schedule** to the Constitution of India covers "posts and telegraphs, telephones, wireless, broadcasting and other like forms of communication".
- In the context of the demand by some States to have their own broadcasting stations, the TRAI had cited the views of **Sarkaria Commission** and the **Verghese Committee**, the power of an exclusive call to the States regarding broadcasting could not be supported.

Do you know?

Reuters Institute' **Digital News Report 2021** 'revealed that DD News and All India Radio are the most trusted News brands in India.

REGULATIONS FOR ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN INDIA

CONTEXT:

- Recently, as per the data collected by the CBI via conducting searches across States and Union Territories as part of a pan-India operation, 'Megh Chakra' against the online circulation and sharing of Child Sexual Abusive Material (CSAM), growing instances of online child sexual abuses has been found.
- There is a need to focus on the legislations regarding the issue.

◎ BACKGROUND

- In India, though **viewing adult pornography** in private is not an offence; seeking, browsing, downloading or exchanging child pornography is an offence punishable under **the IT Act**.
- However, **Internet Service Providers (ISPs)** are exempted from liability for any third-party data if they do not initiate the transmission.
- As the public reporting of **circulation of online CSAM** is very low and there is no system of automatic electronic monitoring, India's enforcement agencies are largely dependent on foreign agencies for the requisite information.
- In November 2021, a similar exercise code-named "**Operation Carbon**" was launched by the CBI, against the cause.


Key factors

Real-life considerations for court while deciding bail

Age of the minor victim: The younger the victim, the more heinous the offence alleged

Age of the accused: The older the accused, the more heinous the offence alleged

Comparative age of victim and accused: The more their age difference, the more the element of perversion in the offence alleged



Familial relationship: The closer such relationship, the more odious the offence alleged

WHAT DOES SECTION 29 OF THE POCSO ACT SAY

When a person is prosecuted for committing an offence of sexual assault against a minor, the special court trying the case "shall presume" the accused to be guilty

◎ ABOUT

Legislations against Online child sexual abuse in India:

- **The IT Act 2000:**
 - **Section 67B** of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 provides stringent punishment for publishing, transmitting, or viewing child sexual abuse material online.
 - The Information Technology (**Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code**) Rules, **2021** empower the users of Intermediaries and make the social media platforms accountable for their safety.
 - The Rules require the intermediaries to adopt a robust grievance redressal mechanism including time-bound disposal of grievances.
 - The government periodically blocks the websites containing out-of-date child sexual abuse material (CSAM) based on INTERPOL's "worst of the list" received through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the national nodal agency for Interpol in India.
 - The Information Technology Act, of 2000 provides a legal framework for addressing all types of prevailing cybercrimes reported in the country.
- **POCSO Act:**

- Further, Section 14 of the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offence (POCSO) Act** provides Punishment for using children for pornographic purposes. As per section 14:
- Whoever uses a child or children for pornographic purposes shall be punished with imprisonment for a term that shall not be **less than five years**.

Preventing children abuse:

- The role of parents: Parents must educate children About sexual advances or threats and protect them from abuse through the concept of unacceptable "bad touch". This communication must be constant, friendly, and frank, and teach children how their sexuality works so they don't unknowingly harass others.
- Donate money to NGOs: NGOs like Save the Children have dedicated services fighting child sex abuse and providing rehab to victims of abuse. It conducts pan-India programs engaging parents, teachers, communities, and even children About sexual abuse. Adolescents are involved in elaborate projects on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH).
- **Reporting incidents of child abuse:**
 - Online system for children to report sexual abuse
 - Report it to the police

India's efforts so far:

- **'Aarambh India'**, a Mumbai-based non-governmental organization, partnered with the IWF and launched India's first online reporting portal in September 2016 to report images and videos of child abuse.
- The Supreme Court of India, in **Shreya Singhal (2015)**, said that **Section 79(3)(b)** of the IT Act means that the ISP, only upon receiving actual knowledge of the court order or on being notified by the appropriate government, shall remove or disable access to illegal contents.
 - Thus, ISPs are exempted from the liability of any **third-party information**.
- In the **Kamlesh Vaswani (WP(C) 177/2013) case**, the petitioner sought a complete ban on pornography.
 - As per **Section 88 of the IT Act**, the orders were issued in March 2015 to Internet Service Providers to disable nine (domain) URLs that hosted contents in violation of the morality and decency clause **of Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.

INDIA AS A GLOBAL ORGANIC FERTILIZER HUB

CONTEXT:

- ❑ With the fact that India has become one of the fastest growing economies of the World, it has invested in almost all sectors including the Organic fertilizers. India has a huge potential of Organic fertilisers and can edge in the field than other developing Countries.
- ❑ So, let us see what India's potential is and how it can help it to grow sustainable future in Agriculture.

◎ ABOUT

What are Organic Fertilizers?

- **Organic fertilizers** are fertilizers that are naturally produced. Fertilizers are materials that can be added to soil or plants, in order to provide nutrients and sustain growth.
- Typical organic fertilizers include all animal waste including meat processing waste, manure, slurry, and guano; plus plant based fertilizers such as compost; and bio-solids.
- Inorganic "organic fertilizers" include minerals and ash.

- **For Example:** The main organic fertilizers are, **peat, animal wastes, plant wastes from agriculture, and treated sewage sludge.**

Why Organic fertilisers should be promoted?

- India organic fertilizer market is anticipated to grow with an estimated CAGR in the forecast years **FY2023-FY2027**, on the grounds of surging demand for the organic food.
- With the increasing concerns regarding harmful effects of chemically infused fertilizers over the crops, soil, consumers, as well as the environment as a whole, the demands for the organic fertilizers and driving the growth of the India organic fertilizer market will increased in the upcoming five years.
- **Health benefits of utilizing organic fertilizers** for the plant growth is also a major reason why farmers in India are shifting toward utilization of organic fertilizers thus aiding the growth of the India organic fertilizer market in the next five years.

How it can impact the India's Agriculture sector?

- **India's dependence on Agricultural products:** Agriculture industry of the country is practically backbone of the Indian economy.
 - Over **58% of the population** in the country is dependent on agricultural practices, equipment, tool, or production of the **Agro products** for their livelihood.
- **Contributes to increase in GDP:** The industry also contributes to **16.5% of India's gross domestic product (GDP)**, while employing the largest workforce in the country.
- **Facilitate higher yield in fields:** Increasing number of agricultural farms, demands for high yielding crops, increasing agricultural practices, are also supporting the growth of the India organic fertilizers market in the next five years.
- **Increasing Research and Development:** Surging research and product development, increasing awareness among the farmers for using organic fertilizer over chemically infused products is also aiding the growth of the India organic fertilizer market in the future five years.

How do organic-based fertilizers contribute to sustainability?

- **Smart growth** – for an economy based on research, knowledge and innovation.
- **Sustainable growth** – for a resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- **Inclusive growth** – for a high-employment economy with social and territorial cohesion.
- The organic-based fertilizers industry generates local employment opportunities and regional economic development across both rural and urban areas, nurturing more vibrant manufacturing and farming communities.

Challenges associated:

- Organic food is more expensive because farmers do not get as much out of their land as conventional farmers do.
- Production costs are higher because farmers need more workers.
- Marketing and distribution is not efficient because organic fertilizers can be produced in smaller amounts as required.
- Organic farmers does not have sufficient knowledge and skills About localized soil systems, meteorology, ecology, and other factors that influence crop growth. Without the proper knowledge, an individual organic farmer will be unable to protect his crop in critical stages that may arise while farming processes.
- The crops are easily susceptible to illness that may slow down production.
- Organic farms have to go through tough certification processes.

