

FEB. 2023 | ISSUE XXVI | PRICE ₹100

India's Best
Current Affairs
& Mentorship
Magazine for
Law Aspirants

VIDHIGYA
CLAT

CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE

**FEB.
2023**

**SPECIAL
FEATURES**

**TOPPER'S TALK WITH
MADHURA GOKHALE**

**CHECK YOUR
QUIZDOM**

HIGHLIGHTS

- Economic Survey
- Union Budget
- Turkey Earthquake
- Russia suspends
New START Treaty

**NIRMALA
SITARAM**

FINANCE MINISTER OF INDIA



VIDHIGYA

LAW



PUN



A man who had been caught embezzling millions from his employer went to a lawyer seeking defense. He didn't want to go to jail. But his lawyer told him, "Don't worry. You'll never have to go to jail with all that money." And the lawyer was right. When the man was sent to prison, he didn't even have a penny..

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LAWsical

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THE BIG NEWS

Economic Survey

Union Budget

Turkey Earthquake

Russia suspends New START Treaty



**ECONOMIC
SURVEY**



THE BIG NEWS

Economic Survey 2022-23

The Economic Survey presents a **comprehensive analysis of India's growth trajectory** including the global optimism towards nation, **focus on infra, growth in agriculture, industries and emphasis on futuristic sectors**. It is presented a day before the **presentation of the Union Budget**.

The Economic Survey 2022-23 highlights that the **transformative reforms undertaken by the government had lagged growth returns due to temporary shocks in the economy**. However, in the present decade, the presence of strong medium-term growth magnets provides optimism and hope that once these global shocks of the pandemic and the spike in commodity prices in 2022 fade away, the Indian economy is well placed to grow faster in the coming decade.



What is Economic Survey?

- ❖ Economic Survey is a study and analysis of the economic conditions and trends of a country, region or Industry.
- ❖ It typically includes an examination of various economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Inflation Rates, employment levels, trade balances and consumer spending.
- ❖ The survey aims to provide an accurate and comprehensive picture of the state of the economy, and it is often used by policymakers, economists and Investors to make informed decisions about economic policy.

History of Economic Survey

- ❖ The first economic survey was published in 1950–51, when it used to be a part of the budget documents.
- ❖ In 1964, it was separated from the budget documents and has since been released a day ahead of the Union Budget.
 - The first volume contains a holistic review of the current economic situation of the country
 - The second part focuses on different issues like healthcare, poverty, climate change, and the Human Development Index, among others.

Prepared By

- ❖ Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Ministry of Finance.
- ❖ Prepared under the guidance of the Chief Economic Advisor (CEA).

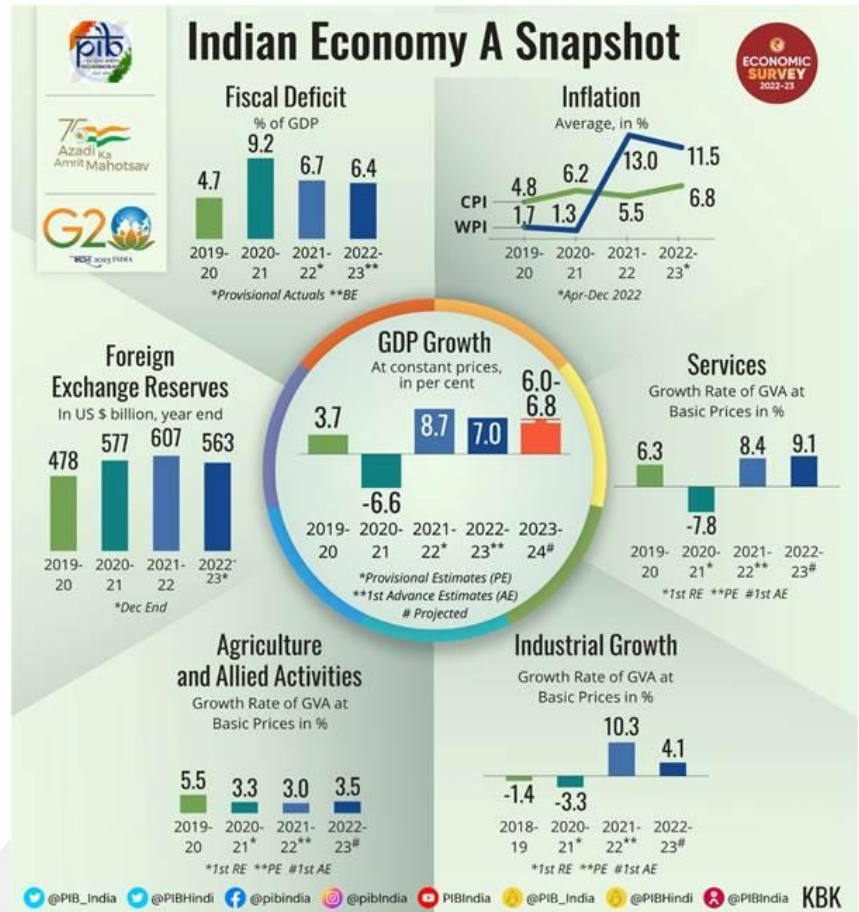
State of Indian Economy

❖ GDP Growth:

- ✓ GDP forecast for FY24 to be in the range of **6-6.8 %**, depending on the trajectory of **economic and political developments globally**.
- ✓ India is the **3rd largest economy** in the world in **Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms** and the **5th largest in market exchange rates**.

❖ Sector wise Growth

- ✓ Primary Sector Growth – **3.5%**
- ✓ Secondary Sector Growth – **4.1%**
- ✓ Tertiary Sector Growth – **9.1%**



Growth drivers

❖ Private consumption:

Private consumption in **first half of FY23** is highest since FY15 and this has led to a **boost to production activity resulting in enhanced capacity utilization** across sectors.

Capital Expenditure:

- ✓ Capex of central government **increased by 63.4%** during first 8 months of FY23.
- ✓ Increase in private capex due to **strengthening of corporate balance sheets** and increase in credit financing.
- ✓ Capex multiplier effect will result in **at least 4 times increase** in economic output of the country.

❖ Rise in employment levels and improvement in Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):

Enhanced Employment generation seen in the declining urban unemployment rate and in the faster net registration in Employee Provident Fund.

- ✓ Urban Unemployment Rate was at four-year low at **7.2% in September 2022**.
- ✓ LFPR was around **41.6% in 2020-21 (Rural + urban)** compared to **40.1% in preceding year**.

❖ Performance of Indian Rupee: Performed well compared to other Emerging Market Economies in Apr-Dec 2022.

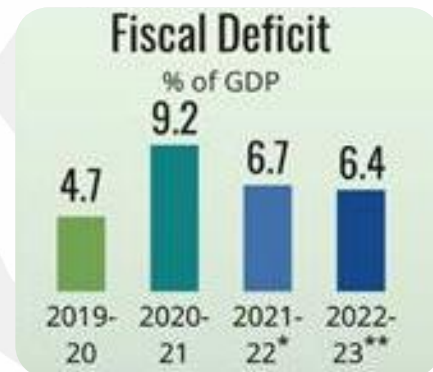
- ❖ **Outlook 2023-24:** Economic growth to be boosted from the **expansion of public digital platforms** and measures **to boost manufacturing output**.

Fiscal Developments

- ❖ **Fiscal Deficit:** Government on track **to achieve fiscal deficit target for FY23 (6.4% of GDP)**.

Resilient performance of Union Government finances during FY23 facilitated by the:

- ✓ recovery in economic activity,
- ✓ buoyancy in revenues from direct taxes and GST, and
- ✓ realistic assumptions in the Budget.



- ❖ **Gross Tax Revenue:** Growth of **15.5% from April to November 2022** driven by:

- ✓ Expansion of tax net due to structural reforms like **GST, digitalization of economic transactions**.
- ✓ Robust growth in the **direct taxes (grew at 26% YoY)** due to corporate and **personal income tax growth**.

- ❖ **Increasing GST collections:** GST has stabilized as a vital revenue source for central and state governments, with the **gross GST collections increasing at 24.8%** on YoY basis from **April to December 2022**.

- ✓ GST Tax payers **doubled to 1.4 crore in 2022**.
- ✓ Improvement in **GST collections** has been due to:
 - the **nationwide drive against GST evaders and fake bills** and
 - systemic changes such as **rate rationalization correcting inverted duty structure**.

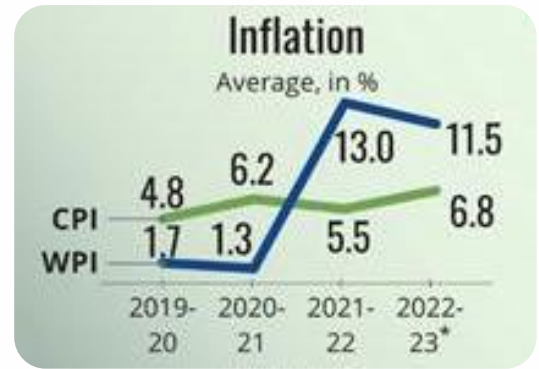
- ❖ **Revenue Expenditure:** Brought down from **15.6% of GDP in FY21 to 13.5% of GDP in FY22 PA**, led by reduction in subsidy expenditure.

- ❖ **State Government Finances:** Combined Gross Fiscal Deficits of States brought down to **2.8% of GDP in FY22 PA, from 4.1% in FY21**.

- ✓ **Fiscal Deficit:** It is the difference between the government's total expenditure and its total receipts excluding borrowing.

$$\text{Gross fiscal deficit} = \text{Total expenditure} - (\text{Revenue receipts} + \text{Non-debt creating capital receipts})$$
- ✓ **Gross tax revenue:** It includes revenue collected from different items like corporation tax, income tax, wealth tax, customs, union excise, service, taxes on Union Territories like land revenue, stamp registration etc.
- ✓ **Revenue Expenditure:** It is expenditure incurred for purposes other than the creation of physical or financial assets of the central government.

❖ **Consumer Price Inflation (CPI):** The index numbers used to calculate the **retail inflation** of a nation constitute the CPI, which is also known as the "**market basket**", and is responsible for tracking the shift in prices at the level of the household. It includes both Goods and Services. **CPI for the Year 2022-23 is 6.8%.**



❖ **Wholesale Price Inflation (WPI):** The index numbers used to measure the change in the overall price of goods before they are sold at retail prices constitute the WPI. **WPI for the Year 2022-23 is 11.5%.**

External Sector

❖ **Trends in Merchandise Trade:** All-time high annual merchandise **export of US\$ 422.0 billion in FY22.**

✓ **Petroleum products, gems & jewellery, organic & inorganic chemicals, drugs & pharmaceuticals** were among the leading export items.

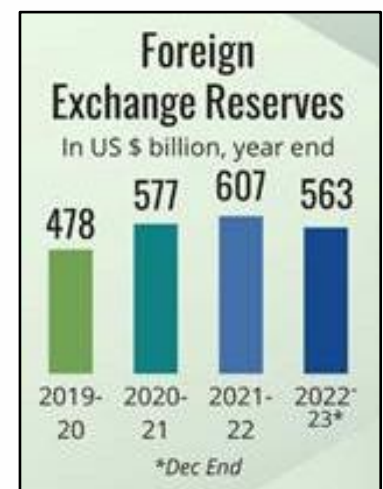
❖ **Trends in Services export:** India's services exports stood at **US\$ 254.5 billion in FY22 recording a growth of 23.5% over FY21.**

❖ Foreign Exchange Reserves

✓ As of December 2022, Forex Reserves stood at **US\$ 563 bn** covering **9.3 months of imports.**

✓ As of End-November 2022, **India is the 6th largest foreign exchange reserves holder** in the world.

✓ **Remittances** are the **second largest major source of external financing** after service export



❖ Balance of Payments

✓ The Current Account Deficit (CAD) has widened **due rise in oil prices.**

✓ The surplus of the **capital account was lower than the CAD leading to a depletion of forex reserves.**

Union Budget 2023-24

The Finance Minister of India introduced the last full-fledged **Union Budget (for 2023-24)** before the Lok Sabha elections of 2024.

- ✓ The Budget Division of the **Department of Economic Affairs** in the **Ministry of Finance** is the nodal body responsible for preparing the Budget.



History of Union Budget

- ✓ The **first union budget** of independent India was presented by **R. K. Shanmukham Chetty** on **26 November 1947**.
- ✓ Total revenues stood at **₹171.15 crore**, and the fiscal deficit was **₹24.59 crore**.
- ✓ The **total expenditure** was estimated at **₹197.29 crore** with **Defence expenditure at ₹92.74 crore**.

Procedure of Budget

In Parliament, the Budget goes through six stages:

1. Presentation of Budget
2. General discussion
3. Scrutiny by Departmental Committees
4. Voting on Demands for Grants
5. Passing an Appropriation Bill
6. Passing of Finance Bill

Constitutional Provisions of Union Budget

- ✓ **Article 112** of the Constitution enjoins upon the President of India to get the budget presented before both of the houses of Parliament.
- ✓ Being a **Money Bill**, it has to be presented to **the Lok Sabha first** and must classify the charge on the Consolidated Fund and expenditure on the Consolidated Fund of India separately.
- ✓ There is a prescribed **legislative procedure in each house and the Rajya Sabha** should not delay it for more than **fourteen days**.
- ✓ There is a prescribed legislative procedure in each house and the Rajya Sabha should not delay it for more than fourteen days.

What does Budget contain?

- ✓ **Estimates** of revenue and capital receipts,
- ✓ Ways and **means to raise the revenue**,
- ✓ Estimates of expenditure,
- ✓ **Details of the actual receipts and expenditure** of the closing financial year and the reasons for any deficit/surplus in that year, and
- ✓ The **economic and financial policy** of the coming year, i.e., **taxation proposals, prospects of revenue, spending programme** and introduction of new schemes/projects.

The Budget speech, delivered by the Union Finance Minister in Parliament, has two sections — **Parts A and B.**

Part A of the budget speech

- ✓ The first part of the budget speech provides an overview of the economy of the previous and current years, and also gives Budget estimates for the next financial year. Basically, **Part A covers review of the prevailing economic situation of the country**, and is more concerned about the 'macro' aspect of the economy.
- ✓ **In part A**, the finance minister provides a **brief overview of total funds raised by the government through taxes or borrowing**, and discusses how the money is to be spent on **Budget deficit/surplus**. It also presents a complete breakdown of the expenditure of each ministry.

Part B of the Budget speech

The second part of the Budget speech highlights the government's tax proposals for the next financial year, and it has a **direct bearing on the personal finance of citizens.**

Part A

Highlights of Union Budget

- ✓ **Per capita income** has more than doubled to **₹1.97 lakh in around nine years.**
- ✓ Indian economy has increased in size from being **10th to 5th largest in the world** in the past nine years.
- ✓ **EPFO membership** has more than **doubled to 27 crores.**
- ✓ **7,400 crore digital payments of ₹126 lakh crore** has taken place through **UPI in 2022.**
- ✓ **11.7 crore household toilets** constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission.
- ✓ **9.6 crore LPG connections** provided under **Ujjwala.**
- ✓ **220 crore covid vaccination** of 102 crore persons.
- ✓ **47.8 crore PM Jan Dhan bank accounts.**
- ✓ Insurance cover for **44.6 crore persons** under **PM Suraksha Bima and PM Jeevan Jyoti Yojana.**
- ✓ Cash transfer of **₹2.2 lakh crore** to over **11.4 crore farmers under PM Kisan Saman Nidhi.**



Seven priorities of the budget 'Saptarishi' are inclusive development, reaching the last mile, infrastructure and investment, unleashing the potential, green growth, youth power and financial sector.

Priority 1 - Inclusive Development – Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas

Health:

- ✓ **157 new nursing colleges** will be established in co-location with the existing **157 medical colleges established since 2014**.
- ✓ A Mission to **eliminate Sickle Cell Anaemia by 2047** will be launched.

Agriculture:

- ✓ **Agri-Credit:** Agriculture credit target to be increased to Rs 20 lakh crore with focus on animal husbandry, dairy and fisheries.
 - A new sub-scheme of **PM Matsya Sampada Yojana** with targeted investment of Rs 6,000 crore to be **launched for fishermen, fish vendors and MSMEs**.
- ✓ **Millets:** To make India a global hub for '**Shree Anna**' (Millets), the **Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad** will be supported as the Centre of Excellence for sharing best practices, research and technologies at the international level.
- ✓ **Agri-Cooperatives:** To fulfil the vision of "**Sahakar Se Samridhi**", the Government plans to establish decentralized storage capacity and set up multiple cooperative societies in **uncovered villages over the next 5 years**.
- ✓ **Funding for Agri-startups:** Agriculture Accelerator Fund will be set-up to encourage agri-startups by young entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Priority 2: Reaching the Last Mile

- ✓ **New 'Aspirational Blocks Programme':**
 - Building on the success of the Aspirational Districts Programme, the Aspirational Blocks Programme was recently **launched covering 500 blocks**.
 - It is aimed at improving the performance of areas across multiple domains such as **health, nutrition, education, agriculture, water resources, financial inclusion, skill development, and basic infrastructure**.
- ✓ **PM PVTG Development Mission:**
 - To improve socio-economic conditions of the **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**, **Pradhan Mantri PVTG Development Mission** will be launched.
 - **An amount of Rs 15,000 crore** will be made available to implement the Mission in the next 3 years under the **Development Action Plan** for the **Scheduled Tribes**.
 - The Centre will also recruit **38,800 teachers** and support staff for the **740 Eklavya Model Residential Schools, serving 3.5 lakh tribal students**.
- ✓ **Water for Drought Prone Region:**
 - In the drought prone central region of **Karnataka**, **central assistance of Rs 5,300 crore** will be given to the **Upper Bhadra Project** to provide sustainable micro irrigation and filling up of surface tanks for drinking water.

Priority 3: Infrastructure and Investment

- ✓ **Increase in Capex for Infra:**
 - Capital investment outlay increased for the third consecutive year - **by 33% to Rs 10 lakh crore making it 3.3% of GDP**.
 - The '**Effective Capital Expenditure**' is budgeted at **Rs 13.7 lakh crore - 4.5% of GDP**.

✓ Railways:

- A capital outlay of **Rs 2.40 lakh crore** has been provided for the Railways - the highest ever outlay and **about 9 times the outlay made in 2013- 14.**

✓ Aviation:

- **50 additional airports, heliports, water aerodromes and advanced landing grounds** will be revived for improving regional air connectivity.

Priority 4: Unleashing the Potential

✓ Centres of Excellence for AI:

- To realize the vision of “**Make AI in India and Make AI work for India**”, three centres of excellence for Artificial Intelligence will be set-up in top educational institutions.

✓ Digi locker for Data Sharing:

- **An Entity Digi Locker** will be set up for use by **MSMEs**, large business and **charitable trusts for storing and sharing documents online securely**, whenever needed, with various authorities, regulators, banks and other business entities.

✓ 5G Technology:

- **100 labs for developing applications using 5G services** will be set up in engineering institutions to realise a new range of **opportunities, business models, and employment potential.**
- The labs will cover, among others, applications **such as smart classrooms, precision farming, intelligent transport systems, and healthcare apps.**

✓ Reduced Compliances and Jan Vishwas Bill:

- To **enhance ease of doing business, more than 39,000 compliances have been reduced and more than 3,400 legal provisions have been decriminalized** under the amendments to the **Companies Act 2013.**
- To further the trust-based governance, the Government introduced the **Jan Vishwas Bill to amend 42 Central Acts.**

Priority 5: Green Growth

✓ National Green Hydrogen Mission:

- An outlay of **Rs 19,700 crores** has been allocated to the **National Green Hydrogen Mission** to facilitate transition of the economy to **low carbon intensity**, reduce dependence on **fossil fuel imports**, and make the country assume technology and market leadership in this sunrise sector.
- The target is to reach an annual production of **5 MMT by 2030.**

✓ GOBARdhan Scheme:

- **500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan scheme** will be established to promote **Circular Economy (200 compressed biogas (CBG) plants and 300 community/cluster-based plants). Total Investment - Rs 10,000 crore.**
- In due course, a **5% CBG mandate** will be introduced for all organizations **marketing natural and biogas.**

✓ Other Investments in Green Energy:

- **Rs. 35,000 crores for priority capital investments** towards energy transition and **net zero objectives**, and energy security (Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas).
- Battery Energy Storage Systems with capacity of **4,000 MWH** to be supported with **Viability Gap Funding.**
- **Rs 20,700 crore (central support - Rs 8,300 crore)** for inter-state transmission system for evacuation and **grid integration of 13 GW renewable energy from Ladakh.**

Priority 6: Youth Power

- ✓ **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0**
 - On-job training industry partnership, new age courses like **AI robotics, Mechatronics, 3D printing, drones, etc.**
- ✓ **Skill India Digital Platform**
 - Expanding digital ecosystem to enable demand based **formal skilling, linking with employers and facilitating access to entrepreneurship schemes.**
- ✓ **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme**
 - To provide stipend support to **47 lakh youth** in three years.
- ✓ **Boosting Tourism**
 - **50 destinations** to be selected and developed as complete **package for domestic & foreign tourists.**
- ✓ **Setting Up of Unity Malls in State Capitals**
 - For promotion and sale of **ODOPs (One District, One Product), GI and handicraft products.**

Priority 7: Financial Sector

Credit Guarantee for MSMEs:

- ✓ In 2022, the credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs was revamped and will take effect from **1st April 2023 through infusion of Rs 9,000 crore in the corpus.**
 - This will enable additional collateral-free guaranteed **credit of Rs 2 lakh crore.**
 - The cost of the credit will be **reduced by about 1%.**

Small Savings Schemes:

- ✓ To commemorate **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**, a one-time new small savings scheme, **Mahila Samman Savings Certificate**, will be made available for a **two-year period up to March 2025.**
 - This will **offer deposit facility upto Rs 2 lakh** in the name of **women or girls (fixed interest rate of 7.5%)** with partial withdrawal option.
- ✓ The maximum deposit limit for **Senior Citizen Savings Scheme** will be enhanced from **Rs. 15 lakhs to Rs. 30 lakh.**
- ✓ The maximum deposit limit for the **Monthly Income Account Scheme** will be enhanced from **Rs. 4.5 lakh to Rs. 9 lakhs (for single account) and from Rs. 9 lakhs to Rs. 15 lakh (for joint account).**

Budget Estimates 2023-24:

- ✓ Total estimated receipts (excluding borrowings): **Rs 27.2 lakh crore,**
- ✓ **Total estimated expenditure: Rs 45 lakh crore.**
 - **Net tax receipts: Rs 23.3 lakh crore.**
- ✓ **Fiscal deficit: 5.9% of GDP.**
 - To finance the fiscal deficit in 2023-24, the net market borrowings from dated securities are **estimated at Rs 11.8 lakh crore.**
 - The gross market borrowings are **estimated at Rs 15.4 lakh crore.**
- ✓ Also, the government is committed to sticking to this plan to reduce the **fiscal deficit to below 4.5% by 2025-26.**

Part - B

Personal Income Tax:

- ✓ There are five major announcements relating to the personal income tax. The **rebate limit in the new tax regime has been increased to 7 lakhs.**
- ✓ It means that **persons in the new tax regime with income up to 7 lakhs will not have to pay any tax.**
- ✓ The tax structure in the new personal tax regime has been changed by **reducing the number of slabs to five and increasing the tax exemption limit to 3 lakhs.**

Current and Proposed Tax Slabs:

During the Union Budget presentation, **Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitaraman** announced that people earning up to **Rs 7 lakhs need not pay taxes.** Tax surcharges of the taxpayers in the **highest tax bracket were reduced from 37% to 25%.** The bottom line, the new income tax slab benefits taxpayers in the highest and lowest tax brackets.

Current Income Slab	Tax Rate	Proposed Income Slab	Tax Rate
0 – 2.5 Lakh	Nil	0 – 3 Lakh	Nil
2.5 – 5 Lakh	5%	3 – 6 Lakh	5%
5 – 7.5 Lakh	10%	6 – 9 Lakh	10%
7.5 – 10 Lakh	15%	9 – 12 Lakh	15%
10 – 12.5 Lakh	20%	12 – 15 Lakh	20%
12.5 – 15 Lakh	25%	Above 15 Lakh	30%
Above 15 Lakh	30%		

Cooperatives:

- ✓ New manufacturing co-operatives that start manufacturing before 31.3.2024 will have a **lower tax rate of 15%.**
- ✓ The limit for cash deposits and loans **by Primary Agricultural Co-operative Societies and Primary Co-operative Agriculture and Rural Development Banks** has been **increased to 2 lakh rupees per member.**
- ✓ Tax Deduction at Source (TDS) on cash withdrawals for co-operative societies has been **increased to 3 crore rupees.**

Major Earthquake struck Turkey and Syria

A massive earthquake with **magnitudes of 7.8** on the **Richter scale** have caused **widespread devastation** in **Turkey and Syria**, and their tremors were felt as far away as **Cyprus (456 km)**, **Lebanon (874 km)**, **Israel (1,381 km)**, and **Egypt (1,411 km)**.