Few Government Initiatives promoting Organic Fertilizer:

- **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY):** Cluster formation, training, certification and marketing are supported under the scheme to a farmer towards organic inputs.
- **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) certification.**

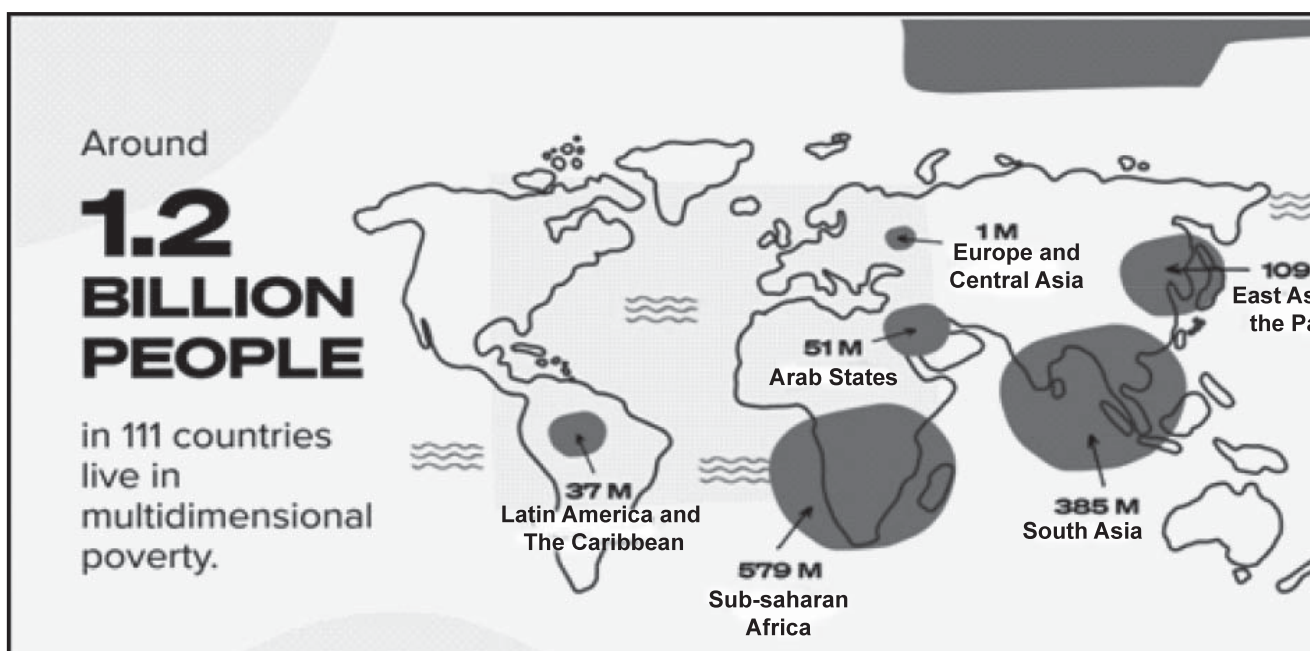
GLOBAL MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

CONTEXT:

The recently released Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) indicates that 41.5 crore people exited poverty in India during the 15-year period between 2005-06 and 2019-21.

Key Highlights of the Index: (India-specific Data)

- It shows that the **incidence of poverty fell** from 55.1% in 2005-06 to 16.4% in 2019-21 in the country.
- The **deprivations in all 10 MPI indicators saw significant reductions** as a result of which the MPI value and incidence of poverty more than halved.
- About 41.5 crore people exited poverty in India during the 15-year period between 2005-06 and 2019-21, out of which two-thirds exited in the first 10 years, and one-third in the next five years.
- Improvement in MPI for India has significantly contributed to the **decline in poverty in South Asia**.
- It is for the **first time that it is not the South Asian region** with the highest number of poor people, at 38.5 crores, compared with 57.9 crores in **Sub-Saharan Africa**.
- The **report doesn't fully assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on poverty in India** as 71% of the **data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-2021)** relied upon for MPI **were collected before the pandemic**.
- Bihar is the poorest State in 2015-2016, seeing the fastest reduction in MPI value** in absolute terms. The incidence of poverty there fell from 77.4% in 2005-2006 to 34.7% in 2019-2021.



India's present scenario:

- India has by far the largest number of poor people worldwide at 22.8 crores, followed by Nigeria at 9.6 crores.
- Two-thirds of these people live in a household in which at least one person is deprived of nutrition.
- There were also 9.7 crore poor children in India in 2019-2021.
- About 4.2% of the population in the country still lives in severe poverty.
- Rural areas account for nearly 90% of poor people.

The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index:

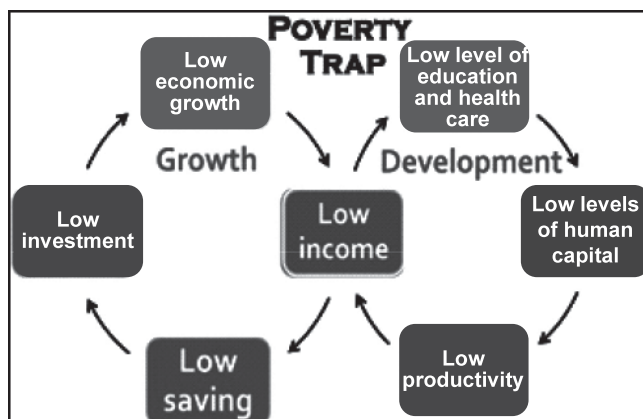
- **The index** is an international measure of acute multidimensional poverty covering over 100 developing countries.
- It complements traditional monetary poverty measures by capturing the acute deprivations in health, education, and living standards that a person faces simultaneously.

How we can measure poverty?

- Poverty can be defined as a condition in which an individual or household lacks the financial resources to afford a basic minimum standard of living.
- Economists and policymakers estimate "absolute" poverty as the shortfall in consumption expenditure from a threshold called the "**poverty line**".
- The official poverty line is the expenditure incurred to obtain the goods in a "poverty line basket" (PLB).
- Poverty can be measured in terms of the number of people living below this line (with the incidence of poverty expressed as the head count ratio). The "depth" of poverty indicates how far the poor are below the poverty line.
- **Six official committees** have so far estimated the number of people living in poverty in India
 - The working group of 1962
 - V N Dandekar and N Rath in 1971
 - Y K Alagh in 1979
 - D T Lakdawala in 1993
 - Suresh Tendulkar in 2009
 - C Rangarajan in 2014
- The government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee; therefore, poverty is measured using the Tendulkar poverty line.
- As per this, 21.9% of people in India live below the poverty line.

How poverty impacts India's economy?

- Less number of people getting resources.
- Growth inclination as rich becomes richer and poor becomes poorer
- Low income generation
- Drop in standard of living conditions
- Cheap labour and man-power available
- Gender inequality
- Low rate of education



INDIA & THE BLUE ECONOMY: SYNERGIES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

CONTEXT:

Recently, the Seychelles hosted the 'BlueInvest Africa conference' (September 7-9, 2022), where European and African companies met to exchange ideas, business strategies and investments related to Blue Economy. This has brought the discussions highlighting the countries quest for harnessing the blue economy including India.

◎ ABOUT

What is Blue Economy?

- The **Indian Blue Economy Task Force defines it as:** The Blue Economy encompasses a wide range of economic activities pertaining to sustainable development of resources and assets in the oceans, related rivers, water bodies and coastal regions – in a manner that ensures equity, inclusion, innovation and modern technology.

India and the Blue Economy:

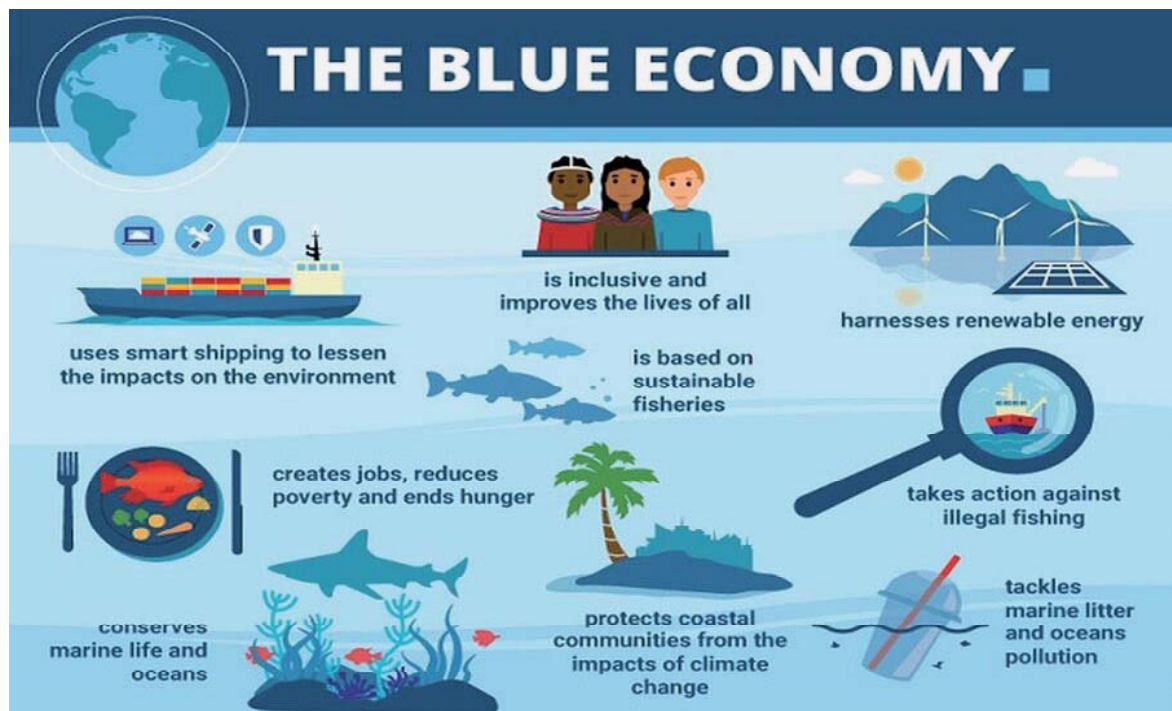
- India's engagement in the Blue Economy is rising, as the country issues policy proposals, and actively participates in **international and regional dialogues** on the Blue Economy, maritime and marine cooperation.
- The **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)** published the **Blue Economy Vision 2025**, which states that the Blue Economy's impacts are not limited to the ocean but these are crucial for countries' food security, poverty, resilience against dangerous consequences of climate change, maritime cooperation, job opportunities and countries' socio-economic growth.