Key Highlights

- ✓ The tremors of the first quake were felt on **February 6** with the **epicentre located near the city of Gaziantep** in **south-central Turkey**, close to the **border with Syria**.
- ✓ **At least 40 aftershocks** followed the first quake, with some of **magnitude as high as 6.7**. **Two more earthquakes of 7.6 and 6.0 magnitude struck the region** nine hours later.
- ✓ This is the strongest earthquake to shake the region in more than 100 years and the worst disaster since 1939. The 1939 earthquake was the Erzincan Earthquake that had caused **“extreme damage in the Erzincan Plain and the Kelkit River Valley**.
- ✓ The **head of Turkey’s disaster and emergency management agency** has raised the **country’s death toll from earthquake to 47,975**. The **United Nations has estimated Syria’s death toll at 6,000**.

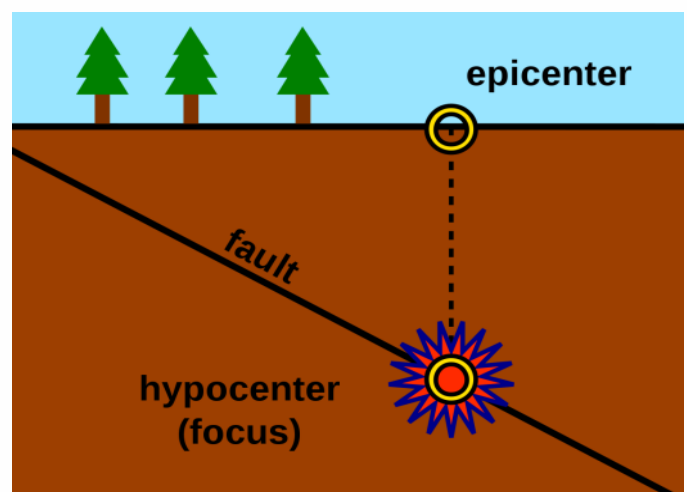
What Makes Turkey a Hotbed of Seismic Activity?

Turkey is frequently shaken by earthquakes. In 2020 itself, **it recorded almost 33,000 earthquakes** in the region, according to **Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD)**. Out of these, **332 earthquakes were of magnitudes 4.0 and higher**.

In the Eastern Mediterranean region comprising **Turkey, Syria and Jordan**, tectonics are dominated by complex interactions between the **African, Arabian, and Eurasian tectonic plates, and the Anatolian tectonic block**.

What is Earthquakes?

- ✓ An earthquake, in simple words, is shaking of the earth. It is a natural event. Earthquakes are caused by a **sudden release of stress along faults in the earth’s crust which generates waves that travel in all directions**.
- ✓ A fault is a sharp break in the **crustal rocks**. **Rocks along a fault tend to move in opposite directions**. As the overlying rock strata press them, the **friction locks them together**.
- ❖ **Hypocentre:** The point where the **earthquake starts is called the focus** or hypocentre of an earthquake.
- ❖ **Epicentre:** The **point on the surface, nearest to the focus, is called epicentre**. It is the first one to experience the waves. It is generally, epicentre, which is shown as the location of earthquake in media and other channels.



Types of energy waves

Release of energy during earthquake generates waves which are called Earthquake Waves. Earthquake waves are basically of two types — **body waves and surface waves**.

Body waves: They are **generated due to the release of energy at the focus and move in all directions** travelling through the body of the earth. Hence, the name body waves. The body waves interact with the surface rocks and generate new set of waves called surface waves.

There are two types of body waves. They are called P and S-waves :-

1. P waves or primary waves - move faster and are the first to arrive at the surface. The P-waves are **similar to sound waves**. They **travel through gaseous, liquid and solid materials**. P-waves vibrate parallel to the direction of the wave. This exerts pressure on the material in the direction of the propagation. As a result, it creates density differences in the material leading to stretching and squeezing of the material.

2. S-waves or secondary waves - arrive at the surface with some time lag. They **can travel only through solid materials**. This characteristic of the S-waves is quite important. It has helped scientists to understand the structure of the interior of the earth. **The direction of vibrations of S-waves is perpendicular to the wave direction in the vertical plane**. Hence, they create troughs and crests in the material through which they pass. **Surface waves are considered to be the most damaging waves**.

Surface waves: These waves **move along the surface**. The velocity of waves changes as they travel through **materials with different densities**. The denser the material, the **higher is the velocity**. Their direction also changes as they reflect or refract when coming across materials with different densities.

Surface waves can be characterized as :-

Love waves - Faster and move the ground from side to side, and

Rayleigh waves - Roll like waves on the surface of oceans and lakes

Measuring Earthquakes

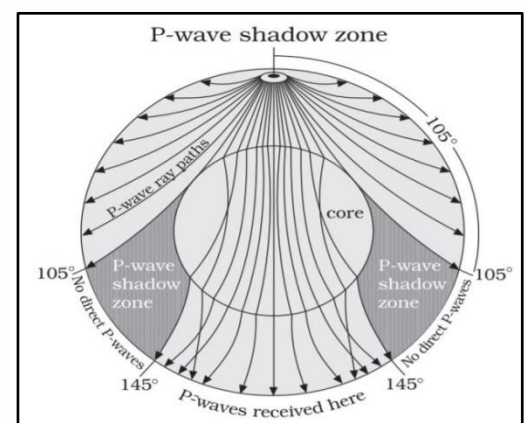
The earthquake events are scaled either **according to the magnitude or intensity of the shock**.

❖ **Richter Scale:** The **magnitude scale** is known as the Richter scale. The **magnitude indicates energy released during the quake**. It is expressed in **absolute numbers 0-10**.

❖ **Mercalli Scale:** The **intensity scale** is named after **Mercalli, an Italian seismologist**. The intensity scale indicates the visible damage caused by the event. The range of **intensity scale is from 1-12**.

Shadow Zones

- ✓ There exist some specific areas **where the waves are not reported by seismograph**. Such a zone is called the '**shadow zone**'. The study of different events reveals that for each earthquake, there exists an altogether different shadow zone.
- ✓ It was observed that **seismographs located at any distance within 105° from the epicentre**, recorded the arrival of **both P and S-waves**. However, the seismographs located **beyond 145° from epicentre record the arrival of P-waves, but not that of S-waves**.



- ✓ Thus, a **zone between 105° and 145° from epicentre** was identified as the shadow zone for both the types of waves.
- ✓ The **entire zone beyond 105° does not receive S-waves**.
- ✓ The shadow zone of S-wave is much larger than that of the P-waves.

Types of earthquake

1. Tectonic - Earthquakes that occur when the edges of the tectonic plates slide against each other in fault zones.

2. Volcanic - Earthquakes that occur in conjunction with volcanic activity.

3. Collapse - Smaller-scale earthquakes that result from the subterranean collapse of caverns or mines.

4. Induced - Quakes caused by human activity, like tunnel construction, filling reservoirs and implementing geothermal or fracking (hydraulic fracturing) projects, Explosions, etc.

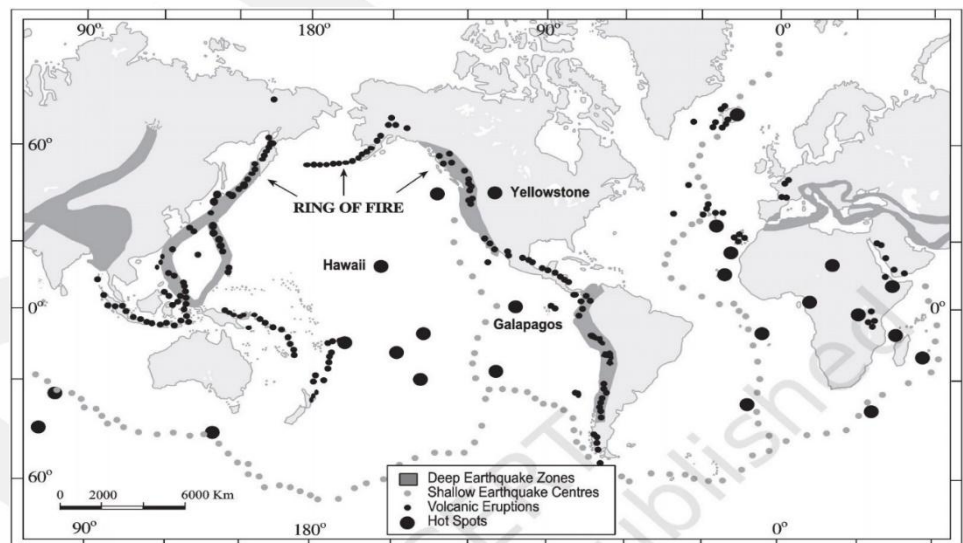
Distribution of Earthquake

Earthquakes can strike any location at any time, but history shows they occur in the same general patterns year after year, principally in three large zones of the earth:

❖ **Circum-Pacific seismic belt:** The world's greatest earthquake belt is found along the **rim of the Pacific Ocean**, where about **81 per cent of our planet's largest earthquakes occur**. It is also known as "Ring of Fire".

❖ **Alpide earthquake belt:** It extends from **Java to Sumatra through the Himalayas**, the Mediterranean, and out into the Atlantic. This belt accounts for about **17 percent of the world's largest earthquakes**.

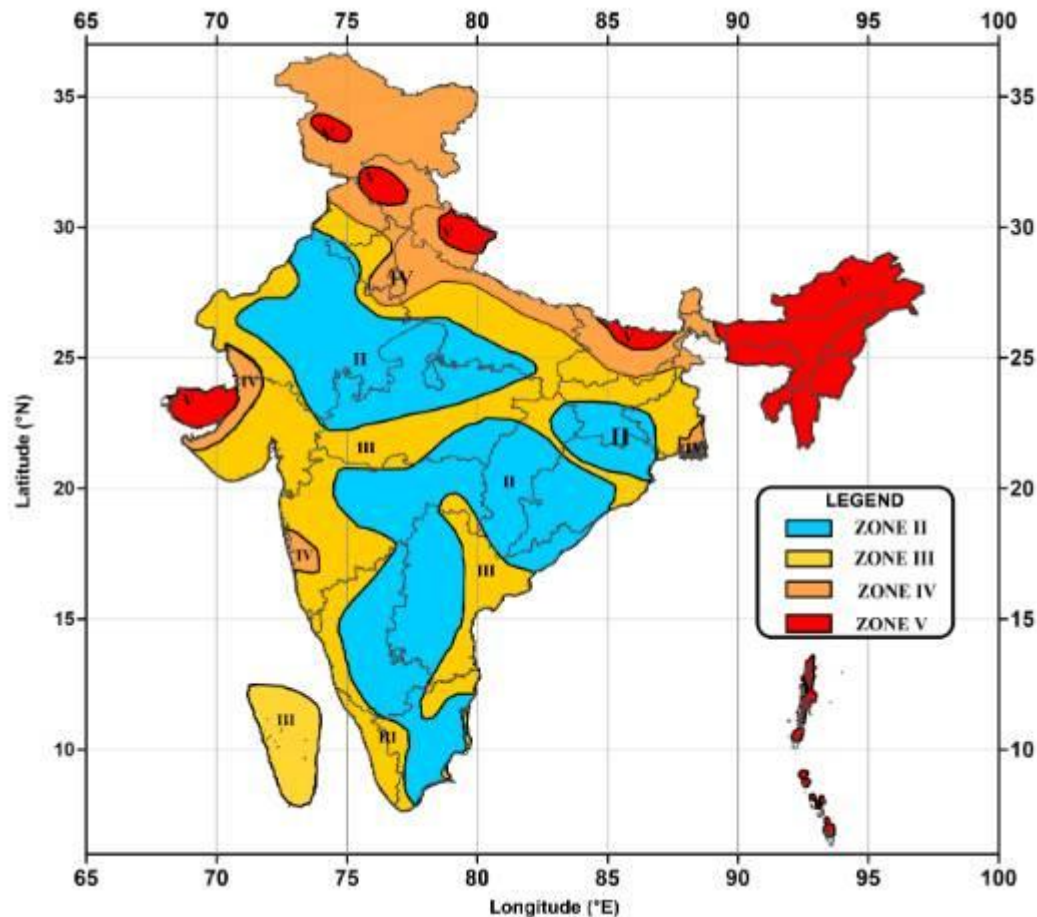
❖ **Submerged mid-Atlantic Ridge:** The ridge marks where two tectonic plates are spreading apart (a divergent plate boundary).



Seismic Zones in India

National Geophysical Laboratory, Geological Survey of India has divided India into the following **four** earthquake zones:

- ✓ Very high damage risk zone (Zone V)
- ✓ High damage risk zone (Zone IV)
- ✓ Moderate damage risk zone (Zone III)
- ✓ Low damage risk zone (Zone II)



New Start Treaty

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that Moscow was suspending its participation from the New START treaty. Speaking in his state-of-the-nation address, President Putin also said that Russia should stand ready to resume nuclear weapons tests if the U.S. does so. If this happens, it would end a global ban on nuclear weapons tests in place since Cold War times.

Reason of Concern because of Announcement -

- ✓ **Deterioration of Nuclear Disarmament Efforts**
 - This is at a time when tensions between the United States and Russia have reached a recent peak after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine last year.
- ✓ **Signals that nuclear weapons are an effective form of diplomatic leverage**
 - This largely depends on the posture taken by the USA after this announcement. If the United States makes concessions, other countries might get the signal that nuclear weapons hold keys in such cases.

START Treaty

- ✓ The name START comes from the original “**Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty**”, known as START-I.
 - START-I was signed between the US and the erstwhile USSR in 1991, and came into force in 1994.
- ✓ START-I capped the numbers of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that each side could deploy at 6,000 and 1,600 respectively.
- ✓ START-I lapsed in 2009 and was replaced first by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT, also known as the Treaty of Moscow), and then by the New START treaty.



Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT):

- ✓ It was **signed in Moscow on 24 May 2002**. After ratification by the U.S. Senate and the State Duma, SORT came into **force on 1 June 2003**.
- ✓ The Treaty Between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Strategic Offensive Reductions (SORT), also known as the Treaty of Moscow, was a strategic arms reduction treaty between the United States and Russia that **was in force from June 2003 until February 2011 when it was superseded by the New START treaty**.

The New START Treaty

- ✓ New START Treaty is officially known as - "**Treaty between USA and Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms**". It was **signed by then-President Barack Obama and then-Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in 2010**.
- ✓ The treaty entered into **force on 5th February 2011**, and placed new verifiable limits on intercontinental-range nuclear weapons.
- ✓ It is a legally binding, verifiable agreement that limits each side to **1,550 strategic nuclear warheads deployed on 700 strategic delivery systems (ICBMs, SLBMs, and heavy bombers)** and limits deployed and **non-deployed launchers to 800**.
- ✓ Its duration was for ten years that is till 2021, but it was extended by **five more years till 2026**.

Compliance with the Treaty

- ✓ Detailed procedures for the implementation and verification of the central limits, and all treaty obligations, are part of the treaty terms.
- ✓ The treaty provides for 18 on-site inspections per year for **US and Russian inspection teams**.

How does United States and Russia Complied with It?

- ✓ Both countries met the limits spelled out in the **treaty by February 2018** and appear to have remained at or below them since then.
- ✓ However, regular inspections mandated by the agreement have not been held for the past three years — initially because of the coronavirus pandemic, and later because relations soured after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Various other treaty between Russia and USA –

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks-1(SALT):

It began in **1969**, Under the Interim Agreement, both sides pledged not to construct new **Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)** silos, not to increase the size of existing ICBM silos significantly, and capped the number of **Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM)** launch tubes and **SLBM-carrying submarines**.

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty-2:

Signed in 1993, called for reducing deployed strategic arsenals to **3,000-3,500 warheads** and banned the deployment of **destabilizing multiple-warhead land-based missiles**.

confactuals

- ECONOMY
- GOVERNANCE & SCHEMES
- SOCIAL ISSUES
- INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- DEFENSE AND SECURITY
- ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY
- ART AND CULTURE
- SPORTS



VIDHIGYA CONFACTUALS

ECONOMY

Angel Tax

The **Section 56 (2) (vii b) in the Income Tax Act** is referred to as Angel tax. **These taxes are imposed on startups.** Say a startup SSS sells one lakh shares to a person X. Selling price of one share is Rs 5000. Now SSS gains 50 crores. Say the actual market value of the share is Rs 2000 per share. So 20 crore rupees is the actual market value. SSS made 30 crores profit. So SSS has to pay angel tax on the 30 crores rupees.

Why Angel Tax is in NEWS?

During Union Budget 2023, Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sita Raman **proposed to amend the Angel tax.** Now, the equity amount received by the startups **will be subjected to income taxes and not angel taxes.** Meaning, the entire **50 crores of rupees**, that is, the total amount the startup received by selling the shares is subjected to income tax! Earlier, only 30 cores were subjected to taxes.

PM KUSUM Extended

The government has extended the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PMKUSUM) scheme, till March 2026.**

PM KUSUM

- ✓ The PM KUSUM scheme was launched by **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2019**, to add solar capacity of **30,800 MW by 2022**, with total **central financial support of Rs 34,422 crore.**
- ✓ State Nodal Agencies (SNAs) of MNRE coordinate with States/UTs, discoms and farmers for implementation of the scheme.

Objectives

- ✓ The scheme aims **to boost solar capacity to provide energy security to Indian farmers.** At the same time, it aims to achieve the **aim by increasing India's share of solar power generation.**
- ✓ It also aims at de-dieselization of the farm sector, providing water and energy security to farmers, **increasing the income of farmers and curbing environmental pollution.**

Scheme Components

- ✓ **Component A:** It focuses on the **installation of 10,000 MW of solar capacity** by setting up small power plants of **capacity of 2 MW.** These power plants will be **set up by farmers, panchayats, cooperatives, farmer producers etc. in barren land.**
 - Procurement Based Incentive (PBI) will be provided for the first five years by MNRE to DISCOMs, for buying the power from farmers/developers.
- ✓ **Component B:** It lays emphasis on the **installation of 20 lakh standalone solar-powered** agriculture pumps (off grid). The government will support individual farmers in setting up solar pumps of a capacity up to 7.5 Horse Power (HP).
- ✓ **Component C:** Solarisation (conversion) of **15 lakh grid-connected agriculture pumps.**

APEDA Organizes Buyer Seller Meet with UAE

- ✓ As a part of its series of **sensitization programmes that are aimed at promoting the export of millets** and its value-added products, **APEDA organized a Virtual-Buyer Seller Meet to harness export opportunities in United Arab Emirates (UAE).**
- ✓ APEDA also launched **e-Catalogue for the UAE** which contains information on various **Indian Millets and range of their value-added products available for export**, list of active exporters, **start-ups and importer/retail chain/hyper markets, etc.**
- ✓ It has also planned to organize millet promotional activities in **South Africa, Dubai, Japan, South Korea, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, Sydney, Germany, United Kingdom and United States of America.**
- ✓ **APEDA** has also signed an MoU with **Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR) to boost value-addition and farmers' income.**

Millets in India

- ✓ India is one of the leading producers of millets in the world with an **estimated share of around 41% in the global production.**
- ✓ **As per FAO**, world production of millets in the year 2020 was **30.46 million metric tonnes (MMT)** and **India's share was 12.49 MMT.**
- ✓ **India recorded 27% growth in millet production in 2021-22** as compared to millet production in the previous year was 15.92 MMT.
- ✓ **India's top five millet producing states are Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.**
- ✓ There are **16 major varieties of millet**, which are produced and exported. Exports of millets from India include mainly whole grain and the **export of value-added products of millets from India is negligible.**
- ✓ Share of export of millets is nearly **1% of the total millet production.** However, it is estimated that the millets market is set to grow from its current market value of more than **USD 9 billion to over USD 12 billion by 2025.**

South India's 1st Industrial Corridor Project

- ✓ The **Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of South India's 1st Industrial Corridor Project to be implemented at Tumakuru** which is spread over 8500 acres of land under the **Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC).**
- ✓ The CBIC project includes the development of industrial townships at three nodes: **Krishnapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), Tumakuru (Karnataka), and Ponneri (Tamil Nadu).**
- ✓ Tumakuru Industrial Township has been planned with holistic and integrated approach in line with the principles of **PM-GatiShakti to address the issue of last mile multi-modal connectivity** to the economic zone.
- ✓ The **Multi Modal connectivity ecosystem** will ensure a seamless movement of raw material and finished goods.
- ✓ The **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)**, and the **Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB)**, have taken up the development of the Industrial Township.
- ✓ The project will be a mixed-use development comprising of land uses **like industrial, institutional, residential, commercial, green spaces etc.** making it a completely self-sustainable and resilient smart industrial city.
- ✓ Target sectors are **Food Products, Textile and Apparels, Electronics, Auto & Auto Components, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals, Engineering, General Manufacturing etc.**

Startup India Seed Fund Scheme

- ✓ The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** has shared that under **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)**, **477.25 crore** has been approved to **133 incubators** of which **Rs. 211.63 crore** has been disbursed as on 31st December 2022.
- ✓ The flagship schemes under Startup India initiative namely, **Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS)**, **Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)** and **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)** extend support to startups at various stages of their business cycle.

Need for SISFS

- ✓ Easy availability of capital is essential for entrepreneurs at the **early stages of growth of an enterprise**.
- ✓ However, funding is generally available to startups only after the proof of concept has been provided. At the same, it is difficult for early-stage startups to get loans from banks.
- ✓ The capital required at this stage often presents a **make-or-break situation** for **startups with good business ideas**.
- ✓ Many innovative business ideas fail to grow **due to the absence of this critical capital required at an early stage for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization**.

Objective of SISFS

- ✓ SISFS provides **financial assistance to startups** for **proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market entry and commercialization**.
- ✓ This would enable these startups to rise to a level **where they will be able to raise investments or seek loans from commercial banks or financial institutions**.

Details of SISFS

- ✓ **Launched in January 2021, SISFS was approved with a corpus of Rs. 945 crores for the period of 4 years**. In this period, it is expected to support an estimated **3,600 entrepreneurs through 300 incubators**.
- ✓ An **Experts Advisory Committee (EAC)** has been created by **DPIIT (Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade)** to execute and monitor SISFS.
 - The EAC evaluates and **selects incubators for allotment of funds, monitors progress, and takes all necessary measures for efficient utilization of funds**.

Khanan Prahari App

- ✓ The government has launched a mobile app Khanan Prahari and a web app **Coal Mine Surveillance and Management System (CMSMS)** for **reporting unauthorized coal mining activities**.
 - Khanan Prahari app is part of (CMSMS).
- ✓ The basic **objective of CMSMS is reporting, monitoring and taking suitable action on unauthorised coal mining activities like rat hole mining, pilferage etc**.
- ✓ It is a web-based **Geographic Information System (GIS) application** through which **location of sites for unauthorised mining can be detected**.
- ✓ There are two ways in which illegal **coal mining is reported/ identified through CMSMS**.
- ✓ **One way** is through **periodic scanning of Satellite imagery (In house)** and the **second is through the information provided by responsible citizens using the mobile application 'Khan Prahari'**.
- ✓ The basic platform used in the system is of **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's (MeiTY) map** which provides village level information.

- ✓ The leasehold boundary of all the coal mines is displayed on this map. The system will use satellite data to detect changes by which **unauthorised mining activity** extending beyond the allotted **lease area can be detected and suitable action can be taken on it.**
- ✓ The complaint originating from **coal mines allotted to Coal India will go to Coal India Offices** and those originating from coal blocks not allotted to Coal India will go straight to the **State Government Officers.**
- ✓ Moreover, for each complaint the alert will also go to the **District Magistrate and SP of the district.**

Millet International Initiative for Research and Awareness (MIIRA)

- ✓ During its G20 Presidency, India proposed to the launch of a **global initiative (MIIRA) to encourage the consumption and production of millets.**
- ✓ MIIRA will **aim to connect the millet research organisations across the world while also supporting research on millet crops.**
- ✓ It is in line with the **UN declaring 2023 as the International Year of Millets** and the **Centre's plan to make India a global hub for millets.**
- ✓ Besides setting up a web platform to connect researchers and holding international research conferences, the **plan is also to promote millet consumption by raising awareness.**
- ✓ For MIIRA to take off, **India will contribute the "seed money"** while each **G20 member will later have to contribute to its budget in the form of a membership fee.**
- ✓ The **MIIRA secretariat** will be in **Delhi.** With India being a **major producer of millets,** this will ensure a flow of investment from the **country's industry and research bodies.**

Additional Surveillance Mechanism

- ✓ The **National Stock Exchange (NSE)** has placed **Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports, and Ambuja Cements under the additional surveillance mechanism (ASM).**
- ✓ This means trading in their shares will require a **100% margin,** which is **aimed at curbing speculation and short-selling.**
- ✓ The move comes as shares of Adani group companies continue to fall in the light of **accusations of stock manipulation** and fraud levelled against the group by **New York-based Hindenburg Research.**
- ✓ **ASM was introduced in 2018** with the intention **to protect investors from market volatility and unusual changes in share price.**
- ✓ The shortlisting of securities for placing in ASM is based on criteria that are jointly decided by the SEBI and exchanges.
- ✓ It covers the following parameters: **high low variation, client concentration, market capitalisation, volume variation, delivery percentage, and number of unique PANs.**
- ✓ Put simply, an **ASM shortlisting signals to investors that the stocks have seen unusual activity.**
- ✓ However, the **shortlisting of securities under ASM is purely on account of market surveillance** and it should not be interpreted as an adverse action against the concerned company/entity.