India's Vision:

- India has greater potential to foster cooperation in the **Indian Ocean** to design blue economic strategies.
- Since sustainability and climate are on top of the international agendas and in vision of the upcoming **G20's presidency**, India looks forward to ideate concrete Blue Economy policies.
- The **Indian ministry of earth sciences** plans to publish a National Policy on the Blue Economy which is still in its draft form.
- The proposal identifies the great contribution the Blue Economy can make **to India's Gross Domestic Product**.
- With the ocean economic activities and governance, the preservation of marine biodiversity and resources is stressed.

India and Regional Cooperation for Blue Economy:

- The **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)** is the principal regional body to bring **21 members, seven dialogue partners and two observers** for roundtables on Ocean activities.
- The organisation has **six priority areas**:
 - Maritime safety and security,
 - trade and investment facilitation,
 - fisheries management,
 - disaster risk reduction,
 - academic and scientific cooperation,
 - Tourism and cultural exchanges.
- IORA's summits successfully enhanced the agenda on the **Blue Economy, sustainable employment and economic growth**.
- Moreover, two programmes are largely contributing to advance ocean cooperation and the Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean: **The Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** and the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)**.



Government Initiatives:

- **Sagarmala Project**: The Sagarmala project is the strategic initiative for port-led development through the extensive use of IT enabled services for modernization of ports.
- **O-SMART**: India has an umbrella scheme by the name of O-SMART which aims at regulated use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Integrated Coastal Zone Management**: It focuses on conservation of coastal and marine resources, and improving livelihood opportunities for coastal communities etc.
- **National Fisheries Policy**: India has a National Fisheries policy for promoting 'Blue Growth Initiative' which focuses on sustainable utilization of fisheries wealth from marine and other aquatic resources.

INTERPOL LAUNCHES METAVERSE FOR GLOBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

CONTEXT:

The Interpol launched the first-ever metaverse specifically designed for law enforcement agencies worldwide during its 90th General Assembly in Delhi.

What is Metaverse?

- The metaverse is a **3D version** of the Internet and computing at large.

In his 1992 science fiction novel "**Snow Crash**," Author Neal Stephenson coined the term "metaverse" in which he envisioned lifelike avatars who met in realistic **3D buildings** and other virtual reality environments.

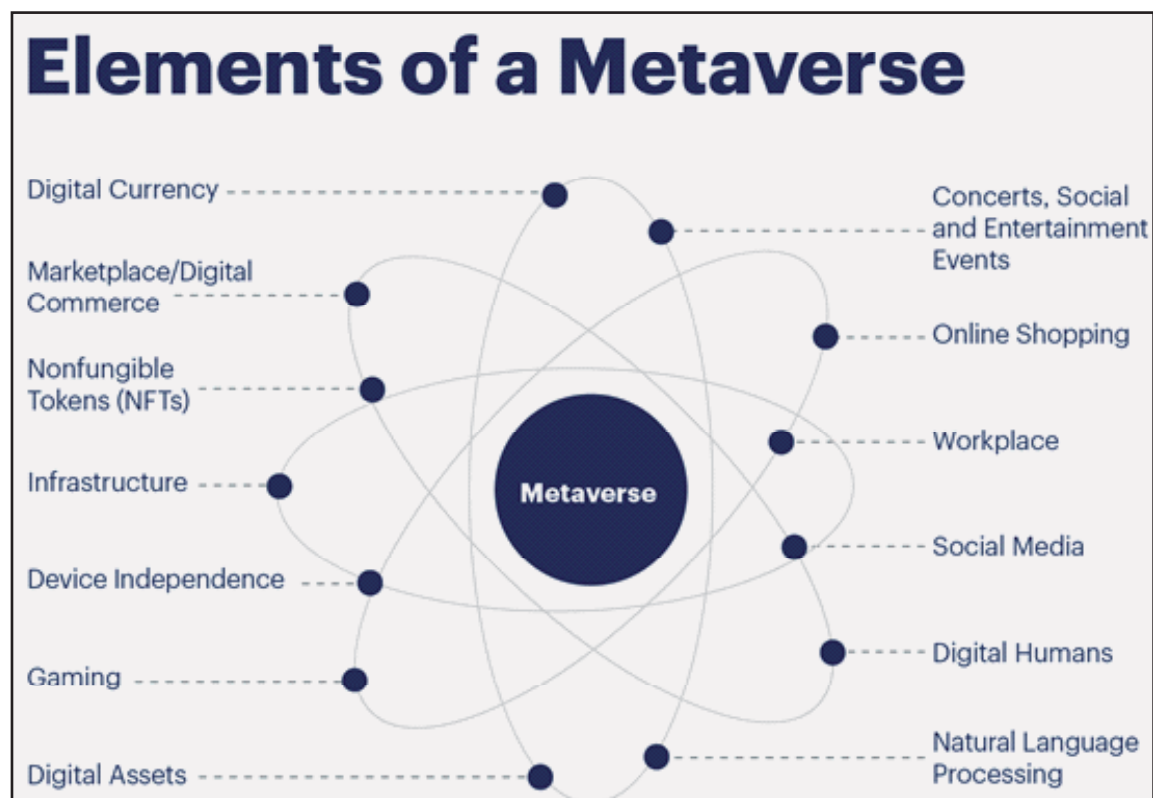
- The intent of the metaverse is to give users the power to create their own experiences and also to interact with others in these spaces, and even collaborate with each other.

- The metaverse combines aspects of **physical reality, virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), artificial intelligence (AI), social media, online gaming, and cryptocurrencies**, allowing users to interact virtually.

Internet	Metaverse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can interact with something — be it a website, a game, or a social media platform. • With the internet, you can be online without necessarily interacting with other people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metaverse puts the user in the middle of the action. To a degree, people can "live" in the metaverse. • The foundation of the metaverse is About digital human interaction. It's About people sharing a virtual universe together, be it for work, school, exercise, or simply for fun.

Application:

- The INTERPOL Metaverse is provided through the INTERPOL Secure Cloud, ensuring its neutrality.
- This "fully operational" Interpol Metaverse allows registered users to **tour a virtual facsimile** of the Interpol General Secretariat headquarters in Lyon, France without any geographical or physical boundaries, interact with other officers via their avatars, and even take immersive training courses in forensic investigation and other policing capabilities.



Section: B

(SPECIALS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

TERRORISM, THE BIGGEST VIOLATOR OF 'HUMAN RIGHTS'

In a recent address at the 90th Interpol General Assembly in New Delhi, the Home minister has mentioned the collective cooperation of members' to ensure that the fight against terrorism is sustained, comprehensive and continuous, for which India is committed to working with the Interpol.

What is Terrorism?

- Terrorism, by definition, is always a **crime**, but it can also be a **strategy in a war**. In the international community (including UN), terrorism has no legally binding, criminal law definition.
- For the sake of discussion, it can be described as; **according to the FBI:** "Terrorism is the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."

What are the causes of Terrorism?

- **Political Terrorism:** It was originally theorized in the context of insurgency and guerrilla warfare, a form of organized political violence by a non-state army or group.
- **Strategic:** Saying that a group has a strategic cause for using terrorism is another way of saying that terrorism isn't a random or crazy choice, but is chosen as a tactic in service of a larger goal. Terrorism is typically described as a strategy of the weak seeking to gain advantage against stronger armies or political powers.
- **Religious:** Religious ideas, such as martyrdom were seen as particularly dangerous. However, as thoughtful studies and commentators have repeatedly pointed out, such groups use selectively interpret and exploit religious concepts and texts to support terrorism. Religions themselves do not "cause" terrorism.
- **Socio-Economic:** Socio-economic explanations of terrorism suggest that various forms of deprivation drive people to terrorism, or that they are more susceptible to recruitment by organizations using terrorist tactics. Poverty, lack of education or lack of political freedom are a few examples.

What issues arises of Terrorism?

- Countering Terrorism can threaten the **right to life** of an individual.
- Challenges to the absolute prohibition against torture

- Transfer of individuals suspected of terrorist activity
- Liberty and security of the person is threatened
- Due process and the right to a fair trial of the suspects gets staked.
- Surveillance, data protection and the right to privacy is at risk due to terrorist activities.

How does it impact world's global order?

- Mass destruction of assets and Infrastructure.
- Violation of Human rights and Communal disputes.
- Creates socio-economic divide in the society.
- Communal Targeting against suspects of terrorism.
- Making the region under-developed and poverty ridden.
- Polarisation of Youth mind-sets.

What are the fundamental challenges?

- Fast evolving of terrorism
- Lack of definition of the term terrorism
- Lack of mechanisms to list terror entities
- The ease with which Islamic State (IS) attracted recruits from around the world.
- The ease with which they travelled across borders to join the so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq.
- Increasing potential use of 3-D printing, robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, unmanned aerial systems, and synthetic biotech, for illegal ends.

Does it violate Human rights and up to what extent?

Yes, Terrorism does violate the Human rights in every form possible including the following aspects:

- It threatens the dignity and security of human beings everywhere, endangers or takes innocent lives, creates an environment that destroys the freedom from fear of the people, jeopardizes fundamental freedoms, and aims at the destruction of human rights.

A world map with a light gray background. Red areas indicate the distribution of the genus Euphorbia. The red areas are concentrated in North America (USA and Canada), Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, South Asia (including India), Southeast Asia (including Indonesia and the Philippines), and Australia. There are also some red areas in South America (Brazil and Argentina) and Central America.

- Thus Terrorism can lead to several challenges and affects every section of the society irrespective of age, sex, region and religion. Hence there is a need to invoke a cooperative approach towards countering terrorism in every possible form.

19

Section: C

(PRELIMS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS

To Attempt
Weekly Current Affairs Test, Visit

www.iascore.in

SIGNIFICANCE OF TAMIL MONTH 'MARGAZHI'

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Margazhi masam is the ninth month in traditional Tamil Calendar which is meant to be an auspicious month for worshippers of both Shiva and Vishnu.

◎ **ABOUT:**

The Margazhi masam:

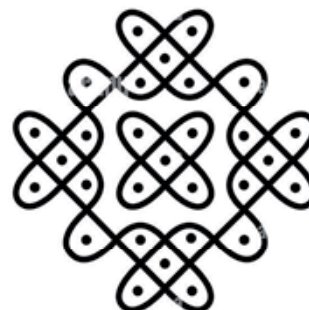
- This month according to the Tamil Calendar falls from **16 December 2022 to 14 January 2023**.
- The month of Margazhi is special to both **Vaishnavites and Saivites**.
- **Andal's Thiruppavai** is recited in Vishnu temples in Margazhi. During this month, in the Arudra star, that **Lord Nataraja** showed his divine dance to **sages Vyagrapada and Patanjali**.
- **Thiruvempavai and Thirupalliezhuchi** are recited by Saivites in Margazhi. Mancikavachagar composed Thiruvempavai in Thiruvannamalai.
- **Five temples** are of significance to each of the five elements. Of these, the temple at Thiruvannamalai is for **Agni**.
- The auspicious month of Margasheersha, also known as Margazhi in Tamil, is considered auspicious for putting efforts into one's own spiritual growth - be it Sadhana, Vrata, Bhajan or Pooja - for the Upasakas of **Shiva, Shakti, Vishnu** as well as others.

Celebrations in the masam:

- The **kolam** is drawn to welcome Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity, into the home and drives away the evil spirits.

What is Kolam?

A **kolam or muggu** is a geometrical line drawing composed of straight lines, curves and loops, drawn around a grid pattern of dots. In Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, it is widely practised by female family members in front of their house entrance.



- Early morning pujas are to be conducted in every household during the month.

Pan-India significance:

- Margahzi or Margali masam is a corresponding month to Margashira masam and Poush month of other Hindu calendars. It also corresponds to the Bengali month of Agrahayan and Poush mash.
- According to the Malayalam calendar, it coincides with Dhanur masam.

Hindu calendar vs. Gregorian calendar

- The ancient Hindu calendar conceptual design is also found in the Hebrew calendar, the Chinese calendar, and the Babylonian calendar, but different from the Gregorian calendar.
- Unlike the Gregorian calendar which adds additional days to the month to adjust for the mismatch between **twelve lunar cycles** (354 lunar days) and nearly 365 solar days, the Hindu calendar maintains the integrity of the lunar month, but inserts an **extra full month** by complex rules, once every **32-33 months**, to ensure that the festivals and crop-related rituals fall in the appropriate season.

Months of the Indian Civil Calendar	Days	Correlation of Indian/Gregorian
1. Caitra	30*	Caitra 1 March 22*
2. Vaisakha	31	Vaisakha 1 April 21
3. Jyaistha	31	Jyaistha 1 May 22
4. Asadha	31	Asadha 1 June 22
5. Sravana	31	Sravana 1 July 23
6. Bhadra	31	Bhadra 1 August 23
7. Asvina	30	Asvina 1 September 23
8. Kartika	30	Kartika 1 October 23
9. Agrahayana	30	Agrahayana 1 November 22
10. Pausa	30	Pausa 1 December 22
11. Magha	30	Magha 1 January 21
12. Phalgun	30	Phalgun 1 February 20

KITTUR UTSAV CELEBRATIONS

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The two-day State-level Kittur Utsav is celebrated in Karnataka which has significance related to initial phase of Freedom struggle of India against the British in 1824.

About Kittur Utsav

- Kittur Utsav is a state-level festival, celebrated in memory of **Kittur Rani Channamma**, who had fought the British 30 years before the **First War of Independence in 1857** but had not got any recognition at the national level.
- Kittur Chennamma** was the Indian Queen of Kittur, a former princely state in present-day Karnataka.
- Kittur Chennamma was born on 23 October 1778, in Kakati, a small village in the present Belagavi District of Karnataka, India.
- She belonged to the **Lingayat community** and received training in horse riding, sword fighting, and archery from a young age.



Lingayat Community:

- The Lingayat/Veerashaiva community, a politically dominant group in Karnataka, are devotees of Shiva.
- The Lingayats follow 12th-century saint-philosopher Basavanna who had rejected ritualistic worship and pre-eminence of the Vedas.
- She married Raja Mallasarja of the Desai family at the age of 15.
- She led an armed resistance against the British East India Company in 1824, in defiance of the Paramountcy, in an attempt to retain control over her dominion.

- She defeated the Company in the **first revolt** but died as a prisoner of war after the second rebellion.
- As one of the first and few female rulers to lead rebel forces against British colonization, she continues to be remembered as a folk hero in Karnataka, she is also an important symbol of the **Indian independence movement**.

Doctrine of Lapse

- The Doctrine of Lapse was imposed on native states by the British.
- Under this declaration, native rulers were not allowed to adopt a child if they had no children of their own.
- Their territory formed part of the British Empire automatically.

CENTRE LAUNCHES PROGRAM TO STRENGTHEN KASHI-TN BOND

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The Union Government recently announced 'Kashi-Tamil Sangamam', a month-long program to "strengthen" and "rekindle" the cultural and civilizational bond between Tamil Nadu and Varanasi.

◎ **ABOUT**

What is in this new program?

- **Time:** November 16 to December 16

The period will cover the Tamil month of **Karthikeya** during which all Tamil households go pray to Lord Shiva.

- This program is a part of the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative.
- It is aimed at rekindling the civilizational link between the new Kashi and Tamil Nadu — both deep centers of knowledge.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat The initiative 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' was announced in 2015. The program aims to actively enhance interaction between people of diverse cultures living in different States and UTs in India, with the objective of promoting greater mutual understanding among them. **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education

Kashi in Hindu mythology:

- Kashi is known to be derived from 'Kasha', the name of an ancient king, whose dynasty later produced the famous legendary king Dividasa of Kashi.
- The Kashi Khand of the **Skanda Purana** explains Kashi to be the name of the place where the light of Shiva shines most brilliantly.