India become 2nd largest consumer of Steel

- ✓ **India has become the 2nd largest consumer of finished steel in the world.** The finished steel consumption was **106 million tons (MT) during the FY22.**
- ✓ The **per capita steel consumption in the World** is around **233 kg.** However, the per capita consumption of steel in India is around **77.2 kg, gone up by 50% in last 8 years,**
- ✓ **Steel is a deregulated sector** and **Government's role is that of a facilitator for encouraging steel consumption in the country.**

- ✓ Thus, the Government has brought **National Steel Policy (NSP), 2017** which forecasts per capita steel consumption **to increase up to 160 kg by 2030-31.**
- ✓ Government's push for infrastructure development through **Gati-Shakti Master Plan, Make-in-India initiative for manufacturing sector, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY) etc.** would provide the required push to the demand and consumption of steel in the country.
- ✓ **Ministry of Steel** has also set up a **Joint Working Group (JWG)** with **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** having members from **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Central Public Works Department (CPWD), Technical Institutions (IITs/NITs) & Industries** for encouraging steel usage in Housing and Construction sector.

UPNEXT India

- ✓ The **first edition of UPNEXT India** was inaugurated in the presence of international buyers and exhibitors.
- ✓ UPNEXT India is organized by **Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC)** and supported by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry under the Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme.**
- ✓ This initiative is in the form of a series of Reverse Buyer Seller meet and has been kick-started with Japan.
 - The **objective of the Reverse Buyer Seller meet is to provide an opportunity to prospective importers (buyers) to interact with Indian counterparts(sellers)** about the requirements and to increase the potential of exports of Indian textile products.

Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme

- ✓ MAI is an **Export Promotion Scheme** designed **to act as a catalyst to promote India's exports** on a sustained basis.
- ✓ It is formulated on **focus product-focus country approach.** This helps to evolve **specific market and specific product through market studies/survey.**
- ✓ Under it, assistance is provided to **Export Promotion Organizations, Trade Promotion Organizations, National Level Institutions, Research Institutions, Universities, Laboratories, Exporters etc.**
- ✓ The assistance helps in enhancement of exports through accessing new markets or through increasing the share in the existing markets.
- ✓ The following activities are eligible for financial assistance under the scheme:
 - **Marketing projects abroad; Capacity building; Support for statutory compliances; Studies; Project development; Developing foreign trade facilitation web portal; Support cottage and handicrafts units.**

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC)

Incorporated in 1978, AEPC is the official body of apparel exporters in India that provides invaluable assistance to Indian exporters as well as importers/international buyers who choose India as their preferred sourcing destination for garments.

GOVERNANCE AND SCHEMES

Digitization of Courts

The **Supreme Court in Feb' 2023** introduced on an experimental basis **the live transcription of its proceedings using the Artificial Intelligence (AI) mechanism.**

e-Courts Project

- ✓ The Government of India has launched the **e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project** in the country for **computerization of District and subordinate courts** with the **objective of improving access to justice using technology.**
- ✓ e-Courts project is being implemented in association with **e-Committee of Supreme Court of India and Department of Justice.**
- ✓ This project is based on the **“National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology in the Indian Judiciary”**. This project is being completed in different phases which are as follows:
 - **Phase 1** - Phase I of the project was **implemented during 2011-2015.**
 - **Phase 2** - Phase II of the project **started in 2015** under which **18,735 District & Subordinate courts** have been computerised.
 - Phase II of the project is nearing its completion.
 - During Phase II, one video conference equipment each has been provided to all Court Complexes including **taluk level courts**
 - **Phase 3 - Detailed Project Report (DPR) for e-Courts Phase III** has been finalized and approved by the e-Committee, Supreme Court of India. **Phase III mentions various new features** such as:
 - **Digital and Paperless Courts** aimed at bringing court proceedings under a digital format in a court;
 - **Online Court focusing on eliminating the presence of litigants or lawyers in the court;**
 - use of emerging technologies like **Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and its subsets like Optical Character Recognition (OCR) etc.** for analysis of case pendency, forecasting future litigation, etc.

The Union Government in its Budget 2023-24 has announced **Rs. 7000 Cr. for e-Courts phase III.** Phase III of the **e-Courts project envisages a judicial system** that is **more affordable, accessible, cost effective, predictable, reliable, and transparent for every individual.**

Following Initiatives Have Been Taken Under e-Courts Project

- ✓ **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG):** It is a database of orders, judgments, and cases, created as an online platform under the e-Courts Project. It provides information relating to judicial proceedings/decisions of all computerized district and subordinate courts of the country. Litigants can access case status information.
- ✓ **Justice Clocks:** To make effective use of databases created through National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG), 39 LED Display Message Sign Board System called Justice Clocks, have been installed in 25 High Courts.
- ✓ **Electronic Case Management Tools (ECMT):** They have been created with Mobile Apps for lawyers (total 1.50 cr. downloads till 31st October 2022) and JustIS app for judges.

- ✓ **A new “Judgment Search” portal:** It has been started with features such as search by Bench, Case Type, Case Number, Year, Petitioner/ Respondent Name, Judge Name, Act, Section, Decision: From Date, To Date and Full Text Search. This facility is being provided free of cost to all.
- ✓ **The Wide Area Network (WAN) Project:** Under this project, connectivity has been provided to 99.4% of total Court Complexes across India with 10 Mbps to 100 Mbps bandwidth speed.
- ✓ **National Service and Tracking of Electronic Processes (NSTEP):** It has been launched for technology enabled process serving and issuing of summons.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

The **National Health Authority (NHA)**, under Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), introduced the ‘**Scan and Share**’ service for faster **outpatient department (OPD)** registrations in 2022. According to the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**, **up to 5 lakh patients** have benefited since last year due to QR code-enabled registration at hospital counters, which has helped reduce long queues.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)

- ✓ **Launched in 2021** during the third anniversary of the **Ayushman Bharat PM Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PM-JAY)**, ABDM will connect the digital health solutions of hospitals across the country with each other.
- ✓ It will enable individuals to discover **hospitals, laboratories and pharmacies across the country**. The health record of every citizen will be digitally protected.



75
आज़ादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

Now Health is just a click away

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission

Salient Features

-  Create a seamless online platform through a wide range of data, information & infrastructure services
-  Enable exchange of longitudinal health records of citizens with their consent
-  Ensure security, confidentiality & privacy of health-related personal information

Components

Health ID - It will be used for the purposes of uniquely identifying persons, authenticating them, and threading their health records only with the informed consent of the patient to help hospitals, insurance firms, and citizens access health records electronically when required.

Electronic medical record (EMR) web app - Comprehensive digital version of a patient's chart (medical and treatment history) from a single health facility. It is to create a web application that operates on a set of standards (interoperability and medical).

Health Facility Registry (HFR) - Comprehensive repository of health facilities (including hospitals, clinics, diagnostic laboratories and imaging centers, pharmacies, etc) across different systems of medicine.

Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR) - Comprehensive repository of all healthcare professionals involved in delivery of healthcare services across modern and traditional systems of medicine

Personal Health Record-System (PHR) - It will enable an individual to manage information about his/her healthcare. This includes viewing of records comprising of health data, lab reports, treatment details, discharge summaries across one or multiple health facilities.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission Sandbox - It will act as a framework for technology and product testing that will help organizations, including private players intending to be a part of ecosystem (Health Information Provider or Health Information User) or efficiently link with building blocks of Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

Benefits

- ✓ The Mission will not only make the processes of hospitals simplified but also will **increase ease of living**.
- ✓ The **Digital Ecosystem** will also enable a host of other facilities like **Digital Consultation, Consent of patients in letting medical practitioners access their records, etc.**
- ✓ With the implementation of this scheme, old medical records cannot get lost as **every record will be stored digitally**.
- ✓ In order to create a **National Digital Health Ecosystem**, the NHA acts as the implementing agency of the mission. **NHA is constituted for implementing AB PM-JAY**, as an attached office of the MoHFW with full functional autonomy.
- ✓ The **Health Facility Registry (HFR)** is the core building block of ABDM that **aims to serve as a single source for verified information on health facilities across the country**

ABDM Performance

- ✓ Since nationwide launch, ABDM has achieved significant growth with over –
 - **23 crore ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)** numbers (earlier known as Health ID),
 - **1.14 Lakh health facilities** registered in the HFR,
 - **33 thousand healthcare professionals under the Healthcare Professionals Registry (HPR),**
- ✓ With more individuals, **healthcare professionals (doctors, nurses, paramedics, etc.) joining ABDM, digitisation of health records** at their point of creation is now possible.

‘Scan and Share’ Service Under The ABDM

- ✓ The service is currently provided in **125 districts across 25 States and UTs** and it is a typical example of how technology can be leveraged to provide better services to patients and to improve the system efficiency.
- ✓ The **participating hospitals (365)**, both government and private, display their unique QR codes in patient registration areas.
- ✓ The patients can scan the QR code using any health application such as **ABHA app, Aarogya Setu app, EkaCare, DRiefcase, Bajaj Health or PayTM.**
- ✓ The patients then share information like name, age, gender, and **unique health ID [ABHA number] to the Health Management Information system [HMIS] of the hospital.**

Party Name & Symbol and Role of Election Commission of India

The **Election Commission of India** allotted the name ‘**Shiv Sena**’ and the party’s bow and arrow symbol to the **Eknath Shinde faction in effect recognising it as the original party founded by Balasaheb Thackeray.**

Background

- ✓ Both the factions of **Shiv Sena led by former CM Uddhav Thackeray and incumbent CM Eknath Shinde claimed the party name and the symbol belongs to them**, ever since Eknath Shinde revolted against the Uddhav Thackeray-led government last year.
- ✓ For immediate electoral purposes, the EC froze the party symbol and advised factions to contest elections with different names and temporary symbols.



- ✓ **On 17 February 2022**, however, **both the party name 'Shiv Sena' and the party symbol 'bow and arrow'**, which has traditionally been used by Uddhav Thackeray's family, have now been retained by the **Eknath Shinde**.
- ✓ The EC cited the **Sadiq Ali judgment in its order in the Shiv Sena case**.

How ECI Allotted Party Name and Symbol?

There are **three criteria** that are used to decide disputes between warring party factions. While passing its decision, the EC considered and analyzed these three tests mentioned in the Sadiq Ali case which includes:

- Test of Aims and Objects of the Party Constitution
- Test of Party Constitution
- Test of Majority

Can The Decision of ECI Be Challenged?

- ✓ In **Sadiq Ali and Another vs. Election Commission of India case**, the Supreme Court decided that the EC is a tribunal and its decision regarding derecognition of a party or allocation of symbols in case of dispute could be challenged only by appealing to the Supreme Court under Special Leave Petition.
- ✓ But later, it was decided that it can be challenged in High Courts too.

Powers of Election Commission on Election Symbol

- ✓ The **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968** empowers the EC to recognise political parties and allot symbols.
- ✓ **Applicability:** It applies to disputes between **recognized national and state parties**. For disputes within registered but unrecognized parties, the EC generally advises them to solve their disputes amicably or to approach the court.

What happens to the Group that Doesn't Get the Parent Party's Symbol?

- ✓ Before 1997, EC used to recognise the party, not getting the symbol, based on the criteria fixed for recognition of parties under **Paras 6 and 7 of the Symbols Order**.
 - o I.e., if the breakaway party had support of sufficient MPs/MLAs as per the criteria, it was recognised by EC as **National/State Party**.
- ✓ The EC in 1997 felt that merely having MPs and MLAs is not enough, as the elected representatives had fought and **won polls on tickets of their parent (undivided) parties**.
- ✓ The EC introduced a new rule under which the **splinter group of the party — other than the group that got the party symbol — had to register itself as a separate party**.
- ✓ These parties could lay claim to national or state party status only on the basis of its performance in state or central elections after registration.

Sadiq Ali and Anr. vs Election Commission of India, 1971 (The Sadiq Ali case)

- In the so-called Sadiq Ali case, a dispute arose between two factions of the Congress in **1969**.
- The EC in 1971 relied on the test of majority to decide which side should get the party's name and symbol. Two other criteria — a test of party constitution and test of aims and objects — were considered and rejected.
- ECI ruled that the faction backed by Indira Gandhi was the real Congress, and its decision was subsequently upheld by the Supreme Court.

National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG)

Recently, two capacity-building programmes for the civil servants of **Bangladesh and Arunachal Pradesh** commenced at the **National Centre for Good Governance (NCGG), Mussoorie campus.**

About NCGG

- ✓ It is dedicated to **promoting collaboration and learning among civil servants** in India and neighboring countries, in line with the '**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**' philosophy.
- ✓ It was established as an apex-level autonomous institution in **2014** under the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**
- ✓ Its head office is at **New Delhi** and its registered office at **Mussoorie.**
- ✓ The Centre traces its origin to the **National Institute of Administrative Research (NIAR)**, which was set up in **1995 by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA).** NIAR was subsequently rechristened and subsumed into NCGG.

Mandate of NCGG

NCGG serves as the country's premier institution for promoting good governance, policy reforms, and capacity building of civil servants within India and in other developing nations. It also functions as a think tank in partnership with the **Ministry of External Affairs.**

Governing Body	Management Committee
<p>The affairs of the NCGG are managed under the overall superintendence and direction of the Governing Body, which is headed by the Cabinet Secretary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cabinet Secretary: Chairperson ✓ Secretary (DoPT): Vice-Chairperson 	<p>The NCGG also has a Management Committee, which is responsible for the administration and management of the society with regards to detailed plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Secretary, Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT): Chairperson ✓ Director, LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie: Vice Chairperson

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)

Ministry of Education released All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2020-2021.

About AISHE

- ✓ The Ministry has been conducting **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) since 2011**, covering all higher educational institutions located in Indian Territory and **imparting higher education in the country.**
- ✓ The survey collects detailed information on different parameters such as **student enrollment, teacher's data, infrastructural information, financial information etc.**
- ✓ For the first time, in AISHE 2020-21, HEIs have filled data using entirely online data collection platform through the **Web Data Capture Format (DCF)** developed by **Department of Higher Education** through the **National Informatics Centre (NIC).**

Highlights of the AISHE

Following are the **key highlights** of the survey:

Student Enrollment	Teacher's Data	Infrastructural Information
<p>1) Enrollment in higher education increases to 4.14 crore, crossing the 4-crore mark for first time; increase of 7.5% from 2019-20 and 21% from 2014-15.</p> <p>2) Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) has improved from the previous year for all social groups. The details are as follows:</p> <p>a) Female enrollment reaches 2 crore mark, increase of 13 Lakh from 2019-20. Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased from 1 in 2017-18 to 1.05 in 2020-21</p> <p>b) Significant increase of 32% in OBC Student enrolment.</p> <p>c) Significant increase of 28% and 47% in enrolment of SC & ST students respectively in 2020-21, compared to 2014-15.</p> <p>3) Enrollment in Distance Education has increased by 7% in 2020-21 from 2019-20.</p> <p>4) Among Disciplines at undergraduate level, enrollment is highest in Arts (33.5%), followed by Science (15.5%), Commerce (13.9%) and Engineering & Technology (11.9%).</p>	<p>1) Total number of faculty/teachers increases by 47,914 from 2019-20.</p> <p>2) The total number of faculty/teachers are 15,51,070 of which about 57.1% are male and 42.9% are female.</p> <p>3) The female per 100 male faculty has improved to 75 in 2020-21 from 74 in 2019- 20 and 63 in 2014- 15.</p>	<p>1) Number of Universities has increased by 70, number of colleges has increased by 1,453, in 2020-21 over 2019-20.</p> <p>2) Government Universities (59% of total) contribute towards 73.1% of the enrolment. Government Colleges (21.4% of total) contribute towards 34.5% of the enrolment.</p> <p>3) The enrolment in Institute of National Importance (INIs) has increased by nearly 61% during the period 2014-15 to 2020-21.</p> <p>4) Enrolment has increased in 2020-21 compared to 2014-15 in the Specialized Universities relating to Defence, Sanskrit, Biotechnology, Forensics, Design, Sports etc.</p> <p>5) Availability of different infrastructural facilities in HEIs in 2020-21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Libraries (97%) • Laboratories (88%) • Computer centers (91%, from 86% in 2019-20) • Skill Development Centre (61%, from 58% in 2019-20) • Connectivity to National Knowledge Network (56%, from 34% in 2019-20) <p>6) 43% of universities and 61.4% of colleges are located in Rural Areas.</p>

Analysis of AISHE

- ✓ From the latest AISHE report, it is evident that the **enrollment rate in higher education has increased significantly**, with more students enrolling in postgraduate and research programs.
- ✓ However, the report also highlights **the need for improvement in the quality of education, research infrastructure, and faculty development.**
- ✓ Moreover, the **report emphasizes the importance of equal access to higher education for students from all sections of society, including marginalized and disadvantaged communities.**

PM-PRANAM Scheme

The government has declared green growth as one of its **major priorities for the 2023-24 financial year**. In its effort to make India a cleaner and greener nation, the **government has allocated Rs 5,172 lakh crores** for the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME) Scheme**. The government has also launched the PM PRANAM Scheme, which is **aimed at reducing the use of chemical fertilizers and promoting alternatives to fertilizers**.

Introduction to the PM PRANAM Scheme

- ✓ The PM PRANAM Scheme stands for **PM Programme for Restoration, Awareness, Nourishment, and Amelioration of Mother Earth**.
- ✓ The main objective of the scheme is **to reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and promote the balanced use of chemicals**.
- ✓ The government is planning **to promote alternatives to fertilizers to achieve green growth and minimize the negative impact on the environment**.
- ✓ It aims **to ultimately bring down the government's subsidy burden**, which is **estimated to reach Rs. 2.25 lakh crore in 2022-23: 39% higher than last year's figure of Rs 1.62 lakh crore**.

Amrit Dharohar

- ✓ The scheme is announced in **Union budget 2023**.
- ✓ It will be implemented over the next 3 years to encourage **optimal use of wetlands, and enhance biodiversity, carbon stock, eco-tourism opportunities and income generation for local communities**.
- ✓ It will emphasize on the **importance of wetlands and their preservation**, with an outlook that is inclusive of local communities as caretakers of the ecosystem.

Agriculture Accelerator Fund

There are more than **two thousand agriculture startups** in the country. The Government of India is trying **to increase this number to ten thousand**. Agriculture is the Backbone of the Indian Economy **contributing 53.89% GVA of India**. In Union Budget 2023-24, Finance Minister **allocated Rs 1.25 lakh crores for agriculture**. Agriculture was one of the **seven major priorities** of the budget. During the Budget presentation in the parliament, **the Finance Minister** announced that GOI will set up **Agriculture Accelerator Fund**.

Agriculture Accelerator Fund

- ✓ This fund is to be setup **to increase the number of agricultural startups in the rural areas**
- ✓ The main aim of the fund is **to provide innovative and affordable solutions**
- ✓ It will focus only on **farmers and the challenges faced by them**
- ✓ **More young entrepreneurs** will be encouraged **to begin agri startups using these funds**
- ✓ Startups focusing on **cost-effective solutions will be given priorities**
- ✓ Also, **technology startups** that aim **to increase agricultural outputs will be given preference**

Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana runs under **Skill Development Ministry** and is implemented by the **National Skill Development Corporation**. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana was **launched in 2015**. The main objective of the program is **to train the youths in areas where there are requirements for Indian industries**. Also, the program certifies the youth who are already good at a skill by evaluating them. The complete **cost involved in learning the skills is borne by the Union Government**. After

completing the training, the candidates are assigned jobs. During the Union Budget 2023, the finance minister announced the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 4.0.

PMKVY 4.0

- ✓ Its objective is **to boost the skills of the youth.**
- ✓ The program **will train lakhs of youths in the next three years**
- ✓ The **fourth version of PMKVY is to be implemented with industrial partnerships**
- ✓ Job training will be offered after course completion. The training will also be provided under PMKVY
- ✓ This includes **Artificial Intelligence, soft skills, robotics, drone technology, 3D printing, the Internet of Things, Mechatronics, etc.**
- ✓ During PMKVY 4.0, the GOI will open **30 Skill India International Centers.**

National Data Governance Policy

Data governance is managing data usage, data security, data availability, and data integrity. During the **Union Budget 2023 presentation, the finance minister Smt. Nirmala Sitaraman** announced that **GOI is to launch National Governance Policy.** The policy will create an **Indian Data Management Office.** The IDMO will operate **under the IT Ministry.** The government of India is to launch a policy to increase access to anonymized data in a safe and secure way.

Objective

- ✓ The main aim of the policy is **to make the data secure and make it available to startups in the country.** In the **2023 budget, almost every new government program and scheme are focusing on startups.**
- ✓ The **policy will increase the availability of data** that are of **national importance**
- ✓ It will **increase the awareness of citizens by increasing the availability of open safe and authentic data**
- ✓ **Increase the overall compliance**
- ✓ Enhance the **participation of the public**
- ✓ **Secure data sharing on the internet**
- ✓ **Streamline privacy standards**

NAMASTE (National Action Plan for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem) scheme

In the **Union Budget 2023,** the Government of India **allocated Rs 100 crores** for the **NAMASTE scheme.** With this, the **GOI aims to mechanize septic tank cleaning and sewer cleaning in towns and cities.** The scheme **aims to provide an alternate livelihood to sanitation workers.** In addition, **NAMASTE will strive to bring behavioral changes to them.**

Objective of the scheme

- ✓ To achieve **zero fatalities in the sanitation sector.**
- ✓ **No sanitation worker will touch or come in direct contact with the faecal matter.**
- ✓ **The sanitation workers will be encouraged to form Self Help Groups.**
- ✓ Ensure the workers have access to alternative livelihoods as mechanization may bring loss of jobs to few in the industry.

Prasar Bharati Revamp

The **Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development** scheme was recently launched to provide financial support to Prasar Bharati, the public broadcaster of India. It aims to boost the infrastructure of **public sector broadcasters in the country such as Doordarshan, All India Radio, etc.** A Revamp to Prasar Bharati



About the Scheme

- ✓ The scheme will **increase the channels in AIR**. It will ensure that AIR reaches 80% of the Indian population
- ✓ **80 lakh free set-top boxes of Doordarshan** will be distributed. Here the focus is on border areas, **LWE areas**, and **tribal areas**
- ✓ The scheme's outlay is **Rs. 2,500 crores**
- ✓ Focus on developing **high-quality content**
- ✓ Increase the capacity of DTH; as in increase **the number of channels being broadcasted**

SOCIAL ISSUES

India's Gender Budget Up by Over 30%

- ✓ India's Gender Budget, which **aims to reduce the gender gap**, was allocated ₹2.23 lakh crore in the **Union Budget 2023-24**, which is just **2.12% higher than the Revised Estimates (RE) of ₹ 2.18 lakh crore for 2022-23**.
- ✓ However, it was **at least 30% higher** compared to last year's **Budget Estimates (BE) of 1.71 lakh crore**.
- ✓ **Overview:**
 - There was a **0.63% rise** in the share of the **Gender Budget in government's total expenditure**. The estimated **Gender Budget stood at 4.96% of the total expenditure this year, compared to 4.33% last year**.
 - The gender budget has been an **average of 4.9%** of the total expenditure as per budget estimates **during the previous 15 years**.

Gender Budgeting

- ✓ The **Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD)** defines gender budgeting as a tool to achieve gender mainstreaming so as to ensure that the **benefits of development reach women as much as men**.
- ✓ The government publishes a Gender Budget Statement (GBS) **every year along with the Union Budget**.
 - GBS is a reporting mechanism for ministries/departments to review their programmes from a **gender perspective & present information on allocations for women**.
- ✓ As such, it is not a separate accounting exercise but an ongoing process of keeping a gender perspective in **policy/programme formulation, its implementation and review**.
- ✓ So, it entails the dissection of the government budgets –
 - To establish its **gender differential impacts** and
 - To ensure that **gender commitments** are translated into **budgetary commitments**.