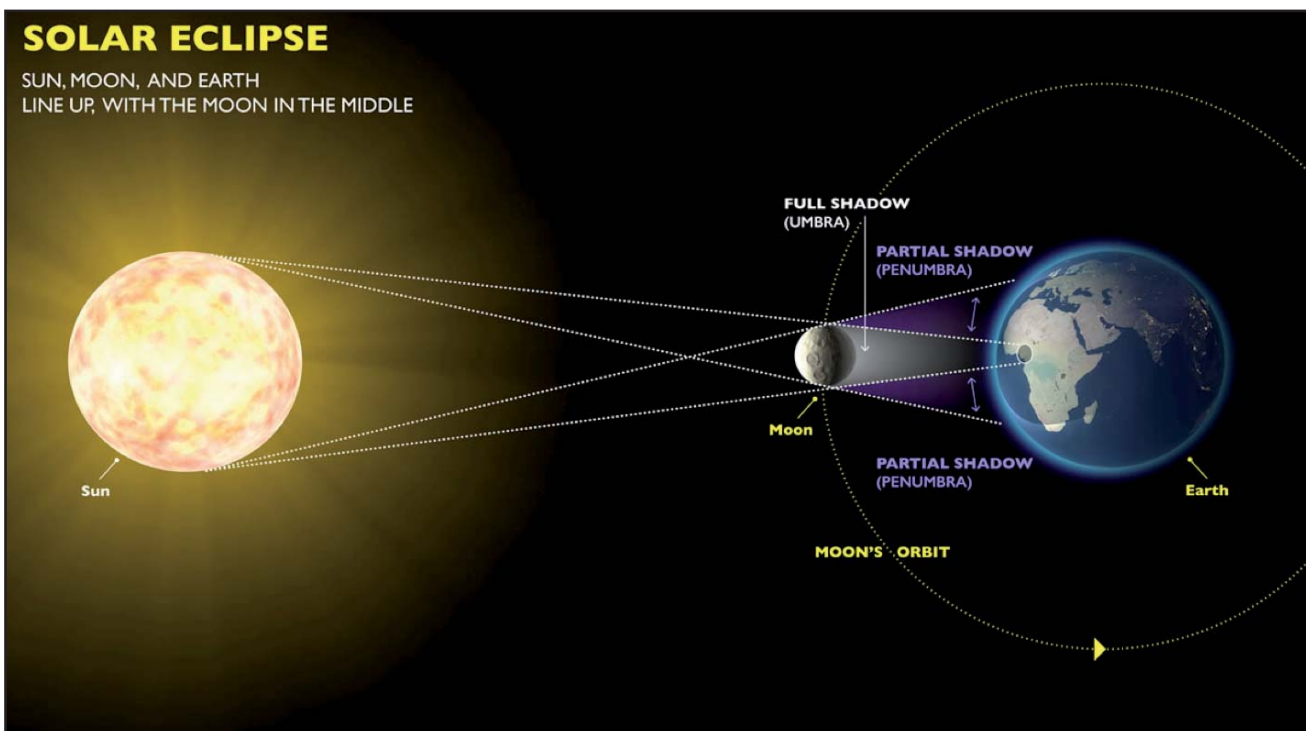
The connection between Kashi and Tamil Nadu

- By the sixth century the Pallavas had adopted Hinduism and Shiva and Vishnu became the supreme Gods.
- The local deity, Murugan is incorporated into the Hindu pantheon.
- Brahmanical ideology became important for Pallava and Chola's self-glorification.
- The glorification of Shiva through grand temples is praised by the Tamil saints, called the Nayanars. In their poems, the Nayanars praised aspects of Hindu mythology like Ganga and Kashi, but at the same time, the Tamil region to is praised immensely.
- In the later Puranas, as sacred sites of southern India like Kanchipuram and Rameshwaram got added, they all came to be connected with Kashi as part of the same pilgrimage.
- There is a Kashi Vishwanatha Temple in almost every temple town of Tamil Nadu

PARTIAL SOLAR ECLIPSE OF THE YEAR 2022

◎ **CONTEXT:** A Partial solar eclipse has been seen on the western horizon shortly before the sunset on 25th October, 2022.

◎ **ABOUT**

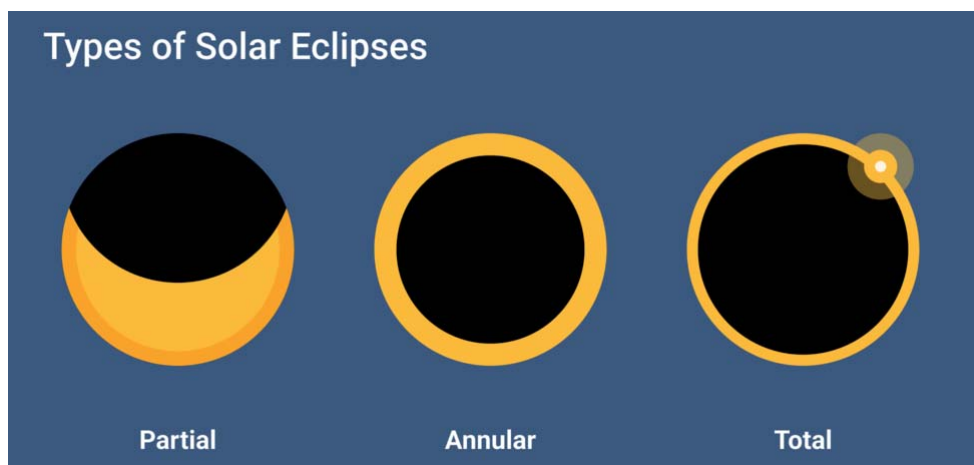


The Solar Eclipse:

- A solar eclipse occurs when the moon "eclipses" the sun.
- This means that the moon, as it orbits the Earth, comes in between the sun and the Earth, thereby blocking the sun and preventing any sunlight from reaching us.

There are four types of solar eclipses:

- **Partial solar eclipse:** The moon blocks the sun, but only partially. As a result, some part of the sun is visible, whereas the blocked part appears dark. A partial solar eclipse is the most common type of solar eclipse.



- **Annular solar eclipse:** The moon blocks out the sun in such a way that the periphery of the sun remains visible. The unobscured and glowing ring, or “annulus,” around the sun is also popularly known as the “ring of fire.” This is the second most common type of eclipse.
- **Total solar eclipse:** As the word “total” suggests, the moon totally blocks out the sun for a few minutes, leading to a period of darkness -- and the resulting eclipse is called a total solar eclipse.
 - During this period of darkness, one can witness the solar corona, which is usually too dim to notice when the sun is at its full glory.
 - Also noticeable is the diamond ring effect, or “Baily’s beads,” which occurs when some of the sunlight is able to reach us because the moon’s surface is not perfectly round. These imperfections (in the form of craters and valleys) can allow sunlight to pass through, and this appears just like a bright, shining diamond.
- **Hybrid solar eclipse:** The rarest of all eclipses is a hybrid eclipse, which shifts between a total and an annular eclipse.

During a hybrid eclipse, some locations on Earth will witness the moon completely blocking the sun (a total eclipse), whereas other regions will observe an annular eclipse.

Lunar Eclipse vs. Solar Eclipse:

- When the Earth moves between the Sun and the Moon, the planet obscures the Moon’s ability to reflect sunlight. The Moon’s surface is then covered by Earth’s shadow rather than the Sun’s light. This phenomenon is called a lunar eclipse.
- A lunar eclipse only occurs on a full Moon.
- Whereas, a solar eclipse occurs when the moon moves between the earth and the Sun and obscures the sunlight from reaching the planet.

RISHI SUNAK BECOMES BRITAIN’S FIRST NON-WHITE PRIME MINISTER

◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, Rishi Sunak was elected as Britain’s first Indian-origin Prime Minister, scripting an impressive political comeback in British politics. This has shown the diversity in Modern day Britain and is expected to strengthen India-UK relations.

◎ **ABOUT**

- Rishi Sunak (42) is now the youngest British **Prime Minister** in 210 years.
- He is also the **First Non-white person** elected as the Prime Minister

of Britain of Hindu origin.

- He was born on 12 May 1980 and is a British politician who has served as the Leader of the Conservative Party.
- Sunak served as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 2020 to 2022 and Chief Secretary to the Treasury from 2019 to 2020.
- He has also been the Member of Parliament (MP) for Richmond (Yorks) since 2015.



Significance of Indian Diaspora:

- The Indian Diaspora in the UK is one of the **largest ethnic minority** communities in the country, with the 2011 census recording approximately **5 million people** of Indian origin in the UK equating to almost 1.8% of Britain's population.
- **Economy:** Indians contribute **6%** of the UK's GDP.
 - Indian diaspora-owned companies with combined revenue of 36.84 billion pounds **employ over 1, 74,000 people** and pay over 1 billion pounds in Corporation Tax.
- **Politics:** In 2019, the British House of Commons had 15 members of parliament of Indian origin.
- It contributes by way of **remittances, investment, lobbying for India, promoting Indian culture abroad, and building a good image of India** through its intelligence and industry.
- Many people of Indian origin hold top political positions in many countries, in the USA itself; they are now a significant part of Republicans and Democrats, as well as the government.
- India's diaspora played an important role in the **India-U.S. nuclear deal**.
- Indian diaspora is not just a part of India's soft power, but a fully transferable political vote bank as well.

Cultural Influence:

- There has been a gradual mainstreaming of Indian culture and absorption of Indian cuisine, cinema, languages, religion, philosophy, performing arts, etc.
- The **Nehru Centre is the cultural wing** of the High Commission of India in the UK which was established in 1992.
- 2017 was celebrated as the **India-UK year of Culture** to mark the 70th anniversary of Indian independence.