Issues with Gender Budgeting in India

- ✓ **Quantum of gender budgeting and fiscal marksmanship:** India's gender Budget remains in the range of 4 - 6% of the total expenditure and less than 1% of its GDP. It also lacks fiscal marksmanship, which is the accuracy of budgetary forecasting.
- ✓ **Concentrated in 5 key ministries:** Around 90% of gender budgeting is concentrated in five ministries. When it comes to livelihood, MGNREGA is the biggest scheme in gender budgeting. ○ Areas like transportation, water collection and water security remain ignored.
- ✓ **Post-Covid-19 approach:** The last Budget failed to address critical areas highlighted by pandemic in 2021-22 and 2022-23, despite the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on women.

Recent Gender Budget Announcements

- ✓ **Decoding Part A and B of Gender Budget**
 - There was a whopping 228% hike in **Part A of the Gender Budget** compared to last year, while **Part B saw a 6% drop from 2022-23**.
 - **Part A of the Gender Budget**, which was allotted over ₹88,000 crores this year, is dominated by the **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (both Urban and Rural housing)**.

- **Part B - the bigger of the two components - received ₹ 1.35 lakh crore in the 2023 Budget** Part B comprises several schemes pertaining to rural development, health, education and women empowerment.

✓ **Allocations to Key Schemes**

- **Safe City Project**, an initiative under the **Nirbhaya Fund scheme** for ensuring **safety of women and children**, saw an **eight-fold increase in allocation - from ₹ 165 crores in RE 2022-23 to ₹ 1,300 crore in BE 2023-24.**
- **SAMBAL**, a sub-scheme comprising old schemes like **One Stop Centre, Women Helpline and Beti Bachao Beti Padhao**, saw **no change in allocation**
- Another sub-scheme **SAMARTHYA**, which includes women empowerment programmes like **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and Swadhar Greh**, was **earmarked 33% more compared to RE 2022-23.**
- **SAMBAL and SAMARTHYA are part of the larger umbrella scheme 'Mission Shakti'**, an integrated woman empowerment programme that **came into effect in 2022.**

Assam Crackdown on Child Marriage

Assam has arrested over 2,000 men in a state-wide crackdown on child marriages that have taken place in the state. Assam has a high rate of maternal and infant mortality, with child marriage being the primary cause, according to reports by the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).**

Legal Interventions

- ✓ There are several laws including the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012**, which **aim at protecting children from violation of human and other rights.**
- ✓ In 2021, **Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021** was introduced in the **Lok Sabha**. Currently, it is studied by the **Standing Committee.**
 - The Bill seeks to amend the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act** and increase the marriage age of women from existing **18 years to 21 years.**
 - **Ministry of Women & Child Development** in **2020** had formed a committee headed by **Jaya Jaitly to examine the matter.** The committee submitted a report stating that the marriageable age for women should be **increased from 18 to 21 years** of age, in light of factors like reproductive health, education, etc.

Schemes/ Policies for Preventing Girl Child Marriage

- ✓ **Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY) –**
 - Launched in 2015, it encourages parents to invest and build funds for the future studies and marriage expenses of the girl's children.
- ✓ **Balika Samriddhi Yojana –**
 - This central government scheme ensures the enrolment and retention of girl child in primary and secondary schools. It aims at the prosperity of a girl's child and provides them with a better quality education.
- ✓ **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao –**
 - This scheme celebrates girl children, literally translating to Save the Girl Child, Educate the Girl child. It believes in women empowerment and creating an inclusive ecosystem for the same.
 - This scheme is to promote girl children's safety before and after they are born.

Under Which Law Are the Arrests Being Made?

- ✓ Men who married girls below 14 years of age would be booked under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (commonly known as POCSO Act)**.
 - The POCSO Act criminalizes sex between a minor and an adult.
 - The law does not recognize a minor's consent as valid.
- ✓ Meanwhile, those **marrying girls between 14 and 18 years** would be booked under the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006**.

Debate on Muslim Age of Marriage

- ✓ Under Muslim personal laws, the marriage of a bride who has **attained puberty** is considered.
 - Puberty is presumed, in the absence of evidence, **on completion of the age of 15 years**.
- ✓ However, under **Child Marriage Act**, the minimum legal age to get **married is 18 for girls and 21 for boys**.
- ✓ This gap between **Muslim personal law** and **special legislations prohibiting child marriages or sexual activity of minors puts a shadow on criminality on such marriages**.

Judiciary's Opinion

- ✓ The Supreme Court is currently examining this **issue since different High Courts** have ruled differently on it.
 - **Punjab and Haryana High Court** in a string of rulings has held that a **Muslim girl can legally marry after attaining puberty**.
 - In October 2022, the **Karnataka High Court quashed a POCSO case against a Muslim man**.
 - He was arrested after a hospital made mandatory disclosures under the law when his pregnant wife, aged 17 years and two months visited a doctor.

Changes in Organ Transplant Rules

The **Union health ministry** modified national **organ transplantation guidelines** to allow even those **above 65 years of age to register to receive an organ for transplantation from deceased donors**.

- ✓ The Union Health Ministry is working on a '**One Nation, One Organ Allocation**' policy in consultation with states to come up with **uniform guidelines for registration, allocation** and other aspects of the process.
- ✓ The government is also planning **to introduce a chapter in school curriculum regarding organ donation awareness for students**.

Regulatory Frameworks Guiding the Organ Transplantation in India

- ✓ **Legislation**
 - In 1994, The **Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA)** was promulgated by the government of India.
 - The **Transplantation of Human Organs Rules followed in 1995** and were **last amended in 2014**, increasing the scope of donation and including **tissues for transplantation**.
 - The act made commercialization of organs a punishable offence and legalized the concept of brain death in India allowing deceased donation by obtaining organs from brain stem dead person.

✓ Institution

- **National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)** is a national level organization set up under **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- It functions as **apex centre** for all India activities of coordination and networking for:
 - **procurement and distribution of organs and tissues;** and
 - **registry of Organs and Tissues Donation and Transplantation in country.**

Changes Brought in Organ Transplantation Policy

- ✓ **Upper Age Limit for Registration Has Been Removed**
- ✓ **No Domicile Requirement**
- ✓ **No Registration Fee Required**

Demand for Greater Tripaland

The newest political party in Tripura, the **Tipraha Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) Motha**, has created a flutter with **its demand for Greater Tripaland**.

About Greater Tripaland

- ✓ Greater Tripaland is the core **ideological demand of the TIPRA Motha**.
- ✓ The objective is to carve out a **new State for the 19 indigenous tribes of Tripura** under **Articles 2 and 3 of the constitution**.
 - **Article 2** - Parliament may by law admit into the Union, or establish, new States on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit.
 - **Article 3** comes into play in the case of formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States by the Parliament.
- ✓ **Regional Extent of the Proposed State**
 - It includes the region under **Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC)** and **36 villages out of it**, within the **Tripura State boundaries**.
 - The demand seeks to include **every tribal person living in indigenous area or village outside TTAADC**
 - However, the idea doesn't restrict to **Tripura tribal council areas**.
 - It extends to include **Tiprasa (indigenous people of Tripura)** spread across different states of India like **Assam, Mizoram etc.**
 - It also includes those living in **Bandarban, Chittagong, Khagrachari** and **other bordering areas of neighboring Bangladesh.**



Special Marriage Act

Recently, a Bollywood actress chose to marry under the provisions of the **Special Marriage Act, 1954**.

Who Can Get Married Under Special Marriage Act?

- ✓ The applicability of the Act extends to the people of all faiths, **including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, and Buddhists, across India.**
- ✓ The minimum age to get married under the SMA is **21 years for males and 18 years for females.**
- ✓ However, once married as per the secular law, **under Section 19 of the Act**, any member of an **undivided family who professes the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh or Jain religion** shall be deemed to affect their severance (ending a connection) from the family.
- ✓ This would affect rights, including the **right to inheritance**, of the persons **choosing to marry under the SMA.**

Procedure for a Civil Marriage

- ✓ As per **Section 5 of the Act**, the parties to the marriage are required to give a notice, in writing, to a **“Marriage Officer” of the district.**
- ✓ Before the marriage is solemnized, the parties and three witnesses are required **to sign a declaration form before the Marriage Officer.**
- ✓ Once the declaration is accepted, the parties will be given a **“Certificate of marriage”.**

“Notice Period” Under The SMA

- ✓ As per **Section 6**, a true copy of the notice given by the parties will be kept under the **Marriage Notice Book.**
- ✓ Upon receiving the notice, the marriage officer shall publish it in some conspicuous place in his office to invite any **objections to the marriage within 30 days.**
- ✓ **Section 7 deals with Objection to marriage.** It allows any person **before the expiration of thirty days from the date of the notice’s publication to object to the marriage.**
 - Various grounds of objection are **specified in Section 4 of the Act.**
- ✓ If an objection has been made, the **Marriage Officer cannot solemnize the marriage** until he has inquired into the matter of the objection.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis

The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK), after being headless for close to a year, has **finally got a chairperson, vice-chairperson and member on board.**

- ✓ After the current appointments, **posts for four members remain vacant.**
- ✓ Due to **vacancies over the past year**, one consultant was looking after the works **relating to sewer deaths in India.**

The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted on **12th August, 1994** as a **statutory body** by an Act of Parliament viz. ‘**National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993**’, for a period of **three years** i.e. up to 31st March, 1997.

As per **sub-section (4) of Section 1 of the Act**, it was to cease to exist after 31.3.1997. However, validity of the Act was extended up to **March, 2002**, and then up to **February, 2004** vide Amendment Acts passed in **1997 and 2001 respectively.**

Need for NCSK

- ✓ **Deprivation among Safai Karamcharis**
 - The Government has taken many steps for the **upliftment of the Safai Karamcharis**.
 - However, the deprivation suffered by them in **socio-economic and educational terms** is still far from being eliminated.
- ✓ **Sporadic instances of manual scavenging**
 - As per the NCSK (2020 data), a **total of 631 people have died in the country while cleaning sewers and septic tanks in the last 10 years**.
 - Although **manual scavenging has been almost eradicated, sporadic instances do occur**.
 - **In 2018, 29,923 people were engaged in manual scavenging in Uttar Pradesh**, making it the highest in any State in India.

Challenges Faced by NCSK

- ✓ NCSK does not have any powers and works as a **non-statutory body on government resolution**.
 - Recently, the govt. mentioned in the Parliament that there is no such proposal for converting the commission into a statutory body.
- ✓ Due to this, the commission is not able to implement its own orders or directions.
- ✓ The **chairperson and members are political appointees**, so they don't question the government or speak against their schemes.
- ✓ The commission remains understaffed and **many posts remain vacant**.
- ✓ The commission itself is running on a temporary basis, the **posts in the commission are filled either through deputation or co-terminus basis**

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Paris Club Likely to Provide Financial Assurances to IMF On Sri Lanka Debt

- ✓ The Paris Club, an informal group of creditor nations, will provide financial assurances to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Sri Lanka's debt.**
- ✓ This assurance is a key step needed to unlock a **\$2.9 billion bailout by the IMF.**

Paris Club

- ✓ The Paris Club is a group of mostly western creditor countries that grew from a **1956 meeting**, in which **Argentina agreed to meet its public creditors in Paris.**
- ✓ **Objective** – To find sustainable debt-relief solutions for countries that are **unable to repay their bilateral loans.**
- ✓ It is a forum where official creditors meet to solve **payment difficulties faced by debtor countries.**
- ✓ **Member Countries** – Australia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States.
 - **All 22 members of the group** are also part of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).**

The London club is another informal group that was **founded in 1976.** It is similar to the Paris club, except for banks' lending to countries instead of other countries.

India, Singapore Start Instant Fund Transfer

- ✓ India and Singapore have integrated their respective **real-time payment network for the first time to facilitate cross-border exchange.**
- ✓ **India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** and its equivalent in Singapore known as **PayNow** have **been conjoined.**
 - This will enable **transfer of remittances, funds and payments between the two countries in a quick and real-time.**

Significance of UPI-PayNow Linkage

- ✓ **Development of infrastructure** for cross-border payments between **India and Singapore.**
 - Hence, it closely aligns with the **G20's financial inclusion priorities of driving faster, cheaper and more transparent cross-border payments.**
- ✓ **Benefits to the citizens of both countries**
 - It will enable users of each of the **two fast payment systems** to make instant, **low-cost fund transfers on a reciprocal basis** without a need to get on board the other payment system.
 - It will also help **the Indian diaspora in Singapore**, especially **migrant workers and students.**

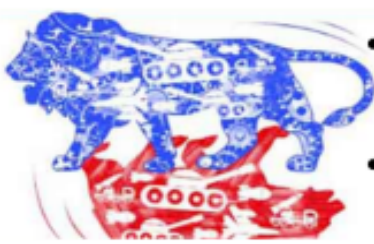
India, U.S. Step Up Strategic Partnership with Technology Initiative

- ✓ India's **NSA Ajit Doval** and the **U.S. NSA Jake Sullivan** officially launched the United States-India initiative on **Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)**.
- ✓ Both the leaders were meeting in Washington for the **inaugural dialogue of the iCET**.

Key Highlights

- ✓ The meeting highlighted **6 areas of planned cooperation**:
 - 1) strengthening **innovation ecosystems**;
 - 2) defence innovation and technology cooperation;
 - 3) resilient semiconductor supply chains;
 - 4) space;
 - 5) STEM talent;
 - 6) next generation telecommunications.
- ✓ Under iCET, these leaders launched programs **to enhance the strategic partnership between the two countries**.
- ✓ The programs include:
 - A Research Agency Partnership between the **U.S. National Science Foundation and Indian science agencies**;
 - A mechanism to cooperate on quantum computing **that will also involve academia and industry**;
 - Developing a new **defence industrial cooperation roadmap**;
 - Supporting the development of semiconductors in India, including by setting up a taskforce **to identify opportunities**; and
 - Increasing space cooperation **including human spaceflight**.
- ✓ A private-public dialogue was also announced **to further 5G/6G cooperation** and the adoption of **Open RAN (technology to connect phones to each other and to the internet) in India**.

ABOUT iCET



- iCET was launched by President Biden and PM Modi during the Quad summit on May 2022.
- It was established in order to elevate and expand the strategic technology partnership and defence industrial cooperation between India and USA.
- It seeks to build supply chains which increase co-production, co-development and increase linkages between the countries start-up ecosystems.

Defence Ministers' Conclave

The Defence Ministers' Conclave was held on the sidelines of **Aero India 2023 in Bengaluru**. At the conclave, Raksha Mantri **Rajnath Singh** hosted the **Defence & Deputy Defence Ministers of 27 countries**.

About the Conclave

- ✓ The broad theme of the conclave was **'Shared Prosperity through Enhanced Engagements in Defence' (SPEED)**.
- ✓ It sought to address aspects related to deepening cooperation for **capacity building, training, space, AI and maritime security** to grow together.

Aero India 2023

- ✓ The **14th edition** of the biennial show, Aero India 2023, was inaugurated by PM Modi at the **Air Force Station in Yelahanka, Bengaluru** in February.
- ✓ It is being organised on the theme **‘The runway to a billion opportunities’** and the show seeks to **display India’s growth in aerospace and defence capabilities.**
- ✓ Aero India 2023 is being organised by **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** on behalf of the **Department of Defence Production (Ministry of Defence).**

Significance of Aero India

- ✓ **Export of indigenous air platforms**
 - The event aims to promote export of indigenous air platforms like **Light Combat Aircraft (LCA)- Tejas, HTT-40 etc.**
- ✓ **Opportunities for domestic MSMEs and start-ups**
 - It will integrate domestic MSMEs and start-ups in the global supply chain and **attract foreign investments** including **partnerships for co-development and co-production.**
- ✓ **Aims to strengthen India’s relations with others countries**
 - Though Aero India is a business event, it additionally aims to strengthen India’s relations with others countries.
 - This is evident from the participation of **98 countries**, the **Defence Ministers of 32 countries and Air Chiefs of 29 countries.**

62nd Session of UN Social Development Commission

- ✓ The UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD) has elected **India’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ruchira Kamboj as its chair for the 62nd session.**
- ✓ The opportunity to chair the **62nd session of CSocD** comes at a time when India is leading the **G20 and is steering the global agenda** through its **G20 Presidency.**
- ✓ In addition, India has undertaken a **number of initiatives and policies to advance the social development of its citizens**, which might be very advantageous for other nations.



62nd Session of the Commission for Social Development

Theme – “Fostering social development and social justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the **implementation of the 2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development and **to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication”.**

- ✓ The theme emphasises the important **connection between social development and social justice** as fundamentals to achieving SDGs.

UN Commission for Social Development (CSocD)

- ✓ CSocD, formerly known as **Social Commission**, has been in existence from the very inception of the **United Nations.**
- ✓ It advises the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** and Governments on a wide range of social policy issues and on the social perspective of development.
- ✓ CSocD is a **functional commission of the ECOSOC of the UN**
- ✓ **CSocD meets annually in New York**, usually in February.

Purpose

- ✓ Since the **World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995**, the CSocD has been the key UN body in charge of the follow up and implementation of the **Copenhagen Declaration** and Programme of Action.
- ✓ **Since 2006**, the Commission has taken up key social development themes as part of its follow up to the **outcome of the Copenhagen Summit**.
- ✓ **Membership** - Originally **18**, **membership now stands at 46**. Members are elected by **ECOSOC based on equitable geographical distribution for 4 year terms**.

Manipur Hosts B20 Conference

CM of Manipur inaugurated a conference on '**Opportunities for Multilateral Business Partnerships in ICT, Tourism, Healthcare and Handloom**' in **Imphal**. This was the first of the four sessions of B20 conference scheduled in Northeast India.

B20 Conference

- ✓ The Business 20 (B20) is an event which is part of the G20 Summit. It is the **voice of the G20 business community**.
- ✓ More specifically, its main purpose consists in **developing recommendations** and issuing relevant commitments from the **business leaders and business organizations to deal with nowadays issues**.
- ✓ The B20 composes of delegates from the G20 countries, including **top executives** from the leading multinational corporations.
- ✓ The first B20 Conference took place in **South Korea in 2010**.

Working of B20

- ✓ The **B20 has no standing secretariat**. The leadership rotates every year together with the G20 Presidency.
- ✓ The B20 delivers concrete actionable policy recommendations on priorities established by each rotation presidency **to spur economic growth and development**.
- ✓ Its working proceeding is based on **Task Forces (TFs) and Action Councils (ACs)** entrusted with developing consensus-based policy proposals to the G20 and to international organizations and institutions.
- ✓ Each **Task Force is composed of around 100 businesses representatives** from the G20 countries and from selected invited countries and international organizations.

5th Regional Dialogue on Afghanistan

- ✓ **National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval** participated in the **fifth multilateral meeting** of secretaries of security council's/ NSAs on Afghanistan, held in **Moscow**.
 - **4th Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan** was held in **Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe**
- ✓ NSA Doval also called on the **President Putin** and had wide-ranging discussions on bilateral and regional issues.
 - It should be noted that the ties **between India and Russia** remained strong notwithstanding **Moscow's invasion of Ukraine**.
 - India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved **through diplomacy and dialogue**.

Key Highlights

- ✓ **Need for inclusive and representative government in Afghanistan**
 - India reiterated its call for an **“inclusive and representative”** government in Afghanistan.
 - India has not recognized the **Taliban administration in Kabul**.
 - However, an Indian technical team is stationed at the **Indian embassy in the Afghan capital**. This team has been overseeing the humanitarian assistance that India has been providing over the past year.
- ✓ **People of Afghanistan were among India’s foremost priorities**
 - The well-being and humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan continues to guide India’s policy towards Kabul.
 - Recently presented **India’s Union Budget 2023-24** allocated **₹200 crores** for the **development and humanitarian needs of the Afghan people**.
 - India has so far **delivered 40,000 MT of wheat, 60 tons of medicines, 5,00,000 Covid-19 vaccine doses, winter clothing and 28 tons of disaster relief**.
 - India has also granted fresh scholarships to **2,260 Afghan students** including **300 Afghan girls** in the **past two years**.
- ✓ **On Terrorism**
 - India reiterated its position that no country should be allowed **to use Afghan territory to export terrorism and radicalization**.
 - It reaffirmed the importance of **United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2593**.
 - The resolution was passed in **August 2021 under India’s Presidency**.
 - It demands that Afghan territory not be used to threaten or attack any other country or to shelter and train terrorists.

Regional Dialogue on Afghanistan

- ✓ **Participants:** Russia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were represented at the 5th meeting. The meeting was **held at the level of NSAs**.
- ✓ **Objective:**
 - To discuss various issues related to Afghanistan.
 - This includes the **security situation and humanitarian challenges facing Afghanistan**.
 - This meeting is among the **heads of the security establishments**. Hence, it is not a protocol-oriented meeting.
 - It mostly discusses practical cooperation from **intelligence sharing to information gathering to counter-terrorism capacity-building**.
 - The **meeting looks at evolving a regional security architecture** to deal with these challenges, arising out of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan.

Genesis of the Dialogue

- ✓ The idea of dialogue was **first mooted in 2018**, when the **US decided to withdraw troops from Afghanistan**.
- ✓ **First two meetings (in 2018 and 2019) were hosted by Iran**. 2020 meeting was cancelled due to pandemic.
- ✓ In November **2021, India hosted the ‘Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan’**.
 - **So far, Pakistan has not attended any of these meetings**.
 - **China did not participate** in the meeting hosted by India in 2021.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET)

The Government of India has been bringing tremendous changes in the defense sector in the recent past. The changes made the defense ministry, **the largest buyer of MSME goods in 2022** amongst all other ministries. India is also pushing startups to participate in defense modernization. **Only 293 startups in India are registered in the defense sector.** To boost the numbers and to welcome more defense startups into the sector, an innovation bridge was formed **between India and USA.**

iCET initiative –

- ✓ **iCET** is the Initiative on **Critical and Emerging Technologies.**
- ✓ The initiative will work **to connect the defense startups in India and USA**
- ✓ It was **jointly launched by India and USA**
- ✓ **Launched in the Washington, USA**
- ✓ Launched by **India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and his counter (US Security Advisor Jake Sullivan)**

Google introduces Chat-GPT rival Bard

- ✓ **Microsoft launched Chat-GPT in November 2022.** Technologists believe that Chat GPT is well advanced and might kill Google's business. In just five days, the number of ChatGPT users increased to one million.
- ✓ To counter the chat GPT, **Google recently launched "BARD".**
- ✓ **Working of the BARD is very much similar to Chat GPT,** the conversational style.
- ✓ The **Chinese search engine company BAIDU is also developing products very much similar to Chat GPT.**



FAIRY Robot

Tampere University have developed a **Dandelion seed-inspired flying robot (known as FAIRY Robot)** that can potentially become an **alternative for some pollinators.**

About FAIRY Robot

- ✓ FAIRY robot stands for **Flying Aero-robots based on the Light Responsive Materials Assembly.**
- ✓ It is a tiny lightweight robot that relies on **wind to float** in the air like a **Dandelion seed.**
- ✓ Its **shape, size and movement** can be controlled with a light source such as a **laser beam or an LED.**
- ✓ The **FAIRY project started in September 2021** and will **last until August 2026.**

Significance of FAIRY Robot

- ✓ The populations of major **pollinators bees, butterflies, wasps, beetles** and others are **diminishing drastically worldwide.**
- ✓ This rapid decline of pollinators is alarming and poses a great **threat to biodiversity and food security.**
- ✓ These concerns may be allayed soon with the help of fairy robot. it can be used in **controlled, coordinated, precise pollination.**

Wolf 1069 b

Astronomers have discovered a potentially habitable **exoplanet just 31 light-years away** from Earth known as **Wolf 1069 b**.

About Wolf 1069 b

- ✓ It is an **exoplanet** that orbits a **red dwarf star called Wolf 1069**.
- ✓ It orbits its star at a **distance of about 0.038 astronomical units (AU)**, which is very close compared to the **distance between Earth and the Sun**. As a result, the planet's year is only **about 18 Earth days long**.
- ✓ **Wolf 1069 b** is tidally locked to its **parent star**, meaning one side is **always in daylight**, and the **opposite side is always in darkness**.

Quasicrystal

Scientists have discovered a **3rd natural source of quasicrystals** in the **Sand Hills of north central Nebraska, USA**.

About Quasicrystal

- ✓ Most crystals are composed of a **three-dimensional arrangement of atoms** that repeat in an orderly pattern. But quasicrystals behave differently than other crystals. They have an orderly pattern that includes **pentagons, fivefold shapes, but unlike other crystals, the pattern never repeats itself exactly**.
- ✓ The **American Israeli scientist Dan Shechtman** discovered quasicrystals in the lab in **1982**. In **2011, the Nobel Prize in chemistry was awarded to him**.
- ✓ It has **poor heat conductivity**, which makes them **good insulators**.
- ✓ Quasicrystals have been widely created in labs and known **to possess novel electrical, photonic, and mechanical properties** that aren't found in other materials.
- ✓ It is used in **surgical instruments, LED lights and non-stick frying pans, needles for acupuncture and surgery, dental instruments and razor blades**.

Aubrite Meteorite

The meteorite that **crashed in two villages in Gujarat** has been identified as an **aubrite meteorite**.

Aubrite Meteorites

- ✓ It is a **coarse-grained igneous rock** that formed in **oxygen-poor conditions** and **contains exotic minerals not found on Earth**.
- ✓ **Around 90% of the meteorite** was composed of **orthopyroxene**.
 - **Orthopyroxenes are pyroxenes** with a certain structure. **Pyroxenes are silicates** consisting of single chains of **silica tetrahedra (SiO₄)**.
- ✓ It has similar and unique characteristics of highly reducing conditions on the **surface of planet Mercury**.
- ✓ It could prove important for understanding **planetary processes in the future**.
- ✓ The **rare aubrite** was last found in India only in **1852 in UP's Gorakhpur**. Studying **aubrite meteorites** can provide valuable insights into the composition and history of the asteroid belt as well as the **formation and evolution of the solar system**.

Abell 2744

- ✓ This Hubble image, taken by the **Advanced Camera for Surveys**, shows the **central part of merging galaxy cluster Abell 2744**.
- ✓ **Abell 2744** is a **giant galaxy cluster** located **about 4 billion light-years away from Earth** in the constellation Sculptor, with a total mass of **around 4 trillion times that of the Sun**.
- ✓ Abell 2744 is also known as the "**Pandora Cluster**" or the "**Abell-2744 Cluster**".
- ✓ It is so massive that its powerful gravity bends the light from galaxies far behind it, making the **background objects appear larger and brighter** in a phenomenon called **gravitational lensing**.
- ✓ In recent years, Abell 2744 has been the target of **several major observational campaigns**, including the Hubble Frontier Fields program, which used the **Hubble Space Telescope**.

Chandrayaan-3

The **Chandrayaan-3 lander** has successfully completed the crucial **EMI-EMC (Electro - Magnetic Interference/ Electro - Magnetic Compatibility) test**.

About Chandrayaan-3 (3rd Moon mission)

- ✓ It will be a mission repeat with **technological updation of Chandrayaan-2**.
- ✓ Chandrayaan-3 interplanetary mission has **three major modules**:
 - 1) the Propulsion module,
 - 2) Lander module, and
 - 3) Rover.
 The mission's complexity calls for establishing **radiofrequency (RF) communication** links between the modules.
- ✓ It will showcase the capability for safe landing (**By Lander**) and **roving on the lunar surface (By rover)**, which is where Chandrayaan-2 failed due to a last-minute glitch in the soft-landing.
- ✓ **It will be launched without orbiter as Chandrayaan 2 already launched Orbiter.**
- ✓ Its propulsion module will behave like a **communications relay satellite**.

About EMI-EMC Test

- ✓ **Electromagnetic interference (EMI)** refers to the **disturbance of electrical or electronic equipment** by electromagnetic radiation or conduction. It can result in a **loss of performance or complete failure of the equipment**.
- ✓ Electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) refers to the **ability of electronic devices to operate without being affected by or causing EMI**.
- ✓ Tests were conducted **to ensure compatibility between the lander and rover** for the post-landing phase.

Chandrayaan-1 (1st Lunar Mission)	Chandrayaan-2 (2nd Lunar Mission)
✓ Launched in October 2008 by PSLV and It was operational for 312 days till August 29, 2009 .	✓ Launched from the Satish Dhawan Space in July 2019 , by GSLV Mk III-M1
✓ It involved an orbiter and an impactor, both built by ISRO .	✓ The mission consisted of an Orbiter of the Moon, Vikram the lander and Pragyan the rover .
✓ The 1st to discover water on the Moon .	✓ But the lander and rover malfunctioned in the final moments and crash-landed .

HWASONG-15

- ✓ It is an **intercontinental ballistic missile** developed by **North Korean**.
- ✓ It can carry a **super-large heavy warhead** which is capable of striking the whole **mainland of the U.S.**
- ✓ The missile's more spacious payload fairing may allow the future deployment of large or multiple nuclear warheads and penetration **aids to complicate missile defense**.

Messier 92

Astronomers have recently **released an image of the globular cluster Messier 92 (M92)** captured by the **James Webb Space Telescope**.

About Messier 92

- ✓ It is a globular cluster of stars in the **northern constellation of Hercules**.
 - Globular clusters are spherical aggregates of **several thousand to millions of stars bound by gravity**.
- ✓ It was **first discovered by Johann Elert Bode in 1777** and independently rediscovered by **Charles Messier in 1781**.
- ✓ **M92** is one of the **brightest globular clusters in the sky** and can be seen with **binoculars or a small telescope**. It is estimated to be **about 26,700 light-years away** from Earth and has a **diameter of about 109 light-years**.
- ✓ The predominant elements within it are **hydrogen and helium**. The cluster contains **hundreds of thousands of stars**, many of which are **ancient and metal-poor**, meaning they have a **low abundance of elements heavier than helium**.
- ✓ It has an estimated mass of up to **330,000 solar masses**.

Ultraviolet Transient Astronomy Satellite (ULTRASAT)

NASA will launch **Israel's 1st space telescope mission**, the **Ultraviolet Transient Astronomy Satellite (ULTRASAT)** in **early 2026**.

About ULTRASAT

- ✓ It is an **ultraviolet observatory** with a **large field of view**.
- ✓ **ULTRASAT will measure ultraviolet light that cannot be measured from Earth**
- ✓ One of the key advantages of observing in the UV spectrum is that **it allows astronomers to study the hot, young, and energetic phenomena that are invisible in other wavelengths**.
- ✓ It's wide field of view will allow it to quickly discover and **capture ultraviolet light from sources in the cosmos that change on short timescales**.
- ✓ It will investigate the **secrets of short-duration events in the universe**, such as **supernova explosions and mergers of neutron stars**.

Microsoft's Project ELLORA

- ✓ Microsoft launched **Project ELLORA (Enabling Low Resource Languages)** in **2015**.
- ✓ It will help in **preserving 'rare' Indian languages**.
- ✓ It aims **to create digital ecosystems for Indian languages** that do not have **enough presence online**.
- ✓ **Microsoft Research** has chosen **to focus on three of these for now which is Gondi, Mundari and Idu Mishmi**.

CCR5-delta 32 Mutation

- ✓ **HIV** primarily targets **CD4 immune cells in the human body**.
- ✓ The **CCR5 receptors on the surface of CD4 immune cells** serve as a portal for **HIV virus entry**.
- ✓ Nevertheless, the **CCR5-delta 32 mutation** inhibits the **HIV virus's surface receptors from developing, essentially closing the door**.
- ✓ Individuals who have the mutation are **virtually immune to HIV infection**, while occasional cases have been observed.

DEFENCE AND SECURITY

Indian Military Joint Training Exercise Trishakti Prahar

The Indian Defense Forces conducted firepower exercises called the “**TRISHAKTI PRAHAR**” to synergize the **firepower assets and to orchestrate a battle**. The exercise is important **to keep the forces ready for battle**. The exercise was conducted by the **Indian Air Force, CAPF, and the Indian Army**. It was a **firepower exercise**.

About Trishakti Prahar

- ✓ The main objective of **Trishakti Prahar** was **to refresh battling skills**
- ✓ All the latest defense equipment was used during the exercise. This includes **helicopters, infantry combat vehicles, new-generation equipment, mortars, artillery guns, etc.**
- ✓ Equipment made as a part of **Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** was **also used in the exercise**
- ✓ **Forces moved and rehearsed across the regions of North Bengal**
- ✓ The **Indian Army checks** if the troops are in **battle preparedness through these exercises**

Section 69(A) of IT Act

The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** recently issued **orders to block 138 online betting platforms and 94 money lending apps** under **Section 69(A) of the Information Technology Act, 2000**.

Background

- ✓ The decision was based on a **recommendation** of the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
- ✓ The MHA had received inputs from **central intelligence agencies** that some of the sites and apps were allegedly linked to China and contained “**material prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India**”.

What Is Section 69 of the IT Act?

- ✓ Section 69 of the IT Act confers on the **Central and State governments** the power to issue directions “**to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource**”.
- ✓ It allows the government to issue **content-blocking orders** to online intermediaries such as **Internet Service Providers (ISPs), telecom service providers, web hosting services, search engines, online marketplaces, etc.**
- ✓ If social media intermediaries do not adhere to the **regulations and guidelines**, they may face **monetary penalties and imprisonment for a maximum period of seven years**.
- ✓ Compliance is important **to fight cybercrime**, which includes **hacking, digital impersonation, and data theft**, and to prevent the misuse of the internet, which is a **growing concern for law enforcement officials**.

Grounds on Which Section 69 of the IT Act Can Be Invoked?

If the Centre or state government are satisfied that blocking the content is necessary and expedient on the below mentioned grounds, then it can direct the concerned authority to block the content. **Section 69A** of the IT Act permits the state to impose ‘**reasonable restrictions**’ for the same reasons as those for **clause 2 of the Article 19 of the Indian Constitution**.

- ✓ sovereignty or integrity of India,
- ✓ defence of India,
- ✓ security of the State,
- ✓ friendly relations with foreign States or
- ✓ public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to above or for investigation of any offence.

Procedure to Block Such Content/Apps -

- ✓ **Since 2009**, the MeitY has possessed blocking powers similar to those of the **Ministry of Information & Broadcasting**.
- ✓ Although MeitY derives these powers from the IT Act, it is the **Information Technology (Procedure and Safeguards for Blocking for Access of Information by Public) Rules, 2009** or the **IT Rules, 2009**, which explain the process to issue such orders.
- ✓ The IT Rules include provisions such as review committees, the opportunity for a **fair hearing, strict confidentiality, and maintenance of records by designated officers**.

Recent Instances of Government Invoking Section 69(A) of IT Act -

- ✓ Following cross-border tensions with China, **the MeitY banned 59 apps** in June, 2020, including **TikTok, Share it, Shein, Xiaomi Mi Community, Clash of Kings, Weibo, Likee, etc.**
- ✓ **Similarly, in September, 2020**, the **government banned 118 apps**, including the gaming app **PUBG, followed by another ban on 49 apps on November 19, 2020.**
- ✓ **Section 69A** was revisited in July 2022 when **Twitter sued the MeitY in the Karnataka HC** over blocking orders that failed to adhere to the **procedural requirement of giving users a hearing.**

Indo-US Exercise TARKASH

The **sixth edition** of the **joint Indo-US exercise (Named TARKASH)** was held in February.

- ✓ Held recently in **Chennai (Tamil Nadu)**, **TARKASH** is a joint exercise by the **National Security Guard (NSG) and US Special Operations Forces**.
- ✓ This exercise had, for the first time, included **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) terror response in its drill.**
- ✓ The name **TARKASH** is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning '**quiver**' - a container used to hold **arrows**.
- ✓ The exercise is named after **INS Tarkash**, a **Talwar-class frigate that was commissioned in 2012.**

About CBRN

- ✓ **CBRN weapons**, which are also classified as **weapons of mass destruction (WMD)**
- ✓ The details of the CBRN weapons are as follows:

Radiological Weapons	Nuclear Weapons
1) Radiological weapons use ionizing radiation to cause harm or damage. 2) These include devices that emit radiation, such as dirty bombs.	1) Nuclear weapons use nuclear reactions to release large amounts of energy in the form of heat, light, and radiation. 2) Examples of nuclear weapons include atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs.

Chemical Weapons	Biological Weapons
<p>1) Chemical weapons are designed to release toxic chemicals that can cause severe injury or death to people, animals, and plants.</p> <p>2) These chemicals can be released in various forms, including gases, liquids, and solids.</p> <p>3) Examples of chemical weapons include nerve agents, blister agents, choking agents, mustard gas and blood agents.</p> <p>4) Mustard gas damages the respiratory tract, skin, and eyes and nerve agents victims rapidly become unconscious, have breathing difficulties, and may eventually die.</p>	<p>1) Biological weapons use microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, or toxins, to cause harm or death to people, animals, or plants.</p> <p>2) These weapons can be particularly dangerous because they can spread easily and quickly and can be difficult to detect and treat.</p> <p>3) Examples of biological weapons include anthrax, smallpox, botulinum toxin and Ebola virus.</p> <p>4) Anthrax causes fever, malaise, cough, shock and Death within 36 hours whereas botulinum toxin leads to paralysis of respiratory muscles.</p>

- ✓ The most recent use of CBRN in the form of a **sarin gas attack** was witnessed in **Syria in 2017** when **more than 100 people died.**

Exercise Dharma Guardian

The fourth edition of **India-Japan bilateral Army exercise 'Dharma Guardian'** was held at **Camp Imazu in Shiga province, Japan.**

About Dharma Guardian

- ✓ The **first Dharma Guardian exercise** was held in **2018.**
- ✓ The exercise involves various activities, including **tactical drills, jungle warfare, counterterrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.**
- ✓ The exercise takes place in **both India and Japan**, with troops from **both countries participating in the training.**

Other Military Exercises between India and Japan

In January 2023, the two Air Forces held the maiden air exercise '**Veer Guardian**'.

- ✓ **MALABAR:** It is a trilateral maritime exercise between India, Japan, and the United States. The exercise is aimed at enhancing the interoperability of the three navies and promoting maritime security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ✓ **JIMEX:** It is a bilateral maritime exercise between the Indian Navy and the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.
- ✓ **Sahyog-Kaijin:** It is a joint exercise between the Indian Coast Guard and the Japan Coast Guard.
- ✓ **Shinyuu Maitri:** It is a joint military exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force.
- ✓ **Cope India:** It is a bilateral air exercise between the Indian Air Force and the United States Air Force, which is hosted by India. However, Japan also participated in the 2018 edition of the exercise.

Exercise Desert Flag VIII

Indian Air Force participated in **Exercise Desert Flag VIII**. The IAF participated with five **LCA Tejas** and two **C-17 Globemaster III** aircraft.

About Exercise Desert Flag VIII

- ✓ Exercise Desert Flag is a multilateral air exercise in which participants Air Forces are from **UAE, France, Kuwait, Australia, UK, Bahrain, Morocco, Spain, Republic of Korea, and USA**
- ✓ This was the **first occasion** when the indigenously made **light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas participated in an international flying exercise outside India.**

LCA Tejas

- ✓ India's **HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited)** designed and developed **the LCA Tejas**, which was introduced as a replacement for the **aging MIG 21 fighter planes.**
- ✓ **Tejas** made its first flight in **January 2001**. The aircraft was inducted into **Indian Air Force in 2016.**
- ✓ It is the **smallest and lightest** in its class of contemporary **supersonic combat aircraft.**
- ✓ **Tejas is fully capable of carrying a load of 8 to 9 tons.** It can fly with as many weapons and missiles as **Sukhoi.**
- ✓ Its biggest advantage is its **speed**. These aircraft can fly as fast as the speed of sound, **i.e., Mach 1.6 to 1.8, up at an altitude of 52,000 feet.**

Big Infrastructure Push for Villages On Border

- ✓ The **Union Cabinet** approved the **allocation of Rs 4,800 crore** for the **Centre's Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP) for the Financial Years 2022-23 to 2025-26.**
- ✓ It also approved the induction of over **9,000 troops in the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, raising of seven new ITBP battalions.

Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP)

- ✓ **VVP was announced in the Finance Minister's Budget Speech 2022.**
 - The programme envisages coverage of border villages on Northern border having sparse population, limited connectivity and infrastructure, which often get left out from the development gains.
- ✓ The **Centrally sponsored village scheme** will cover the border areas of **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Ladakh.**
- ✓ Aims to ensure comprehensive development of these villages, thereby improving the quality of life of people living in identified border villages.
 - To encourage people to stay in their native locations in border areas, reversing outmigration from these regions and **contributing to improved border security.**
- ✓ **Implementation**
 - The programme fund the development of vital infrastructure and creation of **livelihood opportunities in 19 districts, 46 border blocks, four states, and one UT along the country's northern land border.**
 - It will cover **2,963 villages with 663 villages included in the first phase.**
 - The programme assists in identifying and developing the economic drivers based on **local human and natural resources of these border villages**
 - Key outcomes that have been attempted are: **all-weather road, drinking water, 24×7 electricity – solar and wind energy, along with mobile and internet connectivity.**



- With respect to tourism, regular field trips will be held for students as part of a **Seema Darshan programme**.
- ✓ **Institutions Involved**
 - Gram Panchayats will assist the **district administration in developing vibrant village action plans**.
 - Through this 100 % saturation of Central and state schemes will be ensured.
- ✓ **No Overlap with Border Area Development Program:** The government has stated that VVP will not have an overlap with **Border Area Development Program (BADP)**.
 - The **Department of Border Management**, MHA has been implementing the BADP through the State Governments as part of a comprehensive approach to Border Management.
 - The programme aims **to meet the special development needs of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas (within 0-10 km) situated near the international border**.
 - It covers **460 border blocks of 117 border districts in 16 States and 2 UTs**.
 - It also aims to saturate the **border areas with the essential infrastructure**.

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Hibbertopterus lamsdelli: New species of Giant Sea Scorpion

Aquatic arthropods are **invertebrates living in water** with segmented bodies. **They are extinct.** A new species of **aquatic arthropod** was found in **New Mexico** in **unearthed fossils.** The new species is called **Hibbertopterus lamsdelli.** The species lives in an **estuary.** It lived **300 million years ago.** The species found is a **sea scorpion.** It was **giant and is extremely rare.**



About the new Sea Scorpion

- ✓ They **feed on large prey**
- ✓ They have **anterior appendages.**
- ✓ **Fossils of sea scorpions are rare.** They are abundantly found in **European and American sedimentary rock deposits.**

Atmanirbhar Horticulture Clean Plant Programme

The **Indian horticulture sector contributes 33% of the GVA of the country.** The industry is **labor intensive** and therefore, a **small push will increase employment opportunities exponentially.** Today, **only 10% of the Indian land is under horticultural use.** But it contributes **33% of agricultural revenue.** To increase the value of horticultural crops and to boost productivity, the GOI launched the “**Atmanirbhat Horticulture Clean Plant Programme**”. The main objective of the program is **to increase the availability of disease-free plant material.** This will help in improving the value of the horticultural crops. The **GOI allocated Rs 2,200 crores for this scheme.**

Clean Plants –

A clean plant means the **plant has been tested for several things before planting.** The testing made before planting is as follows:

- ✓ Plants are checked for **viruses, bacteria, or fungi.** And those plants infected **with these microorganisms are not planted**
- ✓ Plants that are economically important are put **under the category of clean plants**
- ✓ Some of them shall even be maintained **under controlled conditions for increased productivity**

MISHTI Scheme for Mangrove plantations

The **Mangroves cover 0.15% of the total Indian Geographical area.** This is around **4,975 square kilometers.** The state of West Bengal alone has **42.45% of India’s mangroves.** Indian mangroves are facing limitations such as an **increase in salinity, lack of oxygen, and diurnal tidal inundations.** **MISHTI will aim and protect the Mangrove forest along the coastline.** MISHTI in Bengal means Sweet.

New MISHTI Scheme launched in Union Budget 2023

- ✓ It stands for **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes.**
- ✓ The main aim of the scheme is **to take up mangrove plantations along the coastline.**

- ✓ **Mangrove forests are spread across AP, WB, Odisha, Andaman and Nicobar, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu.** Mangrove forests are present in **all the coastal states of India.**
- ✓ The main objective of the **MISTHI Scheme is to “preserve Mangrove forests”.**

India Energy Week 2023

The India Energy Week was inaugurated by **PM Modi in Bengaluru, Karnataka.** The event is **to focus on energy security and India’s energy transition goals.** This includes **net-zero emission target achievement by 2070.** The major attraction of the event is the **launch of E20 fuel in more than 84 outlets in 11 states and UTs.**

The focus of India energy week

- ✓ **PM Modi will launch solar and conventional energy hybrid cooking systems.** It was designed and created by **Indian Oil.** It is called the **Indoor Solar Cooking System.**
- ✓ Launch of **20% ethanol blend petrol, E20**
- ✓ Launch of **“UNBOTTLED”** initiative by PM Modi.
- ✓ Aim of the UNBOTTLED initiative is to **phase out single-use plastics**
- ✓ Indian companies like **GAIL, Adnani, HPCL, IOCL, BPCL, ONGC, and Total gas** will demonstrate new products and services
- ✓ Participation of more than **650 business associates from 50 countries**
- ✓ GOI plans on **achieving 20% ethanol blend biofuels**
- ✓ Discussions about the **oil companies setting up 2G ethanol plants and 3G ethanol plants**
- ✓ **Green Mobility Rally:** Focusing on green energy sources; Create public awareness on **green fuels.**

World Wetlands Day

- ✓ It is **observed on 2nd February every year** all over the world **to commemorate the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance in 1971.**

- ✓ It aims **to create awareness about the need for conservation of wetlands.**

- ✓ The 2023 theme for World Wetlands Day is **'It's Time for Wetland Restoration'** which highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland restoration.

- ✓ **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** adopted resolution **75/317 for World Wetlands Day on August 2021** to give it an official recognition.

- ✓ India is a party to the **Convention since 1982** and has so far declared **75 wetlands as Ramsar sites** covering 23 states and UTs

- ✓ At present, **Tamil Nadu has a maximum number of Ramsar sites which is 14,** followed by **UP which has 10 numbers of Ramsar sites.**



RAMSAR CONVENTION

About

- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- An intergovernmental treaty, adopted in 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.
- Entered into force in 1975.
- Wetlands that are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- Largest Ramsar Site in World: Pantanal: South America

Montreux Record

- Adopted in Montreux (Switzerland) in 1990.
- Identifies Ramsar sites that need priority conservation attention at national or international level.

Wetlands

- A place in which the land is covered by water – salt, fresh, or somewhere in between – either seasonally or permanently.
- Take many forms including rivers, marshes, bogs, mangroves, mudflats, ponds, swamps, billabongs, lagoons, lakes, and floodplains.
- World Wetlands Day: **2nd February**

India & Ramsar Convention

- Came into force in India: **1982**
- Total Number of Ramsar Sites: **75**
- Chilika Lake (Odisha), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Harike Lake (Punjab), Loktak Lake (Manipur), Wular Lake (Jammu and Kashmir), etc.
- Related Framework in India
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as regulatory framework for conservation and management of wetlands.
- The 2017 Rules decentralise wetlands management and provide for the constitution of the State Wetlands Authority or Union Territory Wetlands Authority.

Key Facts

- Largest Ramsar Site: Sunderbans, West Bengal
- Smallest Ramsar Site: Vembannur Wetland Complex, Tamil Nadu
- State with the maximum number of Ramsar Sites: Tamil Nadu (14)
- Wetlands in Montreux Record:
 - Keoladeo National Park: Rajasthan
 - Loktak Lake: Manipur

International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC)

The **5th International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5)** was held in **Canada**.

- ✓ Canada is bordered by 3 oceans - **Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic** - and has the **longest coastline in the world**.

About IMPAC

- ✓ It has been organized to discuss solutions to address the **funding gap of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)**.
- ✓ It brings together scientists, **policy makers, practitioners, and stakeholders from around the world to discuss the latest scientific knowledge, best practices and challenges in the management of MPAs**.
- ✓ IMPAC congresses are a collaborative effort between the **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the chosen host country**.
- ✓ **First IMPAC congress was held in 2005**.

Key Outcomes of 5th Congress

- ✓ **As many as 70% of MPAs are underfunded:** A well-managed and sufficiently funded MPA can restore good health to vulnerable ecosystems.
- ✓ Roughly **10 million square kilometres** of the ocean must be annually brought **under MPA to protect 30% of the world's ocean by 2030**.
- ✓ This target was set at the **15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in 2022**.
- ✓ It is important because currently, **MPAs represent only about 6% of the ocean**. Of this, **2.4% are fully and highly protected and 3.6% are highly protected**. The remaining **0.8% are designated and 2% have been proposed and committed**.
- ✓ It will provide a forum for **sharing knowledge and best practices in an open environment**

Significance of MPA

- ✓ It protects important marine ecosystems such as **coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds** and provides critical habitat for **threatened and endangered species**.
- ✓ It can help **mitigate the effects of climate change by conserving marine ecosystems and their associated species, which play an important role in regulating Earth's climate**.
- ✓ **It can provide economic benefits** including **increased tourism and recreation opportunities**, as well as **commercial benefits such as increased fish stocks**.

MPAs cover less than 4.01% of the total area of all Protected Areas of India.

- ✓ In India, **PAs that fall-in whole or in part-within swath of 500 m from the high tide line and to marine environment are included in the Marine Protected Area Network**.
- ✓ There are a total of **128 marine Protected Areas in India**.

Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary

The **1st -ever bird survey in Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary** was conducted and the volunteers recorded **186 species of birds**.

About Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary

- ✓ It is located in the **Thane District of Maharashtra**. It is known to be a **paradise for birdwatchers**.

- ✓ It has **two rivers, the Tansa and Vaitarna**, and the sanctuary gets its name from the former, which divides the sanctuary into two parts.
- ✓ The sanctuary forms the catchment area of Tansa lake, along with the surrounding forests of **Khardi, Vaitarna, Wada, and Shahapur ranges**.
- ✓ Tansa reservoir, along with Vaitarna and Bhatsa reservoirs, is the **major source of water for the cities of Mumbai and Thane**.
- ✓ It has **Southern Tropical Moist Deciduous Forest**, with a few **patches of Evergreen Forest**.
- ✓ There are **54 species of mammals** and **more than 250 species of birds** found in the sanctuary. Mammals include **leopard, sloth bear, porcupine, and barking deer**.

Nagarahole Tiger Reserve

The **bird survey** conducted at **Nagarahole Tiger Reserve** has resulted in the recording of **290 bird species, including a few migratory ones**.

About Nagarahole Tiger Reserve

- ✓ It is located in **Karnataka** and is a major hub of conservation under **Project Tiger and Project Elephant**.
- ✓ It was previously known as **Rajiv Gandhi National Park**.
- ✓ It is named after a **small river Nagarahole**, meanders within the habitat, before joining the **river Kabini**.
- ✓ It forms a critical connecting habitat for tigers and elephants to other areas of the **Western Ghats** through the **Brahmagiri wildlife sanctuary** and to the **Eastern Ghats through the Bandipur Tiger reserve**.
- ✓ It is acclaimed as one of the **high-density tiger populations** in the country after **Corbett & Kaziranga tiger reserves respectively**.
- ✓ The habitat also forms part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve**.

Saman Bird sanctuary

The **Asian Waterbird Census** revealed that there has been decline in the number of **migratory bird species** from **North Asia and Central Asia** at the **Saman Bird sanctuary**.

About Saman Bird sanctuary

- ✓ It is located in the **Mainpuri, Uttar Pradesh**. It is a seasonal **oxbow lake** on the **Ganges floodplain**.
- ✓ It is heavily reliant on the arrival of the **south-westerly monsoon**, which provides most of the **annual rainfall**.
- ✓ It was notified in **1990** in order to protect the **large population of sarus cranes** in the area.
- ✓ It has been designated as a **protected Ramsar site since 2019**.
- ✓ It is an important wintering site for many **migrating birds including the greylag goose**.
- ✓ **Settlement encroachment and salinization** are posing threats to this sanctuary.

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary

- ✓ It is located on the **southern bank of the Brahmaputra** in **Morigaon, Assam**.
- ✓ It was declared as **wild life sanctuary in 1987**.
- ✓ It has the highest concentration of **one-horned rhinos** in the world.
 - Under the **Indian Rhino Vision 2020 (IRV 2020)** rhinos were translocated from **Pobitora and re-introduced into the Manas National Park**.
 - Earlier, under the same programme, **two rhinos** were similarly translocated from **Pobitora to Manas National Park in 2008**.

Depsang Bulge

- ✓ It is a **900 square kilometre area** of mountain terrain in the **disputed Aksai Chin region**.
- ✓ It was conceded to **India by China in 1960** but remains **under Chinese occupation** since the **1962 Sino-Indian War**.
- ✓ The area is immediately to the **south of Depsang Plains** and encloses the **basin of the Burtso Nala**.
- ✓ The area is perceived to be of **strategic importance to both the countries**, sandwiched by **strategic roads linking border outposts**.

Pink Dolphin

- ✓ It is also known as the **boto**, lives **only in freshwater**.
- ✓ It is found throughout much of the **Amazon and Orinoco River basins** in **Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Venezuela**.
- ✓ It is a relatively **abundant freshwater cetacean** with an estimated population in the **tens of thousands**.
- ✓ These animal species **use echolocation** which lets the animal determine the size and shape of any **surrounding item or object**.
- ✓ It is listed as **Endangered** in the **IUCN Red list**.

Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG)

- ✓ The **1st G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group (ECSWG)** meeting concluded in **Bengaluru**.
- ✓ It ended on a positive note with all **G20 countries showing interest and commitment to constructively work towards the objective of the three priority areas**:
 - Arresting **Land Degradation, Accelerating Ecosystem Restoration** and **Enriching Biodiversity**.
 - Promoting a **Sustainable and Climate Resilient Blue Economy**.
 - Encouraging **Resource Efficiency** and **Circular Economy**.
- ✓ It was hosted by the **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- ✓ It marks the beginning of constructive discussions within G20 countries for a **sustainable future, led by India's G20 presidency**.

Marine Spatial Planning Framework (MSPF)

- ✓ The **1st Marine Spatial Planning Framework (MSPF)** in India was launched in **Puducherry**.
- ✓ It is to be implemented by **India and Norway** together under the **Indo-Norway Ocean Initiative**.
 - The initiative was created under an MoU signed between the countries in **2019**.

About Marine Spatial Planning Framework (MSPF)

- ✓ It is a public process of **analyzing and allocating the spatial and temporal distribution of human activities in marine areas**.
- ✓ It is a **practical way of creating and establishing a more rational use of marine space** and interactions between its uses.
- ✓ It is also a **way of balancing the demands of development** with the need to **protect the environment and deliver social and economic outcomes** in an open and planned manner.

Need for Marine Spatial Planning Framework (MSPF)

- ✓ The **increase in anthropogenic activities** has **increased the stress on the ecosystem of the ocean**. These stresses are **creating new threats to the marine ecosystem**.

Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor 2023

- ✓ It is published by **Germany-based think-tank New Climate Institute (NCI)**.
- ✓ The **Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor** assesses the transparency and integrity of **24 major companies' climate pledges and strategies**.
- ✓ The **24 companies assessed** in this report are major **multinational companies**.
- ✓ It evaluates **four main areas** of corporate climate action: **tracking and disclosure of emissions, setting emission reduction targets, reducing own emissions, and taking responsibility for unabated emissions through climate contributions or offsetting**.
- ✓ These companies will reduce their total **greenhouse-gas emissions by 36%** by their respective target's years, **typically 2040 and 2050**, compared with the reduction of **at least 90% that is needed**.

River Cities Alliance

- ✓ **DHARA** the annual meet of the **River Cities Alliance members** was organized by the **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** in association with the **National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA)** in **Pune**.
- ✓ DHARA which stands for **Driving Holistic Action for Urban Rivers**, is a platform to co-learn and discuss solutions for managing local water resources.

About River Cities Alliance

- ✓ It is a dedicated platform for river cities in India **to ideate, discuss and exchange information for sustainable management of urban rivers**.
- ✓ It started with **30 cities in 2021** and currently has **95 cities** as members across India.
- ✓ It symbolizes the successful partnership of the **two Ministries i.e., Ministry of Jal Shakti and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**.
- ✓ Its primary objective is **to provide the member cities with a platform to discuss and exchange information on aspects that are vital for sustainable management of urban rivers**.
- ✓ Alliance gives cities an opportunity **to strengthen aspects of governance for river cities and improve their livability to attract external economic investment**.

The Alliance focuses on three broad themes:

- ✓ Networking
- ✓ Capacity Building
- ✓ Technical support

Open Pit Mine

An open pit mine collapsed in **China's northern Inner Mongolia region** on, killing at least two people and leaving **more than 50 missing**.

About

- ✓ It also known as **opencast mining**, is a surface mining technique that **extracts minerals from an open pit in the ground**.
- ✓ It is the most common method used throughout the **world for mineral mining** and does not require **extractive methods or tunnels**.
- ✓ This technique is used when **mineral or ore deposits** are found relatively close to the **surface of the earth**.
- ✓ Most of the world's annual output of **copper, gold, and iron ore is from open-pit mining**.

Effects of Open Pit Mining

- ✓ It consumes enormous **amounts of water**.
- ✓ It changes **geological, hydrological and geotechnical** conditions.
- ✓ Unrehabilitated pit areas remain **elevated risk of erosion and flooding** even after mining are exhausted.

Alternatives to Open Cast Mining

- ✓ **In-situ recovery (ISR)** - It is an extraction process designed to leave a mine's physical location undisturbed. It is touted as an environmentally cleaner method of extraction.
- ✓ **Block caving mining** - It is an underground mass mining method that allows for the bulk extraction of large, relatively lower grade, ore deposits with substantial vertical dimensions.

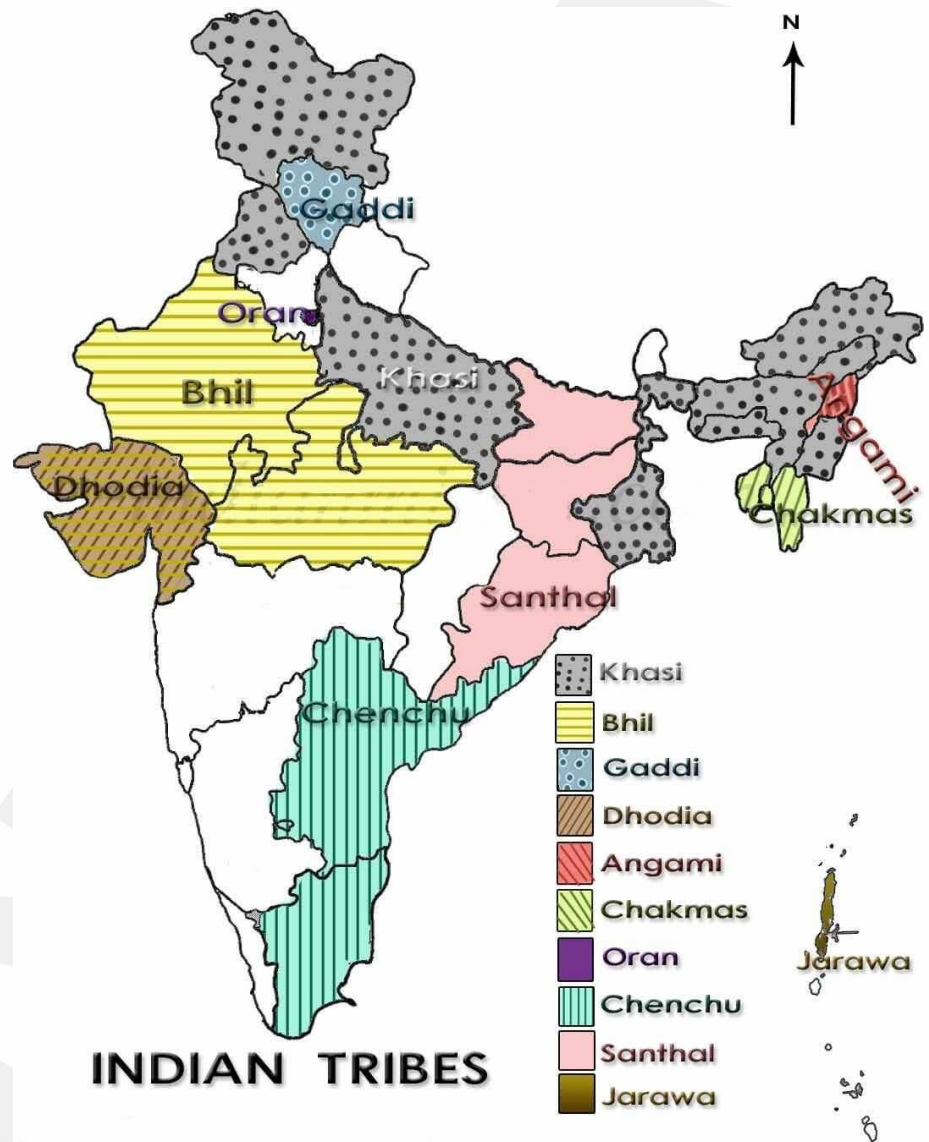
ART AND CULTURE

National Tribal Festival

- ✓ At the inauguration of the **Aadi Mahotsav - a mega National Tribal Festival, at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in Delhi**, PM stated that the Centre has been making efforts to mainstream the **nation's tribal communities**.
- ✓ According to the PM, the **Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM-VIKAS)** has been introduced to provide traditional craftspeople with financial support in addition to skill development.

History of National Tribal Festival

- ✓ The tribal festival is organised annually by the **Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation Limited (TRIFED)** under the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** since 2015, when it was titled "VANAJ".
- ✓ **TRIFED has been organising Aadi Mahotsav - National Tribal Festival to provide direct market access to the tribal master-craftsmen and women in large metros and state capitals.**



About Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman (PM-VIKAS)

- ✓ It was announced in the **Union Budget 2023-24** as a step towards developing the nation's artisans to enhance the scope, calibre and reach of their **goods (to domestic and international markets)**, by providing –
 - Technology to **increase their productivity and profit**,
 - Skills training for **age-old and traditional crafts**, and
 - The opening of **credit lines**
- ✓ The scheme will significantly benefit **the weaker sections and women of society**.
- ✓ The scheme will also be implemented into the **Micro, Small, and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSME) value chain**, which will enhance their **opportunity to scale up their business**.
- ✓ It will contribute to India's growth and development, as the **craftspeople and artisans** are the true spirits of self-reliant and independent India.

Lavani

- ✓ Recently the **dance form of Lavani** was at the centre of a controversy, when some top political leaders from Maharashtra directed against organising vulgar public shows in the name of Lavani.
- ✓ The word **Lavani comes from 'lavanya' or beauty**. Lavani is a traditional folk art form in which **women dancers wearing nine-yard-long sarees in bright colours**, make-up, and **ghunghroos perform on dholak beats** on a stage before a live audience.
- ✓ As an indigenous art form, Lavani has a history going back several centuries, and it attained particular popularity in the **Peshwa era in the 18th century**.
- ✓ There are several **sub-genres of Lavani**, of which the most popular is the **Shringarik (erotic) kind**, in which the lyrics are often teasing, with sensuous dance steps and delicate gestures employed to convey erotic meaning.

Sant Ravidas Jayanti on 5 February

- ✓ Guru Ravidas Jayanti was observed on **February 5** this year. This year marks the **646th birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas**.
- ✓ Guru Ravidas Jayanti is commemorated on **Magh Purnima, the day of the full moon in the month of Magh**, according to the Drik Panchang
- ✓ **Born in 1377 C.E. in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**, Guru Ravidas was an Indian mystic, **poet, social reformer and spiritual guru**.
- ✓ Also known by **Raidas, Rohidas and Ruhidas** - his devotional songs and verses created a lasting impact upon the **Bhakti Movement**.
- ✓ He was among the first people **to oppose the Indian caste system** through his poems and teachings based on **spirituality and spread the message of equality**.
- ✓ Around **41 poems accredited to Ravidas** were included in the Adi Granth, the **sacred scripture of Sikhism**.
- ✓ Ravidas was the founder of the **Ravidasia religion**. He was also known as the **spiritual guide of Meera Bai**, who is an eminent personality in the sphere of Hindu spiritualism.



SPORTS

Saudi Arabia to host 2027 Asian Cup Football Tournament

The Asian Football Cup is held once in four years. It is organized by the Asian Football Confederation. Around 23 teams participate in the tournament. Teams are carefully chosen based on their skills and several other selection criteria. Teams are chosen by AFC. The host of the tournament is selected through a bidding process. The 2023 host is Qatar. This was decided long back. Recently, the 2027 host was selected and it is Saudi Arabia.

Asian Cup Football Tournament 2027

- ✓ **Slogan:** Forward for Asia
- ✓ **Host cities:** Dammam, Riyadh, and Jeddah

The 2023 Asian Football Cup

- ✓ Around 24 teams are to participate in the tournament.
- ✓ AFC has selected 13 teams.
- ✓ The hosting country, that is, Qatar qualifies directly.
- ✓ The other countries selected so far are Japan, Syria, South Korea, Australia, Iran, UAE, Saudi Arabia, China, Iraq, Oman, Vietnam, Lebanon, Palestine, Uzbekistan, Thailand, India, Hong Kong, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Bahrain, Malaysia, Jordan, and Indonesia.

Women's T20 World Cup

- ✓ The 2023 Women's T20 World Cup was the **eighth edition** of ICC Women's T20 World Cup tournament.
- ✓ It was **held in South Africa** between **10 February and 26 February 2023**.
- ✓ In the final **Australia defeated South Africa** by 19 runs in Cape Town.
- ✓ **Australia won their third consecutive** and sixth overall title.
- ✓ Total **8 teams participated** in the World cup.
- ✓ **Next Edition** – Bangladesh (2024)
- ✓ **Player of Tournament** – Ashleigh Gardner (AUS)
- ✓ **Player of the match** – Beth Mooney (AUS)



- **PLACES IN NEWS**
- **APPOINTMENTS**
- **DAYS & THEMES**













PLACES IN NEWS



S. No.	Place	Why in News?
International Places in News		
1.	Finland	India and Finland are looking to expand ties across a range of cutting-edge technologies including quantum computing and nuclear technology. It is a Nordic Country located in northern Europe. It is bordered by Norway, Russia, Gulf of Finland, Gulf of Bothnia, and Sweden. Part of Finland lies north of Arctic Circle, known as Upland Finland. Its capital and largest city is Helsinki. Its largest lake, Saimaa, is the 4th largest in Europe.
2.	Gaziantep Castle	The 2,000-year-old Roman-era Gaziantep Castle was severely damaged by the devastating earthquake. It is located on a hilltop in southern Turkey's city of Gaziantep. It was 1st built by the Hittite Empire as an observation point and later built into a main castle by the Roman Empire. It has the shape of a somewhat irregular circle. It has 12 towers, some of which are adorned with Ayyubid and Mamluk decorations. It is a world heritage site.
3.	Lebanon	Lebanon has devalued its official exchange rate by 90%. It is a country in Western Asia, located on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. It consists of a narrow strip of territory and is one of the world's smaller sovereign states. The capital is Beirut. It is located between Syria and Israel. It is part of the Levant region of the Middle East.
4.	Fiji	Deputy PM of Fiji has expressed hope to partner with India in meeting climate action goals. It is an island nation in Melanesia and an archipelago in Southern Pacific Ocean consisting of around 330 islands. It is located in Oceania between Hawaii and New Zealand. Two major islands - Viti Levu and Vanua Levu - make up 87% of Fiji's total landmass.
5.	Suez Canal	World's biggest shipping company is suing its rival, seeking compensation for delays caused by a 2021 blockage of the Suez Canal. It is an artificial sea-level waterway running north to south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt, to connect the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea. It separates the African continent from Asia.
6.	Equatorial Guinea	Equatorial Guinea declared the country's 1st-ever outbreak of Marburg virus disease (MVD). It is located on the west coast of Africa. It consists of a mainland territory, Rio Muni, which is bordered by Cameroon to the north and Gabon to the east and south.
7.	Port of Haifa	The Adani Group acquired the port of Haifa for USD 1.2 billion. It is located in northern Israel, adjacent to the city of Haifa along the Mediterranean Sea. It is also located near the busy Suez Canal shipping route. It handles nearly half of the country's container cargo and is also the nation's principal port for passenger traffic and cruise ships. It has a natural deep-water harbor.

National Place in News

1.	Deendayal Port	Logistics company DP World won a major contract to develop, operate and maintain a mega-container terminal at Deendayal Port. It was previously known as Kandla port. It is situated on Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat. It is the largest port of India in terms of volume of cargo handled. It is a protected natural harbour. It is recognized as one of the major ports in India.
2.	Keoladeo National Park	The Rajasthan state Forest Department has proposed to construct a zoo inside Keoladeo National Park. It was formerly known as the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary, located in the eastern part of Rajasthan. The Siberian crane is one of the rare species that was spotted here. It was designated as Ramsar site in 1981 and as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1985. It is given legal protection under the provisions of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Indian Forest Act, 1927.
3.	Yaya Tso Lake	Yaya Tso Lake was declared Ladakh's 1st biodiversity heritage site under the Biological Diversity Act. It is known as a bird's paradise for its beautiful lake located at an altitude of 4,820 metres. It is a nesting habitat for a large number of birds and animals, such as the bar-headed goose, black-necked crane and brahminy duck. It is also one of the highest breeding sites of the black-necked crane in India.
4.	Charaideo Maidams	The Centre has decided to nominate the Charaideo Maidams for the UNESCO World Heritage Centre this year. It represents the late medieval (13th-19th century CE) mound burial tradition of the Tai Ahom community in Assam. It enshrines the mortal remains of the members of the Ahom royalty, who used to be buried with their paraphernalia.
5.	Saptakoteshwar Temple	The Prime Minister has expressed happiness over the renovation of Shree Saptakoteshwar Devasthan. It is located in Goa. The original Saptakoteshwar Temple was built around the twelfth century by the Kadamba dynasty in Narve on Divar Island. The mandapa of the temple is built in a distinctly European style. The most important festival celebrated at the temple is Gokulashtami.
6.	Grishneshwar Temple	Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the Grishneshwar temple. It is located in the Aurangabad, Maharastra, near Devagiri fort and Ellora Caves. It is one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines and the smallest of all, dedicated to Lord Shiva and has been mentioned in the Shiva Purana and Padma Purana. It is constructed using red stones in an interlocking pattern and is composed of a five-tier spire or shikara. Current structure was built by Queen Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore in 18th century AD.

APPOINTMENTS

S. No.	Person		Designation
1.	Arun Kohli		Morgan Stanley's New Country Head of India
2.	Monty Desai		Head Coach of Nepal National Cricket Team
3.	K Satyanarayana Raju		MD and CEO of Canara Bank
4.	Neal Mohan		Indian American CEO of Youtube
5.	Lt Gen MV Suchindra Kumar		Vice Chief of Army Staff
6.	Rajan Am ba		MD of Jaguar Land Rover India
7.	Ayushmann Khurrana		UNICEF India's National Ambassador of Child Rights
8.	Ruchira Kamboj		62 nd President of UN Social Development Commission
9.	BVR Subramanyam		CEO of NITI Aayog
10.	Joe Acaba		NASA's Chief Astronaut
11.	Rajeev Raghuvanshi		New Drug Controller General of India

12.	Lt. Gen. RS Reena		Director General Quality Assurance
13.	Shailesh Pathak		FICCI Secretary General

VIDHIGYA

DAYS AND THEMES

S. No.	Date	Event
1.	1 st February	<p>Indian Coast Guard Day</p> <p>On 1st February, the Indian Coast Guard celebrates its foundation day. This year, the Indian Coast Guard is celebrating its 46th Raising Day. Indian Coast Guard has played a significant role in securing the Indian Coasts and enforcing regulations within the Maritime Zones of India</p>
2.	2 nd December	<p>World Wetland Day</p> <p>Every year on 2nd February, World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in Ramsar, Iran. It was first celebrated in 1997.</p> <p>Theme: It's Time for Wetlands Restoration</p>
3.	4 th February	<p>World Cancer Day</p> <p>Every year on 4 February World Cancer Day is observed globally and is celebrated by WHO to aware people of the disease Cancer and how to cure it.</p> <p>Theme: Close the Care Gap</p>
4.	8 th February	<p>Safer Internet Day</p> <p>This year, it is celebrated on 8 February. The day calls for all stakeholders to join together to make the internet a safer and better place for all, mainly for children and young people.</p>
5.	10 th February	<p>World Pulses Day</p> <p>It is observed on 10 February to spread awareness about the nutritional and environmental benefits of pulses as part of sustainable food production.</p> <p>Theme: Pulses for a sustainable future</p>
6.	13 th February	<p>National Women Day</p> <p>On the occasion of Sarojini Naidu's birthday on 13 February 1879 National women Day is celebrated. She was a gifted national leader, a freedom fighter, and a celebrated poet. She was known as the 'Nightingale of India' and 'Bharat Kokila'. Her birth anniversary was chosen to commemorate Indian women and their contribution to the nation in every sphere of life.</p> <p>World Radio Day</p> <p>On Nov 3, 2011, UNESCO declared February 13 as World Radio Day because on this day United Nations Radio was first established in 1946. It is observed to preserve the importance of radio as well as to encourage decision makers to provide access to information through radio. UNESCO coordinates World Radio Day activities on a global scale</p>

		<p>with UN member countries through their radio stations.</p> <p>Theme: Radio and Peace</p>
7.	20 th February	<p>World Social Justice Day</p> <p>World Day of Social Justice is observed every year on 20 February to encourage people to see how social justice affects poverty eradication. The main aim of this day is to achieve full employment and support for social integration. This day tackle issues like poverty, exclusion, and unemployment.</p> <p>Theme: Overcoming Barriers and Unleashing Opportunities for Social Justice</p>
8.	21 st February	<p>International Mother Language Day</p> <p>International Mother Language Day is celebrated annually on 21 February worldwide to aware of the diversity of the language and its variety. This day promotes the awareness of language and cultural diversity across the world. On 17 November 1999, it was first announced by UNESCO.</p> <p>Theme: Multilingual education – a necessity to transform education</p>
9.	27 th February	<p>World NGO Day</p> <p>The day is dedicated to recognizing, celebrating, and honoring all non-governmental and non-profit organizations, and also the people behind them that contribute to society.</p>
10.	28 th February	<p>National Science Day</p> <p>National Science Day is celebrated every year in India on 28 February to mark the discovery of the Raman Effect by the Indian Physicist Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman. He discovered the Raman Effect on 28 February 1928 and for this discovery, he was honored with the Nobel Prize in Physics subject in 1930.</p> <p>Theme: Global Science for Global Wellbeing</p>

The background of the entire image is a dark blue, semi-transparent overlay of a pair of ornate scales of justice. The scales are positioned on the right side, with the pans hanging from a central point. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the intricate details of the metalwork.