PAKISTAN OUT OF FATF 'GREY LIST'

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Pakistan won a major reprieve, as the FATF, an international watchdog on terror financing and money laundering agreed to remove Pakistan's name from the 'grey list'.

More on news:

- **Financial Action Task Force** has agreed to remove Pakistan's name from the list of countries under "increased monitoring".
- FATF has "welcomed Pakistan's significant progress" in its Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) mechanisms.
- **India has protested Pakistan's lack of action** against cross-border terror groups responsible for attacks on India.
- India's other neighbour, **Myanmar has been moved from the grey list to the "black list"** due to actions by the military leadership after the 2021 coup and will **face even more severe financial sanctions and an inability to procure IMF, World Bank, and ADB loans**.

Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

- It was established in July 1989 by a **Group of Seven (G-7)** Summit in Paris, initially to examine and develop measures to **combat money laundering**.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to **combat terrorist financing**, in addition to money laundering.
- Since its inception, the FATF has operated under a fixed life span, requiring a specific decision by its Ministers to continue.
- Its secretariat is housed administratively at the OECD.

How many countries are there in the FATF?

- The FATF, which reportedly comprises 36 countries and two regional organizations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council), works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

What are the Black List and Grey List?

Those are two types of lists that FATF maintains.

- A blacklist is given to the countries that FATF considers uncooperative tax havens. These countries are known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs).
- A Grey list is a warning given to the country that it might come on the Black list. But even when a country comes under a grey list it faces many problems like problems in getting loans Economic sanctions Reduction in trade.

SWADESH DARSHAN 2

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** **The Government is going to launch the 'Swadesh Darshan 2' Scheme with the sites being selected from 15 States across the country to move forward from theme-based destinations to Potential tourist destinations.**

◎ **ABOUT**

Swadesh Darshan Scheme:

- Swadesh Darshan is a **Central Sector Scheme**.
- The scheme was launched in **2014-15** for the integrated development of **theme-based tourist circuits**.
- Under the scheme, the **Ministry of Tourism** provides financial assistance to State governments, Union Territory Administrations, or Central Agencies for the development of tourism infrastructure in the country.
- The scheme was envisioned to synergize with other government schemes such as **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, and Make in India** with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, the driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realize its potential.
- Some of the **prominent circuits** launched under this were the **Buddhist tourist circle, Ambedkar Tourist Circle, and the North-East Tourist Circle**.

A tourism circuit is a path that includes at least three popular tourist attractions that are not located in the same town, village, or city and are not far apart.



The 'Swadesh Darshan 2': (The revamped scheme)

- The Scheme is based on sites that have potential as tourist places and are to be launched in a phased manner.
- The first phase of the scheme is going to start in January 2023.
- **Aim:** The objective will move from 'theme-based tourist' circuits and focuses on 'revving up destination tourism'.
- The scheme has been revamped with the mantra of **"vocal for local"**.
- **Fund allocation:** The Swadesh Darshan scheme is 100% centrally funded.
- **Sites selected:**
 - Fifteen States are part of the first phase which includes Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra.
 - Two destinations from each State have been identified by the Ministry of Tourism.
- **Some of the prominent places identified are;**
 - Jhansi and Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh,
 - Gwalior, Chitrakoot,, and Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh and
 - Ajanta and Ellora in Maharashtra.
- Earlier the Swadesh Darshan Scheme 2.0 has been revived to develop sustainable and responsible destinations with a tourist and destination-centric approach.

BSE LAUNCHES ELECTRONIC GOLD RECEIPTS

◎ **CONTEXT:** The Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) has received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for its Electronic Gold Receipt (EGR), India's first spot physical gold exchange product.

◎ **BACKGROUND**

- In India, electronic gold trading happens through gold derivatives or gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs) on stock exchanges.
- EGR is the first spot physical gold exchange trading product.
- In the Union Budget 2021-22, the government announced the setting up of a SEBI-regulated gold spot exchange.

- Then, on September 28, 2021, Sebi introduced two new investment instruments,
 - EGR
 - silver ETFs

What Is An EGR?

- EGRs are depository gold receipts traded on the stock exchanges. They are held in Demat accounts, just like shares.
- For EGRs, the physical gold is sourced through imports, accredited domestic refineries, or designated delivery centres.
- The buyer could convert the physical gold into an EGR by depositing the yellow metal at the designated delivery centre. After the gold is sourced, a depository receipt is created for trading on BSE.

For example, a buyer can sell the EGR or convert it to physical gold.

FUNGAL INFECTIONS ARE A GLOBAL HEALTH RISKS: WHO

◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, WHO published a report highlighting the first-ever list of fungal "Priority pathogens" – a catalogue of the 19 fungi that represent the greatest threat to public health.

◎ **ABOUT**

Highlights of the Report:

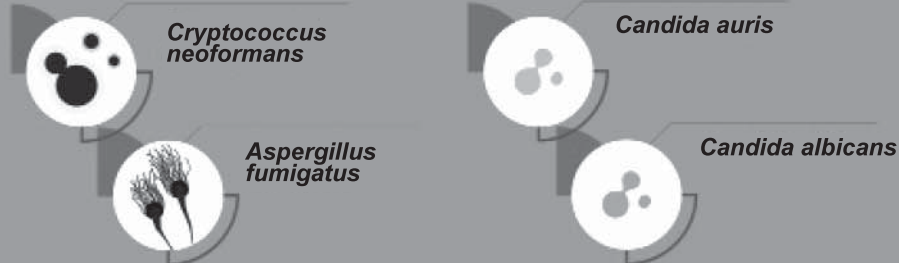
- The WHO **fungal Priority Pathogens List (FPPL)** is the first global effort to systematically prioritize fungal pathogens, considering the unmet research and development (R&D) needs and the perceived public health importance.
- The 19 Fungi identified as categorically as fungi of concern are mentioned in the table below.
- **Objective:** The WHO FPPL aims to focus and drive further research and policy interventions to strengthen the global response to fungal infections and antifungal resistance.
- Fungal pathogens are a major threat to public health as they are becoming increasingly common and resistant to treatment with only four classes of antifungal medicines currently available.]

Anti-Fungal Medicines:

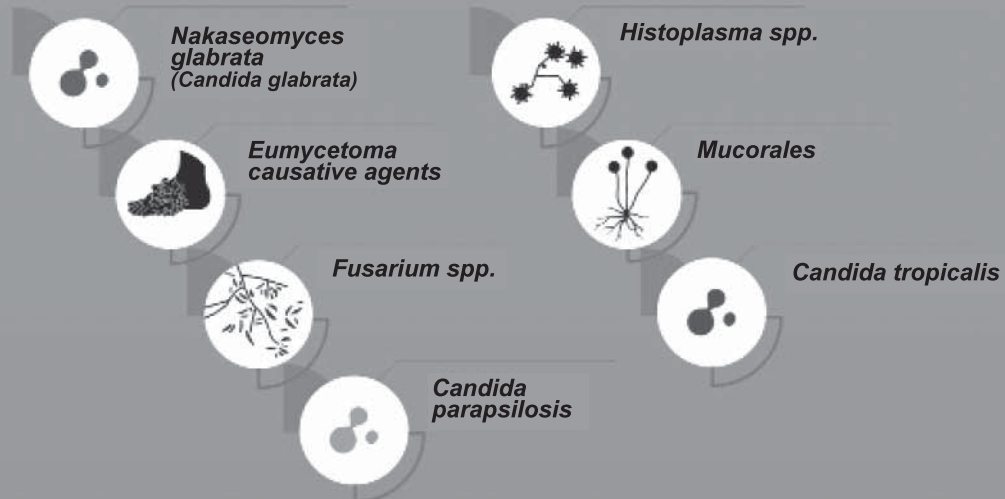
- Antifungal drugs are medications that are used to treat fungal infections.
 - While most fungal infections affect areas such as the skin and nails, some can lead to more serious and potentially life-threatening conditions like meningitis or pneumonia.
- According to the Report, most fungal pathogens lack rapid and sensitive diagnostics and those that exist are not widely available or affordable globally.
 - The invasive forms of these fungal infections often affect severely ill patients and those with significant underlying immune system-related conditions.
 - Populations at the greatest risk of invasive fungal infections include those with cancer, HIV/AIDS, organ transplants, chronic respiratory disease, and post-primary tuberculosis infection.
 - The WHO FPPL list is divided into three categories:
 - Critical,
 - High and
 - Medium priority.