**CLAT
CAM**

SNIPPETS

SNIPPETS

- ✓ PM Modi laid the foundation stone for the **largest helicopter manufacturing unit in Tumakuru, Karnataka** in 2016. The unit is now ready to start its operation. The unit will produce more than a thousand helicopters and make India self-reliant on helicopters.
- ✓ **Sickle Cell Anaemia affects the RBCs in the human body.** When a person suffers from the disease his RBCs (usually rod-shaped) deform. Their shapes are affected. During the Union budget 2023, the Government of **India launched the Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission. Under the Mission, the GoI is planning to eliminate the disease by 2047.**
- ✓ The Government of Delhi constituted the **Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005.** Since its constitution, the DCPCR launched several technological interventions to establish a good communication link between the government and the people. Recently, the DCPCR launched the **WhatsApp chatbot called “BAL MITRA”.**
- ✓ **Australia removes British Monarchy from Bank notes** - Former British colonies are deciding on their constitutional ties with Britain. Similarly, Australia is to remove the face of the British Monarch from its currency bills. The changes are being made to the **five dollar bills of Australia.** The five dollar bills are the last notes to bear the face of the British Monarch. **The coins will still hold the face of the monarch.**
- ✓ Yaya Tso is a lake in Ladakh and is known as the **Bird’s Paradise.** The lake is at an altitude of **4,820 kilometres.** The lake is a popular breeding site for **black-necked cranes.** The lake was recently announced as the **“Biodiversity Heritage Site”.**
- ✓ Recently, the **James Webb Telescope** won the space **Space Foundation Award.** The James Webb Telescope is an **infrared space telescope orbiting the sun.** The telescope was jointly developed by **European Space Agency, NASA, and Canadian Space Agency.** It is the successor of the Hubble telescope. The James Webb Telescope has been discovering many new facts and making extraordinary explorations since its launch.
- ✓ **French President Emmanuel Macron** recently unveiled a **new economic and military strategy for Africa.** According to the new strategy, the French Government is to reduce its troops in the African region. Dropping the military approach, **France is to boost its economic influence in the region.**
- ✓ The Government of India is **planning to create ten clean plant centres.** These centres will focus on increasing fruit crop production. During the **Union Budget 2023-24,** the finance minister Nirmala Sitaraman announced the **Atma Nirbhar Clean Plant Program.** Under the programme, the Government of India will **focus on increasing fruit production in the country.**
- ✓ **Marina** is a specially designed place of pleasure for small boats and yachts. The **Chief Minister of Karnataka** recently announced that the first Marina of India will be constructed in **Byndoor, Udupi district, Karnataka.** He announced this while addressing a function **“Seven Wonders of Karnataka”** organized by the **Tourism department.**
- ✓ The **Kerala State Government** recently signed an agreement with the United Nations women **to increase the role of women** in the tourist industry of the state. Under the agreement, the **Responsible Tourism Mission is to be implemented in the state.** It will be a gender-inclusive mission. The mission will promote **women-friendly tourist spots.**

- ✓ For the first time in Indian history, the **Shree Krishna temple in Kerala introduced a mechanical elephant**. The mechanical elephant will perform temple rituals here. It was presented by **PETA India**. The name of the elephant was **Raman**. It weighed **800 kg in weight and can carry 4 people**.
- ✓ Companies have been striving to create their own chatbots to cater to the needs of their customers. After the success of **OpenAI's ChatGPT**, several companies have launched their own versions of chatbots to grab a share of the market. **META, which loves to monopolize the "Internet Chat" world**, has launched its new **chatbot called LLaMA**.
- ✓ **Kerala uses a BANDICOOT robot** to clean sewage. With this, it has become the **first state to launch robotic scavengers**. BANDICOOT was launched in the **temple town Guruvayur**. Genrobotics developed the robot. The main objective of developing the robot is **to eliminate manual scavenging**.
- ✓ **China** recently launched the **Zhongxing-26 satellite** at a cost of **333 million USD**. It was launched on **Long March 3B rocket**. The main objective of the satellite is **to provide broadband connectivity for aviation and ship-related operations**. The satellite was launched by the **China Academy of Space Technology**. The CAST is planning to make **60 more launched in 2023**.
- ✓ **David Malpass, the former World Bank President** resigned before his term was completed due to climate-related controversies. After his resignation, US President Joe Biden recently nominated the **former Master Card CEO Ajay Banga as the new World Bank President**. Ajay has expertise in handling climate change-related economic issues.
- ✓ **Brazil is the largest beef exporter in the world**. And China is one of the largest beef consumers in the world. Brazil recently suspended its beef exports to China due to mad cow disease. The disease is also called **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy**.
- ✓ **Skywatchers** and astronomy enthusiasts have something to look forward to in February 2024. On February 22, the **Moon, Venus, and Jupiter align in the sky**, creating a stunning celestial display.
- ✓ Caste discrimination does not exist in the US by law. However, the tech sector in the country has been facing caste discrimination. Protests against the issue have increased in the US in recent times. The Dalits account for 1.5% of the Indian immigrants. More than 67% of the Indian Dalits are facing caste-based harassment at work places. To put an end to such discrimination, the City Council of **Seattle** recently introduced a **Ban on caste discrimination**.

SPECIAL FEATURE



**CHECK YOUR
QUIZDOM**



QUIZ ZONE FOR CLAT ASPIRANTS

QUIZDOM

Passage 1

The State Governments and Union Territory administrations celebrated World Wetlands Day (WWD) at all 75 Ramsar sites this year with over 200 events. The National Flag was hoisted at the Ramsar Sites. The wetland pledge was administered during these events. Over 50 activities were held with student engagement in which drawing competition, quiz competition, exposure activities, and bird watching were organized. A wetland is a place in which the land is covered by water—salt, fresh, or somewhere in between—either seasonally or permanently. It functions as its own distinct ecosystem. Wetlands may support both aquatic and terrestrial species.

1. World wetland Day is observed every year on –
(a) 31st January (b) 1st February (c) 2nd February (d) 3rd February
2. What is the theme of World Wetland Day 2023?
(a) Wetlands and Biodiversity (b) Wetlands and Water
(c) Wetlands Action for People and Nature (d) It's Time for Wetlands Restoration
3. What is the significance of World Wetlands Day?
(a) To celebrate the beauty of wetlands
(b) To raise awareness about the threats facing wetlands
(c) To promote recreational activities in wetlands
(d) To support commercial development in wetlands
4. Which organization is responsible for coordinating World Wetlands Day?
(a) United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)
(b) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
(c) Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention)
(d) World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
5. Which state has the highest Ramsar sites in India?
(a) Tamil Nadu (b) Himachal Pradesh (c) Meghalaya (d) Goa

Passage 2

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday presented the Union Budget 2023, the fifth budget of Modi 2.0. In the last full-fledged Budget before the general elections next year, Nirmala Sitharaman said that the Indian economy is on the right path and heading towards a bright future. In a big boost for taxpayers and economy, Sitharaman announced major changes in tax slabs under the new tax regime and big hike in allocation for railways and capital expenditure. Many changes have been announced in the new tax regime to make it attractive for the individuals in the Budget 2023. The income tax slabs under the new tax regime has been proposed to be reduced to 5 in FY 2023-24 from 6 currently.

6. Which article of Indian constitution defines Money bill?
(a) Article 110 (b) Article 112 (c) Article 114 (d) Article 117
7. In this Union Budget Millet is termed as Shree Anna. Which Institute will be the Global Hub for Millets?
(a) Indian Institute of Millet Research, Assam (b) Indian Institute of Millet Research, New Delhi
(c) Indian Institute of Millet Research, Mumbai (d) Indian Institute of Millet Research, Hyderabad

8. Indian economy has increased in size from being 10th to _____ largest in the world in the past nine years.
- (a) 4th (b) 5th (c) 6th (d) 7th
9. In the union budget of FY 2023-24, it is announced to launch a mission to eliminate sickle cell anemia by —
- (a) 2035 (b) 2047 (c) 2057 (d) 2070
10. How many new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan scheme will be established?
- (a) 100 (b) 350 (c) 500 (d) 1000

Passage 3

After the initial Turkey-Syria earthquakes, fresh new tremors once again rocked the already disaster-struck area on Monday. The unpredictability and abruptness of such country-wide disasters mean many have begun questioning India's current earthquake forecasting measures and preparedness in case similar calamities befall our country. Now, Dr N Purnachandra Rao, the chief scientist of seismology at the National Geophysical Research Institute, has warned that an earthquake similar in magnitude to the Turkey quakes is "imminent" in Uttarakhand and can happen "any time", raising many alarms for the northern state and the nation.

In an interview with the Times of India, Rao explained that tremendous stress continues to build under the Uttarakhand region, and it will inevitably be released as a massive earthquake in the area. "We are monitoring the situation real-time. We have GPS networks in the area. GPS points are moving, indicating changes happening beneath the surface," he explains, noting that they have "set up around 80 seismic stations in the Himalayan region focused on Uttarakhand".

11. The instrument which is used to measure the earthquake shaking is called _____
- (a) Seismograph (b) Anemometer (c) Barometer (d) Nomograph
12. National Institute of Disaster Management is located in:
- (a) Delhi (b) Bangalore (c) Chennai (d) Hyderabad
13. The point on the surface, nearest to the focus, is called _____.
- (a) Focus (b) Hypocentre (c) Epicentre (d) Centroid
14. What is the range of the intensity scale used in measuring earthquakes?
- (a) 1 to 12 (b) 1 to 7 (c) 1 to 15 (d) 1 to 5
15. Consider the following terms:
- A. Lightning
 B. Landslide
 C. Thundering
 D. Tsunami
 E. Floods
- Earthquakes can cause.
- (a) B, D and E (b) A, B and C (c) B only (d) B and E

Passage 4

Russia and the United States maintain one of the most important, critical and strategic foreign relations in the world. Both nations have shared interests in nuclear safety and security, nonproliferation, counterterrorism, and space exploration.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the relationship was generally warm under the Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991–99) until the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1999, and has since deteriorated significantly.

Following Vladimir Putin regaining control of the Russian government in 2012, relations between the two countries significantly strained due to Russia's annexation of Crimea and Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Deterioration continued with the Russian military intervention in the Syrian Civil War, and over Russia's interference in the 2016 and 2020 U.S. elections.

16. The "New START" treaty was in the news. What is this treaty?

- (a) It is a bilateral strategic nuclear arms reduction treaty between the USA and the Russian Federation.
- (b) It is a multilateral energy security cooperation treaty among the members of the East Asia Summit.
- (c) It is a treaty between the Russian Federation and the European Union for the energy security cooperation.
- (d) It is a multilateral cooperation treaty among the BRICS countries for the promotion of trade.

17. With Reference to START Treaty Consider the Following

- 1) Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty", known as START-I, was signed between the US and the erstwhile USSR in 1991, and came into force in 1994.
- 2) START-I, capped the numbers of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that each side could deploy at 6,000 and 1,600 respectively.
- 3) START treaty lapsed in 2010 and was replaced first by the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) and then by the New START treaty.

Which of the Above Statements Are Incorrect?

- (a) 1 & 2 Only
- (b) 2 & 3 only
- (c) 3 Only
- (d) All are Correct

18. Between which country did the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, 1971 was signed?

- (a) India and Pakistan
- (b) India and Bangladesh
- (c) India and USSR
- (d) India and USA

Ans. c

19. The two key post-war powers which played significant role during the Cold War were

- (a) USA and Soviet Union
- (b) USSR and China
- (c) USA and England
- (d) USA and China

20. The organization of the Soviet bloc's equivalent of NATO was

- (a) COMECON
- (b) Warsaw Pact
- (c) NAM
- (d) SEATO

Passage 5

Over 8,000 farmers in Pilibhit using electric grid-connected tube wells for irrigation of agricultural lands will be linked with solar energy under the PM-KUSUM scheme of the union government. Under this scheme, NEDA (non-conventional energy development agency) and the UP Power Corporation joined hands to equip the grid connected agricultural tube wells with solar devices to drastically cut down the electricity expenses of irrigation. The extra power generated by the system will be transferred to the electricity grids, the value of which will be reimbursed to the concerned farmers. The state government would also provide free maintenance to the solar power devices for five years from the date of installation. The solar panels manufactured by NEDA would carry a warranty of 25 years. Sukhwant Bindra, a farmer of village Baivaha, while welcoming the scheme said, "This is the first time when the farmers will not only irrigate their fields without cost but also be subjected to get payment of the unused solar power."

21. Recently Government has extended PM KUSUM scheme till which Year?

(a) 2025

(b) 2026

(c) 2030

(d) 2047

22. PM KUSUM launched by which ministry in 2019?

(a) Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

(b) Ministry of Power

(c) Ministry of Science and Technology

(d) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas

23. PM KUSUM is focused towards which kind of Renewable Energy?

(a) Hydro Energy

(b) Solar Energy

(c) Wind Energy

(d) Biomass Energy

24. PM-KUSUM stands for –

(a) Pradhan Mantri Krishi Ujawala Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan Yojna

(b) Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan Yojna

(c) Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Uttar Madhya Yojna

(d) None of these

25. What is the current India's total installed Renewable Energy capacity?

(a) 125.62 GW

(b) 137.82 GW

(c) 149.64 GW

(d) 168.96 GW

Passage 6

The Election Commission on Friday recognised Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde's faction as real Shiv Sena and allotted the poll symbol to it. The Shiv Sena symbol was claimed by the party's rival factions led by Shinde and former chief minister Uddhav Thackeray. As of now, the two factions were using separate party names and symbols allotted to them after the EC 'froze' the Shiv Sena name and party symbol until the dispute was decided by it. In its order, the Election Commission said that Shiv Sena's constitution, amended in 2018, was not on record of poll panel. "The constitution of political parties ought to provide for free, fair and transparent elections to the posts of office bearers and a further free and fair procedure for the resolution of internal disputes. These procedures ought to be difficult to amend and should be amendable only after ensuring larger support of the organisational members for the same," the ECI said.

26. The Election Commission of India allotted the name 'Shiv Sena' and the party's symbol to the Eknath Shinde faction on the basis of majority. Which case decided that in case of dispute the Party's name and symbol is given to a party on the basis of test of majority?

(a) Sadiq Ali Vs Election Commission of India

(b) TN Seshan vs Union of India

(c) Harbansingh Jalal vs Union of India

(d) Arjun Singh vs INC

27. Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order empowers the EC to recognise political parties and allot symbols. It was introduced in which Year?

(a) 1951

(b) 1965

(c) 1968

(d) 1971

28. Shivsena is which kind of party?

(a) National Party

(b) State Party

(c) Unrecognised Party

(d) None of these

29. What is the Party symbol of Shivsena?

(a) Two Leaves

(b) Flowers and Grass

(c) Hammer

(d) Bow and Arrow

30. A political party in India can be recognised as National Party if it has state party status in atleast

(a) Three States

(b) Four States

(c) Five States

(d) Seven States

V – 70's

31. As per the Union Budget 2023-24, Per Capita Income of India has increased to –
(a) 1.46 Lakh (b) 1.67 Lakh (c) 1.76 Lakh (d) 1.97 Lakh
32. Recently Al Minhad city of which country renamed as Hind City?
(a) Iraq (b) Saudi Arabia (c) Qatar (d) UAE
33. Recently 'YayaTso' has been proposed as the first Biodiversity Heritage Site of which State/UT?
(a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Uttarakhand (c) Ladakh (d) Jammu Kashmir
34. Recently who has been appointed as the first female Prime Minister of Equatorial Guinea?
(a) Manuela Roka Botey (b) Sama Lukonde (c) Patrick Jérôme Achi (d) Mainza Chona
35. To boost cooperation in Semiconductor Industry, India agreed to setup Task Force with which country?
(a) United Kingdom (b) United States of America
(c) Australia (d) France
36. Recently, Asia's first floating festival started in which city?
(a) Bhopal (b) Mandsaur (c) Indore (d) Khandwa
37. Recently which country is invited as the theme country of Madrid International Book Fair 2025?
(a) UAE (b) Saudi Arabia (c) India (d) Bangladesh
38. Recently 'Exercise Topchi' of Indian Forces started at which place?
(a) Mattur (b) Tirupati (c) Madurai (d) Devlali
39. Recently which country removed the British Monarchy from its Bank Notes?
(a) China (b) Australia (c) Canada (d) South Africa
40. Recently, BR Ambedkar School of Specialized Excellence inaugurated in which State/UT?
(a) Maharashtra (b) New Delhi (c) Gujarat (d) Rajasthan
41. Which airline introduced a new software for real-time reporting of in-flight incidents?
(a) IndiGo (b) Air India (c) Spice Jet (d) Vistara
42. As per the 'Annual Death Penalty Report, 2022', which state accounted for the highest death row inmate population?
(a) Gujarat (b) Uttar Pradesh (c) Assam (d) Nagaland
43. Which Indian state/UT launched the 'Ladli Bahina Scheme'?
(a) Maharashtra (b) Madhya Pradesh (c) Gujarat (d) Odisha
44. Who is the winner of the Australian Open 2023 women's singles title?
(a) Aryna Sabalenka (b) Elena Rybakina (c) Iga Swiatek (d) Ons Jabeur
45. Which Union Ministry launched the 'Visit India Year – 2023' initiative?
(a) Minister of Home Affairs (b) Minister of Tourism
(c) Minister of Railways (d) Minister of External Affairs

46. Which city hosted the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Film Festival 2023?
(a) Gandhinagar (b) Mumbai (c) Mysuru (d) Kochi
47. Which city is the host of the fifth Khelo India Youth Games 2022?
(a) Mysuru (b) Bhopal (c) Guwahati (d) Shimla
48. Which company has started exports of aviation gasoline for the first time in India?
(a) Indian Oil Corporation (b) Hindustan Petroleum
(c) Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (d) Bharat Petroleum
49. Which is the first district to register 10,000 new MSMEs?
(a) Coimbatore (b) Ernakulam (c) Lucknow (d) Surat
50. Which state's tableaux has been adjudged as the best in the Republic Day Parade 2023?
(a) Tamil Nadu (b) Uttarakhand (c) Assam (d) West Bengal
51. Which institution released the 'Prospects for children in the polycrisis' Report?
(a) NITI Aayog (b) World Bank (c) UNICEF (d) World Economic Forum
52. Manuela Roka Botey has been appointed as the first female Prime Minister of which country?
(a) Finland (b) Equatorial Guinea (c) Norway (d) Sweden
53. Deoghar Mart is an online marketplace for local artisans made operational in which state?
(a) Madhya Pradesh (b) Gujarat (c) Jharkhand (d) Karnataka
54. Who is the only living Indian to win the Grammy Award thrice?
(a) A R Rahman (b) Ricky Kej (c) Resul Pookutty (d) Babbu Mann
55. Kiruna, which was seen in the news, is a small town located in which country?
(a) Switzerland (b) Sweden (c) Argentina (d) Ukraine
56. Which international association launched 'Cyber Challenge' to enhance the cyber security within their individual territories?
(a) ASEAN (b) G-20 (c) QUAD (d) G-7
57. Who launched the 'Digital Payments Utsav' in New Delhi?
(a) Nirmala Sitharaman (b) Ashwini Vaishnav (c) Amit Shah (d) Nitin Gadkari
58. Skye Air launched which country's first traffic management system for drones?
(a) America (b) Israel (c) India (d) Australia
59. Which country has declared National Emergency in view of Cyclone Gabriel?
(a) New Zealand (b) Australia (c) Philippines (d) Indonesia
60. According to budget 2023, how many tourism destinations have been selected for development?
(a) 50 (b) 20 (c) 40 (d) 30
61. Who has been selected by the BCCI as the title sponsor of the Women's Premier League?
(a) Jio (b) Master Card (c) Dream 11 (d) Tata Group

62. Where did the ICC T-20 Women's World Cup 2023 kick-off?
(a) South Sudan (b) South Africa (c) Sri Lanka (d) South Korea
63. In which state has the Election Commission started the "Mission-300" and "My Vote, My Valentine" campaign?
(a) Goa (b) Kerala (c) Meghalaya (d) Telangana
64. Which Indian-American has been selected as the new CEO of YouTube?
(a) Neal Mohan (b) George Kurian (c) Shantanu Narayan (d) Raj Subramaniam
65. In which Indian state/UT is the Frozen Lake Half Marathon organized?
(a) Ladakh (b) Jammu & Kashmir (c) Sikkim (d) Uttarakhand
66. 'TReDS' is an electronic platform that facilitates the transactions for which entities?
(a) Exporters (b) Banks (c) MSMEs (d) Pharma companies
67. Which institution launched the 'Zero-Draft' of the Pandemic Treaty?
(a) World Economic Forum (b) World Health Organisation
(c) International Monetary Fund (d) World Bank
68. Who became the costliest player in the ongoing player auction for the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2023?
(a) Smriti Mandhana (b) Gurmit Kaur (c) Ravina Dhiman (d) Harmanpreet Kaur
69. Who are the beneficiaries of the PM-VIKAS scheme announced in the Union Budget 2023?
(a) Students (b) Artisans (c) Teachers (d) MSMEs
70. Who has been elected as the new President of Bangladesh?
(a) A. K. M. Nurul Islam (b) Sheikh Hasina
(c) Shahabuddin Ahmed (d) Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu
71. Amrutha Nagarothana Scheme is implemented in which state?
(a) Odisha (b) Karnataka (c) Kerala (d) Andhra Pradesh
72. Which country leads the International Biofuels Alliance?
(a) India (b) USA (c) Indonesia (d) France
73. In which state did PM Modi virtually inaugurate 'Jal Jan Abhiyan'?
(a) Uttar Pradesh (b) Himachal Pradesh (c) Rajasthan (d) Bihar
74. In which city did Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently lay the foundation stone of South India's first industrial corridor project?
(a) Tumakuru (b) Jaipur (c) Mumbai (d) Hyderabad
75. Which state government launched the Family ID - One Family One Identity Portal?
(a) Himachal Pradesh (b) Madhya Pradesh
(c) Arunachal Pradesh (d) Uttar Pradesh
76. Who has been appointed by UNICEF India as its National Ambassador?
(a) Amitabh Bachchan (b) Rohit Sharma
(c) Shatrughan Sinha (d) Ayushmann Khurrana

77. Lakshmi Bhandar is a scheme implemented by which state/UT?
(a) Jharkhand (b) West Bengal (c) Odisha (d) Assam
78. When was the Mughal Gardens in New Delhi's Rashtrapati Bhavan designed?
(a) 1925 (b) 1917 (c) 1931 (d) 1920
79. BIND Scheme, which was seen in the news, is associated with which Ministry?
(a) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (b) Ministry of MSME
(c) Ministry of Power (d) Ministry of Defence
80. Which state/UT is expected to be the most climate-vulnerable region in India, as per a recent report?
(a) Maharashtra (b) Uttarakhand (c) Bihar (d) New Delhi
81. As per FAO recent database, which country ranked first in milk production across the world?
(a) China (b) India (c) Brazil (d) Argentina
82. Who has been appointed as the next Vice Chief of the Indian Army?
(a) Lieutenant General Anindya Sengupta (b) Lieutenant General B S Raju
(c) Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar (d) Lieutenant General NSR Subramani
83. On which date is National Women's Day celebrated in honour of Sarojini Naidu's birth anniversary?
(a) February 13th (b) February 11th (c) February 12th (d) February 15th
84. Which country has launched 'Commercial Arms Transfer (CAT) Policy'?
(a) UK (b) Russia (c) Germany (d) USA
85. 'The Mukaab' is a new development project, associated with which country?
(a) Australia (b) France (c) Israel (d) Saudi Arabia
86. In which state has action been taken on child marriage, with police having arrested over 1,800 people so far?
(a) Karnataka (b) Assam (c) Bihar (d) Nagaland
87. Which country launched 'Operation Dost' to extend assistance to Turkey and Syria after a devastating earthquake?
(a) Iran (b) India (c) Israel (d) Italy
88. Who is the first female astronaut from Saudi Arabia who will be sent on an International Space Station mission?
(a) Jessica Meir (b) Nora Al Matrooshi (c) Jasmin Moghbeli (d) Rayyana Barnawi
89. Which country's Chief Justice is the chief guest of the 73rd foundation day of the Supreme Court of India?
(a) Singapore (b) France (c) Bangladesh (d) USA
90. Which state ranked first in the medal table in the 5th Khelo India Youth Games?
(a) Nagaland (b) Punjab (c) Maharashtra (d) Karnataka
91. According to the Budget 2023, what is the revised average processing time for ITR?
(a) 20 days (b) 16 days (c) 21 days (d) 18 days

92. What is the name of the new AI chatbot introduced by UIDAI recently?
(a) 'Aadhar Sathi' (b) 'Aadhar Sahyogi' (c) 'Aadhar Mitra' (d) 'Aadhar Madad'
93. Who has become the first Indian woman bowler to take 100 wickets in T20 International?
(a) Rajeshwari Gayakwad (b) Ekta Bisht
(c) Radha Yadav (d) Deepti Sharma
94. What is the name of the indigenous data link communication developed by the Indian Navy?
(a) Commlink (b) Rakshalink (c) Vayulink (d) Radiolink
95. Which country's Parliament passed a new law allowing gender self-determination?
(a) Sri Lanka (b) Spain (c) Siberia (d) Sudan
96. India launched the 'Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies' with which country?
(a) Australia (b) UK (c) France (d) USA
97. Who has been selected as the External Auditor of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva?
(a) Rajesh Patil (b) G C Murmu (c) Neha Uppal (d) Urjit Patel
98. Which company has recently launched India's first ChatGPT-powered AI Chatbot 'Lexi'?
(a) Velocity (b) Axio (c) Razorpay (d) Lentra
99. Who has been nominated by US President Joe Biden for the position of World Bank's Head?
(a) Ajay Banga (b) Soumya Swaminathan
(c) Neal Mohan (d) Gita Gopinath
100. Who was named the new Chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India?
(a) Sunil Mishra (b) Ravi Mittal (c) Ajay Varma (d) Parmod Sharma

Answer & Explanation

1. Ans. c

Sol. World Wetlands Day, celebrated annually on 2 February, aims to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and planet. This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar.

2. Ans. d

Sol. The theme of World Wetlands Day 2023 is "It's Time for Wetlands Restoration". It highlights the urgent need to prioritize wetland restoration.

3. Ans. b

Sol. World Wetlands Day is an opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and the threats they face. By bringing attention to these important ecosystems, World Wetlands Day aims to encourage conservation efforts and promote wise use of these valuable resources.

4. Ans. c**5. Ans. a**

Exp. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of Ramsar Sites in India with 14 Ramsar Sites.

6. Ans. a

Exp. The money bill is defined in Article 110 of the constitution of India.

7. Ans. d

Sol. The Union Budget 2023-24 highlighted that to make India a global hub for Shree Anna Research, the Indian Institute of Millet Research in Hyderabad will be made into a center of excellence for sharing best practices, research and technology at the international level.

8. Ans. b

Exp. Indian economy has increased in size from being 10th to 5th largest in the world in the past nine years.

9. Ans. b

Exp. In the union budget of FY 2023-24, it is announced to launch a mission to eliminate sickle cell anemia by 2047.

10. Ans. c

Exp. 500 new 'waste to wealth' plants under GOBARdhan scheme.

11. Ans. a

Exp. The instrument which is used to measure the earthquake shaking is called seismograph. There are three components of a seismograph. These are the recorder, the sensor and the timer.

12. Ans. a

Exp. National Institute of Disaster Management is located in Delhi.

13. Ans. c

Exp. The point on the surface, nearest to the focus, is called epicentre. It is the first one to experience the waves

14. Ans. a

Exp. The intensity scale is named after Mercalli, an Italian seismologist. The intensity scale indicates the visible damage caused by the event. The range of intensity scale is from 1-12.

15. Ans. a

Exp. Earthquakes are able to initiate landslides over mountainous regions or wet regions.

If the earthquakes are under the sea bed, this sudden shake can create extreme pressure outwards and might take a shape of a Tsunami.

Sometimes the earthquakes can break the dams and overflows of water can create the situation of floods.

16. Ans. a

Exp. It is a bilateral strategic nuclear arms reduction treaty between the USA and the Russian Federation.

17. Ans. c

Exp. The name START comes from the original "Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty", known as START-I, which was signed between the US and the erstwhile USSR in 1991, and came into force in 1994.

START-I, which capped the numbers of nuclear warheads and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that each side could deploy at 6,000 and 1,600 respectively.

This lapsed in 2009 and was replaced first by the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT, also known as the Treaty of Moscow), and then by the New START treaty.

18. Ans. c

Exp.

- The Indo–Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was a treaty signed between India and the Soviet Union in August 1971 that specified mutual strategic cooperation. Hence Option 3 is correct answer.
- The Soviet Union, officially the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), was a country that spanned much of Eurasia from 1922 to 1991
- This was a significant deviation from India's previous position of non-alignment during the Cold War and was a factor in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani war.
- The treaty was caused by increasing Pakistani ties with China and the United States and played an important role in the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.
- The duration of the treaty was of 20 years and it was renewed for another 20 years on 8 August 1991.
- Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union it was replaced by a 20-year Treaty of Indo-Russian Friendship and Cooperation during President Yeltsin's visit to New Delhi in January 1993.

19. Ans. a

Exp. USA and Soviet Union were two post-war powers which played significant role during the Cold War.

20. Ans. b

Exp. Warsaw Pact was formed in 1955, as an organization of the Soviet bloc's equivalent of NATO.

21. Ans. b

Exp. Recently Government has extended PM KUSUM scheme till March 2026.

22. Ans. a

Exp. The PM KUSUM scheme was launched by Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) in 2019, to add solar capacity of 30,800 MW by 2022, with total central financial support of Rs 34,422 crore.

23. Ans. b

Exp. The scheme aims to boost solar capacity to provide energy security to Indian farmers. At the same time, it aims to achieve the aim by increasing India's share of solar power generation.

24. Ans. b

Exp. PM-KUSUM stands for Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan Yojna.

25. Ans. d

Exp. India's total installed renewable energy capacity touched 168.96 GW mark by February 2023-end, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

Out of the total 168.96 GW, 64.38 GW is solar power capacity, 51.79 GW hydro, 42.02 GW wind and 10.77 GW bio power, RK Singh, Union Minister for Power, New and Renewable Energy.

26. Ans. a

Sol. In the Sadiq Ali case, a dispute arose between two factions of the Congress in 1969.

The EC in 1971 relied on the test of majority to decide which side should get the party's name and symbol. Two other criteria — a test of party constitution and test of aims and objects — were considered and rejected.

27. Ans. c

Exp. The Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968 empowers the EC to recognises political parties and allot symbols.

It applies to disputes between recognized national and state parties. For disputes within registered but unrecognized parties, the EC generally advises them to solve their disputes amicably or to approach the court.

28. Ans. b

Exp. Shivsena is a right-wing to far-right Marathi regionalist and Hindu ultranationalist political party in India founded in 1966 by Bal Thackeray.

Shivsena is a State Party.

29. Ans. d

Exp. Party Symbol of Shivsena is Bow and Arrow.

30. Ans. b

Exp. As per the ECI's Political Parties and Election Symbols, 2019 handbook, a political party would be considered a national party if:

- It is 'recognised' in four or more states; or
- If its candidates have secured at least 6% of total valid votes in at least 4 states (in latest Lok Sabha or Assembly elections) and the party has at least 4 MPs in the last LS polls; or
- If it has won at least 2% of the total seats in the LS from at least 3 states.

V – 70's

31. Ans. d

Sol. India has made significant progress in many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the per capita income has increased to 1.97 lakh, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Union Budget Speech.

32. Ans. d

Sol. The Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum renamed the Al Minhad area and its surrounding areas as 'Hind City'.

33. Ans. c

Sol. Yaya Tso lake has been recently proposed as the first Biodiversity Heritage Site of Ladakh under Biological Diversity Act. It is also known as Bird's Paradise. It is one of the highest breeding sites of the Black Necked Crane in India.

34. Ans. a

Sol. Equatorial Guinea has appointed Manuela Roka Botey as prime minister. She became the first woman in the country to hold the position.

35. Ans. b

Sol. Both nations have agreed to constitute a task force involving India's Semiconductor Mission, India Electronics Semiconductor Association, and the US Semiconductor Industry Association. The aim is to develop a readiness assessment to identify near-term opportunities and facilitate longer-term development of semiconductor ecosystems.

36. Ans. b

Sol. Gandhisagar Floating Festival, touted as Asia's first floating festival, commenced on February 1 at Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh. The first edition of the five-day floating festival was inaugurated by Usha Thakur, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Religious Trust and Endowments, Government of Madhya Pradesh.

37. Ans. c

Sol. India will be invited as the focal country at the Madrid International Book Fair in 2025, the Ambassador of Spain to India, Jose Maria Ridao said. Spain is the theme country at the 46th International Kolkata Book Fair. The Madrid International Book Fair is an annual event held in the Buen Retiro Park in Madrid.

38. Ans. d

Sol. indigenously manufactured weapon systems were the highlight of the Indian Army's 'Exercise Topchi', an annual firepower demonstration and training exercise conducted at the School of Artillery in Devlali, Nasik.

39. Ans. b

Sol. Australia is removing the British monarchy from its bank notes.

40. Ans. b

Sol. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday inaugurated a new School of Specialised Excellence (SoSE) in DESU Colony in Janakpuri. SoSEs offer specialised education to students of classes 9 to 12 in four

domains — science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), humanities, performing and visual arts, and high-tech 21st-century skills which include subjects such as robotics and computer programming.

41. Ans. b

Exp. Air India said it will use UK-headquartered Ideagen's enterprise cloud software application Coruson to help enhance safety management and facilitate real-time reporting of in-flight incidents.

42. Ans. b

Exp. The northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh accounted for the highest death row inmate population (100), followed by Gujarat (61) and Jharkhand (46).

43. Ans. b

Exp. MP govt will provide Rs 1000 to every woman of the state under 'Ladli Behna Yojana': CM Chouhan.

44. Ans. a

Exp. Aryna Sabalenka defeated Elena Rybakina in the final, 4–6, 6–3, 6–4 to win the women's singles tennis title at the 2023 Australian Open.

45. Ans. b

Exp. Ministry of Tourism launched the Visit India Year - 2023 initiative.

46. Ans. b

Exp. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Film Festival began with a grand opening ceremony in Mumbai.

Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur and Minister of State Meenakshi Lekhi inaugurated the SCO Film Festival.

47. Ans. b

Exp. The Khelo India Youth Games 2022 is being held in Madhya Pradesh from January 30 to February 11, 2023.

It will be the fifth edition of the event under the government of India's Khelo India initiative. The last edition of the KIYG, Khelo India Youth Games 2021, was postponed thrice due to COVID-19 before finally being held in June last year. Consequently, the 2022 edition is being held in 2023.

48. Ans. a

Exp. Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) has started exports of aviation gasoline, which is used to operate unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and small planes.

For the first time in the nation's history, India is exporting fuel. The first consignment of 80 barrels of aviation gas named 'AV gas 100 LL' was shipped from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT) to Papua New Guinea.

49. Ans. b

Exp. Ernakulam in Kerala has been named as the first district to achieve registration of 10,000 new MSMEs. This will help boost the contribution of MSMEs by generating new jobs and diversifying India's GDP. The availability of highly skilled Human Resources and the good industrial infrastructure are among the key reasons for its excellent communication and networking systems.

50. Ans. b

Exp. Uttarakhand has been adjudged the best state/UT tableau in the Republic Day Parade 2023, by a panel of judges.

Gujarat's tableau has won an online public poll conducted by MyGov. The tableau of Ministry of Tribal Affairs (Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) has been adjudged as the best tableau in ministries/departments category.

51. Ans. c

Exp. The UNICEF recently released the 'Prospects for Children in the Polycrisis: A 2023 Global Outlook', report.

It explains 'polycrisis' as multiple, simultaneous crises that are strongly interdependent. As per the report some effects of the crises include higher food and energy prices leading to global hunger and malnourishment, limited access to healthcare, slow recovery from learning losses etc.

52. Ans. b

Exp. Equatorial Guinea has appointed Manuela Roka Botey as prime minister. She became the first woman in the country to hold the position. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled the country since 1979, made the announcement.

Ms Botey was previously the education minister and joined the government in 2020. She replaces former premier Francisco Pascual Obama Asue.

53. Ans. c

Exp. Deoghar Mart is an online marketplace for local artisans, shops, micro-enterprises and businessmen, which is made operational in Jharkhand.

The online e-commerce website selling local arts and crafts is an initiative of the district administration and was launched by District Magistrate of Deoghar Manjunath Bhanjantri.

54. Ans. b

Exp. Ricky Kej is an Indian musician and environmental activist. The Indian music composer recently won his third Grammy Award for the album 'Divine Tides'.

He is the youngest person to win this award and only the fourth Indian to achieve this feat. He recently made another history by becoming the only living Indian to win the Grammy Award thrice.

55. Ans. b

Exp. Kiruna is a town in northern Sweden that houses over 18,000 individuals and a tonne wooden church.

56. Ans. c

Exp. The Quad Cyber Challenge was launched by the QUAD member states (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States) to enhance the cyber security within their individual territories.

57. Ans. b

Exp. Ashwini Vaishnaw, Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, launched a comprehensive campaign plan, 'Digital Payments Utsav, in New Delhi. Digital Payments Utsav, has been planned this year to promote Digital Payments across the country and to celebrate the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' and G20 Presidency.

58. Ans. c

Exp. Skye Air launched India's first traffic management system for drones.

59. Ans. a

Exp. In view of the threats posed by Cyclone Gabrielle in New Zealand, the Government has declared a national emergency in the country on account of the dangers of the cyclone situation. After the Christchurch earthquake of 2011 and Covid-19 in 2020, this is the third national emergency.

60. Ans. a

Exp. According to FM Nirmala Sitharaman, 50 tourist spots would be chosen through a challenge mechanism and developed as a comprehensive package for local and international tourism. Tourism promotion will be carried out on a mission basis, with the active participation of states, the convergence of government programs, and public-private partnerships.

61. Ans. d

Exp. The title sponsor of the Women's Premier League starting next month has been announced. WPL's title sponsorship has been received by the Tata Group. Tata Group is already the sponsor of India's prestigious Indian Premier League. The BCCI has released the schedule for the first season of the Women's Premier League. A total of five teams are participating in the first season.

62. Ans. b

Exp. The ICC T-20 Women's World Cup kicked off in South Africa.

63. Ans. c

Exp. 'Mission-300' and 'My Vote, My Valentine' campaign started by Election Commission in Meghalaya.

64. Ans. a

Exp. Indian-origin Neil Mohan has been appointed as the new CEO of the famous video-sharing platform YouTube. He has replaced polish-american business executive Susan Wojcicki. Prior to this, Mohan served as the Chief Product Officer at YouTube. Neel Mohan joined Google in the year 2008 and in the year 2015, he acquired the position of Chief Product Officer of YouTube.

65. Ans. a

Exp. For the first time in India, the Pangong Tso lake in the Union Territory of Ladakh organized Lake Marathon. This lake is situated at an altitude of four thousand 350 meters above sea level. This lake is situated at an altitude of four thousand 350 meters above sea level.

66. Ans. c

Exp. The Trade Receivable Discounting System (TReDS) is an electronic platform that facilitates the financing or discounting, trading and settling invoices of the MSMEs.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has decided to expand the scope of the TReDS to allow the use of insurance facilities. This will facilitate secondary market operations on the TReDS.

67. Ans. b

Exp. The 'zero-draft' of the pandemic treaty was launched recently by the World Health Organization's Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB).

The international treaty is expected to be presented at the World Health Assembly in 2024. The aim of the pandemic treaty is to strengthen national and international-level preparedness against future pandemics.

68. Ans. a

Exp. Smriti Mandhana became the costliest player in the ongoing player auction for the Women's Premier League (WPL) 2023.

69. Ans. b

Exp. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a new initiative for empowering the Vishwakarma community.

The PM VIKAS (Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman) yojana will provide support by providing skills training to artisans and craftsmen people engaged in traditional and skilled professions. The special package will help integrate them with MSME value chain.

70. Ans. d

Exp. In Bangladesh, Mohammad Shahabuddin Chuppu has been elected as the 22nd President of the country. He will be replacing President Mohammad Abdul Hamid. Also, the longest-serving President of Bangladesh Abdul Hamid's term will end on April 23. 75-year-old Chuppu was born on December 10, 1949, in the Pabna district of East Bengal, Dominion of Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). He participated in the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

71. Ans. b

Exp. Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has announced ₹ 9,698 croreworth projects in the State Budget 2023-23 for comprehensive development of Bengaluru city.

Under the Amrutha Nagarothana Scheme, works worth ₹ 6,000 crores are being implemented in Bengaluru. Development of 108 km of roads has been taken up under the high-density corridors scheme.

72. Ans. a

Exp. The US and Brazil, two of the world's largest biofuels markets, are joining an India-led initiative of International Biofuels Alliance.

The Alliance will aim to boost demand for the lower-emissions energy source. India has also earmarked 350 billion rupees (USD 4.3 billion) in its union budget to promote energy security.

73. Ans. c

Exp. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Jal Jan Abhiyan' virtually at Abu Road in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan. On this occasion Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and film actor Nana Patekar among others were also present. It is a public awareness campaign in which Brahmakumaris Sansthan and people associated with the Ministry of Jal Shakti are working on the project. This aims at conserving more than five thousand water bodies across the country and creating new water bodies. This awareness campaign will run for about eight months.

74. Ans. a

Exp. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi recently laid the foundation stone of South India's first industrial corridor project in Tumakuru.

75. Ans. d

Exp. The government of Uttar Pradesh launched the Family ID - One Family One Identity Portal.

76. Ans. d

Exp. UNICEF India has appointed actor Ayushmann Khurrana as its National Ambassador. The Bollywood stardom Khurana expressed gratitude by saying, "It is an honour for me to take forward the advocacy of child rights as a National Ambassador with UNICEF India." Earlier, 38-year-old Ayushmann worked as Celebrity Advocate and had been associated with UNICEF's 'Child Rights Campaign' in 2020. UNICEF is an agency of the United Nations that works to protect and promote child rights around the world. It was established in 1946.

77. Ans. b

Exp. West Bengal state government announced its state budget for the year 2023-24 and broadens several welfare schemes.

The state Budget for the year 2023-24 widened the ambit of social welfare schemes like Lakshmi Bhandar, added a new scheme providing death benefits for fishermen, promised financial assistance for micro-enterprise and allocated ₹ 3000 crores for rural road connectivity and repair of urban roads in the State.

78. Ans. b

Exp. The Mughal Gardens in New Delhi's Rashtrapati Bhavan were designed in 1917 and have been renamed by the government as "Amrit Udyan". These gardens, spread over 15 acres, are also known as the "soul of the presidential palace".

79. Ans. a

Exp. Of the Rs 1,100 crore estimated for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Rs 600 crore has been set aside for the recently announced Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development (BIND) Scheme.

The scheme has a total outlay of over Rs 2,500 crore. The scheme aims to boost public sector broadcasting in the country and focuses on infrastructure development of Prasar Bharati, including All India Radio (AIR) and Doordarshan (DD).

80. Ans. c

Exp. As per the XDI's Gross Domestic Climate Risk report, the economies of India, China and the US will witness the worst impact of the climate change.

This report revealed that 14 Indian states will remain within the top 100 most climate-risk prone territories among more than 2,600 regions in the world by 2050. Bihar, with a global ranking of 22, is expected to be the most climate-vulnerable region in India by 2050.

81. Ans. b

Exp. According to production data of Food and Agriculture Organization Corporate Statistical Database (FAOSTAT), India ranks first in the world contributing twenty-four percent of global milk production in the year 2021-22.

The milk production of India has registered fifty-one percent increase between 2014-15 and 2021-22 and increased to twenty-two crore tonne in the year 2021-22.

82. Ans. c

Exp. Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar has been appointed as the new Vice Chief of the Army Staff. Also, Lieutenant General BS Raju will take over as the South Western Army Commander. The newly appointed Vice Chief of the Indian Army is an alumnus of the National Defense Academy, Khadakwasla. He was commissioned into the 1st Assam Regiment in June 1985. Lieutenant General Anindya Sengupta, the current commander of 14 Corps, has been selected as the new Chief of Staff, Northern Command, headquartered at Udhampur.

83. Ans. a

Exp. National Women's Day is celebrated on Sarojini Naidu's birth anniversary on February 13.

84. Ans. d

Exp. The US administration has unveiled a new Commercial Arms Transfer (CAT) policy that places greater emphasis on human rights in its arms export policy.

This is in contrast to the Trump-era policy that gave more importance to commercial considerations. The new policy covers the review of government-to-government weapons transfers, security assistance, and licensed commercial sales of US-origin military equipment overseen by various government departments.

85. Ans. d

Exp. The Mukaab is a new development project that has been announced by Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman.

The ambitious plan aims to build the largest inner-city building in the world named 'The Mukaab' in Riyadh, the country's capital. It aims to develop the world's largest modern downtown in Riyadh in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

86. Ans. b

Exp. Action on child marriage has been taken in Assam, with police having arrested over 1,800 people so far.

87. Ans. b

Exp. India launched 'Operation Dost' to extend assistance to Turkey and Syria after a devastating earthquake.

88. Ans. d

Exp. Rayyana Barnawi is the first woman astronaut from Saudi Arabia who is selected for an International Space Mission. She will be sent on a 10-day voyage with fellow Ali Al-Qarni to the International Space Station (ISS) this year.

89. Ans. a

Exp. Singapore Chief Justice Sunadresh Menon attends as chief guest of the 73rd foundation day of the Supreme Court of India.

The Singapore chief justice delivered a lecture on the "Role of judiciary in a changing world" as this year's event was aired on social media platforms. On January 28, 1950, two days after India became the Sovereign Democratic Republic, the Supreme Court of India was established.

90. Ans. c

Exp. In the 5th Khelo India Youth Games, Maharashtra ranked first in the medal table, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

91. Ans. b

Exp. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stated during the presentation of the Union Budget on February 1, 2023, that the average processing time for income tax returns has been lowered from 93 to 16 days. She stated that 45 percent of ITRs are handled within 24 hours. "The administration aims to bring out next-generation universal IT Return forms as well as reinforce the grievance redressal process," she explained.

92. Ans. c

Exp. Aadhaar issuing body UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India) has launched 'Aadhaar Mitra' which is a new AI/ML-based chatbot. With the help of this AI-powered chatbot, one can check Aadhaar enrollment status, track Aadhaar PVC card status and get information about enrollment centres. Aadhaar Mitra will provide quick and automated responses. Currently, this service is available in Hindi and English languages.

93. Ans. d

Exp. Indian women's team all-rounder Deepti Sharma created history as the highest wicket-taker in T20Is. She has now become India's first bowler. Before this, leg-spinner Poonam Yadav has taken 98 wickets from India. Talking about male cricket, India's Yuzvendra Chahal has set the record for taking the most wickets in the T20I matches. While Chahal has taken 91 wickets in T20Is. In the recent Women's Premier League, Deepti was bought by UP Warriors for Rs 2.60 crore at the auction event.

94. Ans. c

Exp. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has developed an indigenous data link communication named 'Vayulink'. It uses the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) that is also known as NAVIC, to send radio communication to the base station when the signals are low.

The Vayulink system also prevents aircraft collision, provides better combat teaming and helps plan real-time basis.

95. Ans. b

Exp. Spain's Parliament passed a new law allowing gender self-determination.

96. Ans. d

Exp. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval launched the US-India initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) along with his American counterpart Jake Sullivan.

In May 2022, US President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced iCET to expand their strategic technology partnership and defense industrial cooperation between the governments, businesses, and academic institutions.

97. Ans. b

Exp. Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Girish Chandra Murmu has been selected as the External Auditor of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva.

98. Ans. a

Exp. ChatGPT-powered AI chatbot named Lexi has been launched in India by the Velocity company. The drone is considered the Indian version of the ChatGPT. Also, Velocity has integrated this new technology in artificial intelligence with its existing Analytics Tool integrated with Velocity Business Insights. A chatbot is a computer program that uses Artificial intelligence and Natural Language Processing (NLP) to understand and answer the queries put by customers.

99. Ans. a

Exp. US President Joe Biden has nominated the former Mastercard CEO Ajay Banga has been for the President of the World Bank. Ajaypal Singh Banga is an Indian-American, born in Pune, Maharashtra to a Saini-Sikh family, where his father was posted in the army. He is currently the Vice Chairman of General Atlantic, one of the world's largest private equity firms. The current President of the World Bank, David Malpass has announced to resign by June 2023. Malpass was elected by former US President Donald Trump.

100. Ans. b

Exp. Ravi Mittal was named the new Chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India.