WHO fungal priority pathogens list (WHO FPPL)

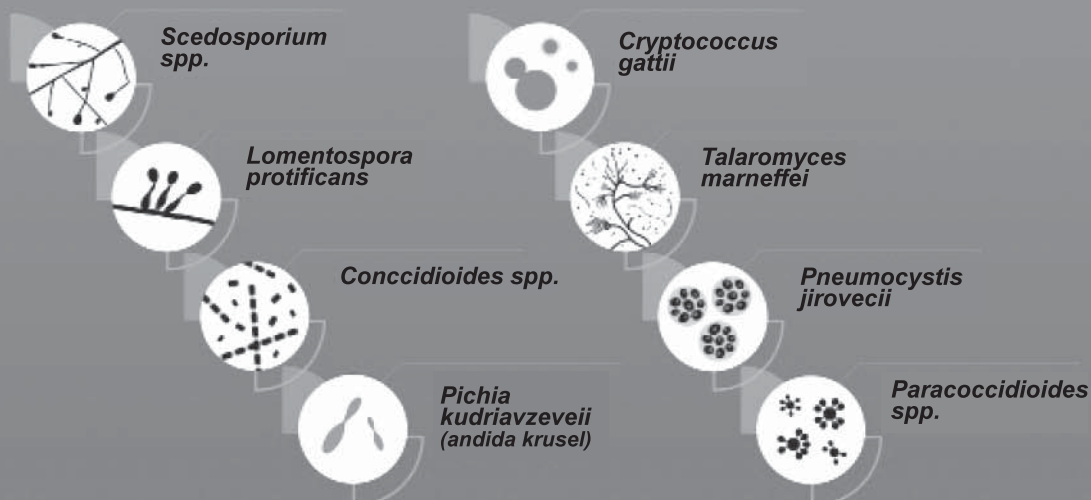
Critical Priority Group



High Priority Group



Medium Priority Group



- The fungal pathogens *in each priority category* are so ranked primarily due to their public health impact and/or emerging antifungal resistance risk.

Fungal Infections:

There are many types of fungal infections. Some of the most common fungal infections are those of the skin, nails, and mucous membranes. Examples include:

- **Ringworm (also known as tinea):** a fungal infection of the skin that can occur on your scalp, on your feet (athlete's foot), in your groin area (jock itch), and on other areas of your body
- **Nail fungus:** an infection that typically affects your toenails but can also affect your fingernails
- **Vaginal yeast infection:** an infection that occurs due to the overgrowth of *Candida* yeast in and around the vagina
- **Oral thrush:** a condition in which *Candida* yeast overgrows in your mouth.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED MUSTARD APPROVED

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change recommended the "environmental release" of the transgenic hybrid mustard DMH-11 for seed production and ordered to conduct the field demonstration studies with respect to its effects on honey bees and other pollinating insects.

Let us understand exactly about the GM Mustard crops in India.

◎ **ABOUT**

What is Hybridisation of crops?

- Hybridisation involves crossing **two genetically dissimilar plant varieties** that can even be from the same species.
- The **first-generation (F1) offspring** from such crosses tend to have higher yields than what either parent can individually give.

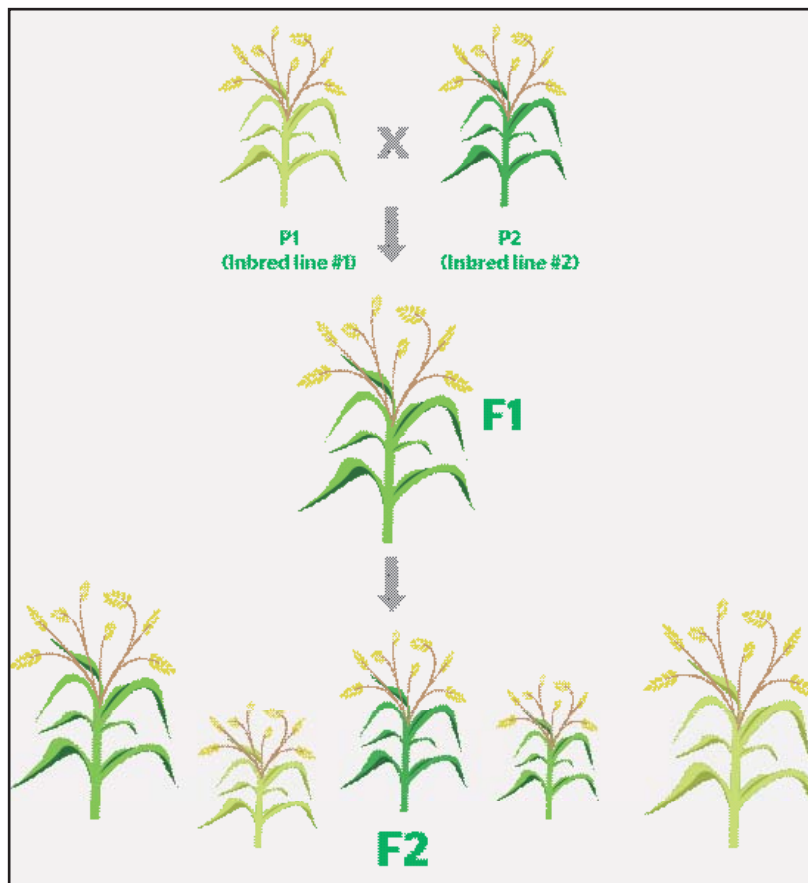
Is it possible to produce hybrids of all crops?

- Hybridisation is not easy for all crops including mustard, as its flowers have both **female (pistil) and male (stamen) reproductive organs**, making the plants largely self-pollinating.
- Since the eggs of one plant cannot be fertilised by the pollen grains from another, it limits the scope for developing hybrids — unlike in **cotton, maize or tomato**, where this can be done through physical removal of anthers.

The **barnase-barstar system** enables breeding of hybrids from a wider range of mustards, including those of East European origin such as 'Heera' and 'Donskaja'.

How has hybridisation been achieved in mustard?

- The **hybrid mustard DMH-11** has been produced which contains **two alien genes** isolated from a soil bacterium called *Bacillus* '**amyloliquefaciens**'.
- The first gene ('barnase') codes for a protein that impairs pollen production and renders the plant into which it is incorporated **male-sterile**.
- This plant is then crossed with a **fertile parental line** containing, in turn, the second 'barstar' gene that blocks the action of the **barnase gene**.



- The **resultant F1 progeny** is both high-yielding and also capable of producing seed/ grain.
- This system was used to develop DMH-11 by crossing a popular Indian mustard variety '**Varuna**' (the barnase line) with an East European '**Early Heera-2**' mutant (barstar).

Significance:

DMH-11 is claimed to have shown an average **28% yield** increase over Varuna in contained field trials carried out by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

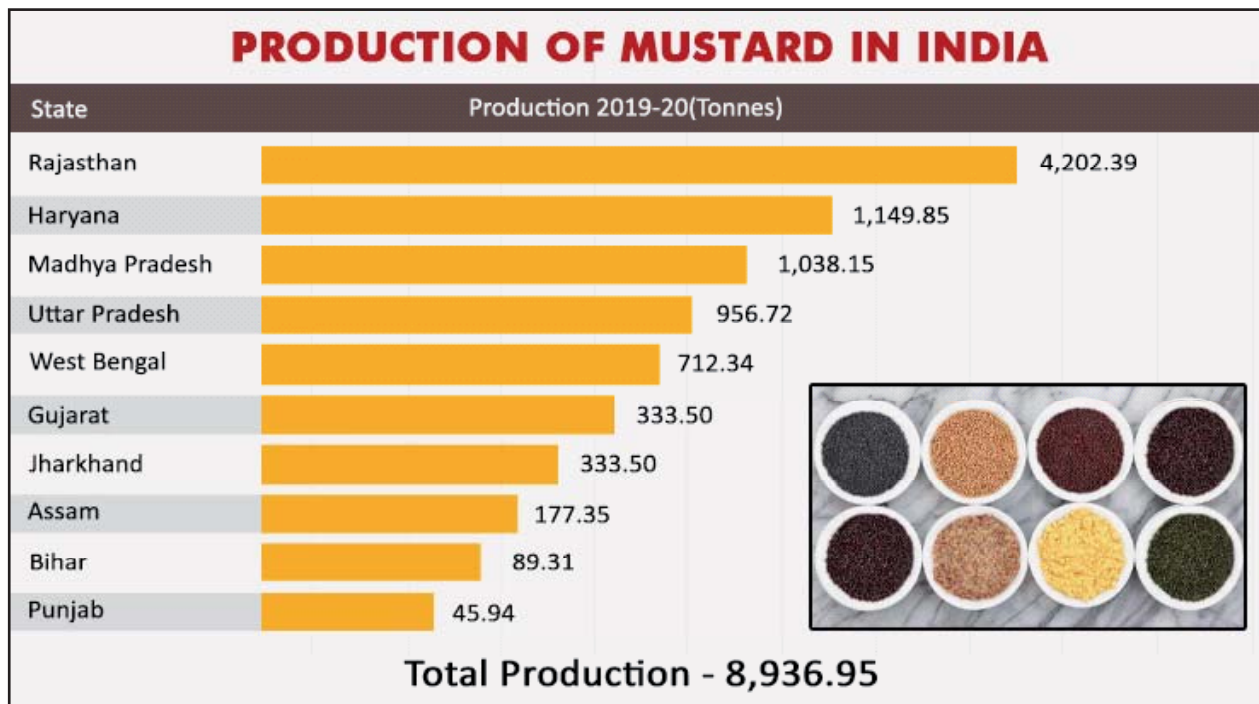
Role of GEAC:

- GEAC is a body responsible for appraisal of proposals relating to the release of GM organisms and products (ordinarily considered hazardous) into the environment.
- The GEAC is the apex **biotech regulatory body** in India. It is a **statutory body**.

■ The functions of the GEAC are:

- It is responsible for the appraisal of activities that involve the large scale use of hazardous microbes and recombinants in research and industrial production from the point of view of the environment.
- The GEAC also assesses proposals regarding the release of genetically engineered products and organisms into the environment, and this includes experimental field trials as well.
- The body also looks into proposals regarding the use of living modified organism that comes in the risk category III and above in the import/manufacture of recombinant pharma products, or where the end-product of the recombinant pharma product is a modified living organism.
- The Committee has the power to take punitive action against people/body under the Environment (Protection) Act.

- The approval of the GEAC is mandatory before genetically modified organisms and products derived from them can be used commercially.



Concerns associated:

- The presence of a third 'bar' gene, which makes GM mustard plants tolerant to the spraying of **glufosinate ammonium**, a chemical used for killing weeds. This will cause displacement of manual labour engaged in weeding by promoting use of chemical herbicides.
- The GM mustard can threaten the population of honey bees as the Mustard flowers are a source of nectar for honey bees and many other pollinator insects.

KATRAJ ZOOLOGICAL PARK TO GET ZEBRAS FROM ABROAD

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** Recently, the Pune Municipal Council has planned to procure five Zebras for its Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park in Katraj from foreign zoos.

Key Highlights:

- The five Zebras to be brought are planned to include two males and Three Females.
- The guidelines by the Central Zoo Authority of India (CZAI) will be followed for the transportation of captive wild animals.

Zebras in India:

- Zebras are equids, members of the horse family.
- There are three different species: plains, mountains, and Grevy's zebras.
- The Grevy's zebra is the largest, weighing from 770 to 990 pounds (350 to 450 kilograms)



- The Grevy's zebra lives in the arid grasslands of Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The Grévy's zebra is considered endangered in India.
- Though Zebras live in Africa, each species of zebra has its own home area.

Recent Initiatives:

- The Lucknow Zoo has obtained **three Zebras** from Israel.

Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park:

- The Rajiv Gandhi Zoological Park, commonly known as the Rajiv Gandhi Zoo or Katraj Zoo, is located in Katraj, Pune district, Maharashtra State, India.
- It is managed by the Pune Municipal Corporation. The 130-acre (53 ha) zoo is divided into three parts: an animal orphanage, a snake park, and a zoo, and includes the 42-acre (17 ha) Katraj Lake.
- The zoo has a collection of reptiles, mammals, and birds. Among mammals, the zoo has a white tiger and a male Bengal tiger named Tanaji.

Indian Laws related to Wild Animals in Captivity:

- The **Wildlife Protection Act** is the law governing the status of wildlife conservation and Transportation in India.
- Any animal which is kept or bred in captivity, which is described in **Schedule 1; Schedule 2; Schedule 3; and Schedule 4** of the act.
- The '**Chief wildlife warden**' is the **statutory authority** that heads the wildlife department of a state.
- Protection of animals is enshrined as a fundamental duty in the Indian Constitution and there exist several animal welfare legislations in India such as the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960** and the **Wildlife Protection Act 1972** at the Central level.

Central Zoo Authority of India:

- The Central Zoo Authority (CZA) is the body of the government of India responsible for the oversight of zoos.
- It is an affiliate member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA).
- The Central Zoo Authority has been constituted under section 38A of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972.
- Composition:
- The Authority consists of a Chairman, ten members, and a Member Secretary.

MIGRATION OF CRITICALLY ENDANGERED GIBS TO PAKISTAN

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** In a recent sighting of three Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) inside the Pakistan's Cholistan desert has given rise to speculation that the 'endangered birds' might have flown across the international border from India's Desert National Park (DNP) due to loss of habitat for their survival and hunting.

The Great Indian Bustard (GIBs):

- The Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*), is a bustard native to the Indian subcontinent.
- Bustards are **large terrestrial birds** found in **dry grasslands and steppe regions**.
- It is also known as the **Indian Bustard**; it is among the **heaviest flying birds in existence**.
- It is the **State bird of Rajasthan** and is considered India's most critically endangered bird.

- It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
- The GIB is now found in a small number only in western Rajasthan, while Gujarat claims to have a few females left in its **Banni Grassland Reserve**.
- **Population:** As per the last count of the GIB in 2018, there were around 127 birds in the Desert National Park or the DNP in Rajasthan.

■ Protection Status:

- International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List: Critically Endangered
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I
- Convention on Migratory Species (CMS): Appendix I
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule 1

Reasons behind the Migration of GIBs:

- As Rajasthan shares the international border with **Pakistan's Sindh** and Punjab provinces, it is suspected that the GIBs might have flown across to the neighboring country's desert.
- The GIBs in the Thar Desert has been facing threat to their survival because of intensive agricultural practices, laying of power lines, and industrialization.
- Experts have observed that the endangered birds have raised their families within the Desert National Park and outside in the rural pockets, where feed and grassland habitat is available.
- They also move in the crop fields to pick up insects and lizards and like to hide there.

SAVING THE VULTURES OF TAMIL NADU

- ◎ **CONTEXT:** The Tamil Nadu government has formed a State Vulture conservation committee (SLVC) to check the declining population of vultures in the state.

Tamil Nadu is home to four species of vultures:

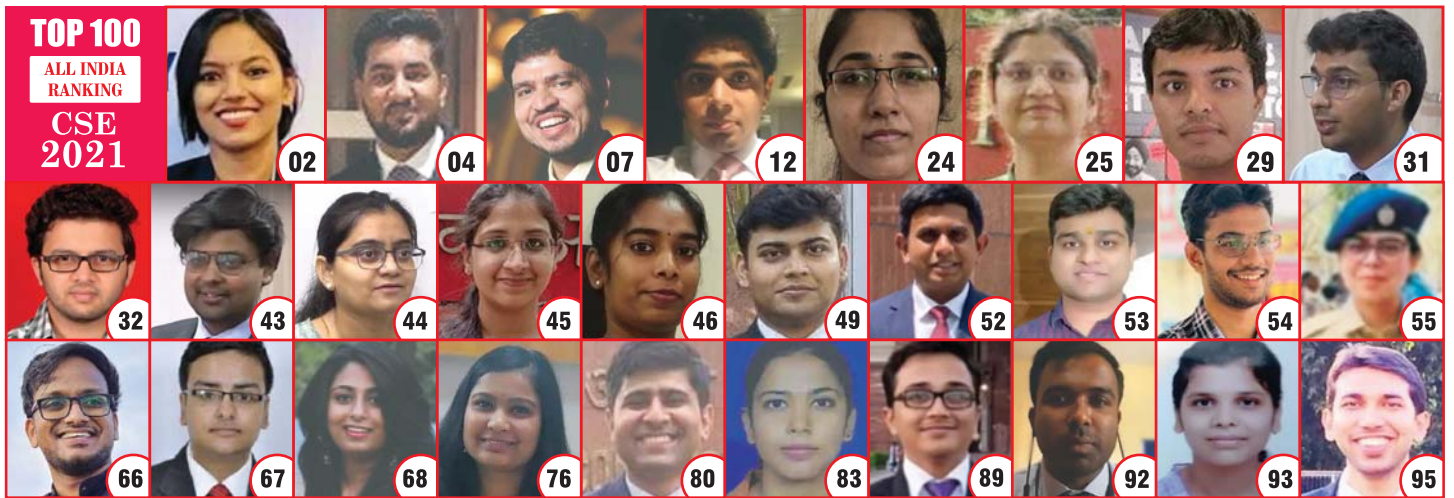
- **White-rumped vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)**- Critically Endangered
- **Long-billed vultures (*Gyps indicus*)**- Critically Endangered
- **Asian king-vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*)**-Critically Endangered
- **Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)**-Endangered

About Vultures

- Vultures are scavenging birds of prey. They are nature's most efficient scavengers.
- India shelters about **nine species of vultures**, but most of them face the danger of extinction.

Vulture numbers are decreasing:

- The numbers are still extremely low, and even a single poisoning event could lead to several of the species going locally extinct, especially the long-billed Asian king vulture.
- Breeding seasons have also seen less hatching than is the norm.
- **Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)** to treat cattle, such as **diclofenac, nimesulide, and ketoprofen** among others, have led to the crash in vulture populations across India.



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